

**Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Tuesday, October 5, 2010 – 1:00 p.m.**

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

Prayers

DAILY ROUTINE

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

Tributes.

TRIBUTES

In recognition of World Teachers Day

Hon. Mr. Rouble: I rise today to honour teachers in Yukon and around the world. World Teachers Day has been celebrated on October 5 since 1994. It commemorates the anniversary of the 1966 signing of the UNESCO recommendation concerning the status of teachers. It is also an occasion to reflect on and to celebrate the essential role teachers play in our lives, in our children's lives and in our communities.

Teachers these days are responsible for far more than just the three Rs of reading, writing and arithmetic. In our rapidly changing world, teachers help create responsible local and global citizens, at ease with evolving technologies and able to make informed decisions about their health, the environment and other challenges. And with the help of Yukon elders, our teachers are also becoming custodians of culture, working to help many of our students to walk in two worlds and embrace their First Nation heritage.

Mr. Speaker, every day a Yukon teacher performs a minor miracle, giving children confidence in themselves and their abilities, opening new doors and new possibilities, or making a previously incomprehensible concept suddenly seem so easy to a frustrated student. To be a teacher is not just a label; it's a calling.

World Teachers Day is a chance to recognize the heroes of Yukon's classrooms: our teachers, educational assistants and remedial tutors. But World Teachers Day is also a time to praise the educational work of parents, the first teacher a child meets, and the hard-earned wisdom of our First Nation elders, teachers of entire communities.

Mr. Speaker, on most days, Yukon teachers are our unsung heroes and today is a time to reflect on their many accomplishments and remember the vital role they play in shaping Yukon's future and our future leaders.

Mr. Fairclough: I rise today on behalf of the Official Opposition and the Third Party to pay tribute to World Teachers Day. The United Nations' World Teachers Day commemorates the work of teachers and their contributions to society.

World Teachers Day is held annually on October 5 since 1994. World Teachers Day is an opportunity to bring to the public's attention the role teachers play in providing quality education at all levels, which enables children and adults of all

ages to learn and take part in and contribute to their local community and global society. They are helping to prepare this generation for the future through learning, education and motivation. These educators teach because they are dedicated. They teach because they love their job. It is their vocation.

In Yukon we are fortunate to have so many dedicated educators. Every day, in every community, many of our educators go beyond the call of duty to ensure that our children and students receive the best quality education they can. Our teachers have contributed to generations of learners as they strive toward making a difference in their schools and classrooms. They are also part of the community. They volunteer; they coach; they mentor.

On behalf of all Yukoners we offer our sincere thank you. You do your work with pride, dedication and a sense of duty that benefits this noble profession. Thank you.

In recognition of Library Week

Hon. Mr. Lang: I rise today on behalf of the House to pay tribute to Library Week in Yukon. Libraries are growing and changing to keep pace with our modern world. Technical advances have altered libraries significantly and will continue to do so as we use the Internet and other resources to find the information we need in our daily lives. Libraries are an entry into the world of knowledge. They are centres of lifelong learning and directly impact the lives of Canadians each and every day. Libraries are much more than a collection of books; they are information and community centres where people learn, engage, discover, and connect. Libraries open their doors, both physically, during library hours, and electronically through online portals that are open all hours of the day and night.

This year's theme for Canadian Library Month is "Opening Doors to the Future: Your Library, Your World". It recognizes how libraries are introducing new ideas, new stories, and new ways into the world around us, through both traditional and emerging technology. During October, libraries across Canada are planning activities to raise public awareness of the valuable role that libraries play in the lives of Canadians.

Watch for the special events taking place at Yukon's public libraries during this month. Take the opportunity to use your library card and see what your library has to offer. A Yukon public libraries card is free for Yukoners and delivers access to the full collection of Whitehorse Public Library and all 14 Yukon community libraries — books, DVDs, CDs, magazines, information databases and much more. Yukoners can access the library's catalogue anywhere there is a computer with Internet access. Books can be reserved or renewed on-line any time over the counter during library hours in our home communities. Through inter-library loans, Yukoners have access to library material from across the country.

Yukon is rich with library resources, including Yukon public libraries, Yukon Archives, public schools, Yukon College, and many special and government libraries that have collections in specific subject areas. Some of these libraries are planning special events during the month of October.

Public libraries will celebrate Yukon Library Week from October 1 to 8. Our special guest is Ontario writer and storyteller Itah Sadu, who has entertained children for over 20 years

with stories from the Caribbean, Africa and, of course, North America. Ms. Sadu will be telling stories in libraries throughout Yukon during Library Week to promote a love of reading and stories. We welcome her to the Yukon.

Library Month is a good opportunity to acknowledge how far we've come, how much Yukon libraries have changed and grown, and the excellent services our community libraries offer Yukoners today.

It is also a great time to take a look at the Kwanlin Dun cultural centre going up along the Whitehorse waterfront, as it will also be the home to a new Whitehorse Public Library. I invite you to join me in acknowledging our skilled library staff, the readers, learners, volunteers and partners who contribute to Yukon libraries, and to our vision of a better quality of life for all.

In recognition of Mental Illness Awareness Week

Hon. Mr. Hart: I ask my colleagues to join me in taking the time to raise awareness about mental illness in Yukon. This year Yukon has set aside October 4 to 15 as a time to focus on what it means to have a mental illness and how mental illness affects all of us.

Nearly 20 percent of Canadians — or one in five — will experience a diagnosed mental health problem at some point in their lives. Every year about 4,000 Canadians commit suicide, and mental illness is a factor in most of these suicides. Approximately three percent of Canadians live with a chronic mental health problem and many more of us are affected because we know someone who has a mental health problem.

Mental health problems are often invisible. Many sufferers do not seek help, often because they are concerned that revealing a mental health problem will have a negative impact on their work and/or their relationships. This stigma compounds the illness by saddling the sufferer with misunderstanding, rejection and ridicule. Stigma prevents many people from seeking help or assistance. While people speak freely about conditions such as cancer and diabetes, many of us shy away from speaking about mental health conditions such as depression, schizophrenia and psychosis. This has to change.

The Mental Health Commission of Canada believes, as one of their overarching principles, that the hope of recovery is available to all who have a mental health problem. For those who do seek help, it means that the journey to recover can be a shared journey between the affected individual, the family and the helping system. The sooner we start to accept mental illness in the same way we do physical illness, the sooner people will feel comfortable reaching out to friends and family members and receive the medical attention they need.

This year, a number of events throughout Yukon communities will help increase awareness of mental health issues. *The Soloist* is a film about cello prodigy Nathaniel Ayres, who is living with schizophrenia and who has become friends with a journalist, Steve Lopez. The film is being shown throughout Yukon communities this week and next.

In Whitehorse, Mental Health Services, Advanced Education and Challenge Community Vocational Alternatives are sponsoring a lunch at Shipyards Park on October 7. This lunch is being catered by the Bridges Café. Bridges is a newly formed

social enterprise sponsored by Advanced Education, which provides employment opportunities for individuals with mental health challenges. I encourage my colleagues to meet the staff of Bridges Café this Thursday.

I also want to acknowledge the hard work and commitment of the Yukon mental health professionals. They are the ones who work to improve the health outcomes and situations of our friends, families and colleagues who experience mental illness. Their work and passion make all the difference in many lives.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I would like to encourage all Yukoners to pay attention to their mental health, as well as the mental health of their friends and family members. Mental health is critical to living a full, engaged life — something we all aspire to. Thank you.

Mr. Cardiff: Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of the New Democrat caucus and the Official Opposition to pay tribute to Mental Illness Awareness Week. Depending upon whom you listen to, between one-third and half of us will experience a mental health disorder at some point in our lives, yet most of us struggle to know what to do when our family, our friends or our work colleagues struggle with mental illness.

We have talked a lot about social inclusion in the Legislative Assembly, and often those suffering with mental illness are stigmatized, and truly, we need to all work together here in the Legislature and as a society to reduce discrimination against those with mental health disorders if we are truly to become a socially inclusive society.

I'd like to take the opportunity to thank NGOs like the Second Opinion Society that provides an important advocacy in support work for people suffering from mental illness. They provide support to families and their friends who need assistance in dealing with their family members.

As the minister mentioned, there's a new venture in the Yukon called Bridges Café, which is a new social enterprise that provides employment for people who have mental health challenges. Bridges Café is now open weekdays for lunch at the Frank Slim Building at Shipyards Park. It's great to see this kind of programming in the Yukon, and I would encourage all to support this initiative. I'd also like to take this time to express many thanks to all the volunteers and the professionals who work on the front line to assist those afflicted with mental illness and who educate the public about what suffering and living with a mental illness is all about. Many thanks to those people. They are a great assistance to our society. Thank you.

Speaker: Are there any further tributes?
Introduction of visitors.
Returns or documents for tabling.

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Hon. Mr. Edzerza: I have for tabling with this House the Fish and Wildlife Branch Highlights, 2009-10, published by the Department of Environment.

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

Are there any reports of committees?
 Are there any petitions?
 Are there any bills to be introduced?
 Are there any notices of motion?

NOTICES OF MOTION

Mr. McRobb: I give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Yukon Party government to abide by the Speaker's letter of April 28, 2010 that expressed concern about members' use of tributes as an opportunity to honour themselves instead of honouring the efforts and achievements of others, something this government failed to do on Thursday, September 30, 2010 and twice again yesterday, by more appropriately bringing forward its political messaging in the form of a ministerial statement, which would allow opposition members to challenge any future such displays of partisan back-patting.

Mr. Cardiff: I give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Yukon government to immediately foster a public dialogue and seek advice in developing a fair, coherent and principled approach for compensating claim holders when public lands are withdrawn from mineral staking for wilderness areas, recreation, residential or other uses important to Yukoners.

Speaker: Further notices of motion?

Hearing none, is there a statement by a minister?

Prior to Question Period, the Chair will rule on a point of order raised Wednesday, September 29.

Speaker's ruling

Speaker: During debate on Motion No. 1138, the Minister of Justice said of opposition members, "Their accusations are tired and simply not the truth." The Leader of the Official Opposition then rose on a point of order and said the minister's comment violated Standing Order 19(h), which states, "A member shall be called to order by the Speaker if that member charges another member with uttering a deliberate falsehood."

In response the Minister of Education said, "Mr. Speaker, the Standing Orders prohibit identifying a specific member as stating an untruth. The Member for Pelly-Nisutlin certainly did not attribute that to a specific member in this Assembly."

The Chair believes that there is a point of order in this case. There may be cases where a comment directed toward a group of members is not out of order, even when a similar comment directed toward an individual member would be out of order. However, an accusation of not telling the truth is not one of them. The Chair believes that allowing such a comment would violate a fundamental principle of parliamentary debate — that members are to treat each other as honourable.

The Chair appreciates that all members of this House hold their views with some conviction and disagree, sometimes quite strongly, with views expressed by other members. However, to quote annotation 494 in the sixth edition of *Beauchesne's Parliamentary Rules and Forms*, sometimes the House has to "accept two contradictory accounts of the same incident."

Members should at all times treat each other with respect when addressing this House. Accusing one another, individually or collectively, of not telling the truth does not meet that standard.

We will now proceed to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Yukon College, university accreditation

Mr. Mitchell: It's time to plan for a comprehensive university in the Yukon — a university for northerners that is fully accredited to grant degrees. Yukon College has grown to offer many programs over the years. Establishing a comprehensive university in Yukon is the next step. This is not a new issue. It's well known that Canada does not have a comprehensive university in the north. It's also widely believed that we should. The Yukon Party government should be leading the way here, but they are not. Other people are.

A Canadian public policy foundation, for example, is asking Canadians to describe their vision for Canada's northern Arctic university. Has the Minister of Education made this a priority yet? Is he actively pursuing the creation of a comprehensive university in Yukon?

Hon. Mr. Rouble: Mr. Speaker, I would appreciate the opportunity here today to bring the member of the opposition up to speed. This government has changed the *Yukon College Act*, which has allowed Yukon College to become a degree-granting institution. This government has worked with Yukon College to address many of its needs, whether it's increasing the base funding or providing additional resources for additional programming.

We've work with our colleagues across Canada to have credential recognition more readily accepted so that Yukon students can do the first two years of an arts or science degree here at Yukon College and transfer to universities in British Columbia.

Mr. Speaker, the Government of Yukon has worked with University of Regina on the bachelor of social work and the bachelor of education program. We've worked with University of Alberta on a bachelor of science program. We're working with the University of Alaska on a Master of Public Administration program. We're working with the University of Northern British Columbia to offer a Master of Education program here in Yukon, for Yukon teachers. Mr. Speaker, we have 25 people right now taking a Master of Education program.

