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HANSARD

Thursday, December 10, 2020 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable Nils Clarke

YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

2020 Fall Sitting

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DEPUTY SPEAKER and CHAIR OF COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE — Don Hutton, MLA, Mayo-Tatchun
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Hon. Ranj Pillai	Porter Creek South	Deputy Premier Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources; Economic Development; Minister responsible for the Yukon Development Corporation and the Yukon Energy Corporation
Hon. Tracy-Anne McPhee	Riverdale South	Government House Leader Minister of Education; Justice
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Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Thursday, December 10, 2020 — 1:00 p.m.

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

Prayers

DAILY ROUTINE

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

Introduction of visitors.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I will ask my colleagues to join me in welcoming three guests here today. They are: Birju Dittani, who is the director; Vida Nelson, legal counsel; and Drew Spicer, information officer — all with the Yukon Human Rights Commission. Thank you very much for being here.

Applause

Speaker: Tributes.

TRIBUTES

In recognition of Yukon Advisory Committee on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls and Two-spirit+ people

Hon. Mr. Gallina: I rise today on behalf of the Yukon Liberal government, here on the traditional territory of the Kwanlin Dün First Nation and the Ta'an Kwäch'än Council, to humbly pay tribute to the Yukon Advisory Committee on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls and Two-spirit+ people.

I had a very close relationship with my mother, Francesca. She was there for me, she supported me in any way that she could, and she loved me unconditionally.

There are women who are no longer with us today here on Earth. They are not with us for reasons unknown. These women are daughters, sisters, aunties, cousins, and, yes, many of them are mothers.

One of the privileges that I acknowledge in being a member of this Legislative Assembly is working alongside the matriarchs of the House that we are in today and the many women leaders throughout our Yukon communities. Leadership that has come together to change the story of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls and two-spirit-plus individuals is the MMIWG2S+ advisory committee.

The Yukon advisory committee was created in the spring of 2015 to guide and support the first Yukon Regional Roundtable on MMIWG2S+. This group was also tasked with connecting the work of the national inquiry in Yukon to families of MMIWG2S+ and indigenous survivors, experts, and communities. Following the national inquiry, the mandate of the advisory committee was expanded to include the development and implementation of Yukon's response to the

final report. Just a few short weeks ago, they finalized Yukon's strategy.

It is because of the tireless work of this group of leaders over the last year that we have been able to gather this morning, where people pledged their support for changing the story to upholding dignity and justice — Yukon's MMIWG2S+ strategy.

The Yukon advisory committee is co-chaired by my honourable colleague, the Minister responsible for the Women's Directorate, representing the Government of Yukon, Chief Doris Bill, Kwanlin Dün First Nation, representing Yukon First Nations, and Ann Maje Raider, executive director of the Liard Aboriginal Women's Society, representing indigenous women's organizations.

Additional current members of the YAC are: Terri Szabo, president of Yukon Aboriginal Women's Council; Adeline Webber, president of Whitehorse Aboriginal Women's Circle; Toni Blanchard, MMIWG2S+ family representative; Amanda Buffalo, Liard Aboriginal Women's Society representative; Shaun Ladue, LGBTQ2S+ representative; and May Bolton, elder representative. Ex-officio members include officials from Yukon government, indigenous women's organizations, Government of Canada, and Yukon RCMP.

I would also like to recognize the contributions of past members of the Yukon advisory committee on MMIWG2S+, including: Doris Anderson, former president of Yukon Aboriginal Women's Council; Krista Reid, former president of Whitehorse Aboriginal Women's Circle; and Agnes Mills, elder representative.

I want to thank this group for the incredible work that they have done to create Yukon's MMIWG2S+ strategy. It is truly a historic and nation-leading beacon on a path to seek truth and to create story. I know that this group has dedicated their time and energy to this work. They have connected with many partners, hearing directly from First Nation governments, municipal governments, governments of Canada, RCMP, and many non-governmental organizations.

Most importantly, they have heard directly from family members — as recently as this summer — about their priorities for action in Yukon. I know that these conversations were not easy for many — so difficult to share and so challenging to hear — but these conversations were so important and contributed to the final strategy that we have here today.

Mr. Speaker, as I close, I'll take a moment to reflect on the ceremony that I was a part of today. We lit a fire together that called upon all of our ancestors. We talked about standing up as leaders to champion the actions laid out in this strategy, taking action as men to do our part and hold up the women in our lives, both personally and professionally.

We are all on a journey together, and the ceremony that took place today set the intention for this journey to change story, to write new chapters, and to commit to work to end violence against indigenous women, girls, and two-spirit-plus people in Yukon.

As a member of this government, I am truly humbled by the work of all members of the Yukon advisory committee. Your unwavering commitment to a decolonized approach

shows us how we can all operate differently. Your dedication, courage, and hard work is already building a safer, healthier, and stronger community where indigenous women, girls, and two-spirit-plus individuals can live in safety, with the dignity and justice that they deserve.

I know that my mom is looking down on us today, and I know that she joined us in ceremony. I also know that many others also joined us, both physically, virtually, and spiritually, and I feel them smiling down on us, recognizing the hard work that has been done to date and the stories yet to be defined.

Applause

Ms. Van Bibber: I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to recognize the Yukon advisory committee's work in response to the national inquiry's final report on missing and murdered indigenous women and girls.

On June 3, 2019, the final report from the Canadian national inquiry was presented, entitled *Reclaiming Power and Place*. This report was a culmination of two years of testimony, action, stories, gatherings, and calls for justice by families, indigenous women's organizations, First Nations, and all levels of government.

In the report, there were 231 individual calls for justice — action to take place, not just recommendations. This morning at the Kwanlin Dün Cultural Centre, the Yukon strategy for missing and murdered indigenous women and girls and two-spirit-plus individuals was released — the first response to the final report in Canada. Congratulations.

A signing ceremony took place to begin the implementation of Yukon's commitment and action plan. Representatives from the 14 First Nations, municipal, territorial, and federal governments, as well as the leaders from the opposition parties, witnessed the signing ceremony.

We take a moment to celebrate Yukon's work throughout the years to confront the issue of violence against indigenous women and girls. Through collaborative efforts with many partner organizations and communities, Yukon has been a supportive force in this national effort and also a leading edge in many instances.

In December 2015, the Whitehorse Aboriginal Women's Circle hosted a gathering in Whitehorse, bringing together 25 family members of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls. This gathering was held with the intent of supporting local families and allowing them to provide recommendations to government, First Nations, and RCMP in advance of the regional roundtable that was to be held in February.

The regional roundtable of February 2016 included a declaration signed by the co-chairs of the Yukon regional roundtable: former Deputy Premier and Minister of the Women's Directorate, Elaine Taylor; Kwanlin Dün First Nation Chief Doris Bill; and then-president of the Yukon Aboriginal Women's Council, Doris Anderson. As well, thanks to all of the amazing women who worked on these roundtables, meetings, and hearings. Once the Canadian national inquiry began the hearings, its first gathering was held in Whitehorse from May 30 to June 1, 2017.

There are community hearing transcripts online under the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. I applaud each and every participant who spoke, because you made history by sharing your story. The participants are named and listed for each of those days. There are too many to call out in our tribute time allotted, but rest assured, you are noted and recognized.

At this time of year and during the pandemic, the stats are not positive as domestic and sexualized violence is on the rise. Let's all make a commitment to be supportive and help anyone who cries out for help. Thank you to everyone who has and continues to support these initiatives, past and present. We look forward to seeing continued progress throughout the territory as we set out to implement the newly signed Yukon strategy.

Remember — it is our silence that makes this normal, and this is anything but normal.

Applause

Ms. White: I rise today on behalf of the Yukon New Democratic Party to hold my hands up and pay tribute to the members of the Yukon advisory committee on missing and murdered indigenous women and girls and two-spirit-plus people. We want to say thank you from the depths of our hearts. Thank you for this incredibly important powerful and hard work. Thank you for being inclusive and never turning your backs on those who needed you. Thank you for listening to the stories that were shared so honestly with you and hearing them with open hearts — stories of our sisters, mothers, aunts, neighbours, and friends, stories of loss and heartache, and stories of stolen potential and what could have been. Thank you for holding space for those who so desperately needed to be heard — those asking the questions fuelled by the loss and absence — always with the hope of seeing real justice.

You took these stories from across Yukon and into yourselves and have turned them into a guiding document of action. The work that you did will help to restore the dignity and justice of indigenous women, girls, and two-spirit people, just as it should have always been — and will be again. Your work gives me hope that, from the most tragic events that have tainted our history as a country and a territory, change will come. Like Ann Maje Raider said today, it's about "rematriation" — restoring balance to the world.

Applause

In recognition of Human Rights Day

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I rise today on behalf of the Yukon Liberal government in recognition of International Human Rights Day, celebrated every year on December 10, the day that the United Nations General Assembly adopted, in 1948, the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*. That declaration was a milestone document that proclaims the inalienable rights to which everyone is entitled as a human being — regardless of race, colour, religion, sex, language, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth, or other status.

This year's theme of International Human Rights Day is "Recover Better — Stand Up for Human Rights". This theme relates, of course, to the COVID-19 pandemic and seeks to

ensure that human rights principles are applied to our recovery efforts. We know that the pandemic has exacerbated and deepened poverty, exposed and worsened existing inequalities, brought light to discriminatory practices and attitudes, and increased hardships — some physical, mental, financial, or otherwise.

A few weeks ago, federal, provincial, and territorial ministers responsible for human rights met virtually. As part of these meetings, we heard from national indigenous organizations — including three national indigenous women's groups — and a number of other civil, societal, and human rights organizations. The clear, overarching message was that if we are able to create an atmosphere where an equitable recovery for all can flourish, we need to reaffirm the importance of human rights and the need for global solidarity, we need to tap into our sense of interconnectedness and shared humanity, and we need to foster resilience in pursuit of a society that is just and true.

This morning, the Yukon has once again shown its leadership with our own first MMIWG2S+ strategy — the first in Canada, its own milestone document. As was noted in this morning's ceremony, it is so fitting that, on this Human Rights Day, we should all make the commitment to uphold dignity and justice for indigenous women.

The work is clear: As society and the world grapple with a new normal, inequities — many of them systemic — have in fact worsened. Governments everywhere have made their best effort to walk the fine line between public safety and upholding the economic, social, and cultural rights of their citizens.

December 10, International Human Rights Day, is an opportunity for governments, individuals, civil society, grassroots communities, and private enterprise to come together and imagine their role in building a post-COVID world that does better and ensures a future that we can all be proud of — a future free of hate and discrimination, a future where all voices are heard, and where everyone can access services, heal, and feel protected.

It is also important today to recognize Yukon's Human Rights Commission and to remind Yukoners that its core mandate is to promote equality and diversity through research, education, and enforcement of the Yukon *Human Rights Act*. While hardships exposed and created by the COVID-19 pandemic are real, we must look to human rights principles to ensure that our recovery efforts are equitable and address the failures exposed by this devastating time.

What we know is that transformative action is possible if we look for examples — both practical and inspirational — of acts of kindness, compassion, and love. We have seen and participated in such an action today, with the historic commitment made to Yukon's MMIWG2S+ strategy. On this, we should reflect, be proud, and move forward together.

Applause

Ms. McLeod: I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to recognize today as Human Rights Day. As has been mentioned, this important day is observed each year on December 10, which was the day, in 1948, that the

United Nations General Assembly adopted the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*.

This year, as we deal with the COVID-19 pandemic, Human Rights Day is focused on ensuring that human rights are upheld and central to recovery efforts worldwide. As the pandemic has affected us globally, the United Nations notes that we will reach our common goals only if we are able to create equal opportunities for all, address the failures exposed and exploited by COVID-19, and apply human rights standards to tackle inequalities, exclusion, and discrimination.

While the pandemic continues to impact communities around the globe, it has had a disproportionate impact on those vulnerable and marginalized populations. I would like to say thank you to the Human Rights Commission for the work that they do to support and promote human rights across the Yukon and to Yukoners and organizations who continue to live, work, and serve the public in ways that respect the human rights of all and promote healthy and happy communities. Thank you to all those organizations, volunteers, and individuals who work with our more vulnerable populations to ensure that they have access to the things that they may need during this pandemic.

Applause

Ms. Hanson: I rise on behalf of the New Democratic Party to acknowledge December 10 as International Human Rights Day — a day marking the anniversary of the international community convening 72 years ago at a time when the world was still reeling from the worldwide catastrophe created by the Second World War.

Despite — and in many ways because of — the horrendous divisions and appalling aftermath of that war, world leaders recognized the importance of finally acknowledging the common thread of human relationships reflected by their adoption of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*.

This historic document — and the treaties that grew out of it — set out minimum rights essential for a life of dignity for all people, including children, by recognizing: the rights of indigenous peoples and workers; gender equality; the full and equal participation of women; intergenerational equity; a just transition of the workforce that creates decent work and quality jobs; ecosystem integrity and resilience; and food security.

Today, as we mark Human Rights Day, we are being asked to ensure that our recovery plans for a worldwide catastrophe that is the COVID-19 pandemic — that those plans are based on the same human rights that we have pledged as a world, a nation, and a territory to uphold. We need to resist the easy fallback assumption that economic security and rights can only be afforded to some and not to all. With that comes the need to state clearly that, by recognizing the rights of anyone — particularly a group that is statistically disproportionately impacted — we are somehow reducing the rights of another group. This is simply wrong. Allowing attention and support to one group — particularly when you are talking about fundamental human rights — does not create an automatic penalty for others; it is quite the opposite. It levels the playing field and increases basic rights for all.

We are called upon to address the failures that have been exposed and exploited by COVID-19 locally, nationally, and internationally. Now exposed, we have the opportunity and the obligation to apply human rights standards and to tackle entrenched systemic and intergenerational inequalities, exclusion, and discrimination. When we recognize that human rights are not a zero-sum game, Mr. Speaker, we will begin to act, because we recognize that no one loses their rights if everyone else has theirs.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I have for tabling today an analysis on voting here in the Legislature for the 34th Sitting of this Assembly.

Ms. Hanson: I have for tabling a document entitled *Pandemic Planning — Questions and Answers for Human Resources and Managers*, new version, dated October 27, 2020.

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

Are there any reports of committees?

Are there any petitions to be presented?

Are there any bills to be introduced?

Are there any notices of motions?

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

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

THAT this House urges the Minister of Community Services to increase support for volunteer fire departments, including ensuring that our rural fire departments are not left without equipment they need, such as pike poles and reliable ice augers.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Minister of Community Services to provide the Legislative Assembly with a detailed list of the full costs associated with implementing tipping fees at its solid-waste facilities prior to the end of the 2020 Fall Sitting of the Yukon Legislative Assembly.

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

THAT this House urges the Minister of Community Services to recognize that providing communities with nearby garbage-disposal options reduces greenhouse gas emissions and lowers the risk of wildlife conflicts by taking the following actions:

(1) keeping the Silver City solid-waste transfer facility open;

(2) keeping the Keno solid-waste facility open;

(3) pausing his plans to close other solid-waste facilities; and

(4) consulting with affected businesses and communities before making a decision that would reduce their access to waste-disposal options.

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

THAT this House urges the Minister of Highways and Public Works to ensure that the pedestrian crossing signs on the Alaska Highway in Porter Creek are fixed in a timely manner.

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

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Yukon's MMIWG2S+ strategy

Hon. Ms. McLean: Today we unveiled *Changing the Story to Upholding Dignity and Justice, Yukon's MMIWG2S+ strategy* during a sacred ceremony taking place on the traditional territory of the Kwanlin Dün First Nation and the Ta'an Kwäch'än Council. Today was a remarkable and historic day for Yukon and Canada. We must take a moment to recognize and celebrate what an accomplishment this really is. It marks a major milestone for the family members, survivors, and advocates who have been waiting too long for action, some for decades. Holding our commitment to each other and to family members in ceremony represents a sacred agreement to do this work in a good way.

The strategy will guide us for the next 10 to 15 years toward our vision of violence-free communities where indigenous women, girls, and LGBTQ2S+ people are safe and respected. We went into a major consultation with our stakeholders to develop this strategy, and every single one of our stakeholders sees themselves in it.