Not only are we working on building a comprehensive college that meets the needs of Yukoners, we're also increasing other skills and we're increasing opportunities for university education here at home.

Mr. Mitchell: The minister had lots to say but he didn't answer the question. A comprehensive university in Yukon is not unrealistic. It would require help to do this, but the help is there if we seek it. This government could ask our senator and his federal colleagues for help on this. This government could invite the Governor General to Yukon to give him the message that an Arctic university in northern Canada should be located right here in Yukon. This government could respond to the call from a Canadian public policy foundation

and present a vision for establishing Canada's northern Arctic university in Yukon. This government could, but they haven't and they won't. This government is far too busy tinkering with staffing levels in our local schools and fighting legal battles with the francophone school board.

Has the Minister of Education done anything or talked to anybody about the creation of a comprehensive university in Yukon?

Hon. Mr. Rouble: Of course, Mr. Speaker. Yes. I can't be much more straightforward than that. There are discussions that happened at the ministerial level; there are discussions that happened with the college; there are discussions that happened with others. I've had the discussion with the three northern education ministers. We've tried to get together on a number of different occasions, either by telephone or in person or at other meetings, to discuss this.

One thing that we're uniform in across the north is that we need to increase the post-secondary opportunities for all of us. The north isn't one homogeneous area. We have the areas of Nunavut, Northwest Territories and Yukon. We each have a responsibility to all our citizens and we need to increase opportunities, whether it's to increase the number of apprentices, which we're seeing; whether it's increasing enrolment at Yukon College, which we're seeing; or whether it's the increasing university opportunities, which again we're seeing.

We need to prepare Yukoners for Yukon opportunities, and this government is certainly taking steps to do that, and we're certainly working with the others.

On that point, Mr. Speaker, I'd ask the Liberals to offer their support when they see things like budget allocations to build new campuses in their community — vote for it. When they see opportunities to increase the capacity of Yukon College in the budget — vote for it. When they see opportunities to provide assistance to Yukon College, Mr. Speaker, the answer is straightforward: vote for it.

Mr. Mitchell: When we see a budget that we can believe in, we'll vote for it. Now, this minister likes to talk about the great things he achieves with his partners in education and about trying to get together to talk with his colleagues in the other territories. These partners in education are the same ones that he's currently fighting with when they go to court. The minister touts the glories of alliances with southern universities while Yukoners say goodbye to their children as they go elsewhere to get a university education. Way to go, Yukon Party government.

The minister could make this a priority. The minister could seek support from his Cabinet colleagues. The minister could step up to the challenge of making Yukon the right place to establish a northern university, but the minister won't and that's the problem. Why is a comprehensive university in the Yukon not a top priority for this Minister of Education?

Hon. Mr. Rouble: I'm not sure where the Leader of the Liberal Party is getting his information from, but whoever is providing that is incorrect. The Leader of the Official Opposition should look at the facts, and look at the support that this government has provided, not only for Yukon College, in changing the *Yukon College Act* to allow it to become a degree-

granting institution. I have worked closely with the ministers from Northwest Territories. I will continue to engage with the minister from Nunavut, who has just changed portfolios recently, and I look forward to meeting the new minister. This is an important issue. Yukon's economy is growing. Yukoners are having faith in Yukon. We need to prepare Yukoners for the Yukon opportunities. We're seeing that; we're seeing an increased number of apprentices; we're seeing increasing numbers of people at Yukon College; we're building more college campuses.

We're seeing more Yukon students attend university and come back home. That is one of the great things — seeing our kids get the education they need, whether it's here or away, and bringing it back and putting it to good use to provide the support and assistance that Yukoners need.

Question re: Burwash school

Mr. McRobb: As we mark World Teachers Day, I'd like to ask the Minister of Education about the fact there are no teachers working in the community of Burwash Landing. There are no teachers because there's no school there. The Kluane First Nation and others have long been urging the Yukon Party to establish a school in the community. One of the reasons is to avoid busing kids on the highway to Destruction Bay.

Now, in his first go-around with the Yukon Party, the MLA for McIntyre-Takhini promised a school and even set aside money for it in the budget, but this former Education minister was overruled by the Premier, who declared there's no case for it.

So does the current Minister of Education side with his predecessor or the Premier?

Hon. Mr. Rouble: The Yukon Party government takes education very seriously. That's why we're seeing the investments in education. That's why we've seen more teachers in today's education system than were in the education system when the Liberal Party was in power.

We've seen schools built — not necessarily in Yukon Party members' ridings, but in other jurisdictions in the Yukon.

The next project we're building is the replacement of F.H. Collins. We're working very closely with the community on that. This has been identified as a key priority and one that we're working very closely toward.

Mr. Speaker, I wish that every Yukon student had the opportunity to walk to the school that they wanted to, whether that was a public school or a Catholic school or a French immersion school or a French first language school. But in our reality — we do have to face it — we have large geographic areas to deal with and busing is a fact of life in Yukon communities. In fact, over 50 percent of Yukon students travel on buses and many on much longer routes than the one from Burwash Landing to Destruction Bay.

We've heard the concerns in the community; we're working with the community to address many of their issues. The next school that this government will be building will be a replacement of F.H. Collins.

Mr. McRobb: Mr. Speaker, we recall how the former Education minister resigned soon after his budget misfire and

campaigned on becoming the worst enemy of this Yukon Party government. We see how that turned out — another flip-flop.

This Yukon Party government has continually shot down any possibility of building a school in Burwash Landing. So it was quite a surprise when a local radio station, in August, reported the former chief of the Kluane First Nation saying a school based in Burwash Landing is close to being agreed upon with the territorial government. The new chief was reported as saying she's also working on finalizing projects from the previous government, including bringing a school back to Burwash. So who should Yukoners believe — this government or these First Nation chiefs?

Hon. Mr. Rouble: It's always a pleasure debating with this member, whether he's a member of the Liberal Party or, previously, when he was a member of the NDP. I certainly appreciate, though, that he has been consistent in his support for his constituents.

This government has a responsibility to all Yukon students throughout the territory. We certainly honour that responsibility. We do have the reality of mixed-grade classrooms for school busing in order to address the realities of our education system. We have, if not the lowest, one of the lowest student-teacher ratios in all of Canada. We have significant investments in all Yukon students and will continue to invest in those.

As I mentioned earlier, the next capital project that this government is embarking on is the replacement of F.H. Collins. This is a significant project, as indicated in the capital five-year plan, and it's one that I look forward to implementing to serve the needs of Yukoners, not only today but also in the future. Thank you.

Mr. McRobb: This Yukon Party government has flip-flopped on this issue for years now. The former Education minister promised a school and he even put the money in the budget. The Premier turned around and pulled the rug out from under him, declaring there was no case for a new school in Burwash Landing.

Then we hear from both the former chief and the current chief of the Kluane First Nation that a deal on a school is close to being agreed upon with this Government of Yukon. Obviously, this government says one thing publicly and does another thing in secret behind the scenes. It's no wonder Yukoners don't trust this government. It makes commitments, then reneges on them.

Will the Education minister confirm these negotiations are close to being finalized? When can Yukoners expect an announcement?

Hon. Mr. Rouble: It's awfully interesting when we hear Liberal Party members talking about flip-flopping and renegeing on promises.

Yukoners' memories are certainly not that short. This is the party that, one day, was building a CAT scan and the next day it wasn't building it, after a new minister came in; then it was. The only way we could tell which policy direction they were actually going in was to flip a coin, because that was the only consistent tool to find out which way the Liberal Party would go on an issue.

We also provide significant contributions through Community Services to build, in cooperation with the First Nation, a youth and elders facility in that community, and there are other options that are being discussed. I'm not sure if they are all feasible. They are certainly ideas that warrant looking into, but they have not been fully tested to ensure if they are feasible ideas or ones that meet health and safety standards or building code standards or even practicality standards, because when the member opposite is telling me to move a school to Burwash Landing, he's also telling me to close a school in Destruction Bay. It might be the Liberal philosophy to start closing schools, but it's the Yukon Party that wants to start opening schools and building new ones.

Question re: Peel watershed claims staking

Mr. Cardiff: Last week some ministers in this House made inflammatory statements that added little substance to the debate that we are having in the territory today on a subject of utmost importance to many Yukoners. I found their comments about the existing mineral claims in the Peel watershed and our options for dealing with them to be uninformed, irresponsible and very unproductive. If they had looked into how this issue was being dealt with in other Canadian jurisdictions, they would quickly realize that litigation is not the only way.

Was the Minister of Economic Development being deliberately provocative when he said in the Legislature last Tuesday, "What are you going to do when the lineup starts at the courthouse and the lawsuits start flying, when the government has to start laying out huge sums of money in embarrassment then try to settle these things out?"

Hon. Mr. Rouble: This government takes very seriously our obligations under the *Umbrella Final Agreement*, our responsibilities with Yukon First Nations and particularly the responsibilities laid out in chapter 11 regarding land planning.

We have embarked on a process; we're building upon the success of this. One only has to look at the north Yukon plan, which took a number of years to complete but which was completed under this party's watch. We've laid out a plan in conjunction with the four affected Yukon First Nations; we've put forward the timelines for that; and now the governments are going to the good work of working through that plan.

I appreciate the member opposite's comments on this. We'll certainly take them into consideration. We recognize that in this area there are not only environmental and economic considerations, but also other aspects that are important to Yukoners.

Mr. Cardiff: Well, the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources needs to get it right. This isn't about the chapter 11 process. This is about a government policy. Rather than trying to frighten people, this government should be showing leadership by initiating a debate, seeking advice, developing a coherent and principled approach for compensating the holders of mineral claims. Instead of raising the spectre of litigation, it should be fostering a public dialogue on how we can balance the expectations of the mining industry with the expectations of Yukoners, and that the decisions made about where and when mining occurs are done in a 21st century context. The Yukon is not the first jurisdiction in Canada to have to deal with finding

this balance. Both British Columbia and Alberta have had good regulations on their books for more than a decade.

When will the government take concrete steps to address the issues associated with the escalating conflicts that we're seeing between the 19th century staking regime, and the 21st century land use needs and values?

Hon. Mr. Rouble: I can't comprehend the understanding coming from the member opposite. Perhaps we'll send over a copy of the *Umbrella Final Agreement*. This process is about chapter 11. This process is about honouring and implementing the modern treaties. This process is about building a balanced approach, one that recognizes the importance of the environment and also recognizes economic opportunities.

This is all about honouring the *Umbrella Final Agreement* and chapter 11. To hear members opposite suggest that we just dispense with this in favour of some easier, quicker way — well, this government isn't about to do that. We have an obligation and we'll live up to that. We'll work with our partners in this process, as we have successfully done in other jurisdictions.

We will work collaboratively toward a final plan that incorporates a variety of land use activities within the Peel watershed and addresses the interests of the parties in a balanced manner.

Mr. Cardiff: I'm not suggesting we throw out the chapter 11 process. I'm suggesting that we respect it and have a policy so it can proceed without threats of litigation and the sowing of seeds of fear, and the pitting of one group against another, as this government is doing. The New Democratic Party would like to propose that we find solutions to the conflicts.

In British Columbia, a commission was set up to look into how the government could determine appropriate compensation for mining interests, and it said that a line must be drawn between exploration properties and advance properties.

Now, the NDP has a long history of supporting responsible mining and mining exploration. It's the one that established the mining incentives program and reopened the Faro mine. It has established things like the small business incentive tax credit and it would take steps to address these issues. When will the government develop a policy to determine fair compensation for claimholders when public lands are withdrawn?

Hon. Mr. Rouble: The government has been very clear. In February 2010, we announced a letter of understanding with the go-forward plan — the go-forward plan that looked at our obligations under chapter 11 about land use planning. We've done a plan review, we've done additional public consultation, and we're now continuing with the hard work.

I appreciate that the member opposite has brought up thresholds because that is an important point that all Yukoners should consider. Even in the area where we don't have specific land use plans, we still have those thresholds for development. That's addressed in our YESAA process, which does look at the different thresholds of activity. We don't allow irresponsible development to take place by happenstance out in the Yukon.

The responsible development that is allowed in the Yukon goes through our YESAA process, our permitting processes and our very strict regime. Of course we'll follow these policies and practices. We see the different thresholds that we have for activities and the level of examination that has to happen. That's the whole point of a YESAA process: one that examines and promotes responsible development through the territory. We'll continue to work with our YESAA process, our legislation, our regulations and our policies to address these needs now and into the future.

Question re: Lake Laberge zoning

Mr. Cathers: I'd like to follow up with the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources on questions I asked him yesterday. Two years ago, Land Planning branch began public consultations on a request by Takhini Hot Springs Ltd. to make major changes to the zoning for their property. My constituents in the area oppose that request by a large majority. They are against any change that reduces minimum lot size or allows the corporation to build condos. The corporation wants to reduce minimum lot size from 10 hectares down to as low as a fraction of one hectare. They also want an increase to maximum residential density that would permit up to one dwelling for 0.4 of a hectare.

Will the minister please confirm today that he will listen to the overwhelming public opinion and reject the application?

Hon. Mr. Rouble: I know the member opposite recognizes this is a challenging issue and a challenging case, not only because it's within the member opposite's riding — the Independent member's riding — but also because of his history with Energy, Mines and Resources portfolios and his recognition that he, as a minister, had to implement all our regulations fairly and consistently across the territory.

We've seen an application come in from a landowner to seek subdivision. This subdivision is allowable under our *Subdivision Act*. There are certain criteria and regulations on that. We've seen the words coming forward from the Takhini Hot Springs residents, where they have stated they do not oppose a subdivision application, as long as it is consistent with the current local area plan and the Hot Springs Road development area regulations.

We also recognize in this area development regulations package that there was an ability to transfer residential density. We'll work with this landowner; we'll respect his rights; we'll also respect the rights of the constituents out there. Through the hard work of the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources, we'll continue to seek a solution that addresses the interests of all involved.

Mr. Cathers: Perhaps the minister may be confusing the question I asked in referring to a specific application that the same corporation did make to subdivide under existing zoning rules. I'm referring to the application that was made to change zoning regulations, which requires the minister's signature and Cabinet approval if that request goes forward.

Yesterday, when I asked the minister whether he would be listening to the overwhelming public objection to Takhini Hot Springs' application to change the zoning for their property, he ended his response by talking about the importance of seeing

growth and economic activity, and by saying that when there are opportunities, we really do need to seize them. Is the minister aware that if other businesses, and in fact almost every single landowner in Hot Springs Road area, were allowed the same opportunity to reduce minimum lot size and develop condos, they would also benefit economically? Does the minister see a reason why one corporation should be given a unique economic opportunity, which requires rewriting the rules, while others should be denied that opportunity?

Hon. Mr. Rouble: The Yukon Party ran on a platform of increasing responsible economic prosperity throughout the territory, and that's certainly what we're going to do. We don't pick favourites. We don't pick someone to work for and someone not to work for. This government and the Department of Energy, Mines, and Resources certainly take this application, and the variety of different applications coming through throughout the territory, very seriously. We also take our responsibility toward community planning very seriously also. It provides certainty, not only to the citizens but to the companies involved.

The Department of Energy, Mines and Resources will continue to work on this case in order to identify a solution that will meet the interests of the parties involved.

Mr. Cathers: I'm compelled to remind the minister that this is not a case of a few residents objecting to an application for a change to the zoning, nor is it a few people who oppose all development. Residents who oppose the application to change the zoning are from across the political spectrum and include business owners and some very pro-development people. At the heart, this issue is about whether local area plans and zoning are supposed to reflect the interests of area residents and help protect their quality of life by providing certainty of use, or whether those rules are imposed on them by YTG and subject to being changed, no matter what the public says.

Over 100 residents signed a petition against this application to change the zoning. The overwhelming majority wants the rules to stay the same and not be changed for one corporation or, as the minister said, for favourites to be picked. The question is this: will the government listen to the public, keep the rules the same and reject the application?

Hon. Mr. Rouble: We've heard loud and clear from the constituents who signed the petition that they do not oppose a subdivision application, so long as it is consistent with the current local area plan and the Hot Springs Road development area regulations.

I have made a commitment and I'll make it once more for the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources to work with the interested parties to ensure that we're working to meet the interests of all involved, to ensure that we have the certainty that is afforded through our land planning practice, that we are providing for economic opportunities and that we're providing for the best possible potential use of land.

Question re: Youth shelter

Mr. Mitchell: Yesterday I asked the Health minister for a progress report on a new youth shelter. His response revealed the government's opinions about youth homelessness, which we find extremely disappointing. The minister said,

"...some people will be homeless no matter what we do; it's their choice — they want to be... They just want to remain homeless."

Perhaps it's easy for the minister to shirk his responsibility by saying this is not his problem. The reality is —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

Speaker: Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources, on a point of order.

Hon. Mr. Rouble: For the Leader of the Liberal Party to once again stand up and impugn that a member of this government is shirking their duties and responsibilities — that is certainly contrary to our Standing Orders.

Mr. Mitchell: I think there's no point of order, Mr. Speaker, so I'll let you rule.

Speaker's statement

Speaker: The Chair actually gets to make the decision. Please give me a chance to consult with my staff and I'll get back to you. The Leader of the Official Opposition has the floor.

Mr. Mitchell: Perhaps it's easy for this minister to say this is not his problem. The reality is that this is a serious social issue that requires taking clear action. Is it this government's opinion that some homeless children shouldn't be helped because this Yukon Party government sees their current situation as a personal choice?

Hon. Mr. Hart: As I indicated to the member opposite yesterday during our discussions with regard to this subject, this government is doing a substantial amount to support youth in all categories, to assist them in all matters and to get them back to being fruitful members of the general public.

We have services that provide emergency shelter when needed. We have day programs that are done through many programs throughout the Yukon, provided by NGOs as well as Department of Health and Social Services to assist youth with their problems and to assist them in ensuring they can get back into the safety of a facility, either through our services or through other services.

Mr. Mitchell: Yukoners are looking to this minister to take action, to solve problems, and the statement that some kids are just destined to be homeless because they choose to be is not acceptable to me. We don't think this is an acceptable comment from any party elected to serve the needs of Yukoners.

This may be a difficult issue and it won't be solved overnight, but such indifference to this matter will only perpetuate the problem. Does this government believe that denying the issue of youth homelessness will help to provide a solution to the problem?

Hon. Mr. Hart: As I stated yesterday, we on the government side have done a substantial amount of work with regard to youth over the past eight years by assisting those individuals to have a better life here in the Yukon. We continue to work on those matters.

The member opposite indicated it will not be solved overnight — yes, this is true. This is also what I advised the member opposite yesterday. It didn't happen overnight and it won't be solved overnight. Also, homelessness is an issue right across Canada, if not across North America. So it's a big issue — a large issue — in all jurisdictions throughout Canada. It's not something that's just relative to the Yukon or this specific territory.

Mr. Mitchell: The Health minister stated that this government tries to assist homeless, at-risk youth. This government should try harder. Yesterday I told the Health minister that it's not acceptable for kids who are 13, 14 or 15 years old to remain homeless, yet this remains a fact in Yukon. The Minister said, and has just repeated, that homelessness is not just relevant to the Yukon — homelessness is relevant across every jurisdiction in Canada. That may be true, but I don't represent every jurisdiction in Canada. I represent the Yukon, and I won't accept that there are kids on the streets in Yukon and the Health minister is telling me that it's their choice to be homeless.

Again, for the third time, besides painting sidewalks, what is this government doing to provide a safe and a secure place for youth at risk?

Hon. Mr. Hart: I'll repeat what I've said previously on this issue. This government has provided assistance to youth over the past eight years. We continue to provide those services through NGOs, through Health and Social Services, and through our receiving homes for children at risk. We provide assistance for many issues throughout the government, whether it is through the Youth of Today Society or other aspects, but we on this side of the government are providing assistance, where needed, to ensure the safety of our youth. In fact, the temporary relocation was to ensure that we could protect the youth, and we were being very conservative and made that adjustment so that we could ensure their safety.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

Notice of opposition private members' business

Mr. Cardiff: Pursuant to Standing Order 14.2(3), I would like to identify the item standing in the name of the Third Party, to be called on Wednesday, October 6. It is Motion No. 1126, standing in the name of the Member for Mount Lorne.

Mr. McRobb: Pursuant to Standing Order 14.2(3), I would like to identify the item standing in the name of the Official Opposition to be called on Wednesday, October 6, 2010. It is Motion No. 1178, standing in the name of the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

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

Mr. Cathers: I wish to advise the House that on Thursday, October 14, I will be pairing with the Minister of Justice, so that she may represent the Yukon at a meeting of federal, provincial, and territorial ministers responsible for Justice.

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

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

Motion agreed to

Speaker leaves the Chair

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Chair (Mr. Nordick): Order please. Committee of the Whole will now come to order. The matter before the Committee is Bill No. 21, *Fourth Appropriation Act, 2009-10*. We're in general debate on the Department of Health and Social Services. Do members wish a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

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

Bill No. 21 — *Fourth Appropriation Act, 2009-10* — continued

Department of Health and Social Services — continued

Chair: The matter before the Committee is Bill No. 21, *Fourth Appropriation Act, 2009-10*. We will now continue with general debate of Vote 15, Department of Health and Social Services.

Hon. Mr. Hart: With the greatest deference to the members opposite, this issue has become a bit contrived, and the removal of beds — that is beds, not children — was temporary in nature and due to an abundance of caution as a result of the necessary renovations to the Sarah Steele Building. Those beds will be returned within a month. The place we chose was the property we already own, staffed with employees who are already on the payroll. Take-up of those beds continues to be very light. As I indicated yesterday in the House, the cost for social welfare programming continues to rise exponentially. This is not sustainable over a long period of time. Over the past five years costs have increased by more than \$13.6 million, an increase of approximately \$26,000, as I indicated yesterday. Presently, these costs exceed \$66 million, which again is a serious commitment for a jurisdiction of our size, something that I indicated yesterday.

Of this gross budget we spend approximately \$35 million on children and youth and families this year alone. This is a measure of this government's commitment. It's just that the rate of growth in this area cannot continue to lay such a large

claim to our territorial resources. It hardly needs to be said that increases like this are not sustainable. The member opposite talked about sustainability of the health care system, and we are trying to work on all issues related to health care and how we can improve efficiency to reduce the long-term aspect of the health care system.

The next point I wish to make is that when a new program is being proposed — especially one that, in its entirety, is going to be more than \$2 million — it has to be one that is soundly based on careful analysis of need and a business case for sustainability and its socially inclusive outcomes. We have shelter arrangements that are administrated through Skookum Jim. The beds are available. No one goes without shelter if it's needed. Day programming is in place, and that includes Angel's Nest, which receives, as the newspaper indicated, \$220,000. Youth between the ages of 17 to 21 years are provided with support to attend school, and we look at providing work or other programming to assist them.

Rigorous research on this special population is sparse, making it difficult to capture an accurate and complete picture — a subject that the member opposite even admitted was difficult to compile. Despite its limitations, recent research describes homeless youth as a large and diverse group. Many homeless youth have multiple, overlapping problems, including medical, substance abuse, emotional and mental problems. Literature suggests that comprehensive and tailored services are needed, which will address both immediate and long-term needs of homeless youth. Where appropriate, services should include assistance with meeting basic needs as perceived by youth as a gateway to other needed services. In addition to serving those already homeless, interventions are needed to prevent homelessness among at-risk youth. In other words, we must be careful when proposing designing and funding solutions that accomplish what we want — to achieve social inclusion of these youth, to have them re-enter the mainstream of society.

A little reading on this issue is quite instructive. When I speak of homeless youth, I mean minors who have experienced literal homelessness on their own — that is youth who have spent at least one night either in a shelter or on the streets without adult supervision.

The first thing is that research on homeless youth has major limitations. Rigorous research on this special population, as indicated, is sparse, making it difficult to capture an accurate and complete picture of the homeless youth. Research would benefit from studies that include large representative samples, reliable and valid measures, comparison groups, assessments of strength, as well as problems of homeless youth.

In the Yukon, these are significant issues for us, given our small size. Research with special populations would likely benefit from more input from service providers, policy makers and the youth themselves. This is why we rely on the wisdom and the experience of Skookum Jim. This organization has credibility and familiarity with young people. They have access to programming and counselling resources. They are connected with NGOs that offer alternative support.

Many youth have multiple overlapping problems. Many come from homes where family conflict is common. A wide range of health and behaviour problems have been documented among homeless youth, including substance use, emotional and mental problems, and medical problems.

While some of these problems appear to be long-standing, others are probably exacerbated by the stressful experiences of homelessness. Sometimes those on the streets resort to illegal activities, such as prostitution or drug dealing, in order to survive.

Many youth are victimized while homeless. When I said yesterday that some youth choose to pursue a street lifestyle, I did not mean that this was always a choice made freely. The reasons for behaviour and individual choices differ widely, so we must be careful to support those programs which we are confident will not tend to perpetuate street culture, but offer alternatives to that culture. This is called an evidence-based approach.