Yukon's MMIWG2S+ strategy includes 31 action items under four paths: strengthening connections and supports; community safety and justice; economic independence and education; and community action and accountability. I encourage all members and all Yukoners to read this document and consider how you can be involved in implementing the action items.

Our next step is to develop an implementation plan together. This will outline the concrete actions to take under each item in order to meet the goals set out in the strategy. We will also identify who will lead, be involved, or contribute funding in each item.

We know that the Yukon government cannot, and should not, lead all action items set out in the strategy because we know that approach has contributed to the problem in the past. We are committed to doing things differently in a decolonized way, reflecting the principles set out in the strategy, such as truth and reconciliation and self-determination. We will work in partnership with MMIWG2S+ families and survivors, First Nation governments, the Government of Canada, municipal governments, indigenous women's organizations, the RCMP,

the media, the private sector, non-governmental organizations, and individual Yukoners.

As we move forward to develop an implementation plan, we are committed to the principles set out in the strategy, including the principle of accountability. We will regularly report back to each other on progress made and identify new, emerging priorities; we will bring all partners together alongside a family gathering, once public health measures allow, to make sure that we are on the right track.

I look forward to Yukon government working alongside our partners to implement concrete actions that will restore dignity and justice to indigenous women, girls, and two-spirit-plus folks in Yukon.

Ms. Van Bibber: Thank you for the opportunity to respond to this ministerial statement, and thank you to everyone for their efforts in the creation of the missing and murdered indigenous women and girls two-spirit-plus strategy. I would also like to thank all those who have been part of the conversations and part of the process throughout the years.

It has taken many years of action to get to where we are today, going back as far as 2010 when the Yukon Aboriginal Women's Circle, with support from the Government of Yukon, launched the Yukon's Sisters in Spirit project. In February 2015, a Yukon delegation consisting of the Yukon's Premier, government officials, First Nation chiefs, and aboriginal women's organizations attended the First Nation Roundtable on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls in Ottawa. At the time, the Yukon delegation reaffirmed its commitment to preventing violence against aboriginal women and girls and committed to a second national roundtable in 2016.

I would like to give out thanks to the Yukon advisory committee, past and present members, and, as well, the many community partners and organizations that have played a role in the creation of this strategy.

There is still much work to be done. With the 231 individual calls for justice within the final report, this will be no small feat. It is now in the hands of government, organizations, institutions, and — yes — all Canadians to see those calls through and to ensure that the hard work done throughout the inquiry sees action and merit.

Today's ceremony brought together leaders from all levels of government and many community organizations, each of whom pledged to contribute to the vision set out in the strategy and to be accountable to all for the implementation of this strategy. Yukon Party Leader Currie Dixon was honoured to be invited and participated this morning as well.

It was a historic and moving ceremony and another important step forward, as leaders from all levels of government have come together with a commitment to end violence against indigenous women, girls, and two-spirited people.

I look forward to the good work to come — the implementation plan that will be responding to the Yukon's strategy, all interim reports, and, of course, the final report.

Ms. White: It was an honour to participate in such a meaningful ceremony honouring the families, friends, and the communities of many missing and murdered aboriginal women, girls, and two-spirit people. The work accomplished by the advisory committee is tremendous and, given support from all levels of government, it has the ability to shape Yukon's future. The work gives me hope that, from the most tragic events that have tainted our history, our country, and our territory, change will come.

Today, I join leaders from across the territory in commitment and celebration of the completion of Yukon's Strategy on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls and Two-spirit+ People. It's so beautifully and aptly named *Changing the Story to Upholding Dignity and Justice*.

To echo my commitment this morning: On behalf of the New Democratic Party, together and as an individual, I'm committed to do my part to take action for the implementation of *Changing the Story to Upholding Dignity and Justice: Yukon's Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls and Two-spirit+ People Strategy* and initiatives that contribute to the vision set out in the strategy. I commit to end violence — including all forms of race- and gender-based violence — and to uphold dignity and justice for indigenous women, girls, and two-spirit-plus people in Yukon. I commit to be accountable to families, survivors, other partners, contributors, and Yukoners for implementation of this strategy. I thank all those who participated over the years and look forward to playing my part as we move forward.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Thank you to my colleagues across the way for your words and for your participation today in this very important and historic day for Yukon.

I thank the member opposite for the recap in terms of the Yukon advisory committee. I worked alongside the minister at the time — Minister Elaine Taylor — and was a technical person. I supported the work that was happening at that time and I recognized that leadership during the consultation. I really wanted to just say that here today: that a lot of people have blazed this trail for all of us, as well as many elders and many family members.

The work has gone on for decades. As Ann Maje Raider talked about her sister today — that's 50 years ago when her sister was murdered. It has been a long journey. So, this is truly a historic day and a remarkable one. Yukon is the first jurisdiction in the country to release a comprehensive response to the national inquiry. We have charted a course that other provinces and territories are watching across the country. Yukon is, once again, a leader and trailblazer on a national stage.

Our colleagues across the country are looking to us. Our ability to come together as representatives of all levels of government alongside indigenous women's organizations, family members, and elders to create a coordinated approach is the envy of the nation.

The national action plan on MMIWG2S+ will be informed by our journey in the Yukon. As Minister Bennett said today,

the national gender-based violence strategy will also be informed by Yukon's approach.

I want to share with the Assembly that getting to this point has been hard work, but it has also been heart work. We have led this work with our hearts. It has been painful at times. This has all been part of the journey to get here, but the heartache was necessary, and we recognize that. I wish that we could have held a huge celebration today to mark this event. I wish that all family members could have been in the room with us this morning. I wish that we could have invited our elders and many strong indigenous leaders who paved the way for us. I wish that we could have shared food, tears, laughter, and hugs together. But I am so grateful for the technology that allowed us to connect with each other, even if we could not come together physically. I thank the staff of the Women's Directorate once again and Gúnta Business Consulting again for all of their effort and everything that they did to ensure that we had a successful event. Thank you to those partners, contributors, and family members who joined us virtually. I know that people were watching from all corners of the territory and across the nation.

I hope you feel as proud as I do of the strategy. As leaders, we will keep working together to uphold justice and dignity in our communities. Today really showed Yukon unity and the spirit of our amazing territory.

Speaker: This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: COVID-19 pandemic contact tracing

Mr. Hassard: This week, the government started requiring bars and restaurants to log and store the contact information of customers. Earlier this week, we asked the government if they had consulted with the Information and Privacy Commissioner about the planning or implementation of this policy.

The Liberals stumbled over the answer and didn't even know who was responsible to answer, as three separate ministers got up to deliver three different responses — but the Minister of Health and Social Services did eventually admit that the government did not consult the Privacy Commissioner about this policy.

Can the minister explain why the government did not consult the Privacy Commissioner about the collection of personal information?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: My recollection of the response to that question earlier this week was that the work had been led by the chief medical officer of health. I recall that we were going to speak with the chief medical officer of health and find out what work had been done around privacy.

I heard the Minister of Health and Social Services also explain that the privacy issue was around the businesses and how they were retaining it. This was not information that was going to be held by government. I am happy to again say that we will get back to the member opposite by conferring with the chief medical officer of health.

What is important to note here is that businesses have been working with us around this. They agree that this is a good

approach to keeping their staff and clientele safe. It's just a way of making sure that we can follow up with people if there has been some potential risk or exposure. So, it is a good thing that everyone is doing and I'm sure that most of the public are very appreciative of having this safety net in place.

Mr. Hassard: If you go to a bar or a restaurant right now, everyone is doing this differently. There are sign-up sheets at the front in some places where the public can see everyone who has been there and when. Other places have more of a raffle box system. Staff and businesses have been given no guidance by the government on how to store this private information or keep it safely.

The minister has said that they did not consult with the Privacy Commissioner because the government isn't collecting the information and that it is just businesses doing it, so it's not their problem. We have heard that again today, Mr. Speaker. But the reason that businesses are doing this is because they are being instructed to by the government, so the government is responsible for this. The government had no clue about what was going on earlier this week, so hopefully we can get a better answer today.

Will the government commit now to consult with the Privacy Commissioner?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: The beginning of that question was that there was no conversation with the private sector, but I know that the president of the Yukon Liquor Corporation had calls with licensed establishments to go over it. I am aware that there were other conversations with non-licensed establishments — so there has been work with the private sector. So, I am not sure where this is breaking down for the members opposite.

If they know of people who haven't heard, please let me know. I will be sure to pass those business names across so that we can make sure that there is information getting out to everybody. I am happy to continue to work to make sure that this is as smooth a transition as possible as we all work together, as a territory, to keep the public safe.

Mr. Hassard: Unfortunately, we haven't heard the government commit to consulting with the Privacy Commissioner yet. Earlier this week, we asked: What happens if an individual refuses to provide information? What is the responsibility of the bar or restaurant? Are they required to deny service? Not only did the government not know the answer to this when we asked, the minister was so confused and bewildered that he started talking about access-to-information legislation. So, it has become quite the trend that this Liberal Cabinet doesn't know the answers to basic questions about issues that they are responsible for.

We are just hoping that we can get a simple answer to our question now. What is the responsibility of a bar or a restaurant if a patron refuses to provide this contact information? Are they required to deny service?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: In all things, as we introduce new measures here in the territory, our first role has always been around education; it has not been enforcement. That has not been the way in which we have rolled out any of these programs — whether they are masks or whether they are rules around the

borders or rules for isolation. I have said that we have a complaint-driven process, and I have said that, after 1,000 or so complaints, approximately 85 percent of those were dealt with just by informing the people who were bringing the issue forward. About 15 percent, or maybe 13 percent, were dealt with by educating the person who was making the mistake, and about two percent were dealt with by tickets.

So, enforcement isn't our first rule. The experience that I have had, in speaking with the enforcement officers — in almost all cases, just a simple conversation deals with it. I am happy to get the specific details, but I think — it underlies — that the approach here is not about a heavy hand; it is working with Yukoners to help keep them safe. In my experience, almost all Yukoners are supportive of that, including the business sector.

Question re: School busing

Mr. Kent: Yesterday, we raised the issue that the three new school buses are in town and ready to go. They are just waiting for the Department of Education to provide the schedule to the company. In response, the minister appeared to not be up to speed and gave a non-answer. That part wasn't shocking for us. What was shocking, however, was that the minister seemed unaware that these buses have been ready to go for some time and that the holdup was her responsibility.

Can the minister tell us how long the buses have been ready to go and how long they have sat idle because she has not provided the necessary information to the contractor?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I am not really sure where to start. I will just go with the idea that the member opposite is asking about school buses and that Yukoners are concerned about the fact that there are some students who are not eligible to ride the bus and have not yet been assigned to buses — that it is generally a practice that occurs over a period of time in the fall of the year while bus routes are finalized and while student numbers are finalized — and those who want to ride the bus. We have heard the concerns from the families.

We are working to deploy the three additional buses that have been here since about the middle of November and to optimize the existing routes in ways that allow us to not only accommodate some of the students who have not yet been assigned to buses in particular corridors or on particular routes — those additional buses will help with that — but also to amend some of the other routes' stop times or small changes so that we can accommodate as many students as possible on the school buses.

Mr. Kent: The minister just admitted that these buses have been ready to go since the middle of November and here we are — almost in the middle of December, one month later. As often happens with the Liberals, their commitments don't line up with what actually happens. Not only was the minister not aware of what was going on with these buses, the Premier, in his media scrum yesterday, was also completely uninformed on these issues as well. He actually said that he would brief the minister based on information he got from the media.

Mr. Speaker, the Liberals seem to be indifferent to the challenges that so many families are facing and don't seem to be following up on what is going on in their departments.

Can the minister at least tell us how much has been spent on these buses, and if the resources came from the \$4.1 million that Canada provided for school reopening?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Again, I will overlook the insults to give the information appropriately to Yukoners.

The work has been ongoing. Let me just clarify: The buses were here in the middle of November, but they needed to be properly outfitted and properly inspected to be ready to go.

As the member opposite knows and perhaps Yukoners know, Standard Bus is the service provider for school busing here in the territory — throughout the territory — and they have been doing an exemplary job under very, very difficult circumstances. They had a number of drivers who were unable to return to work. New drivers needed to be hired and trained. The driver situation, we hope, is settling down now.

We have reviewed existing routes and remaining requests from parents of non-eligible students and are working to have those three buses respond to that situation, as well as to some additional situations for families who are wanting buses.

The purchase of the three buses cost approximately \$300,000. That does not include the operations or the driver costs.

Mr. Kent: So, throughout this Sitting, it has become abundantly clear that this Liberal Cabinet is inattentive to what is going on in their departments. They are unable to answer questions that they should know the answers to. They frequently give inaccurate information and inaccurate timelines. When they get caught, they pass the buck or blame others.

As I've pointed out, on November 10, the minister told Yukoners that these school buses had arrived and that they would be ready in two weeks. We found out yesterday that the buses are ready to go, but the government is the holdup.

The buses were actually ordered in August, so why wasn't the route and schedule work done in September and October so that these buses could be on the road now?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I think the member opposite might have been a former Minister of Education and perhaps he has forgotten that school bus registration happens throughout the summer months — usually to end in June. This year, it didn't end until August, officially. We still had many families either registering or de-registering for the bus as late as October and early November of this year. We are responding to a very complex situation in order to have students who are not eligible under the law to ride school buses, but yet we would like to respond to that situation and assist those families.

I can indicate that 1,907 students who are eligible to ride school buses here in the territory are all assigned and riding school buses as permitted. The additional students who are technically not eligible will be accommodated as soon as we are able.

Question re: Hemodialysis services in Yukon

Ms. White: On Tuesday, I asked the Minister of Health and Social Services about the lack of access to hemodialysis here in Yukon. A year ago, my friend Terry was forced to choose between spending the rest of his life in Vancouver away from his family, friends, and community or coming home to die surrounded by loved ones. Had he lived in the Northwest Territories, he could have accessed those services in or near his home community. In her response, the minister said — and I quote: “We certainly don’t want to focus on acute care.”

Well, no one is disputing that prevention is key, but it’s no excuse to force Yukoners to leave their loved ones to access life-saving care Outside. Can the government explain why they have not taken any meaningful steps over the last year to bring in-centre hemodialysis to the Yukon?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I appreciate the question. Our government is proud of the work that we are doing to ensure that Yukoners live happier, healthier lives. It is incredibly important that our health care system respond to the needs of Yukoners. We have seen the work done by the *Putting People First* report and the future of health care in the Yukon by way of accepting those recommendations and moving forward together as Yukoners to provide better care for all of our Yukon citizens.

It’s very important as well that Yukoners have access to the care that they need and that, when possible, that care is offered here at home. It is a commitment being made by this government going forward and the opportunity to respond to Yukoners’ needs here at home is a priority.

Ms. White: I would hate to see what would happen if it wasn’t a priority.

We know that, when my friend was in Vancouver for hemodialysis, his costs were also covered by this government. His family shared with me that, in just over five months, this government paid over \$450,000 for his care Outside. This included the hemodialysis he received and coverage for the facility he was staying in.

On Tuesday, the minister said that there are now seven patients who require dialysis who are treated in BC. So, beyond the human cost of not offering hemodialysis through the Hospital Corporation, there is a significant financial cost. Has the government made an analysis of the cost — both human and financial — of keeping individuals away from their families, friends, and communities rather than finally bringing hemodialysis to Yukon?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I think that’s an important question. I don’t want to provide the numbers — because I simply don’t have them today — on whether or not that analysis has been done and what the cost amounts are determined to be. I’m happy to seek that information from the department and provide it to the member opposite.

Ms. White: I look forward to that information.

Prevention is important, but unfortunately, prevention does not mean the end of kidney disease or even a cure. Illnesses, diabetes, high blood pressure, and even amputations are just a few pretty common contributors to kidney disease. More

patients, families, and communities will continue to suffer from this lack of service.

The Yukon government made a decision to bring the first MRI north of 60. The Northwest Territories government made a decision to offer hemodialysis in not one but two communities. This government hides behind the BC Renal Agency, but it’s their job to do what’s best for Yukoners.