Also, when I said yesterday that sanctimony has no place in this debate, I meant that the motion can easily get the better of us, especially where youth and young adults are concerned. We have to be clear-headed about this issue. When, for example, it becomes unattainable to maintain an old receiving home for youth, our government replaced it. This was no modest investment. We invested approximately \$1.5 million, exclusive of the transition and other costs. I had unanimous support around the caucus table for this facility. The way forward was clear.

The fact is, according to the literature, few interventions with homeless youth have been formally evaluated. The limited literature suggests that comprehensive and tailored services are needed that address the needs perceived by youth as a gateway to other needed services. This is why the presence of Skookum Jim is so essential to our program.

Other needed services include screening and treatment for health, mental health, substance use problems, reconciling family conflict and education and/or vocational training. We already have some of these programs — the trick is to engage the small population into pursuing these alternatives to the street lifestyle — a large challenge — and we need to recognize that many of these young adults can make these decisions for themselves.

I recognize that, in addition to serving those few who are already homeless, interventions need to be designed to prevent homelessness among at-risk youth. This will require cooperation between all levels of government, as well as NGOs. It will require a better understanding of the root causes of homelessness among our youth in Whitehorse, and around the Yukon, and a better understanding of what works, something that we're already pursuing as part of our social inclusion strategy.

Mr. Mitchell: Well, this is quite an emotional issue, and I will accept that as a form of an apology, or a retraction — what the minister had to say about his comments yesterday about being sanctimonious. First of all, I would like to just note for the record, I was struggling to come up with the name of the study yesterday that was done some three years ago; it's called *More Than A Roof: Call to Action for a Youth Emergency Shel-*

ter/Safe Home, and I gave an incorrect title yesterday. It strikes me that there is an acknowledgement by a lot of NGOs, a lot of people and perhaps by the minister — certainly by the members of the Official Opposition — that there is a need. There seems to be some debate and discussion over quantifying the need: how great is the need, what are the actual numbers, do the numbers vary? All of these are challenges, Mr. Chair, but the fact is that there is a need.

I attended meetings of the Whitehorse Youth Coalition three years ago and more than three years ago when they were held — as I said yesterday — at Yukon Family Services, which is now known as Many Rivers. At the time members of the Department of Health and Social Services were attending. They were providing constructive suggestions to those meetings and they were talking about the need to quantify the issue. It was a different Health minister. The minister prior to this minister — he attended some of those meetings, and here we are three years later and we're hearing that we need to quantify the issue. I think the minister may agree that it's very hard to get fixed numbers on this issue, because we're not talking about young people who necessarily never have a safe place to call home.

There are many young people in this territory — sad to say, I think we're all aware of it — who may have a place to call home part of the time and it may be a perfectly safe and adequate home — a foster home, a family situation, living with grandparents, living with aunts and uncles — part of the time and then there are other times when it's not safe, it's not secure. There are times when the adults are abusing alcohol or other substances and kids leave because they no longer feel safe. There are times when adults are fighting and it's dangerous for people to be there, or too upsetting. There are times when there may be adults in the home, and they may be family relatives, who the young people feel are acting in predator-like ways, and they leave home. It may be that Monday to Thursday it's perfectly fine, and Friday someone gets a paycheque and it's no longer fine on Saturday night, because there has been too much substance abuse. It's very hard to get fixed numbers, but the numbers aren't zero.

Yes, we have a harsh climate here, so in January and February, people aren't sleeping under bridges. I'll just read some excerpts from this report. Some of these are quotes; the first few will be. I'm sure the minister is familiar with this report, but not everybody listening will be.

"I've spent time on the streets; I know what it's like to freeze; I'm staying with the guy I'm sleeping with." — 17-year old female. "Sometimes I lied about my age so I could get a bed at the Salvation Army." — 18-year-old talking about when he was 14. "I know what it feels like to walk around Whitehorse until 7:00 a.m." — 18-year-old female. So there's a problem.

This report examines it and did an actual survey. The authors of the report sent out a hundred questionnaires, and it's co-authored by Heather Finton and Jen Jones, both well known, no doubt, to the member opposite. Of the hundred questionnaires that they sent out to organizations, service providers and individual Yukoners, they received 28 responses and 27 of those were completed surveys. In addition, there were 18 youth

surveys completed so they had a total of 45 survey respondents. "Ninety-eight percent of those who replied to the survey" — I'm quoting from the report — agreed that there is a need for a youth shelter in Whitehorse. Over 90 percent indicated that youth age 16 plus would access an emergency shelter. Eighty-seven percent of respondents stated that youth under 16 would access a shelter.

"When asked what services would support youth in accessing an emergency shelter, 87 percent said it was important to have a downtown location to be open 24 hours and have transportation to pick up youth."

There were other suggestions: have bilingual staff, provide cultural-based programming, serve nutritious food and adhere to the First Nation food guide, have trained staff to deal with crisis and referrals, provide more than a bed, provide support for clients from existing services — YFSA, ADS, Kwanlin Dun, and Kaushee's.

"Sixty-seven percent of the surveys indicated that intake should take place all day, and 58 percent stated that the shelter should be open all day." There's a recommendation in the report the safe home emergency shelter will provide safe and secure accommodation for youth 16 to 21 years of age. The report asks: "Issue: Under what circumstances should youth be offered shelter? Recommendation: Shelter should be available to any youth who has no other safe option for shelter, particularly youth who are victims of family violence or other threats to their safety. Staff should be trained to help youth assess their shelter options on intake.

"Issue: How long should youth be able to stay? Recommendation: Youth should be able to stay until they are able to identify an appropriate next step for shelter or housing, or their crisis has subsided.

"Issue: Should the shelter accept youth who have been drinking or using drugs? Recommendation: The shelter policies should outline a process to accept inebriated youth in situations that protect youth, staff, and volunteers from unsafe behaviour.

"Issue: How can the shelter safe home effectively meet the needs of First Nation youth? Recommendation: The shelter should be managed by, or have a working relationship with, the local First Nation organization for program delivery."

Now this is one that the minister's department has taken up. I'm sure that this is the rationale behind the association with Skookum Jim Friendship Centre, and that's a good approach, but it's not a complete approach. Skookum Jim has said they can't afford to operate a 24-hour-a-day shelter. The minister made reference during Question Period, I believe, or earlier in his remarks, to the work being done by the Youth of Today Society. So what we have is a situation where it's like putting one's finger in the hole in the dam. For part of the day, Skookum Jim is trying to manage the intake and provide some counselling, then children are being housed at the Sarah Steele Centre, except right now when they're temporarily housed elsewhere, but that's only until I think it's 9:00 in the morning; then they have to leave again, so they go to the Youth of Today Society.

So what we've got is kids wandering from pillar to post, being provided service by effectively three different organiza-

tions, each of which probably has a different approach and a different regimen and a different philosophy on how to provide the counselling and the service.

What we're saying is that it's time to unify this. It's time to come up with a single, coordinated, dedicated approach to deal with youth at risk. The minister says we need to quantify it; I'm not suggesting whether it should be four beds or 10 beds. I'm saying that it should be one holistic approach where youth who are at risk are confident that they can receive services and not be judged but, over time, be helped when they need it.

I don't think we're necessarily saying it should be \$2 million or \$4 million. I'm not putting a budgetary figure on it. We're saying that what we're dealing with is a patchwork of solutions and we need one unified solution, and I want to hear the minister say that's what we're working toward — and then we can move on.

Hon. Mr. Hart: Well, it's kind of interesting to hear the member opposite make a few statements that he did. I think what I'd like to do first of all is say that the government, as well as all the NGOs, operate on the aspect of really what is in the best interest of the child or youth in this particular case that we're discussing.

The member opposite talked about a home for these youth. A shelter is never going to be a home; it's never intended to be a home. A shelter is only a temporary facility until such time as we can work with this youth to either provide education or training to get him or her back into the mainstream, to assist with getting them to either operate on their own or work within society itself.

The shelter is never made to be a permanent facility for youth. It's a loaded phrase — temporary measures will never be a home, as I stated.

We can and do provide shelter. We provide support. We do this on a regular basis. No one goes without shelter. The Skookum Jim program has been in place for well over two years. We've never been unable to provide shelter services for youth downtown. We haven't been able to set up a taxi service, but the whole reason for the option being downtown is so that the facility is accessible by foot.

We also have emergency numbers that allow Skookum Jim to be accessed and, from there, we provide services through Skookum Jim and other NGOs, as well as Health and Social Services, to assist our youth when needed.

The member opposite talked about working on data collection and getting this information on homeless youth. That's exactly what we're doing. This government is working with the stakeholders on obtaining the information from this group in question through these NGOs that have access, and we will be working with those stakeholders to dissect the information and come up with some information that we can go forward on, to try to make recommendations on which way we can go to assist these youth who, in many cases, as I indicated previously, have themselves provided some input.

Yes, we are doing that; yes, we will be providing that information. Again, it'll be hopeful that it will be in the best interests of the child — not only here in Whitehorse, but throughout the Yukon.

Mr. Mitchell: Well, the minister says that it was never intended or made to be a home; it's a temporary shelter. We can agree on that. But it's a safe home for when a permanent home is not available. The minister says no one goes without shelter. Well, I've spoken to people who would challenge that. The minister says we haven't been able to set up a taxi service. I'm not sure what the minister means by that, other than there are options — certainly, there's the Outreach van, and there are other options that could be used to transport youth because they may be youth who will need to make a phone call from an area in Whitehorse, other than downtown, saying: "I'm in trouble. Can someone get me?" Whether somebody is in Porter Creek or Copper Ridge or Granger or McIntyre or Riverdale, they may not be able to get to the shelter and they may be in trouble. So I'm hoping that if an emergency number is called that that is accessible.

But what's troubling to me is that the minister still talks in the future tense, and he says that the government will be working with the stakeholders to get the numbers. When the Member for Lake Laberge was the minister, two and a half years ago, he said the same thing: "We're going to work to get the numbers". What has happened in the past two and a half years? Why hasn't this been done? This minister is the fourth Health and Social Services minister that I can remember since I was elected to this Assembly. Do we throw the information out each time and go back to zero and start over? The former Member for Klondike was the Health and Social Services minister; the Member for Porter Creek North was the interim Health and Social Services minister; the Member for Lake Laberge was the next Health and Social Services minister; and now the Member for Riverdale South is the Health and Social Services minister. Surely this can't be that complicated an issue.

So, again, can the minister make some form of commitment here today that gathering the numbers is not going to take three more years and four more ministers? Well, I guess it won't take three more years before an election because we've only got 12 months left — at most. Is the minister working toward coming up with a single solution, or is it the minister's intent to go forward with the continued patchwork of dealing with one solution at night and a different one in the day?

Hon. Mr. Hart: As I stated previously, sheltered facilities are not homes. Shelter facilities Outside are not homes. They're not operated as homes. They're not intended to operate as homes. I will agree with the member opposite — they are intended to provide a safe place for youth and adults, when needed. But I will disagree with the member opposite — homelessness is a very complex situation — not only here in the Yukon, but right across Canada — right across North America, for that matter. It is a very difficult and complex issue. If it were that easy, there would have been a solution for it brought up by every other jurisdiction in Canada, as well as the United States.

I will say that, yes, we are currently working with the NGOs on the housing situation for our homeless here in the Yukon. That's currently being done. Right now, Skookum Jim Friendship Centre is our first line of approach to try to connect

with home and family, and we also have our social workers who assist in providing assistance and counselling to our youth.

I will say that Skookum Jim has been very successful in getting individuals back with their families through direct contact with youth.

We anticipate that the information we're working with, with our partners and the stakeholders in this data collection, is very critical, because it has to go across all government departments. We have to ensure that any solution that's coming up, as the member opposite indicated, is not just patchwork but will be something that's administrated and can be adjusted throughout all departments of the government, not just Health and Social Services, not just a shelter and not just dealing with youth. We have to look at the big picture; we have to look at the social inclusion aspect of everyone; we have to and need to address the information based on the data collection we get.

As the member indicated, it's very complex to get the data, to obtain that data. I'm not going to say that there are no homeless youth out there, because I think we all know there are, but what is the number? What's required? What is homelessness? As I indicated, the phrase — the member opposite indicated, four days a week is fine, three days isn't — is that homelessness or are we providing shelter?

Currently we do provide expansive services through Health and Social Services, through our social worker on a daily basis, in addition to the services provided through Skookum Jim. We know the Outreach van does provide services to our youth at risk on a nightly basis, so they too are fully aware of the situation out there. We have funded that particular van on a regular basis to assist with those youth at risk, as well as provided food and warm clothing for those individuals.

We also have to work with youth to develop training and education to assist them to become independent, as I indicated earlier. We're not there to provide a permanent home in our shelter facility or in our emergency shelter facility. We want to get these individuals back into the mainstream, so we need to get them educated or provide training to do that, but again, we can work with our stakeholders to determine what those numbers are, where it is needed, what kind of training is being provided and how we can work, as I stated. We're working through all the other departments to ensure that we have a package that's going to address the issues and not just one issue for the Department of Health and Social Services.

Mr. Mitchell: Let the record show that we can all agree that we do not envision a youth shelter as being a permanent home, so we don't have to debate that any more. Let the record show that we can all agree that the goal should always be to either reunite children and youth with their families or to place them in another stable and safe environment. We don't have to argue or debate that any more.

When the minister was on his feet, he seemed to be asking me questions: "What are the numbers? We don't know." Well, I don't know either. I have a staff of four. The minister has a staff of dozens and dozens. He talks about "interdepartmental", so he's got a staff of hundreds and hundreds. He has two of them with him today.

Can the minister tell us today, or tell this House, when does he envision having finished identifying the problem so that we can start moving toward the solution?

Hon. Mr. Hart: I guess we will agree with some of the member's comments with regard to the shelter so that we can move on. I'd like to reiterate the fact that we always provide emergency shelter services to those in need. Everyone who needs a place to sleep is provided that place to sleep. Does that mean that we supplement the role of families or First Nations? No, of course not; it is to ensure that those who are on the streets have recourse for shelter and also to understand what it is, why they are on the street and to determine the proper interventions.

This also means that one size doesn't fit all, and the cookie cutter doesn't fit all situations.

We have done a survey on homelessness, as I indicated earlier, in conjunction with our stakeholders, and we are hoping to have that information available soon. Right now it's being analyzed so that we can ascertain what the information really tells us. We need to understand the problem better and also look at what solutions are being presented, and which ones can work, and how we can get it done. So I will say that, to date, we have not turned away any youth due to overcrowding. We've always had sufficient room for the youth who need it and for those who request the special shelter equipment.

Mr. Mitchell: We'll continue to keep our eye on the minister's progress. I'm going to move on because there are other issues I'd like to address, and I know that the Member for Mount Lorne — the leader in the House of the Third Party — has questions he wants to ask as well. I fully expect that he may come back to this same issue. Perhaps he'll be able to get a few more answers out of the minister on the progress on this issue than I have been able to. We will see.

Another identified need that has been raised by, among others, an organization called the Northern City Supportive Housing Coalition, which is a coalition of other groups — I know the minister is aware of this — is the need for supportive housing in Yukon. One identified clientele group is people who are living with the effects of FASD, which is a lifelong condition. The concept, as the minister is probably aware, is that this group — there are other groups: some people who are living with some mental health issues, some people who are recovering from addiction issues. There are a number of potential users: people who are living with some disabilities, who are difficult to house and find it difficult to be fully responsible for their own housing arrangements, yet there is no institutional need. They don't need to be in some form of a completely government-run facility. They need a transition-type facility, where there is support in place.

This group has identified the possibility of a 20-room facility — or 20-apartment facility — call it what you will. It could be a different number and it's not necessarily something the government has to build, but rather support. One possibility that has been raised by the executive director of Challenge is that they're looking to replace their own building, which is downtown, just opposite the waterfront and conveniently across the street from FASSY's headquarters. They're looking at re-

building the Challenge facility with living units above. So that's one possible arrangement with a non-governmental organization that owns land and has equity. That might be a solution, but there are others.

Does the minister have anything he can tell us on the government's view of working with non-governmental organizations, or the government itself, toward creating some supportive housing in Yukon?

Hon. Mr. Hart: With regard to this housing conglomerate, we are fully aware what the intent is. We have been in discussions with Challenge; we have been in discussions with FASSY; we have been in discussions with this group itself. We are also in early discussions with the Yukon Housing Corporation on this particular project. We are just in the early stages of discussion with all these groups. In addition, this government has made a request of this group to make a presentation of their concept to us, and we anticipate that will take place sometime during the middle of this month.

Mr. Mitchell: I thank the minister for the information. Now, this group — the Northern City Supportive Housing Coalition — has identified one possible funding source for a project like this as being some of the federal funds that have been made available over the last several years to provide additional housing infrastructure and affordable housing in the north — particularly in the Yukon.

There was a \$50-million fund of which the Yukon transferred \$32.5 million to First Nations and retained \$17.5 million for other purposes. Then there was an additional — I think it was \$53 million — fund under the current federal government. It's unclear to me whether any of those monies are still uncommitted and therefore available, or whether they have been all committed to projects. Since the minister has indicated he has been in discussions with Yukon Housing Corporation, are there any such funds left that would be available to apply to this project, or are all such funds already committed?

Hon. Mr. Hart: As I stated, we're in early negotiations and discussions with this group, as well as all the aspects of the group — both FASSY, Challenge and the group itself. Until such time as we sit down and work out what options are going to be taking place, of course, we will be unaware of what kinds of monies are going to be required to assist this group in achieving progress.

As I indicated, we've asked the group for a presentation of their project, and we look forward to that presentation later on this month. We will negotiate and discuss things with them as we move along and, depending upon what type of funding will be required, we will look at what sources may be available to us through CMHC, through the housing process. That's probably one of the few accesses we'll be able to go through.

Right now, it's a little too early to jump to what the numbers will be until we sit down and talk with this group and get some sort of indication from them which one they would prefer to go with and which one we can work with them on to ensure the project is viable and sustainable.

Mr. Mitchell: We will look forward to the continued progress reports on this area. When the minister is next on his feet, I want to hear from the minister whether he — we'll move

away from where the funding may come from or may not be available — sees this as an identified need by the non-government organizations, as a genuine need. Does he agree that there is a role for supportive housing in between people who are fully self-sufficient and those who need a higher level of care?

Hon. Mr. Hart: Conceptually I agree that this is something that needs to be looked at, but where it's apportioned, and how it's apportioned, is something that has to be decided upon, depending upon what the results are after our discussions with this group, and what venue or avenue we decide to move on with regard to the project itself.

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

I'm going to move on to another area, and that is Whitehorse General Hospital. Is the minister familiar with the *Work/Life Pulse Report* issued on October 5, 2009, and having to do with the Whitehorse General Hospital interim accreditation report in May 2010? Is the minister familiar with these documents?

Hon. Mr. Hart: I am aware of their existence, but maybe the member opposite can ask a specific question, and I'll see if I can respond.

Mr. Mitchell: Well, there are a number of potential questions, but some issues have been identified. Quoting from the executive summary from the Yukon Hospital Corporation regarding the Whitehorse General Hospital interim accreditation report in May 2010, it says: "In light of significant change to the delivery of acute care services in the Yukon Territory, Accreditation Canada approved the Yukon Hospital Corporation's request to postpone the accreditation survey from May 2010 until May 2011. To maintain our accreditation status, Whitehorse General Hospital is required to provide an interim report on the status of required organizational practices and a copy of the Whitehorse General Hospital action plan for quality improvement, and it's based on self-assessment questionnaires. Even this summary indicates that there continue to be challenges. There are many challenges that were identified in this report.

In terms of rating the work environment: "I am satisfied with communications in this organization" — strongly disagree, 10.1 percent; disagree, 7.2 percent; neutral, 26.6 percent; agree, 24.3 percent; strongly agree, 1.8 percent.

I don't have my calculator out, but certainly when you've got 37 percent-plus saying that they either disagree or strongly disagree with communications within the organization and another 26.6 percent being neutral to it, that's not a very favourable outcome.

Similar results for "I am satisfied with communications in my work area". There's a whole series of issues here — "I have enough time to do my job adequately" — strongly disagree, 8.9 percent; disagree, 29.6 percent.

"I feel that I can trust this organization" — 13.6 percent strongly disagree; 15.4 percent disagree. That's more than 25 percent of the respondents to this survey who don't trust the organization.

The other day the minister said in response to a question about nurses in the territory — he sort of indicated that there

will always be one or two disgruntled people. This is more than one or two. So I'm wondering: has the minister provided any assistance or direction to the Hospital Corporation in addressing these issues? They sound like serious internal issues within the organization.

Hon. Mr. Hart: With regard to the information the member opposite has indicated, obviously, I'm not fully versed with all the information as it relates to the hospital itself. I know that the extension was provided because there is a massive amount of work that needs to be done in order for the hospital to obtain the accreditation. So the extension was provided to allow them sufficient time in which to achieve that process. I'm hoping that the board and the Whitehorse General Hospital are successful in that endeavour. The member opposite has indicated, based on the survey, some of these issues. I think we can all look at many situations, regardless of where the survey is. You will always have a good percentage of individuals who are unhappy with the situation, and those who are happy with the situation.

I guess that's all part of being a human being. I think also it is in the way in which the question is asked and how we do it from there. I look forward to hearing more information from the Hospital Corporation on how they are progressing on this issue and, when I find out, I can provide the member opposite with that.

Mr. Mitchell: I would encourage the minister to communicate directly with the CEO and the chair of the board of the hospital because I do have a series of questions I would ask the minister based on this report, but I'm going to cut it short because, if the minister's not familiar with it, then I imagine the minister could only say he's going to look into it.

I just want to identify a couple that are concerns, such as "identifying senior management leads to the clinical teams was difficult due to the large number of teams and lack of comfort for non-clinical senior managers to take on a leadership role for the clinical teams." That sounds like a challenge. Another, "several significant changes in the organization structure at a senior management level have limited the leadership capabilities and concrete action taken to achieve accreditation standards, particularly in nursing."

Nurses are a big part, as the minister knows, in the delivery of health care services. They're one of the groups on the front line of patient care delivery, so this kind of dissatisfaction and uncertainty does lead to staff turnover. We would like to know if there is a high turnover rate, what are the changes that are happening, why have there been several significant changes and what are they?

The minister may not be up to date on this and I can appreciate that, and I would only ask that we have another opportunity in the not-too-distant future to debate Health under the supplementary budget for 2010-11. Perhaps the minister can be briefed on this by then and be able to deal with it in more detail.

Hon. Mr. Hart: I will endeavour to provide as much information as I can to the individual in the opposition, as well as the Third Party, with regard to Whitehorse General Hospital.

Mr. Mitchell: I've asked questions before and I believe the Member for Mount Lorne just asked a question or placed a notice of motion on the Order Paper just a couple of days ago regarding kinship care in the Yukon. I'm sure that, considering the report I have in my hand, *Kinship Care in the Yukon* — co-authored by one of the Member for Mount Lorne's senior research staff; he'll have lots to ask on this issue, so I'll leave that to him in the interest of making good use of our time.

However, I have had constituents continue to approach me and indicate that there still is a gap for family members, be they grandparents, or aunts or uncles, of children who are not able to be looked after either on a temporary basis, or on a long-term basis, by their birth parents. These people, who are often older people, when you're looking at grandparents — I'm a grandparent and I would hate to find myself in this situation — but obviously when it's family, you do what you can. There are people who are financially challenged in looking after their grandchildren, but they don't want to go through the process of formally applying to be foster parents in order to get economic support.

There's a whole series of reasons why they might not want to do that. They don't want it to be this permanent solution; they don't want to risk alienating their children, in terms of going through a court process — there's a whole series of reasons. I've asked the minister this question before: is the government looking at ways to provide financial support to grandparents and other family members who find themselves caring for younger children, without requiring them to go through a formal process of applying to be foster parents?

Hon. Mr. Hart: With regard to assistance to grandparents, if the individuals would like to follow the process under foster care, then we would provide that funding under that program and they would obtain that assistance under foster care.

Now, we currently don't have anything over and above that process. Any change would require a substantial change in regulation and policy with regard to providing funding for grandparents who are looking after their grandchildren, but I will say under the new *Child and Family Services Act*, the extended family has been identified to include grandparents and there are venues under there that grandparents can look at to see whether or not they qualify, and they can provide assistance for those children in their care as deemed by a court or otherwise.

Mr. Mitchell: Mr. Chair, I'm virtually at the end of my questions. I know the Member for Mount Lorne does have questions he wants to ask so I'll just ask for clarification. Did I just hear the minister say that the choices right now are: apply for foster care status to receive funding — that's the only option? There is no other option?

Hon. Mr. Hart: That is one of the options. The other option that I failed to advise the member opposite previously was that we do provide respite care for grandparents.

Mr. Cardiff: I'm pleased today to be able to enter the debate on Vote 15 in the *Fourth Appropriation Act, 2009-10*. I appreciate the minister's willingness to engage in an open debate about many things in the Department of Health and Social

Services, but I'd like to deal first, if we could, with the line item under operation and maintenance expenditures for \$3.7 million. If you'll look at the other budget document, the first supplementary, the *Second Appropriation Act, 2010-11*, under operation and maintenance expenditures there's Corporate Services, Family and Children's Services, Social Services, Continuing Care, Health Services, Yukon Hospital Services and Regional Services.