Why won’t the government make it a priority to bring in-centre hemodialysis to Yukon, and can they at least acknowledge that it’s a decision that they have the power to make?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: We are focused as a government on creating a health care system that will meet the needs of Yukon — as I noted earlier — for years to come. There are many ways in which this is occurring, not the least of which is a plan going forward with *Putting People First* and the partnerships and cooperation that will take place in implementing those stages of that plan.

We are committed to ensuring that Yukoners who safely qualify for dialysis have every opportunity to receive that treatment in the comfort of their own home. We know how important that is.

Earlier this year, our government signed a letter of intent with the BC Renal Agency that will maximize opportunities for Yukoners to receive home hemodialysis here in the territory. This partnership will focus on early intervention and support of independent dialysis options.

Question re: Government of Yukon auxiliary-on-call employees

Ms. Hanson: Auxiliary-on-call workers make up a large number of the front-line workers who provide care and support to our most vulnerable. These dedicated staff are employed in our continuing care facilities, at the emergency shelter, Housing First residences, group homes, in-home care, and in our family support and day programs.

We know that auxiliaries on call — or AOCs — make up the majority of front-line workers in most of these workplaces. This government as a whole — but Health and Social Services in particular — has chosen to staff AOCs to work in essential front-line positions that require full-time staffing but provide no guarantee of hours to workers.

I will start with a question that, given our persistence in asking, we hope the minister can now answer. Will the minister tell this House how many auxiliary-on-call workers are employed by Health and Social Services?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Auxiliary-on-call employees are an important and valued segment of our Yukon government workforce — that goes without saying. They are integral to us being able to staff important positions throughout government. They help us to fulfill our public service obligations when departments determine that there is not operational justification for an indeterminate or term position to be hired. They are called into work as and when required to replace other employees who are sick or on other leave and to provide coverage for peak periods and special projects.

The use of auxiliary-on-call employees will vary by department and depends on both the size of the department and the makeup of its programs and services. For example, the Department of Health and Social Services relies on auxiliary-on-call employees to deliver critical health services to the public, to provide for people living in care, and to protect those who are vulnerable at all times. I do not, at this moment, have the exact number of auxiliary-on-call employees who we have working within Health and Social Services at this particular moment; it changes from week to week and month to month. But I will endeavour to get a number for the member opposite.

Ms. Hanson: Kind of ironic — so important that we fill full-time positions with auxiliary-on-call staff. Auxiliary-on-call workers are paid an extra \$2 an hour to cover all the benefits provided to permanent employees. These include sick leave, vacation special leave, and extended benefits for the employee and their family members, like dental and drug. In the pandemic planning document that I tabled earlier, AOCs are told that they don't have access to sick leave because they are already compensated. This goes for any leave an AOC may need if they are sick or if they need to care for family members or dependents. During this pandemic, auxiliary-on-call employees are left with no option but to take unpaid leave.

Mr. Speaker, given the extraordinary circumstances of a global pandemic, does the minister think that the \$2-an-hour compensation for these essential front-line workers is adequate? If the work that they do is essential, why would they not be offered permanent positions?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Again, I will say that the use of auxiliary-on-call employees will vary by department. It depends on the size of the department and what roles they want them to play. People work as auxiliary-on-call employees for a variety of reasons. Some choose it as a lifestyle choice because it affords employment flexibility and variety, while for others who prefer full-time employment, the work can be a stepping stone to a full-time job.

Auxiliary-on-call employees are members of the Yukon Employees' Union and their terms and conditions of employment are covered in that collective agreement. The Public Service Commission monitors the use of auxiliary-on-call employees across the Yukon government and maintains an ongoing dialogue with the Yukon Employees' Union on their appropriate use.

Ms. Hanson: I would suggest that the Minister of the Public Service Commission actually talk to some of those full-time two-year auxiliary-on-call employees and ask them if they would choose that.

In the same pandemic planning document, managers are told that they can ask an employee on sick leave for a doctor's note if they are not satisfied that an employee — whether permanent or auxiliary on call — is sick. This directly goes against the advice of the chief medical officer.

The same document covers wearing masks in the workplace. It informs managers that, no, employees will not be provided masks or gloves based on the April 6 advice of the chief medical officer of health. This document was released on October 27 — 44 days ago. As of 11:00 a.m., that link was still

valid. A lot has changed since then, Mr. Speaker, including mandatory mask-wearing in public spaces and, where appropriate, in workplaces.

When will managers and employees see an updated pandemic planning document posted that reflects the current direction from the chief medical officer of health?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I can say to the member opposite that, throughout the pandemic, the Public Service Commission's work has been guided by the need to protect the health of public servants while maintaining the capacity to deliver services that Yukoners rely on.

We've been fortunate in the Yukon that public services continue to deliver most of the services that Yukoners depend on, even if we've had to shift our approach and implement new and even innovative ways of doing things here in the government.

Now, the member opposite has been talking about how we actually deal with employee leave through COVID-19 or even coordinate the way that people work in the civil service. I can say that, throughout the pandemic, we have worked very, very closely to make sure that we safeguard our public servants and the way that they work, and our public. That has been top of mind throughout our pandemic response.

At the very beginning of this pandemic, we had almost 50 percent of the workforce working from home. Just last week, I issued a letter to deputies encouraging them to look — on the heels of the chief medical officer of health's recommendation to work from home — at getting employees home with a lens toward public safety. That will remain our focus, Mr. Speaker.

Question re: COVID-19 testing for children

Ms. McLeod: Yesterday, we asked the Minister of Health and Social Services if the government had received the COVID-19 gargle tests for children in the territory yet. As is often the case with the Liberals, they were unable to answer this simple question about what the government is doing.

I know that the Liberals think that it is just the Yukon Party asking these questions, but they should know that, in fact, it's being asked by many parents and families.

Can the minister just tell us: Are these kid-friendly tests in the territory yet — yes or no?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Since British Columbia concluded their trial and put the mouth-rinse and gargle test into regular use in late September, the Department of Health and Social Services and the chief medical officer of health here in the territory have been reviewing the policy and the evidence around implementing the mouth-rinse and gargle test in the territory. As a result of this review, the Government of Yukon has moved forward with this testing option on a trial basis. The trial in Yukon is being done in consultation with the BC Centre for Disease Control. Implementation is based on the program in British Columbia. We are leveraging their expertise and experience with this type of testing.

Once the testing trial is completed, we will explore options for further rollout, which we anticipate may occur in mid-January 2021 — in a few weeks. This is a less invasive, simpler collection process than the gold standard nasal swab test, but

samples collected in the Yukon will still require processing through the BC Centre for Disease Control. This is a welcome option — hopefully in the near future.

Question re: 1Health computer system

Mr. Cathers: In the spring of 2017, the Official Opposition began pushing for the replacement of the 30-year-old Meditech system used by our hospitals. After two and a half years of pressuring by us, this Liberal government finally looked like they were going to do something. On October 11 last year, the minister touted the rollout of a replacement Meditech computer platform branded “1Health”. The government indicated that the first portion of the system would be live by November 2020. It is December 2020, and we are hearing that the rollout hasn’t even started yet.

Can the minister please update Yukoners on where we are regarding the installation of the 1Health computer system in Yukon health care facilities?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: The upgrading of our systems throughout government has been a priority of our government. We know that the previous government cancelled the Meditech upgrades. We actually resurrected that project because we realized how important it was to Yukoners. I, myself, am befuddled as to why this upgrade has taken so long and why the previous government took the decision to nix this very important upgrade to our health services in the territory. Certainly, that is not the direction that we like to take, so we have undertaken to fund and actually upgrade this system, which will greatly enhance the amount of information that our doctors, nurses, and medical professionals have in dealing with their patients. It will also greatly improve patient care.

Now, I know that Highways and Public Works has transferred money to Health and Social Services to execute that program. We did that this year. I will certainly endeavour to get a response to the member opposite as to where that program upgrade is at the current time.

Mr. Cathers: The Minister of Highways and Public Works is famous for his spin attempts, but as he knows very well, it took two and a half years of pressure by us before this Liberal government agreed to proceed with the replacement. You can simply check Hansard.

This is another case of the announcement last year — the Liberals are pretty good at press conferences and not so good at actually getting things done. The press conference on October 11, 2019, was complete with stand-up banners and special t-shirts featuring the 1Health logo. Included was a press release saying that \$7.2 million would be provided to the hospital for the new system.

While we appreciate that the pandemic has delayed everyday life, this is one item that should have been prioritized to support health care. This new system is now even more vital in this new age of working from home, with more emphasis on systems such as telehealth and remote health care for communities.

Can the minister tell us if the delay in the rollout has increased the cost of the project?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I would like to check Hansard too, Mr. Speaker. I would like to go back to 2015, 2014, and 2013, look at the Hansard discussions there, and see the lack of progress that Yukoners were subjected to under the previous government.

I can tell the Speaker this afternoon that this government is working very hard to upgrade systems inside this government that have been neglected for years and years — systems with critical information for Yukoners that have Pong-era servers that had to be upgraded because of the neglect of the previous government and their inability to see the importance of data and actually managing this government in a 21st century environment.

We have taken the tough decisions. We are upgrading our systems. We have the Meditech upgrades underway, something that was neglected in the past, but we are taking that hard work and digging ourselves out of a very big hole, and we’re proud to do it. We know that this is what Yukoners want, and we are going to continue that good work throughout the term of our mandate which, right now, has another year left.

Mr. Cathers: Despite the Minister of Highways and Public Works’ infamous, desperate spin attempts, he knows very well that I began pushing on behalf of our caucus for the replacement of the Meditech system in early 2017, and the Liberal government dismissed it for years before finally listening to the request about the importance of implementing this new upgraded computer system.

When you implement a new computer system, it takes training and time to bring employees and others who will use it up to speed. I want to emphasize that we support the upgrade to the 1Health platform.

We’re glad to see that the government has finally listened, but we also recognize that doctors, nurses, and other health care workers need time to learn about a new modernized computer platform that meets the needs of our health care system.

So, with the government not even into the first phase of this rollout, instead of the minister’s desperate spin attempts and rhetoric, will he actually tell us how health care providers and those who work in rural facilities will be trained and what the timeline is for the rollout of this important system?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: You know, Mr. Speaker, I will tell this House this afternoon exactly why the Member for Lake Laberge stood up in 2017 and asked us about the status of the Meditech program. He asked us that question, Mr. Speaker, because he knew that it had been ignored by his government in the past.

I know, Mr. Speaker, because when I was going out in the neighbourhood and talking to people in my constituency, I had health care workers coming to me and saying, “Will you please bring the Meditech system into place? This has been long ignored. We need this going.” I logged it. It was one of the first conversations that I had with the Department of Highways and Public Works when I got into office and into this portfolio, because Yukoners needed it. Yukoners were pleading for it and, Mr. Speaker, do you know why? Because it had been so long ignored. The members opposite know this. That’s why they are asking the question — because when they came into office, the

only things that they could ask about were the things that they couldn't deliver on and they started to put it on our shoulders. Well, Mr. Speaker, we're shouldering that load and we're going to do the hard work that Yukoners have asked us to do and that was so long ignored at the hands of the party on the opposite side — the conservative Yukon Party.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

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

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

Motion agreed to

Speaker leaves the Chair

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

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

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

Chair: Mr. Kent, on a point of order.

Mr. Kent: We have had discussions with our colleagues in the Third Party and we will be submitting our Justice questions in writing. Just for the minister — she won't require Justice officials during that portion. We will require Health officials be present relatively quickly, as we do not have any general debate or questions. We will obviously pass the questions on once the Committee reconvenes — or if the minister is amenable, we could pass through Committee now with the proper motion. I will leave it to the Chair and Clerks to discuss the proper order.

Chair's ruling

Chair: Committee of the Whole will recess for five minutes while we have a discussion.

Recess

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

The matter before the Committee is general debate on Vote 8, Department of Justice, in Bill No. 205, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Some Hon. Members: Disagreed.

Deputy Chair: Unanimous consent has not been granted.

The matter before the Committee is general debate on Vote 8, Department of Justice, in Bill No. 205, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21*.

Is there any general debate?

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

Deputy Chair: Ms. McPhee, on a point of order.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Deputy Chair, I am going to seek a brief recess so that I might have the officials come in and join me. I think that it is a bit unorthodox not to do so. I understand that generally to be the practice. I appreciate that the members opposite disagreed, but I am seeking that adjournment perhaps for 10 to 15 minutes, please.

Deputy Chair: Mr. Cathers, on the point of order.

Mr. Cathers: I don't believe that is actually a point of order. It is the practice with recesses in this House that, if there is not unanimous consent, there isn't a recess. We are prepared to move into the Department of Health and Social Services, since it is a priority — especially in a pandemic — and as indicated earlier, we will be submitting our questions about Justice in writing, so the minister really does not need officials here.

Deputy Chair's ruling

Deputy Chair: I am going to take this under advisement and I will get back to the Committee with a ruling on that, but I think that it would be appropriate, if the minister requires a recess even to get into her general debate, that five minutes would be appropriate to bring in the officials.

So, we will take a break for five minutes.

Recess

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

Bill No. 205: *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21* — continued

Deputy Chair: The matter before the Committee is general debate on Vote 8, Department of Justice, in Bill No. 205, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21*.

Is there any general debate?

Department of Justice

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Chair. If I may have a moment while I welcome the officials to have a seat here with us this afternoon.

I welcome Deputy Minister John Phelps and Director of Finance for the Department of Justice, Luda Ayzenberg — I welcome them to join us here this afternoon. Thank you very much for coming.

I understand the submission — prior to break this afternoon — from the Official Opposition to be that they would be submitting some questions with respect to the Justice supplementary budget in writing. I am happy to receive them in that way and respond. I note that in the general debate here in Committee of the Whole, they won't be asking questions, but

that is open to them. I did not understand — or maybe I didn't hear — what the intention of the Third Party was.

That being said, as part of general debate, I will make some comments with respect to the supplementary budget on behalf of the Department of Justice that will, I hope, explain a number of things and perhaps either alleviate further questions or prompt some to come forward. As a result, I will take the time to do that now and thank the officials from the department for joining me for that purpose today.

Mr. Deputy Chair, I rise to present the Department of Justice supplementary budget for the 2020-21 fiscal year. I will take some time this afternoon to highlight the department's supplementary operation and maintenance expenditures and supplementary capital expenditures for the past eight months. Throughout this fiscal year, the department has continued to work diligently toward a justice system that is responsive to the needs of all Yukoners in a fiscally responsible manner, all while responding to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. This is a story that will be heard over and over again — presumably, it has been heard already in some of the debate with respect to other departments that are up in this supplementary budget — but plans for 2020-21 have certainly gone astray in some circumstances with respect to the requirements to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Through the strategic investments in our future, we continue to build healthy, vibrant, safe, and sustainable Yukon communities, Mr. Deputy Chair. It is critical that this is a priority and, in fact, all of the work of our government was focused on doing so prior to the pandemic and it has certainly been focused on that work during the pandemic because of the safety and health of Yukoners. The supplementary budget that I present today enables the Department of Justice to continue to offer programming and supportive initiatives that meet the needs of Yukoners and Yukon citizens.

First, I will outline the variances that are seen in our operation and maintenance expenditures because I think that will be helpful to those looking at the supplementary budget and also, as I've said, perhaps address some of the questions that might be coming from the opposition or from the Third Party or be of interest — more importantly — to Yukoners if they have reviewed these documents.

Specifically, I will be discussing the expenditures for the following programs, initiatives, and branches: the independent legal advice pilot project or program; the family information liaison unit; the First Nation policing program; the RCMP mobile radio system; Court Services; and Legal Services — all important initiatives of the Department of Justice. Additionally, I will outline the expenditures that are before us in relation to the COVID-19 response.

I would first like to turn attention to the newly launched independent legal advice pilot program. This program is known as "ILA" and provides independent legal advice for victims of intimate partner violence and sexualized violence. This is an incredibly important opportunity for Yukoners to have a service that was not readily available prior to this program. Victims of all genders and ages can access independent lawyers to assist

in making informed choices, such as when a victim is deciding whether or not to report an incident.