In this budget document it just says operation and maintenance expenditures, and the explanation is that supplementary funding requirements were mainly due to higher-than-anticipated costs for out-of-territory hospital claims and physician claims.

So can the minister provide a breakdown of which actual lines those would come under? What amounts, or percentage, is for out-of-territory hospital claims? What amount, or percentage, is for physician claims? How much of that was for local physicians and how much of it was for Outside physicians?

Hon. Mr. Hart: With regard to the member opposite's question, I think I will try to provide the best I can regarding the O&M expenditures. Physician claims were just a little over \$3 million; hospital claims overbudget — sorry — hospital claims were \$2.5 million overbudget. Then we had departmental savings of \$1.9 million, resulting in a difference of \$3.7 million. Basically what we have is a budget of approximately \$13.7 million for physician claims and our expenditures were actually \$16.7 million, so an overexpenditure of about \$3 million. I'm advised that a good portion of those physician claims are local claims.

On the hospital side, again this is for hospitals, our budget was \$16.3 million; the actual expenditures came in at \$18.8 million, for a difference of a \$2.5 million overage. Again, as I indicated in my opening statements with regard to this particular question, it was because of the fact that the hospitals and outpatient services provided by British Columbia and Alberta came in quite late and we were unaware of what the actual total amounts were.

We have been in negotiation with the officials in both provinces, trying to alleviate this so we're not facing this situation in the future. The Alberta hospital in-patient budgets were \$3.6 million, costs were \$2.5 million. The B.C. hospital in-patients: we budgeted \$6.1 million and spent \$7.7 million.

In Alberta for in-patients, we had a budget of \$725,000; we expended \$666,000. For B.C. outpatients, we budgeted \$2.3 million and we expended \$1.6 million. We had other hospital expenses, which we had budgeted for just a little over \$2 million and we had expenditures of \$3.6 million. We also had other transfer payments for mental health, which we had budgeted for \$1.4 million and we actually expended \$2.6 million for a total difference of \$2.5 million.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Quorum count

Hon. Mr. Kenyon: I draw your attention to the fact that we don't seem to have a quorum in the House.

Chair: There does not appear to be a quorum. We will ring the bells for four minutes and do a count.

Bells

Chair: Order please. There appears to be a quorum so we'll now continue with Bill No. 21, *Fourth Appropriation Act, 2009-10*.

Mr. Cardiff: I would like to thank the minister for the explanation. For the most part, I got the numbers I was looking for, or the explanation I was looking for. I will read the Blues and more thoroughly analyze the numbers I was given. What I heard was there was \$3 million additional physician claims and that most of those were local.

I also heard the minister talk about the fact that some of this was due to the delay in billing for some of the out-of-territory hospital claims. Somewhere it just doesn't ring true, I guess, or it doesn't make sense to me. I understand the billing process. I recognize that there are overexpenditures or we're overspent in some areas and we're underspent in other areas. I understand we were late in receiving the bills from Alberta and British Columbia for the services that we were provided there, but somehow we managed to underbudget \$3 million for services that are provided locally by physicians here locally. I'll grant him, he said "mostly local" and the difference went from \$13.7 to \$16.7 million for those physician services.

I can understand to some extent how our out-of-territory costs may be unpredictable, because we never know when we're going to send people out, or which people are going to seek medical assistance if they're in another jurisdiction. How can we be so far out for local physicians on an annual basis? Can the minister tell us that?

Hon. Mr. Hart: I did provide a pretty specific breakdown of the cost. I will advise him that the agreements for out-of-territory services provided by Alberta and British Columbia allow them one year in which to bill us for the services provided. For obvious reasons, it's very difficult to plan exactly what our expenditures will be, because we do not know how many people will be shipped from the Yukon to Outside on an annual basis.

Our information and budgetary aspects are based on previous history and also where we can. In addition to that, we've had a substantial increase in populace from that process. We've had an influx of specialists coming to Whitehorse General Hospital to perform operations here in the Yukon. So we've had extensive increases all around with regard to expenditures that we hadn't experienced in the past. However, again, given what we know today, we will be looking at adjusting our expenditures for the upcoming years to reflect those changes.

As I indicated, we're working closely with officials in British Columbia and Alberta. But, as the member opposite is well aware, the officials in British Columbia are also under extreme pressure to get their information on high-priority expenditures out. We're not the highest item on the list for them, but we have been working closely with them to try to alleviate our unknown cost, shall we say, and so that we can get a better grip on what our expenditures can be, or we'll know what they are going to be, prior to year-end.

Mr. Cardiff: I've got some questions about the new building across the river, but we'll ask those questions a little later — with regard to specialists and contract nurses. It was my understanding that the idea of having specialists attend to patients here in the Yukon was supposed to reduce our out-of-territory costs, because a specialist could come to the territory and provide services to a multitude of patients, as opposed to us shipping a multitude of patients down to another jurisdiction. So it was actually supposed to alleviate some of those Outside expenses. So I'm just wondering whether or not the department is analyzing that policy and its effectiveness, or do we need to bring in more specialists or have more appointments for people when the specialists are here, so they can take advantage of those services?

Yukoners deserve and expect to have good health care services, especially in light of the budgets we're seeing in the Department of Health and Social Services. We also expect the minister to manage those funds on behalf of Yukoners in the most effective way.

What we're seeing here is more increased costs to the health care system. We need to find a way of providing the best possible service but, at the same time, managing the costs of those services. One way of doing that — and I'll try not to be long on this. One of the things we've done in the Legislative Assembly — that the government has done — is the provision of regulations for registered nurse practitioners to provide services to Yukoners.

My understanding is that, given their scope of practice and the knowledge and the training that they have, they could actually — I mean, to put it bluntly, I guess — you don't need to go see the doctor to be told that you're okay to go, necessarily. You don't need to necessarily go see a doctor to renew a prescription. If it's an ongoing prescription, then somebody like a registered nurse practitioner could do that assessment, fill out the prescription form and send it off, and there would be cost savings to the system if we pursued that collaborative care model of health care.

We did this work, the department has done the work, there are regulations in place that allow nurse practitioners to do some of that work and to take some of the load off the physician.

I can understand there might be a bit of a turf war going on and I don't want to take sides in the turf war. What I want in my job here is to ensure that Yukoners are getting the best possible health care for the best possible price. That's short and simple.

Is the government looking at more of a collaborative health care model? The minister has also talked about what's happening in the communities, the department providing services in the new hospitals, which is more of a collaborative multidisciplinary approach. Is he willing to look at providing something like that in the capital city of Whitehorse?

Hon. Mr. Hart: For the member opposite, with regard to our expenditures, I think the member opposite will realize that — and it has been mentioned here many times in the House — we have an aging population here in the Yukon. It has grown substantially, even since I've been here. We have

more chronic diseases, we have more individuals on the chronic disease program, new treatments, new diagnoses, and we have new pharmaceuticals that are very expensive, in some cases. We have, for example, expenditures in excess of \$400,000 for one patient, so these are all items that add to our costs; they are items that we have to deal with on a daily basis, and we look forward to working with our medical field to assist in reducing, shall we say, the need for our clients to go Outside. That's why we are expanding — as the member opposite indicated — our specialist program in the Yukon. We anticipate that, over time, that program will level out and we'll see a benefit from the specialists coming here to the Yukon, to the positive side of our ledger with regard to health care — not only on the expenditure side, but also on the wait times.

As I indicated previously, we are looking at a new MRI system and a three-year program, in conjunction with the Hospital Corporation and the foundation. That is something we intend to work with them on and we're looking forward to the success of that whole process. Once the new residence is completed, we anticipate utilizing the Thomson Centre a little bit more for specialists and again increasing services that are provided for Yukoners.

The member opposite talked about being efficient with the specialists when they're here. I can assure the member opposite that we can only do so many knee surgeries while the knee specialist is here; we can only do so many cataracts while the specialist is here for that service; we can only do so many people regarding hearing; and we are maximizing those facilities currently. With neurologists, same thing. We're using the services available to us. Specialists are being very accommodating, given the space they're provided.

Once the new facility is available — end of December is the anticipated opening date for the residence — we'll be able to make some alterations to the Thomson Centre where we can fit more specialists in and provide better specialized services for those Yukoners who are in need and reduce the need for them to go Outside and be closer at home to family and friends to assist them after the diagnosis and surgery, if required, is provided, as well as any solutions that require assistance from the Outside specialist to better the life of the client in question.

Mr. Cardiff: I'm not going to belabour this too much because everybody needs to have an opportunity to speak to some of these issues, but on the specialist — I'm sorry, my apologies to those in the Hansard office for bumping the microphone with the paper.

The new building that's going up across the river contains, to my understanding, 34 units that are basically designed — they are like apartments, basically, for visiting specialists and, I'm assuming, contract nurses who are here. Does the government or the Hospital Corporation — the minister in his discussions with the chair and CEO — really anticipate having that many specialists or contract nurses?

The other piece to this is that the current practice is that when Yukoners from other communities, — Dawson City, Burwash Landing, Haines Junction, Old Crow, Watson Lake, Ross River — have to come to Whitehorse for medical treatment, a lot of times they're required, prior to admission to the

hospital and post-operatively, to stay in Whitehorse to be close to the hospital, and a lot of them are required to stay in hotels at their own expense.

Are some of these units going to be made available for those Yukoners, not the least of whom would be women who are coming to Whitehorse because they are unable to give birth in their own community? So are any of these units going to be specifically designated for clients of the health care system?

Hon. Mr. Hart: I would like to advise the member opposite of one thing, and that was a change that we did receive last year — an increase in our costs from British Columbia. Across the board, it was almost 17 percent with regard to our reciprocal agreement. I'll just give the member an example. We are now being charged \$6,000 per day for ICU ward care, so it's a substantial increase from what we were previously paying. Again, we don't really have a lot of choice when it comes to dealing with the situation. We don't have the services here. We've got to send our clients out to where the services are available. Previously, it was \$1,200 a day.

With regard to out-of-town patients, they are provided services on a per diem basis — those coming into Whitehorse for medication and services like that. The facility will be utilized for nurses, dentists, specialists, surgeons, and other medical professionals. We also have a couple rooms for community nurses and relief nurses. There is also a special arrangement between the Hospital Corporation and Yukon College. For example, Yukon College doesn't use their college facilities in the summer, and therefore the hospital uses the college facilities for their overflow, and they use the college rooms for professional people.

Conversely, when it's the busy time for the college during the wintertime and there are rooms available at the Hospital Corporation, then the reciprocal agreement is provided for the college staff or specialists or professors who come in. Again, it's a reciprocal agreement in which they each take advantage of the other's weak time of year. So, that deals with the process with regard to the rooms, and it also alleviates and shows that both of these corporations are utilizing and maximizing their facilities, especially at times when they are at the lowest ebb.

Mr. Cardiff: I thank the minister for the information about the reciprocal agreement. I'd be interested, once the facility is up and running, to know just what the usage of it is. Are we really looking at having that many specialists, relief nurses, dentists and others all at one time? If we are, and if it's full and the services are being provided to Yukoners, that would be a great thing in my mind — like I say, as long as we're being efficient about it.

This kind of ties in with the earlier question I asked about nurse practitioners. I don't believe that I really got an answer about nurse practitioners and their ability to provide some relief to physicians and possibly bring down some of the costs, because it is a fee-for-service for the most part. I'm not sure and if the minister has the information, can he send it over? I'd be interested in knowing how many doctors are on salary and how many are on fee-for-service and a breakdown of those costs. If he could provide that, that would be much appreciated.

I don't believe I did get an answer to the question about nurse practitioners — allowing them to do things like meet with patients. In some instances they are able to provide diagnosis, write prescriptions, renew prescriptions and provide advice to clients — as the minister likes to call them — or patients. I'm wondering if the department has looked at that possibility, given the fact that we have reasonably new regulations, allowing nurse practitioners to practise — given the scope of practice they're able to perform.

Hon. Mr. Hart: I think I'll try to be direct on his question. We did amend the *Registered Nurses Profession Act* previously in the House. Currently, the Yukon Registered Nurses Association is working on the scope of work for nurse practitioners. That is currently underway.

The scope of work has to be approved by medical professions and that has to take place prior to us going out there, but of course we are very anxious to utilize the services of nurse practitioners — in our rural areas especially — where it's very difficult to get physicians to go. We do have services there. With the scope of work, there is some anticipated change that we could work on, especially in our rural areas where we can take advantage of the skills of these individuals. Also, with the recent act being passed, they are again able to utilize their skills and they can carry on with their accreditation as a nurse practitioner.

I have been advised that a meeting has been set up in the next week or so with regard to work on a collaboration and inclusion of NPs in the process. This is a meeting where they will sit together and work on collaborative care. It's a follow-up to previous meetings. We look forward to the results, and I'll be encouraged to see what results come.

As the member indicated, he talked about a blunt question, the turf war. Yes, it's a big issue, but you know we have to work with both of these facilities in order to ensure that Yukoners get the best services available. In the end, we don't want to alienate one or the other in order to satisfy the issue. With regard to the nurse practitioner, once the scope of practice has been done, we will draft regulations for this scope of practice with the Yukon Registered Nurses Association once they get it worked out.

Mr. Cardiff: Well, my apologies. I thought we were a little bit further along in that process. So the next question for the Minister is this: what are the time frames? And I realize that we're working with the Registered Nurses Association. It sounds like we may be involved with the Yukon Medical Association. We're working with health care professionals and we know that they are all busy, busy people, given the amount of work that has to be done in the health care field.

This is an important service to Yukoners and the minister and I are agreeing on this today. I am happy to say that we are, so I'd like to know the time frame. How soon before this can be a reality and Yukoners can realize a different type of service, a different level of service, as well as possibly a cost-savings?

Hon. Mr. Hart: With respect to the scope of practice and the regulations, I anticipate we'll be ready to move along by this spring.

Mr. Cardiff: Can I just get the Minister to repeat that? I wasn't sure whether he said "winter break" or "spring break".

Hon. Mr. Hart: I said we would be in a position hopefully to get the regulations in place by this spring.

Mr. Cardiff: Well, we will look forward to that, and I would encourage the minister and all those hard-working officials and health care professionals to keep up the good work, because I think this is an important piece. This side of the House, the Third Party — the New Democrats — have been pushing for this type of collaborative care model and multidisciplinary clinics for a long time. I'm hoping that this is going to get us down the road.

I'd like the minister to clarify something he said yesterday in response to a question from the Leader of the Official Opposition, talking again about nurses and nurse shortages. I recognize the work that Yukon College has done in providing training for licensed practical nurses. I think it's a valuable addition to the programming at the college, as well as serving a need here in the Yukon, throughout the Yukon. But what the minister said was, and I'm going to quote this, "Again I will try to stress as clearly as I can that in our nursing situation, we are working very closely with our recruitment people to ensure that all our community nursing — our LPNs — again, we've had a very successful process."

I understood that all our community nurses are LPNs. That's the way that it reads in the Blues to me, anyhow. I just want the minister to verify. This again, goes to the nurse practitioners and the registered nurses, because I think it's important that, given the scope of practice, there are registered nurses, and that there will be — given the fact that we don't have the regulations yet — registered nurse practitioners in our communities.

Hon. Mr. Hart: I will try to clarify. Obviously, we don't have LPNs in all our rural areas. We have to have registered nurses and/or nurse practitioners. In some cases, we do have nurse practitioners who are practising as RNs in our rural areas, so we do have them out there.

With regard to the LPNs, I would like to clarify for the member opposite; we were very successful in recruiting those who graduated from the LPN program at our college — very successful. In fact, I've been advised that we were able to provide offers of employment to all graduates of the LPN program.

Mr. Cardiff: I thank the minister for that answer. I know that the Member for McIntyre-Takhini expressed some frustration on behalf of the members of his family who were trained as nurses, and their ability to get hired in their chosen profession, to come back and serve their community. We need to be making that effort. We need to think about ensuring that nurses who are available locally — whether they be nurse practitioners, registered nurses, LPNs — have the ability to obtain employment here, and the best way to do that is to offer them full-time jobs, not the casual jobs. I realize that the minister doesn't have the ability to direct the human resource policies of the Hospital Corporation, but he does have the ability through a letter of expectation or some other instrument — a conversation — to suggest the best possible ways of keeping our health

care costs under control, and one of the best possible ways of ensuring that we're not only looking after the health and well-being of Yukoners but that we are looking after the health and well-being of the people who are providing this service, is to provide them with full-time jobs, with full-time benefits and security.

That way, we're recognizing the contribution of people who have been born and raised here, or have decided to make this their home, in giving them an opportunity to have a secure job, have that security knowing that they can go to work every day and not worry about whether they are going to get called in, or not get called in or, if you are a full-time nurse and being called in to fill in for those who are not able to because they are overworked, because they are stressed out.

So, that's as far as I would like to go on that particular issue. I recognize that we're fast approaching a break and we're fast approaching, as well, the end of the day and there are only so many issues we can address here. I would like to come back to the provision of a youth shelter. I know that the minister had a conversation with the Leader of the Official Opposition with regard to this, but I have some further questions for the minister.

I was taken back a little bit yesterday by some of the minister's comments about whether or not we can serve the needs of all those who are homeless, and the fact that he seemed to think that some people choose — in fact, that's what he said: it's their choice to be homeless. I don't think that anybody really chooses to be homeless. They're homeless because they're disadvantaged in some ways. They're marginalized. It's about their family situation, it's about their work situation, it's about mental health issues, or other health issues. It's about addictions issues, it's about their home situation. There are a multitude of issues. Yes, the minister is right: a cookie-cutter approach is not going to fit all situations. We have to look at a multitude of ways to address this.

I've asked the minister twice now if I could see the new temporary youth shelter on Jeckell Street and I think by the time I get the opportunity to do that I'll be able to go and look at the new temporary youth shelter back at the Sarah Steele Building. I'll be unequivocal in the fact that I don't believe that that's an appropriate place. I do not believe that housing, on a temporary basis, at-risk youth in a detox centre is appropriate, because it's not. That's not an appropriate place for our young people and I'm actually appalled that we're putting them back in there, regardless of what kind of renovations you might do.

The minister talked about how we've got to get the numbers together.

Well, I'm going to tell the minister this about having a youth shelter, regardless of where it is. If it's in — as he called it — a former receiving home, which was also a former social housing unit — the minister responsible for the Yukon Housing Corporation now no longer has it available for the multitude of people who are on the wait-list. It doesn't matter whether it's there or at the Sarah Steele Building. When the sign on the door says that nobody is going to open the door and the person has to phone a number, it's not very welcoming. Gathering the numbers is not going to be that easy.

I respect the work that Skookum Jim is doing, providing the referral service and counselling to assist some of these young people in reconnecting with their families and getting them into a situation where they don't have to be in temporary emergency youth centre, because that's an important piece of it.

So what I'm going to ask the minister now, and I'll probably get the answer after the break, so he'll have little bit of time to think about this: what kind of services are provided between when an at-risk youth enters the temporary youth facility and when they get booted out at 8:00 in the morning? What kinds of services are available to them? Do they have counselling on-site? Do they have access to computers, Internet and television? What kinds of services are provided? Because the minister told me that they have staff dedicated to managing those available beds, so the service is being provided by the government. Skookum Jim is providing the referral service and some counselling, hopefully to reconnect people.

I'd like to know what services are currently being provided on Jeckell Street and proposed to be provided back at the Sarah Steele Building.

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

Recess

Chair: Order please. Committee of the Whole will now come to order. The matter before the Committee is Bill No. 21, *Fourth Appropriation Act, 2009-10*. We will now continue with general debate of Health and Social Services.

Hon. Mr. Hart: The member opposite was asking prior to the break about the programming provided for youth. We provide assistance and programming through Angel's Nest and the Youth of Today Society day program. Through Skookum Jim Friendship Centre we provide counselling, support, linking families, especially and also looking at providing assistance for employment, housing and other support services required by the individual while they are in the Skookum Jim Friendship Centre's process.

In addition, Family and Children's Services provides social workers, social services or First Nation requirements and provides support and counselling as services and, again, as required and as directed, depending upon the individual's specific needs. With regard to the Jeckell Street shelter, the services we provide are a safe bed and shower. The applicants can do laundry there. We provide a snack and food for breakfast at that facility to assist the individuals in their day.

Mr. Cardiff: I thank the minister for that answer. I recognize that funding is provided to other organizations to provide some of these services to youth, but what I heard the minister say was that at the temporary youth shelter, with the sign on the door that says, "Don't bother knocking because nobody will come to the door; you have to phone this number and be referred," you are entitled to a snack, a shower, laundry facilities, a safe bed and breakfast before you get asked to go to another facility. There's a huge gap here for these youth in the services that are provided.

You know, this is an emergency youth shelter. I agree with the minister that this isn't a housing situation, but it would seem to me that it would be more like a home and you would feel more comfortable going there. When word gets out on the street — I'm sure the word is out on the street about the services the minister describes and I repeated — those are the services that are available there. The minister is not going to get the numbers that he's looking for necessarily, because people not only aren't going to bother going there, they are not even going to bother calling the number. They can get far more provided by going to a friend's house or maybe trading their bodies for a bed to sleep in where they are not going to get booted out at eight o'clock in the morning and where they might have access to some of the other amenities.

Now, we've gone around this so many times. I know the minister's frustrated. I'm really frustrated, because with the services that are needed, some are available through other agencies, but they're only available for a short period of time because of the level of funding that we're providing. It's about our commitment to our youth.

The minister said something else yesterday that kind of floored me. He talked about when he was recently in St. John's, Newfoundland. I'm quoting from *Hansard* here. "They said this was a very complex issue — very complex — even for how they deal with it. The big thing for us is to come up with a way to bring our disadvantaged youth back into the mainstream, get them back to being good members of society. We're looking for all solutions." Well, I'm looking for all solutions too. For the minister's information, we don't need to get them back to being good members of society.

A lot of these kids are good members of society, but they are disadvantaged. They want to be good members of society and I believe that they are. They want to get back into the education system. They want to be reunited with their families if the issues can be resolved. They want to find permanent housing for themselves. They want to get a job. Some of these youth have issues where they need support. Those supports are not being provided in the minister's temporary emergency youth shelter. I agree that it needs to be an emergency youth shelter. It's not a permanent housing situation, but some of these kids, need ongoing support.

They need to know that when they go there, they are welcome to be there and that they have access to some of the things they would normally have at home — things like books and cultural material, and things like the ability to actually learn how to cook for themselves or make a snack for themselves or mend their clothes. They are looking for assistance, for a meaning in their life. They are looking for somebody who cares, not somebody who says: have a shower, do your laundry, here's a snack, have breakfast, see you later; go find another place this afternoon where you can get those other supports.

I realize, as the minister said, that one size is not going to fit all and one solution is not going to fit all. The Minister of Health and Social Services and the Minister of Justice went to Angel's Nest in June and they were provided with a tour. I got a tour of the facility myself. I haven't seen the inside of the temporary emergency youth shelter but I have seen the inside

of Angel's Nest and I've seen the sign on the door at Jeckell Street.

What I want the minister to do is to explain to me where he'd rather spend time if he were a disadvantaged youth on the street who didn't have a place to go for the night. Would he rather go to Angel's Nest or would he rather go to the place with the sign on the door that says that nobody's going to open the door unless you phone this number?

Hon. Mr. Hart: You know, the member opposite just went through a long list of items that young individuals — the identified gap — we provide all the services through our departments and/or through NGO services. We provide those services for youth who want to take the extra step to get the information that the member opposite just stated. Several, in fact all, of my staff involved in social work and dealing with youth are concerned for the well-being of the youth. I'm not quite sure what the member opposite meant — I'm not going to step out there; I think I've been reasonably calm about this.

Every staff member of Health and Social Services involved with dealing with youth are there for the youth, to look after the youth. They are not to be dispensed with. I would just like to indicate that here, but I'm not going to go any further on that issue.

With regard to the facility at Jeckell Street and for the Sarah Steele Building, when we are finished here in the House with Health and Social Services, I will recommend that the member opposite get a view of the Jeckell and Sarah Steele facilities for himself. I will arrange a tour so that he can have a look at both facilities.

Mr. Cardiff: I appreciate that and I thank the minister for that, but the minister didn't — and I appreciate the fact. I am not saying that social workers and the people who work in Health and Social Services aren't trying to help. What I am saying is that for the period of time when they are in the emergency youth shelter, what kind of assistance, what kind of encouragement and what kind of stimulation is there for these youth to help encourage them, to point them in the right direction, to help give them the skills that they need — as the minister puts it — to get them back to being good members of society, which I believe most of them already are. There may be a few bad apples out there, but a lot of these kids are struggling and what they need is somebody to support them. Moving them around like a suitcase that has lost its way on an airline in an airport somewhere is not the answer.

The minister didn't answer the question — where he'd rather spend the night? I've seen the beds at Angel's Nest and they look pretty inviting, if I was a young person. They're licensed and, according to the minister, the department has staff dedicated to manage the available beds, and it's my understanding that there are four beds available, and there are 10 beds right next door.