The independent legal advice program aims to make the legal system more accessible to victims and is another step toward improving services for victims of violence here in the territory. There have been a number of initiatives aimed at doing just that — providing additional kinds of services, listening to Yukoners, listening to victims of crime, and listening to those folks who work with them — having heard what kinds of services, where the gaps are, and how we can improve.

The Department of Justice is pleased to have earmarked funds for a one-time transfer of \$140,000 to fund contracts for legal advice services from specially trained lawyers. There is no impact on the overall budget of the program. I can indicate that the services that are provided to these victims — to Yukoners who need this assistance of the independent legal advice pilot program — are absolutely free to them.

Next, I would like to revisit the family information liaison unit, another catchy acronym known as "FILU", to discuss funding increases that we will be allocating to this unit as part of this supplementary budget.

The Government of Yukon is committed to supporting the important work and mandate of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls and two-spirit individuals.

We've heard a number of comments today and important information about the MMIWG2S+ strategy that has been introduced here and signed and committed to publicly — a community declaration, if you will, today here in the territory on Human Rights Day and the importance of us moving forward with respect to the implementation of that strategy — that strategy being the first of its kind in Canada and being one that is looked to by other provinces and territories, and in fact the federal government, for the purposes of seeing how we've done that work as a community and seeing how it is not a strategy that is the responsibility of the Yukon government. It is, in fact, a strategy that is bought into, signed, and declared to be committed to by the community. That will, we know, make it successful.

The government is committed to supporting that important work, and going forward, the Department of Justice plays a key role in providing that support — as do other government departments, but clearly here today I'm speaking about our commitment as the Department of Justice.

We know that many families of victims will have questions regarding their loved one's cases and that helping them access information and support is an important step in their journey toward healing.

FILU provides centralized, coordinated supports for families of murdered and missing indigenous women and girls and two-spirit individuals to help them access information related to their loved one's case. I can hardly think of a program or project that is more poignant today, on Human Rights Day, or more poignant today as we introduce the strategy to the territory for MMIWG2S+ — and an important role for the

Department of Justice to play with the family information liaison unit for that purpose.

Members of the Assembly will recall that FILU has received funding from the Government of Canada since 2016. The Government of Yukon has received a three-year extension from the Government of Canada to continue this important work. Therefore, FILU is now allotted \$285,000 in this budget, 100 percent of which is recoverable from the Government of Canada.

Turning to policing matters, this budget includes an ongoing increase of \$226,000 to fund the mobile radio system for Yukon RCMP. The RCMP's use of the mobile radio system, of course, is essential for public and police officer safety. Access to this system contributes to integrated communications between territorial emergency dispatch — commonly known as "911" — and allied emergency responders and members of the public. This is a non-discretionary operational requirement, and the costs are determined by the service provider. Additionally, an ongoing transfer of \$50,000 has been earmarked for the First Nations policing program in order to support community consultative groups.

Community tripartite agreements will now govern administration of the new First Nations policing program in 11 Yukon First Nation governments, replacing the older First Nations community policing service agreements under Public Safety Canada's existing framework agreement. These First Nation governments are Champagne and Aishihik First Nations, Carcross/Tagish First Nation, Kwanlin Dün First Nation, Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation, First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun, Ross River Dena Council, Selkirk First Nation, Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in, Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation, and White River First Nation.

The move to community tripartite agreements is intended to increase transparency and to encourage meaningful partnerships between First Nation governments and the RCMP. Examples of these measures include: establishing community consultative groups to guide and inform ongoing work — a very critical opportunity for communities to be involved and for RCMP to work closely with communities and inform the ongoing work. It includes drafting letters of expectation in partnership with the RCMP to set out specific community priorities — again, opportunities for communities and the RCMP to communicate with one another and to have clear expectations set out for their relationships and how they will work together to the benefit of Yukoners.

It will include establishing regular reporting practices among partners. Mr. Deputy Chair, this is all extremely important work in the evolution and improvement of services for Yukon to Yukon by RCMP in communities.

The ongoing funding transfer will enable the Public Safety and Investigations branch to provide funding to each community consultative group to offset any additional cost to the community associated with establishing and monitoring letters of expectation — not only good work going forward, but the ability to assist in the capacity of those First Nations to do that work to the benefit of their communities — particularly around letters of expectation. There is no impact on the overall

budget of the Department of Justice for this work. I am proud to say that so much of this work in the Department of Justice is so ably managed by the officials there with the opportunity for working closely with Canada to the benefit of Yukoners. The financial management in the department is absolutely stellar.

Next, I would like to turn to the Justice Enterprise Information Network. This is known to some folks as "JEIN" — although I am always not sure about that because it is spelled "J-E-I-N" — but that is with Court Services. That's just my little acronym question mark. Known as "JEIN" — and pronounced as "JEN" quite regularly, the Justice Enterprise Information Network — it is a software database system for storage and retrieval of court records. I am sure that all members and Yukoners would understand the importance and critical work done by the JEIN system.

This system, as members may recall, replaced an outmoded computer system from the 1980s and creates a more efficient Yukon court system by allowing for faster court document production and improved case tracking and greater data capacity. Unfortunately, my days of appearing in court every day or every week predate the implementation of the JEIN system, so many a day, we waited for handwritten documents to come out of the court registry so that individuals could be on their way — but I have certainly seen how the JEIN system works and the benefit it has not only for the folks who work in the system but, more particularly, for Yukoners who find themselves in a court process.

We are pleased to say that an ongoing transfer of \$167,000 within Court Services has been earmarked to fund a business analyst position to support this system and for a JEIN support contract. The transfer utilizes lapsing funds from court reporting and will not have any impact on the overall budget.

Additionally, an ongoing transfer of \$96,000 has been allocated to fund a trial coordinator position within Court Services for the Supreme and Territorial Courts. The transfer only reallocates funds within the Court Services branch and will not have an impact on the overall budget.

Turning to the Legal Services branch, an ongoing transfer of \$258,000 has been allocated to restructure the solicitors group. There is no impact on the branch's overall budget.

The last budget increase for the operation and maintenance expenditures that is noted in this supplementary budget pertains to the Government of Yukon response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Department of Justice is working with all government departments to protect the health and safety of our staff, clients, and the public. A number of our workers were deployed to other work units to assist with emergency planning, response activities, and enforcement measures. While the majority of workers have continued with their regular assignments, it is through their efforts and the cooperation of Yukoners that we have been able to limit the spread of COVID-19 within the territory. We recognize that there have been service disruptions due to COVID-19 and the department has remained committed to ensuring the delivery of essential services throughout Yukon. We have allocated \$768,000, representing \$485,000 as required for enforcement under the *Civil Emergency Measures Act*.

I appreciate the opportunity to provide this information to the Legislative Assembly, and I'm open to questions, either with respect to some of the comments I have made or the supplementary budget.

Ms. Hanson: I believe that my colleagues from the Official Opposition had indicated that, in light of the few remaining hours of actual time to debate the budget and given the substantive issues and amounts of money that are contained in the supplementary budget for both Health and Social Services and Education, it's our intention — our intention as the Yukon NDP — to follow up with the minister with either a request for a legislative return or a letter — whichever is the most effective means — because I'm mindful that we did not, during the Spring Sitting, debate the Justice budget at all and we do have a number of substantive issues and questions with respect to the 2020-21 budget that we would not get through in the limited time that's available to us today.

It's with that in mind that we'll be looking to clear Vote 8 and move on to Health and Social Services, as I understand was discussed at the House Leaders' meeting this morning.

Mr. Gallina: I'm going to take an opportunity to ask questions of my colleague here in Committee of the Whole as a private member.

The minister spoke to community safety initiatives in her opening statements. We know that the Government of Yukon continues to support safer and stronger communities across the territory by working with Public Safety Canada and Yukon First Nation governments to develop community safety plans. The minister did speak about community safety plans, and I'm interested in having the minister speak about community safety initiatives.

Can she speak to the partnerships that are in place, dollars spent by this government to date, and the community safety planning that First Nation governments are undergoing?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: It is a broad topic, and I'm certainly able to provide some information to Yukoners about this. As a matter of fact — it's hard to remember the days of the week — on just Monday of this week — so some three or four days ago — the deputy minister and I had the opportunity, along with the Minister responsible for the Women's Directorate, to meet virtually with the Minister of Public Safety Canada, Mr. Bill Blair, for the purposes of discussing a number of topics, and this was high on the agenda.

We have continued to work closely with the Government of Canada, indicating that community safety planning processes have been very effective here in the territory. They have been undertaken by a number of First Nation governments and their communities for the purpose of determining public safety plans going forward. There is a federal program that has, in the past, been funded and supported by Public Safety Canada for the purpose of doing those community safety plans and assisting communities with how they want to move forward.

The success of community safety plans comes from the fact that they are grown, determined, drafted, and decided upon by communities, with help with other facilitation. Subsequent to that, there needs to be assistance in going forward with the implementation of those plans.

A good example — and it is a well-known example now across Canada — was the Kwanlin Dün First Nation, which availed itself of a community safety planning process and ultimately came up with a number of things to be implemented in their community to effect safety for their citizens. Perhaps most well known is the community safety officer pilot program that was developed by the Kwanlin Dün First Nation. It is wildly successful and has also been developed — not the same program, but one that suits their community — by the Selkirk First Nation, and those community safety officer programs are an element of the community safety planning process going forward.

I can also indicate that the Government of Yukon continues to support safer and stronger communities across the territory by working with Public Safety Canada — as I said, speaking to the minister a couple of days ago. Yukon First Nation governments are supportive and work to develop community safety plans for their communities.

That process supports indigenous communities to develop plans and initiatives specific to their unique circumstances and uses traditional knowledge and culture to make communities safer.

As I have noted, the two First Nation governments that have already completed a community safety plan under that federal program and facilitated by Public Safety Canada — the Kwanlin Dün First Nation did their own assessment and then moved forward with some work. There are other First Nations here in the territory that are interested in this process. We spoke with Minister Blair about continuing funding overall for that kind of program. We spoke in person and, most recently, for the purposes of having that available to all communities across the country. Yukon, being a leader, has been a successful partner with Public Safety Canada. The success of these programs and the need for them to continue in a meaningful way and be properly resourced is the message that we have delivered to Canada and is, in fact, the message that is being heard there.

I can also note that Minister Blair will be working with us, going forward, on a number of initiatives. They are excited by the work that is being done here in the north of Canada and particularly in the Yukon Territory and around policing initiatives and the innovation that the Yukon often brings to the table.

Mr. Gallina: I thank the minister for that response. Continuing on with community safety and community initiatives, I wanted to talk about the Yukon Police Council. We know that the Yukon Police Council is a citizen advisory council on policing in Yukon with a focus to promote ongoing dialogue and to foster a positive relationship between Yukon citizens, the Yukon RCMP M Division, and the Department of Justice. We know that the Police Council works to gain community perspective and provide recommendations to set policing priorities for the Yukon RCMP.

Can the minister talk to this House and Yukoners about the policing priorities that have been set as a result of these recommendations and speak to the resources that have been

dedicated to these priorities and the results that we are seeing in communities?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: The Yukon Police Council is unique in Canada. I spoke to Minister Blair about that a few days ago. I was very pleased to provide that information — not that he wasn't aware of it, but clearly, his plate is full. He is looking for work done across the country with respect to making policing better and improving citizens' responses and interactions with the police.

In 2021, policing priorities offer a foundation for effective policing here in the territory and continue to focus on addressing violence against women, responding to serious and organized crime, and fostering meaningful relationships with First Nation governments, communities, and youth.

The Yukon policing priorities are conveyed by the person who holds the Minister of Justice portfolio to the RCMP on an annual basis. That happens to be me at this time. The Yukon policing priorities come to me from the Yukon Police Council after they — as I have said, they are unique in Canada — interact with citizens, communities, community organizations, First Nations, and other governments across the territory to determine how the RCMP should respond and what those priorities should be. Yukon's policing priorities are informed by recommendations that come from the Yukon Police Council and are, again, the priorities of the Department of Justice. We both come together with our priorities from the department and those from the Yukon Police Council, and we convey those. Often, they are very similar to one another. Sometimes one or the other will have additional information or additional priority. I am happy to say that, in the years that I have been here in this privileged position, they have often dovetailed very nicely with what the department's positions or priorities are, as well as the communities'.

The Yukon Police Council is a citizen advisory council on policing in Yukon. Their focus is to promote ongoing dialogue in order to foster a positive relationship between Yukon citizens, the Yukon RCMP — also known as the M Division — and the Department of Justice. Each year, the Yukon Police Council works to gain community perspective and to provide recommendations so that I may set the policing priorities for the Yukon RCMP.

This year, the Police Council has launched a survey — this is a great opportunity to mention it — to seek input from Yukoners on their experiences with Yukon RCMP, partly because of COVID. The opportunity has been restricted for them to visit all communities or the ones where they would normally go in the course of a year to meet with individual Yukon citizens.

The survey, they hope, is going to reach out. I really encourage all Yukoners to participate in this important initiative and share their experiences, as it is only through opportunities — and I spoke about this yesterday in the Legislative Assembly on a different topic — but obtaining meaningful perspectives and meaningful experiences from Yukoners is the key way that we can make improvements going forward and the opportunity to do that.

I think part of the question also involved funding for Yukon policing priorities. The funding arrangement with the RCMP is generally base funding with additional funding for some particular programming. But there is no additional funding that is provided to them for the purposes of achieving the policing priorities. The policing priorities are an exchange of expectations, if you will, between the Department of Justice, the Yukon communities, the Police Council, and the RCMP. They make arrangements with their core funding in order to respond.

Mr. Gallina: I thank the minister for her response. I wanted to talk about the sexualized assault response team. I wanted to get some information on what has been completed as a result of the implementation of SART. We know that, in March 2020, the sexualized assault response team was implemented in Whitehorse with expanded and improved services available to victims of sexualized assault, including emotional, medical, and legal supports.

We know that components of SART include a 24-hour, confidential, toll-free, Yukon-wide support line for all victims of sexualized assaults. Victim support work is available for after-hours support on weekends and a roster of on-call physicians specifically trained to support victims of sexualized assault.

Could the minister please elaborate or speak to items that have been completed since the implementation of SART? Could she also speak to what next steps are for this program or the next phases?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I appreciate the question. The sexualized assault response team is something near and dear to my heart and a responsibility that I have personally taken very seriously — as well as my colleagues around the caucus table. In particular, I have worked closely with the Minister of Health and Social Services and the Minister responsible for the Women's Directorate for the purposes of rolling out and leading a sexualized assault response team for the purpose of providing services to Yukoners — particularly to women but certainly all individuals who become victims of sexualized assault.

The reason I say this is a personal matter to me is that, a very long time ago — some 40 years — I worked with a similar organization as a young post-secondary student for the purpose of providing a version of this kind of service to individuals who were in need of help. It was a profound opportunity to learn about the difficulties and to learn about the way in which our community can better respond. I have had other work opportunities throughout the years that have brought me to the conclusion that this was a service that we needed to pursue here in the territory. Colleagues have also had the same idea, and we pursued this together.

We were proud to formally launch the sexualized assault response team, also known as "SART", in Whitehorse. The Department of Justice, through Victim Services, plays a key role in SART by providing victims of sexualized violence with specialized accompaniment and support services from trained SART workers. Victims of sexualized violence can call the confidential support line to explore options including

requesting that a support worker accompany them to SART locations — including maybe the hospital or the police station, a nursing station — they might just answer questions for them; they might just have a kind ear on the other end of the phone; they might provide them information about housing or about other kinds of services that might be available if they find themselves in a situation where they are dealing with sexualized violence and the opportunity to get help — to know how to respond.

This service is available during weekdays and on weekends, evenings, and nights. While this in-person service was suspended for a period of time due to COVID-19, it has now resumed and I am very pleased to say that it is in phase 1 of the sexualized assault response team, where some of the services that were noted in the beginning of the question are in fact available. From the Justice perspective and Victim Services, the on-call services of Victim Services support people — properly trained — is one aspect of that. There is a 24/7 helpline. There are trained health professionals — nurses, doctors, and others — on call at the hospital — and throughout the territory, if need be. There are specially trained police officers to assist in responding to these kinds of cases. The phase 1 operation involves all of those — but an opportunity for us to enhance that, as we go forward.

We also recognize that, while some Yukoners may have had a reluctance to access services during COVID-19, we encourage victims to contact the support line to explore how to access support safely.

SART involves multiple government, community, and system partners who are all committed to coordinating and improving services for victims of sexualized violence.

When we began having this conversation — and there have been many services provided to Yukoners throughout the years — it was really about improving it so that it was coordinated. A key element of this system and the response team is that, no matter where a victim might first enter the system or first come in contact with someone asking for help, they should receive the wraparound services that are available. They should receive information about all aspects of what might be available to them. If they walk into a police station, they should have those services provided to them. If they walk into a community health centre, if they call a friend, or if they call a 24/7 line, the idea would be that the coordinated response would be prioritized so that the individual could have the service or access the service that he or she needed at any possible entry point so that you don't have to make it through the right door in order to get the right service. It was more important that we meet every victim where they are and help provide them with the service that they need and the response that they need in a trauma-informed, compassionate way every time that they call.

Mr. Gallina: I thank the minister for that response.

I wanted to talk about the Yukon strategy on missing and murdered indigenous women and girls and two-spirit-plus people. We know that Yukon released its strategy this morning, which was supported with declarations from federal ministers and members of this Assembly. I wanted to understand what

the role of the Department of Justice is in addressing the 231 calls for justice.

We know that the Yukon government has worked closely with Yukon First Nations, Yukon indigenous women's groups, and family representatives to finalize *Changing the Story to Upholding Dignity and Justice*, the Yukon MMIWG2S+ strategy.

The strategy outlines four main pathways to guide our action in response to the final report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. It includes strengthening connections and supports, community safety and justice, economic independence and education, community action, and accountability. We know that the Yukon advisory committee has worked hard over the last year to finalize this strategy.

I would like the minister to speak to the role of the Department of Justice in addressing and supporting this strategy in addressing the 231 calls for justice.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: As noted, I think, in the question — perhaps not — the Government of Yukon has worked closely with Yukon First Nations, Yukon indigenous women's groups, and family representatives who were key partners to finalize the *Changing the Story to Upholding Dignity and Justice*, the Yukon MMIWG2S+ strategy.

We have heard quite a bit today about how that strategy was introduced today and how many, many community partners made a declaration and signed a declaration indicating that they would help to implement and find a better path forward — in particular, by implementing the strategy.

I am very proud to say that the Yukon advisory committee has worked so hard. We heard from the Member for Porter Creek Centre, as well as the Minister responsible for the Women's Directorate and others today, about the importance of this going forward. The strategy does outline forming pathways that are actionable responses from the final report. They involved strengthening connections and supports, community safety and justice, economic independence and education, and community action and accountability. The advisory committee has worked hard to develop those pathways forward. The Department of Justice is — by virtue of the responsibilities for community safety, justice, justice systems, concepts of community accountability, RCMP services, court services, and investigative services through the work of those organizations, departments, or parts of departments as well — responsible for a number of initiatives that will be interwoven.

I think it is key to remind Yukoners that, in fact, while this advisory committee was co-chaired by one of the ministers in our government, there were two other co-chairs. They brought a community perspective — a Yukon-wide community perspective. It was clearly noted today — and it has been through all the information — that this strategy will not ultimately be the responsibility only of the Yukon government, but that Yukon government is a proud partner coming to the table for the opportunity to work on a number of those initiatives for the implementation of that strategy.

Clearly, Justice will be involved in the areas that I've noted. The RCMP is an important partner. The Yukon

Department of Justice and Victim Services and the programs that I mentioned earlier today are all incredibly important — FILU and others — for the purposes of supporting families through this process and the opportunity for this work to begin as a one-government approach and a one-community approach. This is something that we clearly look forward to.

Mr. Gallina: I have one final question. I appreciate the time from the minister today in helping Yukoners understand Justice priorities and policing priorities throughout Yukon communities. I wanted to end on the registration of First Nation settlement land.

We know that the Government of Yukon is committed to supporting those First Nation governments that have an interest in using Yukon's Land Titles Office to register their settlement land, which would allow for future development of settlement land for a variety of residential or commercial purposes.

We know that, in 2017, the *Kwanlin Dün First Nation Self-Government Agreement* was amended to enable the First Nation to register their category A or category B settlement land in the Land Titles Office without affecting aboriginal title. We know that the option to pursue using the Land Titles Office to register First Nation settlement land remains completely at the discretion of the First Nation.

The question that I have for the minister is: What other First Nation governments is the Yukon government looking to support or to work with in support of settlement land through the Yukon Land Titles Office without affecting their aboriginal rights or title?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: The Government of Yukon is committed to supporting those Yukon First Nation governments that have an interest in using Yukon's Land Titles Office to register their settlement land. As a matter of fact, we had a bill before this Legislative Assembly just some days ago to facilitate that process.

This would allow for the future development of settlement land for a variety of residential or commercial purposes, which is the intent of this work with Yukon First Nations. The Government of Yukon has approved recommendations to support the amendment of the Kluane First Nation, Champagne and Aishihik First Nations, and Carcross/Tagish First Nation self-government agreements to facilitate registration of their category A and B settlement land in Yukon's Land Titles Office without affecting aboriginal rights and title.

In 2017 — if anyone can remember back that far — the *Kwanlin Dün First Nation Self-Government Agreement* was amended to enable the First Nation to register their category A and category B settlement land in the Land Titles Office without affecting aboriginal title.

Also, I had the pleasure of participating in a ceremony — pre-COVID, sometime ago — when Kwanlin Dün First Nation in fact did register their first piece of land in the Land Titles Office, to much celebration and opportunity going forward. The system has been designed such that any Yukon First Nation that intends to avail themselves of that — we are happy to support and work with them. There are relatively small changes needed to self-government agreements for the purposes of completing that procedure, and Canada is a signatory there, but all

indications that we have — and certainly it was the case with Kwanlin Dün — the federal government is also supportive of these options being made available to First Nation governments.

Deputy Chair: Is there any further general debate on Vote 8, Department of Justice, in Bill No. 205, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21*?

Seeing none, we will proceed to line-by-line debate.

Mr. Cathers: Pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, I request the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all lines in Vote 8, Department of Justice, cleared or carried, as required.

Unanimous consent re deeming all lines in Vote 8, Department of Justice, cleared or carried

Deputy Chair: Mr. Cathers has, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, requested the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all lines in Vote 8, Department of Justice, cleared or carried, as required.

Is there unanimous consent?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Deputy Chair: Unanimous consent has been granted.

On Operation and Maintenance Expenditures

Total Operation and Maintenance Expenditures in the amount of \$1,292,000 agreed to

On Capital Expenditures

Total Capital Expenditures in the amount of nil agreed to

Total Expenditures in the amount of \$1,292,000 agreed to

Department of Justice agreed to

Deputy Chair: The matter now before the Committee is general debate on Vote 15, Department of Health and Social Services, in Bill No. 205, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Some Hon. Members: Disagreed.

Deputy Chair: Unanimous consent has not been granted.

The matter before the Committee is general debate on Vote 15, Department —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

Deputy Chair: Mr. Streicker, on a point of order.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Thanks, Mr. Deputy Chair. I'm just looking for understanding on this. You just asked whether members were agreed. I believe that it is a vote of the House. I heard several people say "agreed" and I heard some people say "disagreed". I'm not sure if I understand — if you can explain to me. I went and checked with the Clerk earlier, and the understanding that I was given is that, if there is a misunderstanding of whether it is one or the other, that it is a simple majority, and that we would go for a count.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Deputy Chair: Just one moment, Mr. Cathers; I just want to confer with the Clerk and I will get right to you.

Mr. Cathers, on the point of order.

Mr. Cathers: The rule has always been, in rulings in the past, that taking a recess requires unanimous consent. I think that the minister is misunderstanding the rules.

Deputy Chair's ruling

Deputy Chair: In conferring with the Clerk, it has been said to me that unanimous consent has to be granted to have a recess. I heard that some disagreed, so we are continuing on.

The matter before the Committee is general debate on Vote 15, Department of Health and Social Services, in Bill No. 205, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21*.

Is there any general debate?

Department of Health and Social Services

Ms. McLeod: Earlier this year, the government ended drop-in dinner service at the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter, and then they moved to a contract with Coast High Country Inn to prepare the meals. Can the minister tell us how much the contract was for?

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

Deputy Chair: Mr. Pillai, on a point of order.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I guess it would be a point of order. I think it would be appropriate, as per the conduct that we have had, that if officials are changing over — what we have done is the Sergeant-at-Arms has come in to wipe this down so that we're making sure that the health protocols are in place. What we have seen here is a quick call for questions. We haven't been able to take the appropriate health precautions. It seems to be that things are quickly being rushed, and I also didn't see the opportunity for opening remarks for the Minister of Health and Social Services.

Deputy Chair: Mr. Cathers, on the point of order.

Mr. Cathers: This cleaning of chairs is not a point of order. Officials do not have to be in their seats the entire time that a minister is. There is certainly time to do that before officials sit down and for the minister and the critic to engage in questions. The critic just asked a question, and I would hope that the minister would take the opportunity to respond to it.

Deputy Chair: Government House Leader, on the point of order.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Whether or not it is a point of order, I am bringing to your attention — much as my colleague has — that there are protocols for this room. If our friends across the way are not interested in a break, we could at least have 30 seconds for the desks to be properly cleaned, as is required by this Legislative Assembly and the rules that we have discussed therein.

In addition to that, I was standing for the purposes of doing an opening statement. Perhaps you didn't see me, but launching into the questions at this point, I think — the questions about general debate — I was trying to be recognized. I appreciate

that there seems to be some urgency today in proceeding without any breaks. That's the prerogative of the other side, but I think that the cleaning protocols are something that we should all be respecting.

Deputy Chair: I will go back to Ms. McLeod. Could you please repeat your question?

Ms. McLeod: Is the government side ready, Mr. Deputy Chair?

Deputy Chair: They appear to be. We can either ask your question or we can have the minister make her opening statement.

Ms. McLeod: I believe that there is probably no point in me asking a question at this time. Given that we're going to get the opening statement anyway, I will stand down and the minister can proceed.

Deputy Chair: Ms. Frost, please proceed.

Hon. Ms. Frost: I appreciate the opportunity to speak today to the Legislative Assembly. I would like to acknowledge my colleagues who are here with me — Deputy Minister Stephen Samis and Assistant Deputy Minister Karen Chan. I would like to also say thank you for giving us the opportunity to follow very closely the COVID protocols in ensuring that we have a safe work environment and that my colleagues were not in any way jeopardized by not essentially following the protocols and doing the necessary cleaning.

As a note, as the Minister of Health and Social Services, it's critical that we follow protocols. If that's not the practice of this Assembly, then I suggest that we would perhaps not be in a very good position in that we would jeopardize the well-being of all of us — and that's essentially why the protocols were established in the first place.

With respect to Health and Social Services, today we are speaking about the supplementary budget for Health and Social Services for 2021. Before I begin, I would just like to say thank you to the department for doing a great job during this most unprecedented time in our history as we deal with a pandemic that has affected all of us in more ways than we would like to acknowledge, I guess. We have gone through some major trials and stresses over the course of the last nine months.

The Deputy Minister and the Assistant Deputy Minister of Corporate Services, along with the whole department, have been instrumental in ensuring that we develop a budget that supports Yukoners. I want to thank them for their hard work.

It is clear that 2020 is the year that will be remembered by all Canadians and by all Yukoners. Keeping Yukoners safe has been our government's top priority since the COVID-19 virus appeared. It has been difficult and challenging for all of us. We have managed to keep our caseloads low. Although now we have 58 cases, we have made good progress with our contact tracing and public health measures. Our territory is in a good position today due to the ongoing hard work and, of course, the compliance of Yukoners — not just government employees, but all citizens who have followed our public health measures, adapting their business practices and changing their habits as required.

For the Department of Health and Social Services in particular, protecting and enhancing the well-being of

Yukoners during a global pandemic has been both challenging and expensive, but I am pleased to say that, through the dedication and hard work of our front-line staff and social support workers — from doctors to nurses to continuing care workers to personal support workers to cleaning staff — and to all those who support our chief medical officer of health, we have not only protected Yukoners, but we have continued to offer the services and supports that our citizens rely on. Our vision of healthy, vibrant, sustainable communities continues even during this global pandemic.

In addition to all of our efforts combating this pandemic, which I will outline in more detail, we have continued moving forward with the direction proposed in *Putting People First — the final report of the comprehensive health review of Yukon's health and social programs and services*. It has been a year like no other, one that has tested our resiliency, but one where we have accomplished a great deal.

In this budget, we are requesting a supplementary appropriation of \$52.3 million. This additional funding is required to fund not only our pandemic responses, but also the legislated and required services that we provide Yukoners.

The majority of these supplementary funds, nearly 65 percent — or approximately \$33.7 million — is needed for our COVID response. The good news is that, of that amount, all of this will be fully recoverable, thanks to the COVID support from the Government of Canada.

Approval of this funding will allow the Department of Health and Social Services to continue meeting the requirements of essential health and social programs while ensuring that proper support is offered to vulnerable citizens who are significantly affected by the pandemic. It will also allow us to continue leading Yukon's public health response to the pandemic. Specifically, the department is requesting funding to transition from a health emergency operations centre to a smaller COVID response unit.

The COVID response unit directly supports our chief medical officer of health in combatting COVID and developing related plans, policies, communication materials, and epidemiological models. This unit coordinates our health response during the pandemic and is vital in the fight against this pandemic.

Effective testing and tracing are crucial to prevent community spread, which is something that we have thankfully avoided here in the Yukon. We have continued operating the COVID testing centre that opened on July 6. We have introduced mobile testing and drive-through testing to expand testing access for Yukoners.

The COVID testing centre has a staff, including nurse practitioners, nurses, admin support, greeters, and cleaners. Given the current flu season and with the arrival of the second wave here in the Yukon, testing remains essential in our fight against this virus.

We have introduced funding that supports the very successful mass flu clinic in Whitehorse that was held at the High Country Inn over a six-week period. We were able to vaccinate more than 14,000 people. The clinic allowed us to test for the future COVID vaccine implementation.

The infrastructure for this model worked well, and we have been able to determine that it will be able to accommodate the general projected demand for the COVID vaccine. Holding that clinic in one facility allowed community nursing more time to administer vaccines because they did not have to set up and dismantle their equipment and supplies each day. Clinics have also been held in communities. This funding allowed for longer operating hours with the hiring of auxiliary-on-call nurses, greeters, cleaners, and admin staff to support the clinic.

During the pandemic, like everywhere in Canada, we have been paying particular attention to vulnerable populations. These are Yukoners living in our continuing care residences, people living with disabilities, those on social assistance, and those who are precariously housed or homeless.

The Whitehorse Emergency Shelter and its client population continues to be greatly affected by the pandemic. As with all of our 24/7 operations, we are mitigating the risk of transmission with this vulnerable population through enhanced cleaning measures and the implementation of social distancing measures.

For example, Health and Social Services is contracting with local hotels to house clients who are unable to be accommodated at the shelter due to the physical distancing requirements. We are also providing additional funding to Skookum Jim Friendship Centre to enhance their youth shelter program. We partnered with the Whitehorse Food Bank to ensure that brown-bag meals prepared at the shelter could be distributed to clients off-site — again, all in order to have proper social distancing measures in place.

As cool weather has arrived, we adapted our distribution plans and partnered with the Stop In Family Hotel and the Coast High Country Inn to address this community need, while continuing our COVID-19 protocols at the shelter.

The pandemic has also had an impact on the ongoing public health crisis related to high rates of opioid poisoning and deaths. Unfortunately, Yukon has not been immune to these impacts, and this is a cause for real concern and deep sadness. The street supply of illicit drugs is becoming even more unpredictable and dangerous as regular supply chains are disrupted. We are working with Blood Ties Four Directions to enable people who use drugs to have their illicit substances tested for a range of harmful components beyond fentanyl.

We have also had to increase our mental health and other supports due to the unintended consequences of self-isolation and physical distancing. It is important to note that the creation of mental wellness hubs in Yukon communities continues to expand mental health services for Yukoners across the territory, including our children and youth.

Due to our vulnerable population and the number of 24/7 facilities that Health and Social Services manages, much of our additional funding continues to be spent on cleaning and screening to ensure that we comply with the best practices and the recommended guidelines from the chief medical officer of health. Continuing Care alone has nearly 300 long-term care beds in total, over 600 home care clients, and over 800 staff. With the challenges and changes to policy, practice, outbreak management, et cetera, Continuing Care will continue to

require resources to maintain screening stations that have been set up at long-term care homes to screen staff, contractors, and visitors. Additionally, Continuing Care has hired additional cleaners for McDonald Lodge in Dawson City and for long-term care homes in Whitehorse to ensure adherence to cleaning and sanitization guidelines.

For Yukoners living with disabilities, we are providing extra support to clients and their families to ease the many challenges that they are facing primarily due to the reduction in client-based services in the community. We are helping clients and caregivers offset their increased respite costs. For Yukoners receiving social assistance benefits, we are ensuring that they did not experience a reduction if they received the Canada emergency response benefit, the Canada emergency student benefit, or the one-time disability payment.

With the downturn in the economy, we are preparing for an increase in applications for social assistance. Furthermore, we have recognized the impact that the pandemic may have had on youth in care, specifically those Yukoners who might age out of care during what is a difficult economic time. Just as parents and caregivers in our communities may be supporting their children while employment and other opportunities are scarce, we are giving these young adults more time to establish themselves in the community by extending their benefits for a longer period.

For all of our vulnerable populations, we have put measures in place to ensure that necessary health care and medical services remain available and accessible. Early in the pandemic, we also provided subsidies to ensure that childcare spaces remain open during the pandemic. This allowed parents and other caregivers to remain at work or return to work or to access any other needed services and supports.

We continue to work with all centres to ensure that they have the necessary supports, including training, to remain operational to serve the needs of children and families. We are also providing funding so that all licensed childcare centres and family day homes can meet the cleaning requirements to mitigate the risk of transmission of COVID-19. Without these supports, some childcare operators might have had to close.

Of course, we can't talk about COVID without talking about personal protective equipment, or PPE. We have had to not only buy more PPE, but also secure additional places to store enough PPE to ensure that we have enough for essential health care workers and others, including First Nation governments, should there be a shortage in the future.

The PPE procurement is in addition to the allocations that we are receiving from the federal government and the related 12-week reserve that the federal government provided. Every program area is purchasing additional cleaning supplies, sanitation, and soap to adhere to the public health guidelines.

Supplementary funds are also needed to support the Yukon Hospital Corporation, which has not only experienced a loss in revenue due to a decrease in patients from other jurisdictions, but also an increase in expenditures to comply with pandemic health and safety requirements. This includes enhanced screening measures and cleaning to mitigate COVID

transmission through additional staffing or increases in overtime paid.

Of course, within Health and Social Services as well, staffing costs have increased due to the pandemic. We have hired additional temporary health supports and paid increased overtime to ensure that all of our program areas are able to respond to COVID-19 and mitigate the risks of transmission. In addition, the department has hired an infection control nurse, paid for additional physician coverage so that doctors do not travel between facilities, hired additional support for community nursing, incurred additional staffing costs by limiting staff to work at only one facility, expanded Yukon 811 services, hired additional environmental health officers; and paid increased salary costs for Yukon Communicable Disease Control Unit staff who conduct our contact tracing and provide additional testing for high-risk cases.

Finally, we are continuing to offer self-isolation options for people who cannot self-isolate in their own homes. Again, this is an important public health measure — one that helps prevent the spread of the virus and community transmission. It is money well spent.

As already mentioned, despite the demands that this global pandemic is placing upon us, the Department of Health and Social Services is continuing to make progress on many other fronts. The final report of the comprehensive health review, of our Health and Social Services' *Putting People First*, provides a road map to transform Yukon's health and social services system into a more integrated, collaborative, and person-centred system that will better meet the needs of Yukoners. We are committed to implementing the report's recommendations. This will make services more effective, it will be better value for money, and it will improve outcomes and experiences for client, patients, families, and health and social services providers.

To improve primary care for Yukoners living in rural Yukon communities, we are — as recommended by the *Putting People First* report — increasing our number of nurse practitioners, first in Carmacks and then in other communities. We are also looking at home care options. We are improving access to vaccines for at-risk and vulnerable Yukoners, including the Shingrix vaccine, HPV vaccine, and the PrEP drug. As well, we are enhancing our medical travel program — doubling medical travel benefits on the first day of travel for patients who remain overnight for medical care.

It is important to note that, while we may not see immediate savings from many of our *Putting People First* recommendations, making these changes will help us bend the cost curve.

Finally, it is extremely important to note that we have set aside funding to support additional needs related to COVID, such as enhanced drug testing and screening. There are also funds available to support the implementation of our vaccination plan.

Ms. McLeod: I would like to welcome the minister and her officials to the House today.

Earlier this year, the government ended drop-in dinner service at the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter. Then they moved

to a contract with the Coast High Country Inn to prepare the meals. Can the minister tell us how much that contract is worth?

Hon. Ms. Frost: In response to the question, the average per meal is \$5. We produce approximately 40 meals per day. That is covered by COVID-related expenses.

Ms. McLeod: I get that it is \$5 times 40 meals per day. Is that a fixed cost for seven days a week and for what period of time, please?

Hon. Ms. Frost: With respect to the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter meals — providing a bit of an update — the focus early on at the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter was to provide low-barrier opportunities for our street-involved individuals. At the same time, we had to follow COVID protocols with respect to safe distancing and cleaning protocols.

With that in mind, Health and Social Services had to take measures under the public health guidelines for COVID to allow physical distancing at the shelter, and we had to start preparing meals in a different way, much like we provided supports in a different way.

Historically — and I have noted this before in the Legislature — we have provided support to approximately 50 to 70 people in a night, and that had to be significantly reduced as a result of the COVID protocols. So, the shelter kitchen began preparing meals for distribution by the Whitehorse Food Bank for shelter guests to pick up and eat meals off-site.

We are in the middle of winter now, and so, the reassessment at the facility with the experts as it relates to COVID and COVID protocols — while still meeting the needs of the vulnerable population group, we had to find an alternative. The best way to serve shelter guests and determine that with additional COVID-19 protocols — we had to resume providing food services within the shelter for those clients whom we were able to safely accommodate on a daily basis.

On the very first of November, the meals provided at the shelter were taken off-site and an existing contract was in place with the Coast High Country Inn, as that's the facility we use as a self-isolation site. The to-go meal service was provided and distributed from there to the Family Hotel. I would like to just note that the clients who pick up the meals are generally those who live elsewhere, and we provide meals currently to the shelter guests, as they reside at the shelter, and we provide meals to the clients who don't reside at the shelter or in one of the hotels.

The objective is to ensure that we provide dinner services through the Family Hotel, and all the other meals are provided through the shelter, with accommodations being made for expanded hours at lunchtime so that we can essentially follow the COVID protocols of cleaning and such. Then, of course, the breakfast is provided for guests who reside at the shelter.

Ms. McLeod: In all of that, I did not get an answer to the question. The minister has said that it is \$5 times 40 meals per day. My question was about what the timing of the contract was, and I believe the minister said that it started on November 1. I don't have an end date on that. I do not know yet what the value of the contract is.

Hon. Ms. Frost: So, 40 a day — of course, \$5 a meal — and you break it down from there. The contract with the High Country Inn includes, of course, the meals that I have mentioned, and the Family Hotel receives \$20,000 to do that distribution. The cost for the meals is already covered through the contract that exists through the Coast High Country Inn. We have to ensure that we follow the necessary COVID protocols as we do the distribution as well. Part of that discussion and part of that arrangement is ensuring that the security and safety of all clients who attend the facility are taken into consideration.

Ms. McLeod: So, \$20,000 is being paid to the Family Hotel for distribution of the meals. I still don't have the value of the contract with the Coast High Country Inn. The minister made some reference to the food provided being already covered by some cost, but I'm unclear where that money is coming from. I still don't have a timeframe for the contract.

Hon. Ms. Frost: With respect to the contract with the Family Hotel, that is to the end of the fiscal year. As I indicated, it covers a number of things. One is the distribution and the services that they provide and the necessary supports for cleaning and ensuring adequate spacing. The contract for the Coast High Country Inn, which covers the isolation centre — I'm not sure if that's the question that the member opposite is asking with respect to the Coast High Country Inn. That facility was acquired early on in the pandemic. We were able to secure that facility to ensure that we provide a safe isolation centre in a facility for individuals who are not able to self-isolate in their own homes or in their own communities — a place to stay.

At the same time, we acquired the convention centre. The convention centre was used recently for the mass inoculation for the flu. We have used that facility over the course of this pandemic, so the overall budget — which is, by the way, fully recoverable from the federal government under the COVID-related expenses — I have highlighted in here that it was just over \$33 million. The overall costs for that facility to the end of June next fiscal year is \$930,000.

Ms. McLeod: That was not my question. I thought I was quite clear on three occasions that the contract value that I am attempting to garner from the minister is the cost of foods — drop-in dinner service that is being provided through the Family Hotel.

I'm going to assume that the minister does not have that information. Was the contract — and I'm not talking about the Family Hotel and the distribution of the meals. I'm talking about the preparation of the meals by the Coast High Country Inn. Was this tendered out? Was this contract tendered out?

Hon. Ms. Frost: The question was asked about the meals. I gave the member opposite the breakdown of \$5 a meal, 40 meals approximately a day — usually averaging, actually, about 35. So, if the member did the calculation on that, it's really not an insignificant amount. The contribution to the Family Hotel for the distribution was \$20,000 a month; the contract already existed with the Coast High Country Inn. They were already providing meals, and it's incorporated into the budget that was in place and the contract that was already in place with the Coast High Country Inn. They were already providing meals to the clients who were in that facility and who

were self-isolating in that facility, and they were already supporting the department.

So, the \$930,000 covers those expenses under the existing agreement.

Ms. McLeod: All right — let's look at this another way. How much of the contract that the government has with the Coast High Country Inn is associated with the meals? I'm looking for a breakdown within that contract with the Coast High Country Inn. How much of that is associated with the provision of the meals that are being taken to the Family Hotel for distribution — if the minister could break that out for me, please?

Hon. Ms. Frost: The contract — I believe that I have given the member opposite some numbers. A quick calculation — if the overall contract for the Family Hotel is \$20,000 a month to distribute the meals and provide that service — we know that it has come up multiple times in the Legislature that we need an alternative, so we found an alternative.

The other thing — for the record — 35 times five will give you your calculation of what is spent, on average, for meals that are provided for clients who don't reside at the shelter and who don't reside in one of the hotels. These are clients who come in who are not captured anywhere else.

The Coast High Country Inn — the contract of \$930,000 covers a multitude of things and it is not specifically broken down. In that contract, we have complete access to all of the hotel rooms for isolation purposes; we have access to the kitchen facilities to provide services there for that clientele; plus we have access to the convention centre. The member opposite has asked for the numbers — those are the numbers that we have.

Ms. McLeod: So, was the contract with the Coast High Country Inn put out to public tender?

Hon. Ms. Frost: With the early onset of COVID and the imminence of protecting Yukoners — knowing that, come January, February, and March and the closure of the Arctic Winter Games — we had to quickly mobilize and find a suitable facility that would: (1) provide for safe isolation; (2) ensure that we have access to the kitchen; and (3) that we were able to secure a convention-type centre that would help us to do essentially the necessary COVID testing to keep Yukoners safe. The direction, early on, was to acquire the support and services of the Coast High Country Inn. They met all the criteria that was needed to ensure that Yukoners were kept safe and that we were still able to deliver the essential supports for Yukoners.

So, that procurement process did not go out to public tender because, in the city, that was the only facility that was readily available at that time to ensure that we had quick access, quick service, and the necessary infrastructure to support Yukoners and keep all Yukoners safe.

Ms. McLeod: That was almost a million-dollar contract. Have there been any change orders to the contract since it was originally entered into?

Hon. Ms. Frost: I'm just seeking clarification. As we've extended the emergency measures orders, of course the extension on the procurement and the services of the Coast High Country Inn had to be extended and aligned with that as

well to align with the critical health needs of Yukoners and ensuring that we have the stabilization there. The change order was associated with the extension of the services. The most recent, we'll see going up into June, and at that point, we will reassess the procurement arrangement.

Ms. McLeod: So, this \$1 million that is being sought — sorry, just under \$1 million — being sought in this supplementary budget is to take us to March 31, 2021. Of course, we have no idea what the costs beyond that are going to be.

So, the change order — now I presume that the contract, when it was signed then, was originally to take us to March 31, given the information that I have had today — if the minister could just clarify that the change order has extended it into June of next year from the end of March or just what the contract date was for the \$900,000-plus.

Hon. Ms. Frost: Just for the record, the contract and the procurement arrangements are not held with Health and Social Services. The procurement arrangements are held with Highways and Public Works. The specific details of the extension and such will have to be verified through Highways and Public Works. I would be happy to endeavour to get that information. I don't have it in front of me, seeing as it is an arrangement through another department.

Ms. McLeod: I would appreciate it if the minister would get me those contract details. I mean, we are talking about the contract and money associated with it in this department. I believe that it would be entirely relevant to have that information.

I am going to move on from that. How much is budgeted for the COVID-19 vaccine planning, purchase, distribution, and rollout?

Hon. Ms. Frost: Just for the record, the arrangement — the member opposite had just indicated that they had a question about COVID vaccines. We just now made this known publicly and made that announcement — something that we're very excited and pleased about. Yukoners should certainly know that, as we look at the distribution of the COVID vaccine, the decision was made, in collaboration with northern colleagues and the First Ministers today, that we would essentially look at distribution of the Moderna vaccine in the Yukon, essentially covering off 75 percent of the Yukon adult population within the first quarter of 2021 — great news.

The other thing to note is that, in the budget, we have the capacity of vaccine planning — funding to address additional COVID requirements, including surge capacity and vaccine planning and potentially early implementation. There is \$4 million allocated to that. We are relying on resources from the federal government, as well, in terms of the mass distribution across the country on the select vaccine for the north.

There is a lot of public notification, awareness, and campaigning that needs to go on with respect to supporting this vaccine program in terms of preparation and work. It's important for Yukoners to know that there will be two specific teams supporting rural Yukon communities, and the most recent flu vaccine here in the city, occupying the Coast High

Country Inn — which is covered under the \$930,000 — will be the central vaccine facility.

The trial run of the mass vaccine at the Coast High Country Inn — of the flu clinic — with 12,488 inoculations in one month, on top of the measures that were in place to do the necessary cleaning and have the greeters and such — those are things that are taken into consideration when we roll out the vaccine program. That system at the Coast High Country Inn convention centre will have to be emulated in each one of the communities as we get out with the inoculation and the vaccines to the communities, which means that we have to have the supports in each one of the communities that we go into to do the mass distribution of the vaccine. I assure Yukoners that the resources are in this supplementary budget to cover that. There is \$4 million allocated to address that pressure.

Ms. McLeod: I'm not sure that I heard entirely what the minister said. I'm just going to recap that there is \$4 million budgeted for COVID-19 vaccine planning, purchase, distribution, and rollout, which will happen between January and March 2021 and will cover about 25 percent of Yukon's population. If any of that is incorrect, I would appreciate the minister changing my mind on that.

Now, at the briefing, we were told that the \$4 million was not recoverable from the federal government, but the minister indicated that they are relying on a federal contribution to cover this off. Can the minister confirm that the \$4 million is anticipated to be recoverable from Canada?

Hon. Ms. Frost: Just for clarification, the vaccines are covered by Canada. That's really great news.

The other great news is that, in collaboration with the northern colleagues — the northern ministers — the north is being treated differently, in different respects, to how the rest of Canada is being treated when it comes to vaccines and the distribution and acquisition of the vaccines.

The remoteness factor, looking at the numbers of individuals — a lot of consideration into the health and epidemiology of the north was taken into consideration when acquiring over 52,000 vaccines — so enough vaccines to cover 25,000 Yukoners, which means essentially 75 percent of the population, to hit the herd immunity criteria that has been established here on a national basis.

The other great news for Yukoners to know is that the team at Health and Social Services has been doing an excellent job in acquiring supports and offsetting cost pressures for this government when we are looking at COVID and COVID-related expenses.

Early on, we received a bunch of support to support our airlines — support to ensure that we get our tests to Vancouver in a timely fashion. We had to ensure that we have our supports for the HEOC unit and support to Dr. Hanley. With that in mind, ramping up the pressures that we were seeing here was no different from what we have seen across Canada. The department has done an exceptional job, and that was to acquire necessary resources.

The member opposite is absolutely correct. Early on, during the briefing, the \$4 million was not equated in the resources received from the federal government. But with great

negotiation tools and, of course, the department doing its due diligence and the necessary evidence-based decision-making that was necessary to get us access to more funding from the federal government, the department was able to capture that \$4 million into this \$33,695,000. The \$4 million was allocated for distribution, storage, and COVID vaccines — the Moderna vaccine. The vaccine itself is fully covered by the federal government.

Ms. McLeod: I thank the minister for that. Earlier this Sitting, on December 2, the minister was asked about the federal government's purchase of 26 ultracold freezers for vaccine storage. We had asked the minister if the Government of Yukon would get any of them. The response was — and I quote: "I know just recently that the Minister of Community Services met with Brigadier-General Carpentier from a joint task force north on capacity for distribution. On behalf of the federal government, they have acquired low-temperature freezers. We have a process in place to acquire that for the Yukon. We have acquired transportation freezers to ensure and enable vaccines to get to our Yukon communities."

So, can the minister give us an update on the procurement of these freezers, and do we have them yet?

Hon. Ms. Frost: Let's maybe speak a little bit about what we know now and what has transpired most recently. As we are working through the modelling and the announcements that have recently come out with respect to the two different types of vaccines — just recently, the government announced the Pfizer vaccine as a vaccine that would be distributed to 14 locations across the country on a trial basis. They made that known quite a few weeks ago and then made it public just last week.

The requirement for that particular vaccine has to ensure that the product itself is kept at minus 83 degrees in temperature, which requires specialized supports and specialized freezers. Of course, through negotiations and through the good work of the department, working with our northern colleagues and the chief medical officer of health — and as agreed to by the federal government — the decision was to acquire the vaccine that would be best suited to meet the needs of the northern context, which was the Moderna vaccine.

That particular vaccine is only required to be kept at minus 20 degrees Celsius. That is minus 20 degree Celsius once it arrives here, and then it is thawed under the actual process for vaccines — I might be wrong here, but I believe it is to two to eight degrees — once it is thawed, we have 30 days to do the distribution. That means that it is the best product for our northern context with the fact that we have some pretty isolated communities to get to across the north.

Of course, the direction and advisement was to start looking at how we were going to — the services or the supports we needed to ensure that we have on the ground here for the vaccines as they arrive here.

We have acquired — as I indicated — a supply of freezers from the federal government, but we also have these freezers that are expected to arrive here this very weekend, which is far in advance — the vaccines will arrive in January, but the freezers will be here this weekend.

We also have, under our process, acquired 10 portable freezers and 10 additional tube type — I guess I'm not sure what it's referred to as, but there are about 20 units that we have on the ground that are arriving really early in January. So, the freezers will be here this weekend, and all are recoverable from the federal government, so it doesn't cost us anything. But we have also done a freezer inventory to identify suitable freezers currently within our system to support the vaccine deployment with regard to leveraging additional and appropriate supports. We will take that under consideration as we're rolling out the vaccines.

We have, in all of our health centres, the necessary resources — within each one of our health centres and the two hospitals.

Ms. McLeod: Thank you to the minister. How many rapid tests are currently in the territory for our use?

Hon. Ms. Frost: Throughout the pandemic, we certainly had to look at relying on the testing facilities out of British Columbia, but we also had to look at the work that we were doing here in the Yukon, ensuring that we had some portable devices here in the Yukon and looking at the technology to support Yukoners.

The Yukon implemented the use of the GeneXpert devices on September 9. We acquired two of those, and those, I understand, are reserved for hospital patients, critical hospital staff, and could be used in a potential outbreak scenario. But most recently, we've also acquired another specific type of device, which is the Abbott Panbio device — and there are 10 of those. Those devices are deployed throughout the Yukon in specific areas where they are needed essentially to help us contain the spread of COVID. The devices are here in the Yukon and we have two of the GeneXpert devices which are in the hospitals.

Ms. McLeod: So, when we talk about numbers, the minister talks about the number of devices. Is each device capable of an unlimited number of tests?

Hon. Ms. Frost: Due to the limited availability of swabs and the testing reagent, the devices are used very sparingly. They are used in emergency situations and are reserved for backup in case the primary devices fail in any way. The required supporting technology is there if we need it.

Ms. McLeod: Is the government anticipating making the rapid tests more readily available to the Yukon public? What would be the deciding factor there?

Hon. Ms. Frost: With regard to COVID testing here in the Yukon, I have responded to this question quite a bit in the Legislative Assembly. We talked about the gold standard test, and the gold standard test is really about relying on the supports out of BC — which is received by the BC Centre for Disease Control. The GeneXpert device and the portable devices that we have are not used as the first primary point. We rely on our testing — the gold standard testing out of the BC clinic, which comes back within 24 to 48 hours, so a very quick turnaround. Early on, we were seeing longer delays because we were seeing immense pressures across BC and Yukon. Now we have seen that just turn around.

The devices are extremely sensitive and may detect non-active traces of COVID or other viruses, so sometimes we are seeing a false negative. We rely very heavily on our chief medical officer of health and the advice of the health experts when it comes to tests and how we proceed. We, of course, try not to rely on the GeneXpert. That is why it is there specifically only for emergency purposes. Shortly after the test is conducted, we always ensure that we follow up with the gold standard test as directed out of the BC Centre for Disease Control.

Ms. McLeod: I want to move on to the line item of \$33,695,000 that was budgeted for funding for a COVID-19 response just from Health and Social Services. Have any of the areas of funding under this budget amount run overbudget to date?

Hon. Ms. Frost: None to date.

Ms. McLeod: I thank the minister for that. I want to thank the officials for their time today. I am certainly hopeful that Health and Social Services will be recalled since we have barely scratched the surface, but I am, at this time, going to turn the floor over to my colleague, the Member for Takhini-Kopper King.

Ms. White: I thank the officials for being here.

The first question that I have is: How many auxiliary-on-call positions currently work within the Department of Health and Social Services?

Hon. Ms. Frost: Health and Social Services has 120 approved FTEs associated with the auxiliary on call.

Ms. White: Can the minister tell me how many of those currently work at the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter on a regular basis?

Hon. Ms. Frost: I am just seeking clarification. The Member for Takhini-Kopper King is asking a specific question about the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter and the auxiliary-on-call employees. I am seeking clarification from the staff. That is not equated for in the budget that we have before us — the \$33,695,000. So, the question specific to the budget — I would be happy to respond to those questions. We will endeavour to get back with the specific information that the member is requesting with respect to the mains.

Ms. White: You know, Mr. Deputy Chair, I didn't think that we would get here so soon. How many staff work a day at the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter? What is the staffing number for a day?

Hon. Ms. Frost: Again, the member opposite is asking specific questions about staffing at the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter. I will endeavour to get that information, but the debate for today — that is not captured in here — so, I would be happy to get that number and will endeavour to do that.

Ms. White: I was under the impression that I was actually having a conversation with the Minister of Health and Social Services who is also responsible for running the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter and staffing. I also thought that, with the department officials here and electronic devices, these questions would be possible. It sounds like I might just continue to put them on the record.

So, since the Yukon government took over the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter on January 1, 2019 — that was a calendar year before the pandemic happened, so things changed in the spring. What I want to know is: What kind of training has been available to the staff at the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter?

Hon. Ms. Frost: I certainly would like to acknowledge again that the budget that we have up for debate is \$3,695,000 specific to COVID-related expenses. I would be happy to have a conversation with the member opposite around the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter.

The Whitehorse Emergency Shelter — the member has raised this previously — acquired a letter from the union. In that 24-hour period, the questions appeared in the Legislative Assembly. Of course, the department hadn't had appropriate time to respond to the union. So, just as a note for the record, I want to just thank the incredible team at the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter for providing the necessary compassionate care to Yukoners during this very difficult time in our history as we are in the middle of a pandemic.

At the same time, as we go ahead and look at recruitment and retention processes and strategies, we work very closely with the support staff of the Public Service Commission and try to acquire the services of staff who have the necessary competencies and skills as we look at recruitment strategies — in particular at the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter and at any one of our care facilities.

Doing that and doing the recruitment, we've identified that the process for hiring front-line staff — given the sensitivities around the clientele, we always want to make sure that the staff are, first and foremost, protected and have the necessary skills to work with this community group at the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter.

The staffing and the supports for staffing development are taken under consideration and advisement with our team of HR professionals. The member opposite notes some points, and the points that have been raised by the union have been addressed and the department is working very closely with the union to address some of the very directed questions and concerns that have been brought to our attention.

The training identified will be there to ensure that support is in place for the front-line staff and also to ensure that if there are staff there who need refresher courses or training — perhaps it has expired — we would ensure that is fulfilled as well. The policies and procedures that are in place that govern the shelter — we have learned a lot from the exercise of the last 12 months of managing a shelter of this magnitude and we have reviewed with our colleagues at Health and Social Services, colleagues at Occupational Health and Safety, and the Public Service Commission and identified unique training requirements for individuals to work in this complex environment.

We will continue to communicate and work collaboratively with the Yukon Employees' Union and we certainly appreciate their support as we look at including the necessary supports for our front-line staff at the shelter. At the same time, we must ensure that the staff follow the guidelines that are in place for necessary COVID protocols. We are developing a robust training regime and plan. That's done with

the good folks at the Public Service Commission and through the Human Resources branch of the Department of Health and Social Services. At the same time, I just wanted to acknowledge that it has been trying for everyone during COVID and during the intense pressures of trying to balance work and life but also trying to work under the rules that apply.

Of course, trauma-informed training comes to mind when we start looking at staff training and safety training and what's required for front-line staff in all of our departments. So, the department is reviewing its policies and protocols when it comes to ensuring that front-line staff have all the tools that they need to be successful in the workplace.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for that answer. Up until fairly recently, the staffing model at the shelter has been different. Can the minister just confirm that a hiring process is in the process of happening now to hire for term positions at the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter?

Hon. Ms. Frost: The member is correct in that, early on — as we have recently acquired the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter — the services there weren't, of course, fully staffed up. We know that the good colleagues from the Yukon conservative party — the government in power in that day — built a facility smack in the centre of downtown and didn't provide essential staffing, nor were there programming or supports in place. It has posed a bit of a challenge for the businesses in the area; it has posed a bit of a challenge for staffing up and, of course, ensuring that clients are supported as they use the facility.

What we saw early on was 13 people a night. We are seeing now 50 to 60 people a night. That meant that we had to staff up to support the clients who were coming to the facility. So, we had to, early on, bring auxiliary staff on to try to balance the imminent support and ensure that the vulnerable population who was acquiring and utilizing services there was well-supported. Since that time, the department is now looking at stabilizing that workforce and is now looking at more permanency within that unit.

Ms. White: If I didn't know better when I listened to the minister, I would think that this was a recent acquisition by the Government of Yukon. But by the calendar date of December 10 — knowing that the government took over January 1, 2019, I believe — it is 22 days short of two years — 24 months. Knowing that we were just recently putting out for term positions, can the minister let me know how many auxiliary-on-call staff have been running the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter?

Hon. Ms. Frost: Again, I just want to thank the member opposite for her comments. I certainly want to acknowledge that she has made note that this is not recent. In my interpretation, when we speak of recent — they are a start-up. When you acquire a facility of this magnitude that was not planned for in the Yukon government budget in any way, shape, or form other than the \$1.5 million that was given to the Salvation Army to provide supports for 13 people — so one would quickly calculate \$1.2 million to provide services to 13 people — that is a lot of money. During that time, the community mobilized, came together, and looked at services.

We absolutely appreciate that it has been two years. It has been a trying two years working with our partners and working with the community to essentially try to bring a complex facility like the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter into an evolving community centre of sorts that would be a model that would be accepted by all community members.

The member opposite makes note that it has been two years. It has certainly been two years. During that time, the team has worked really hard to try to address an appropriate staffing model, a model of care and programming that would meet the needs of the clientele at the shelter. At the same time, we had to bring more staff in to enhance the amount of guests who we were having on an overnight basis — not to mention that the 20 units that were built specifically as transition units were not occupied. None of those facilities were being used; now they are. Now we have 20 citizens occupying that space.

When the member opposite speaks as if it were something just recent — of course, it's evolving, and every day, we deal with a new complexity. The complexity is — in the middle of COVID, changes had to be made. We had to bring in additional staff to deal with the evolving model, but we also had to deal with COVID at the same time.

I know that the staff we had in place early on were auxiliary-on-call staff to maximize the needs. Since that time, we are in the process of bringing in permanent staff on term positions — that's currently underway, as I understand it, with the department. The number we have right now is about 39 FTEs associated with running and managing the shelter.

So, it's a constant learning environment — the shelter works with an adaptive service process — so looking at managing the clients' needs — meaning that we just recently brought in — last October, for the member opposite — EMR support. We are working with Blood Ties Four Directions. We're trying to do additional testing sites so that we can protect the clientele there from more opioid overdoses — so, evolving initiatives, meaning that we need to adapt the service model so we can better align with the clients' needs.

I want to just say to the member opposite that I know that we have done everything that we possibly can to ensure that we stabilize the workforce there, but at the same time, it has been evolving and we have seen complex pressures within the shelter. In the last nine months, we have seen even more complexity, when it comes to COVID.

Ms. White: I appreciate that answer. So, 30 positions — that is what I believe I understand is required to run it — keeping in mind that it's a seven-days-a-week facility, 24 hours a day. I appreciate all that. I think that the shelter is incredibly important. I think that the people who work there are a critical aspect of that, which is why I was asking questions about training and why I am asking questions about term positions or auxiliary on call.

The reason is that, if you're auxiliary on call, you have no security — you don't. There was a question today in Question Period asking about auxiliary-on-call staff in the Department of Health and Social Services and what would happen if you were sick. Well, the extra \$2 an hour is supposed to be adequate. It's supposed to cover that.

The reason why I'm asking about the staffing model at the shelter is because the last nine months have been difficult. I'm happy to hear that the 20 transitional units are used. To ask about that, it was my understanding that those were going to be left open for people who needed to self-isolate.

If the minister can let me know if that is now permanent housing — so, folks who are there — are they on a longer term basis, or is it for the self-isolation that was spoken about somewhere earlier this year?

Hon. Ms. Frost: With regard to the 20 transition units, those 20 units — as I noted earlier — were transition units and were never occupied. What I understand now is that the department was rolling that up and switched the model. The model that is now in place is no longer a transient unit. It's using the Housing First philosophies. The foundation of that model is to ensure that it's someone's forever home, should they choose to be there.

So, working very closely with the Housing Corporation and looking at the whole business of housing with social supports and ensuring that the clients who are in there and who choose eventually to move out of that facility have, perhaps, the opportunity to move into the Housing First facility, should a vacancy open, or into a Yukon Housing unit — so the departments working very closely together.

During the height of COVID, the collective decision was to set aside 10 of those units in the event that we have an outbreak within that population base. The department made the decision not to fill those 10 — to reserve 10 units — and to set it aside in the event that there was a potential outbreak within that community.

At the moment, the department is now looking at moving very quickly to fill those 10 units. I understand that this will happen more quickly — just with the circumstances with COVID, we are seeing a slowdown. We will always reserve some of those units in the event that we have to self-isolate a client there.

The 20 units are generally for high-needs clients. They certainly require 24/7 services, so we have switched the model up. I am happy to make that note, because that wasn't the original intention.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for that. I appreciate that the model has changed from transitional. The conversation that I had here previously was: transition into where? I think the minister has just answered that question, which is that, in some cases, people will transition perhaps toward the Housing First model or toward something in Yukon Housing when they have been stabilized, but maybe not, and that is okay too. Just to repeat what I think I heard — currently 10 of those 20 units are occupied, and 10 will be filled in the near future. I appreciate that.

With the COVID restrictions, can the minister please let me know how many female and male clients are able to attend per night? How many people are able to stay in the shelter space overnight? Can she maybe tell me what it was when there weren't COVID restrictions?

Hon. Ms. Frost: With regard to the capabilities at the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter, the shelter itself was built to

actually only accommodate 25 guests a night. To be honest, there wasn't a lot of room for women. Pre-COVID, we were seeing up to 70 folks come there in one night. The staff had to make adjustments to the facility to accommodate everyone. Boardrooms had to be converted to safe places for clients to spend the night.

As of March, once COVID hit the Yukon, we saw an average of about 30 people a night, and that is following the protocols, meaning that the facility has to be significantly adapted to make accommodations. The rest of the clients who present at the shelter and who we are not able to accommodate are given shelter at one of the hotels.

Ms. White: What follow-up has the minister had with the community residents and businesses on the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter community safety plan?

Hon. Ms. Frost: Lots of discussions over the course of the two years around community safety planning — there were even some really great discussions and recommendations from the surrounding businesses about the potential good neighbour agreement, as an example. The move away from the good neighbour agreement because of legal reasons — it morphed over into this concept of a community safety plan for that facility and the surrounding community.

Because it's a community effort, the consideration — as we looked at exploring and expanding security services and at securing community planning for that area, we have to involve the City of Whitehorse in the discussions, along with Justice and Health and Social Services. There was a committee struck to look at developing an implementation model, or a recommended model, of safety for that area. I understand that this is being undertaken by the Department of Justice, and we are partners in that process, along with the City of Whitehorse because this is the city's responsibility.

So, we collaborated our efforts with community agencies and NGO partners, focusing on trying to look at addressing some of the major issues around that facility. Part of the process was to look at bringing in an expert. We have some really good tried models out there, like the one that is at the Kwanlin Dün — the community safety officer program and the wellness safety model there. Selkirk is doing something very similar, as is Vuntut Gwitchin.

This is something that our government is working toward and we are working across the departments to establish an engagement approach with a plan that would work with our community members when we look at additionally collaborating on a safety plan and enhancing safety in and around the shelter. My understanding is that this is underway. Of course, during COVID, things kind of slowed down, and they are now, I understand, being reinvigorated and the objective is to bring someone in who has the expertise in that particular area to assist the advisory committee.

Ms. White: It is just important to note that the report came out initially in May, so I was kind of looking toward actions — and I appreciate that working groups have been struck. What kinds of conversations have happened with community residents and local businesses since that report came out in May?

Hon. Ms. Frost: Just for the record, prior to the report coming out, I know that I and other members of Justice — the team — have met on four different occasions and had some robust discussions with our partners around the planning. Since that time — I am not able to give you any specific results of that. I would have to go back and consult with the team at Justice, as I know that there have been back-and-forth conversations with individual businesses and residents. Of course, it is difficult to do anything in terms of group settings during COVID. The staff have reached out to the businesses and are looking at some of the different pressures that we are still seeing there — looking at considering the impacts and looking at a uniformed approach when we start looking at the types of supports that are required in that vicinity of our city — of course, wanting to just highlight that we have an oversight committee that is working very closely together around the plan — implementing the plan and focusing really on keeping our vulnerable population safe during this time.

At the same time, we still have to ensure safety within that particular area, which means that our partners need to be at the table as well, with the complexities around gatherings and face-to-face type meetings — but there is still work being done behind the scenes.

Ms. White: I feel like, if I just keep asking questions about the issue, I'm going to get similar answers because I can appreciate that the minister doesn't have them right here. What I will ask is for a commitment for her to get me the answers to the questions that can't be answered here today. It's important to have conversations based on coming from the same understanding and the same facts. I think that's really helpful as we move forward.

I do not deny — I was in this House when the initial conversation started happening about that building. I had conversations with the Salvation Army at the time when they were going to be given this building. I was there and I had concerns — I've heard them echoed by the minister — including the fact that the building essentially goes to the property line. There is no room for outdoor space. There is very little room. The building is practically on the sidewalk. We considered that maybe where the benches are right now is actually probably not on the property line anymore but more on city property.

Has there been any discussion within the department to purchase the property next door?

Hon. Ms. Frost: Appreciating that it's complex and the site, as it is located, is not ideal — we're hearing this constantly from the businesses in the area, the school across the street, and the liquor store across the street. There are many challenges in that area. We also know that, at the same time, the city had proposed to do some infrastructure upgrades in that vicinity and on that particular street, which posed another complicating factor for the department.

There were resources set aside. I will venture to say, because I don't have it in front of me — but I think it was \$1 million that we had set aside in our budget to do some upgrading and modernizing in that facility.

We looked at every possible angle to try to mitigate and address some of the concerns. I know that we have had some really robust discussions with the mayor and council of the city to look at the shelter and what options we might have in terms of addressing the challenges of the guests at the shelter — the clients coming and going and perhaps disrupting the businesses and clients going into the businesses. We have looked at many alternatives.

I think that, at this moment in time, I can safely say that the department has put some temporary resources in place to try to mitigate some of the pressures — such as putting the benches in and doing renovations to the exterior — while still not putting any significant money or funding into any exterior retrofits until we get some resolution from the city around what they're going to do with the enhancement in that area. They have indicated now, I believe, that they may be pushing that out to 2024, so that is quite a way down the road.

Meanwhile, we still have the pressure and we still have to address the challenges. The resources that were put there to do the enhancements — you spend \$1 million in a year, but then you have to rip it down anyway because the work is going to get done by the city, which means that the street will have to be dug up and new infrastructure put in place.

So, not only is it just dealing with the surface right now and what we can do with the facility that we have acquired — enhancing, of course, safety for the guests and enhancing supports for businesses. I feel for everyone. I feel that these are challenging times. I appreciate the member's question because we are always trying to find solutions and appease everyone. At the moment, that is what I have to offer.

Ms. White: I appreciate that. It is indeed complex. I was grateful to see the shelter open and low-barrier, and I was grateful to see the Housing First initiative open because I fundamentally believe that a testament to us as a society is how we take care of our most vulnerable.

I know that the shelter issue is complex and that it's challenging. I don't think that necessarily trying to build outdoor space in front of the building is the solution. We might have to look at different ways, but I feel I could spend all my time talking about making space better for both clients and staff at the shelter.

I cannot understate enough how much I value the work that has been done there by the folks who work within that facility, which is why we have asked questions about training and why I ask about AOCs as opposed to term positions. What I would ideally like to see at some point in time is permanent positions so that people have the ability to plan a future around a job that they love. If you're in harm reduction, it is a passion. It is not just a job; it is a calling.

I really admire the folks who work there and always, with that in mind, try to see how I can help make it better.

The minister spoke about how, if there were more than the COVID-safe number of people who would attend the shelter for the night, clients were being sheltered at hotels. Can the minister give me an idea, right now, of how many hotel rooms are being funded by the Department of Health and Social Services?

Hon. Ms. Frost: We don't have that number at our fingertips because it varies from night to night. But if one could consider this for a moment — if we looked back at what we were seeing at the shelter pre-COVID — if you saw 70 clients in a night and we're now getting 25 — the difference of that 70 and 25 — those clients are now in a hotel room if they haven't acquired a space in the Housing First or if they are not in the permanent units at the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter. So, we are certainly seeing an increase because we can't accommodate, so we are making adjustments on a daily basis. My understanding is that the average we are seeing on a nightly basis varies from 10 to 20, but we do focus on trying to find permanent placements for those individuals.

I noted earlier, as we spoke about permanent housing and we talked about the transition units — which we are now modelling after the Housing First guidelines — the objective is really to find permanent housing for these individuals. The vision of housing transformation through the Housing Corporation, in collaboration with Health and Social Services, is really to provide essential services and supports for the individual so that they can find their forever home on a more permanent basis — rather than putting them in a hotel room every night if they are best suited to be in the shelter or best suited to be in a unit at the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter or the Housing First.

Intentionally — as a note — we work with our communities very closely to identify and get those clients back to their communities. We work with our community outreach workers to find permanent housing. I know that Yukon Housing has changed its model as well to ensure that clients are supported in a different way — more social supports and less on focusing on finding housing, but how we can help you to be successful.

Ms. White: I appreciate that. So, anywhere from 10 to 20, for example, Whitehorse Emergency Shelter clients would be in hotels, but under the department — like the social services aspect — how many clients are in long-stay hotels right now? How many? The reason I ask this question is that this was problematic before. The reason why I dislike long-stay hotels is that they typically don't have kitchen facilities, which means that, if you are lucky, you have a microwave; maybe you buy yourself a hot plate — which you are not really supposed to have in your room — and there is also a lack of security of tenure.

Currently, how many social assistance clients are in long-stay hotels?

Hon. Ms. Frost: I thank the member opposite for the question. Clearly, that's my major concern as well. What we have been working very hard on, on this side of the House, is to ensure that we use hotels less. It's not the ideal — especially when we have families living in long-term hotel rooms. It's not ideal and by no means is it acceptable.

The effort and the change with the profile of how we fund projects out of Yukon Housing Corporation — it is more through the housing initiative process, through the partnership build opportunities. I have to say that we have, through that process, brought over 600 units to the market in the last four

years. We've incorporated bringing on — supported and financed in partnership with the Challenge Disability Resource Group — we just are in the process of building the 47-unit facility. We've finished the Housing First project. We changed the model at the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter so that we could permanently house individuals.

Just now — most recently — we've announced that the federal government has — in collaboration with the Yukon — looked at the rapid housing initiative project and the Building Canada funding. With that, what we've done essentially is work very closely with our communities.

I made note of this last week — we're working very closely with the community of Watson Lake because it has been a community that really has not been supported. The closure of the Lakeview Manor displaced 22 individuals in that community and some of those individuals were seen here in our community.

We have moved quickly to initiating the rapid housing plan and we are doing that with our partners so that we can quickly make some units available. We have been working with the community of Mayo as well to try to build some units there. This is all to say that we are going to see less long-term stays in hotels. My understanding is that there are, on average — from what I understand from the numbers we are getting — I won't say that it is a number that is solid; it's changing every day — but I understand that there are approximately 30 social assistance clients who are in these long-term facilities. With the shift and the change recently — between Health and Social Services working together on the housing transformation model and working with these clients, the objective is to get them permanently re-housed.

Ms. White: That is my wish as well. I am not a fan of the long-stay hotel. I have seen terrible abuses of folks there being taken advantage of by systems, unfortunately.

Just really quickly — the minister referred to the Coast High Country Inn as the isolation centre. Is the isolation centre being staffed by employees of the Coast High Country Inn or by government employees?

Hon. Ms. Frost: That is a great question. The supports that are provided through the Coast High Country Inn isolation centre and the funding from the agreement that is established with that facility — the Northern Vision Development group covers all of the costs associated with the operations of that facility, including the cleaning staff and the kitchen staff.

There are times when we bring in additional staff from Health and Social Services for mental wellness supports or specialized supports like that, but for the general operation and maintenance of that facility, it's done by the owners of that facility.

Ms. White: I'm just going to veer to 22 Wann Road. I'm looking for a status of what's going on with that facility.

Hon. Ms. Frost: The facility at 22 Wann Road is now referred to as the Nts' aw Chua transitional support program for youth exiting care. The facility is providing outreach services to youth without disruption. Currently, we have semi-independent suites at that facility, a supported housing program. We have staff on-site during the day. I understand that

we have approximately 16 youth who occupy — so this is out of the day programming, in and out, so that number fluctuates.

Following all the COVID protocols, we continue to provide outreach support without disruption during this time.

The facility was intended to provide essential outreach services and life-skills training to youth from 15 to 24 who are eligible for services under the *Child and Family Services Act*. The member opposite would know this very well. Historically, youth at the age of 18 were displaced, essentially, and not given any supports to transition back into the community as young adults — so, lots of changes. What we heard during lots of debate in this Legislative Assembly was “Not in my backyard — they're going to get into trouble, they're going to do this, and they're going to do that”.

I can tell the member opposite that it has been very successful. The youth have used the facility and are being well-supported. We currently have seven youth in the facility — three in the semi-independent units, and we have four in the supported-living environment. We have staff there right now who continue to provide the youth with all of the necessary supports so that they can successful transition out of that facility — hopefully into permanent housing. That is the fundamental principle of why we changed how we conduct business here, on this side of the House, in terms of working very closely with Health and Social Services in dealing with individuals when we speak about housing with social supports.

We deal with the holistic approach to the individual — no matter your age — to help you to transition nicely into your forever home, whether it be a supported-living environment or into market housing — rent with employment. So, that is the objective of the Nts' aw Chua facility — to help provide opportunities for our young people in many ways, to acquire and get acquainted with what the community has to offer. That means that we have had significant elders from our community participate in that program. We have looked at working with our NGO partners as well in supporting our youth. I know that the counselling supports there are really phenomenal. Programming, including a variety of development — the university is nearby, and so the young people who are in that facility have their tuition covered, and they are supported so that they can essentially pursue and acquire the dream of their choice.

We also help them with assigning a counsellor to that young person so that they always have the direct lifeline and support when they need it. Social workers are on-site all the time — budgeting with the individual so that they can essentially use their minimal budget to stretch it as far as they can. As we know, I have young adults who are in university, so I know what it is like to get them to stretch their dollar, and it is the same thing in this facility.

We treat the young people as if they were our children, saying, “What do you need to be successful?” The really cool thing about that facility is that there is a lease agreement in place. The lease agreement is with the young person and the facility, so there are parameters that they must follow — upholding the tenancy rules and such. It gives them an opportunity to know what it's like to actually go out in the

world and acquire their own place in the general population and not in a supported environment. The idea is to be successful.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for that update. Just to be super clear, the Yukon NDP was never against that facility. We have met young folks who have literally aged out of the program into nothing. This was a critical piece of how to support and continue. I am hopeful and glad that it's there, because it means that we are giving people an opportunity.

When the minister spoke about youth in care, she said that it was up to the age of 24. I think that this is very important.

One of the questions I have is that, if a young person who has been in government care — and it's important to note that any death of a young person is tragic, and it's even more tragic if it's under unnatural causes — what is the department's responsibility at that point — if a young person dies before they turn 25 and has been in the care of government?

Hon. Ms. Frost: I want to just say that the safety of all of the youth in our care is at the top of everyone's mind. We know that 90 percent of the children in care are indigenous. We are working very closely with our indigenous partners to ensure that we have resources in place to provide essential safety nets for children so that we don't ever have to deal with the unfortunate circumstances that the member describes.

Of course, in the event that there is an experience like that, we would work very closely with our colleagues at the Department of Justice and the team to establish protocols, ensuring that any supports within that facility are put in place very quickly — also supporting the rest of the clients and youth there — and always trying to position ourselves so that it is from best practices and what we've learned from experience.

As a child and a product of that system, I can speak from my own lived experience. I know what it's like to live in residence. I know what it's like to try to transition and be supportive and flexible. I know what it's like to deal with systemic, pervasive racism. I deal with it every day. These children deal with it every day. We try to hold them up and support them so that they are successful and that they are well-supported as they move out of these facilities and back into the community with the tools that they need to essentially be respectful adults and successful adults in our society. That's our ultimate goal.

We have a responsibility. The department has the responsibility to oversee the unit there — the facility there. We also have a lot of responsibilities.

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

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

Motion agreed to

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I move that the Speaker do now resume the Chair.

Deputy Chair: It has been moved by Mr. Streicker that the Speaker do now resume the Chair.

Motion agreed to

Speaker resumes the Chair

Speaker: I will now call the House to order.

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

Chair's report

Mr. Adel: Mr. Speaker, Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 205, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21*, and directed me to report progress.

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

Are you agreed?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Speaker: I declare the report carried.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I move that the House do now adjourn.

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

Motion agreed to

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

The House adjourned at 5:29 p.m.