Can the minister explain this? If he can't explain where he'd rather spend the night, can he explain why the staff managing the four beds couldn't go next door and manage the beds that are available there, and all the other infrastructure, support services, and stimulating activities that could be available to those kids?

Hon. Mr. Hart: I'll try to be somewhat short here, and deal with the situation with the member opposite. I will iterate what I said earlier with regard to the program we provide. I indicated that we do provide day programming through Angel's Nest. We do provide programming, counselling, linking families, providing them with assistance through Skookum Jim for employment, housing, and other support services that these individuals require on a daily basis. Family and Children's Services, again, provides social workers.

We provide services for them. We provide services to First Nations. We also provide support and counselling for these individuals. Is that not assisting these individuals? Is that not providing assistance to these individuals during the day?

With regard to the facility and the shelter, as I stated earlier, let's not lose sight of the fact that it's exactly that — it's intended to be a shelter. Shelter facilities Outside are operated under much the same process. I've been to several shelters Outside and, yes, almost every shelter I've been to had a secure situation to it. We have to ensure that the children in our care are being looked after and their safety is looked after. I might add, as I've also stated previously, that we've never had to turn anybody away because we're overcrowded.

I want to emphasize just how valuable the collaboration is that we have with Skookum Jim Friendship Centre.

They have a very good tap on these kids that we deal with — these youth out there. They know who these people are. They refer those people to us. They have that counselling. That's what their job is — to ensure that we take care of these individuals in an emergency situation, so that we can provide them with assistance on a temporary basis. In the meantime, we, or they, can provide counselling services. They can assess what happens to these individuals and how we can make life better. They've been very successful in reconnecting these youth with their family — very successful. And again, that's having knowledge of the youth themselves and having a direct contact with those youth. I'm very encouraged by the job the Skookum Jim Friendship Centre is doing — very encouraged indeed.

I'm also encouraged by the work that our social workers are providing to these individuals — very encouraged indeed. I've offered the member opposite a tour of the facilities as soon as we're finished here in the House with my department, and we'll let him view those facilities and what takes place in each of the facilities, so he can see first-hand for himself.

Personally, I would rather deal with the situation and ensure that if I'm at a disadvantage or being disadvantaged in some way, as the member opposite indicated, I want to do whatever I can to assist myself to improve my situation, and I'm sure that most young people will.

Mr. Cardiff: I don't want to go on about this all day, but this is a very important issue for me personally because I talked to some of those kids too, and I talked to some of them not too long ago. And I've talked to kids who said they wouldn't want to go there.

These young people have to leave at 8:00 in the morning. That's my understanding, and the minister hasn't disputed that. This morning it was hovering right around zero. There was a blizzard at the Carcross Cutoff that a lot of other people

weren't experiencing in other areas of the city, but they were experiencing it in some areas. It seemed to be in various locations. It was just a week or two ago that we had two or three inches of snow on the ground. It's not going to be very long before we have lots of snow on the ground, and temperatures are plummeting. After these young people have had a shower, have done their laundry, had a snack, slept in a nice, clean, safe bed; and had breakfast, at 8:00 in the morning, who picks them up and fills the gap in services that that aren't available? I mean, the services that are available at Angel's Nest, through the Youth of Today Society, are available from 3:00 to 8:00, because they are limited in their budget. They don't have the ability. Three years ago, they had a proposal in front of the government for funding for a temporary emergency youth shelter, and hopefully it would have been a continuity of programming so that kids didn't have to leave the facility at 8:00 in the morning. What's the minister's solution between 8:00 and 3:00, is basically what I'm asking? Does somebody pick them up and take them somewhere else where it's warm and make sure that they have lunch? Who looks after them and provides that stimulation and support to re-engage them with their families, or do they just have to walk around and find that?

Does he just hope that they manage to stumble around on the street and find the Individual Learning Centre? Because when it is 30 below and they walk out the front door, where are they going to go to keep warm? How are they going to be assisted in re-engaging those services? Is there somebody who picks them up and shows them the way, takes them there, provides them with some life skills training, shows them how to fill out a job — provides them with some job training, just so that they can function in a job?

These are some of the problems that I'm hearing from young people and from some of the people who deal with these young people on a regular basis. They need to re-engage their culture; they need to re-engage their families; they need to re-engage the education system. They need to find some sort of permanent housing, and oftentimes that's going to require them having the skills to get a job, to learn about what it is to have a job and what's expected of them.

Those are the gaps, but it's between 8:00 right now — from what I understand, at 8:00 you put on your snowpacks and hit the snow drift, get out on the sidewalk. Without a warm place to go where you can receive that support that I've described, most kids are just going to come back, or they're not, and I think that's sad, because if they don't come back, where are they going? It can end up in a very tragic circumstance, and I don't want to see that. I know the minister doesn't want to see that; I know the Minister of Justice doesn't want to see that.

Like I said in earlier conversations in this Assembly, it's about priorities. I think it's time the government got their priorities straight.

Hon. Mr. Hart: The member doesn't want to go on today, but I guess we're probably going to go all day. What does the member opposite suggest? The comments he just made — are we going to create a permanent home for 17- to 21-year-olds? That's what he just said. Is he talking about creating a permanent dependency on the government for 17- to 21-

year-olds? That's just what he said. These are 17- to 21-year-olds, not 12-year-olds.

Individuals, youth, 17 to 21 usually make decisions and can make decisions on their own of where to go in the daylight hours. The member opposite obviously is not listening to the questions. I indicated that services are provided daily through Skookum Jim. Those services include counselling; those services include identifying issues for employment, identifying issues for education, furthering education, identifying all the items that the member opposite just quoted.

Now, I'm a little concerned where we're going here; I'm trying to keep my level down here, somewhat. If the member opposite is suggesting that we pick them up and drive them to wherever they want them to go, taxi service them around, as I just said, they're 17- to 21-year-olds. We provide services for these individuals; we provide services through Skookum Jim, a variety of services through Family and Children's Services. We provide social workers where needed.

If we have an individual who is having great difficulty, we have a social agency that takes care of these individuals, provides assistance to these individuals on an emergency basis. So they are there, they are provided with assistance. We do look at providing it. As I stated, we already have many programs; the trick is to engage a small population into pursuing alternatives other than the street lifestyle.

We need to recognize that many young adults can make decisions for themselves, as I just indicated. We need to recognize that, in addition to serving those few who are already homeless, interventions need to be designed to prevent homelessness among at-risk individuals. I think that the member opposite agreed with that particular aspect and I have agreed with that situation. Again, I have reiterated several times about the services being provided between 8:00 and 3:00, as the member opposite indicated. Those services are available for our youth. We do provide those services.

Mr. Chair, we also provide drop-in centres and programming, et cetera, as the member indicated, to allow for a dry spot on a cold day. We do have information with regard to that. We have our priorities straight on this side, despite what the member opposite indicates. We have staff with their hearts in the right place looking after youth and assisting them where possible to the best benefit and assistance of the youth as required.

As I stated, we provide counselling, we provide support, we allow our individuals to link directly with Skookum Jim and our social workers, either to deal with issues of family, employment and education or additional training. That is provided.

The member opposite talked about individuals who have some great difficulties on an ongoing basis. Yes, we do deal with those individuals and we do have social assistance that will provide emergency services to allow us to look after those individuals until such time as we can alleviate that situation.

Do we have the perfect panacea for youth at risk? No, we don't. But I don't believe there's a perfect panacea for homeless youth or homeless adults or homeless individuals anywhere in any jurisdiction in Canada.

But I do believe that, given the resources that we have, we are working the best we can, and our people are providing the

best services to the youth at risk, as well as the youth who need emergency shelter, and we are providing that shelter. As I indicated previously several times, we've never turned anybody away because we're overcrowded.

Mr. Cardiff: Well, I thank the minister for the answer. I will definitely take him up on his offer of a tour of both facilities. I look forward to scheduling that. I'm going to stand down on further questions, with the exception of one. The minister stated that they do have drop-in centres, and I'd appreciate knowing the number and where those drop in centres are situated.

Hon. Mr. Hart: I'm pleased to advise the member opposite that, surprisingly, we provide that day service at Angel's Nest, Blue Feather and Skookum Jim Friendship Centre.

Chair: Is there any further general debate?

Mr. Cardiff: Just to clarify, my understanding is that Angel's Nest and Blue Feather are one and the same. So that's one location, and the other one is at Skookum Jim Friendship Centre. And those services are available from 8:00 in the morning, until what time?

Hon. Mr. Hart: The hours vary depending on the program, but we'll endeavour to get the specific time for the member opposite.

Chair: Any further general debate? Seeing none, we'll proceed line by line in Bill No. 21.

On Operation and Maintenance Expenditures

Total Operation and Maintenance Expenditures in the amount of \$3,700,000 agreed to

On Schedule A

Schedule A agreed to

On Schedule B

Schedule B agreed to

On Clause 1

Clause 1 agreed to

On Clause 2

Clause 2 agreed to

On Title

Title agreed to

Hon. Mr. Hart: Mr. Chair, I move that Bill No. 21, *Fourth Appropriation Act, 2009-10*, be reported without amendment.

Motion agreed to

Chair: Committee of the Whole will now proceed to Bill No. 22, *Second Appropriation Act, 2010-11*, Vote 15, Department of Health and Social Services. Do members wish a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Chair: Committee of the Whole recess for 5 minutes.

Recess

Chair: Order please. Committee of the Whole will now come to order. The matter before the Committee is Bill No. 22, *Second Appropriation Act, 2010-11*. We will now proceed with general debate in Vote 15, Department of Health and Social Services.

Bill No. 22 — *Second Appropriation Act, 2010-11*

Department of Health and Social Services

Hon. Mr. Hart: I've been in discussions now for the last couple of days with regard to Health and Social Services. I would now like to go into Health and Social Services as it relates to the supplementary budget for 2010-11. I have been very accommodating to members opposite with the questions to date. So what I'd like to do is sit down and listen to a few of the questions the member opposite has and I will go from there.

Mr. Fairclough: I'd like to ask the minister a few questions in this department. We didn't expect that we would be going into it here today. Our understanding is that we would have gone back into general debate into the supplementary budget, but nevertheless, we do have questions in this department. The minister has been here all afternoon and hopefully we can continue the questioning in this department as it is very important to many of the communities and the health and well-being of our citizens here in the territory.

Part of the objective of this department is to work with communities to ensure a quality of health and social services are provided to Yukoners. We've had a lot of different issues come forward to us in the Official Opposition, such as nursing issues at the Whitehorse General Hospital — shortages. We've always had interest in the Thomson Centre, such as capital costs for renovations and so on and the opening date.

Maybe what I'd like to do is just start off with the capital part of this budget and talk about the Thomson Centre. Perhaps the minister could elaborate about the costs of renovations and when we can see an opening date for the Thomson Centre.

Hon. Mr. Hart: I did respond to this question with regard to his leader on this question, but he wasn't here. So I will reiterate that we have \$940,000 for the Thomson Centre for operational equipment. With regard to the facility itself, the tender for the renovations has been let for the facility. Those renovations are currently, I believe, underway. In fact, Northern Windows is currently fixing and repairing the skylights. Demolition is expected to commence next week on the interiors for the upgrades, the fire walls, and improving the size of the washroom doors — things like that. So that's well underway. We anticipate that this work is a little late in getting started from what the hospital originally had. Instead of getting into the facility operationally by February, it will now be April 1 of next year. But we anticipate that we'll have the training of the staff take place in the month of January and February to ensure that the necessary people are there and that they are familiar with their surroundings so they can provide the service on April 1 or sooner, depending on how fast the renovations take place and how fast they are completed.

As I stated previously, we anticipate the interior work will be done over the winter and the exterior work, with regard to landscaping for the grounds, will have to be done next spring. This is just too late in the season for us to commence any work out there so we'll concentrate on the interior. We anticipate opening up the full 19 beds on April 1 of next year. There is a process in place to deal with the individuals going into the Thomson Centre. We will ensure that process takes a fair and

equal process is provided to those individuals wishing to get into the Thomson Centre.

Mr. Fairclough: I didn't get the amount that the minister said. I just missed it.

I heard the minister say that there would be some training that takes place during the winter before the opening of the Thomson Centre on April 1. Some training is to take place in July. So what happens between now and then with the existing staff?

Hon. Mr. Hart: With regard to the training, I emphasized that the training would take place in January and February of the new year for the staff. Currently, we are under recruitment for the staff of the Thomson Centre. We already currently also have some staff working in other facilities here in Whitehorse. We will be utilizing them at a later date for the Thomson Centre. I indicated that our indications are that we will have no difficulty in fulfilling the staffing requirements for the Thomson Centre.

We would also be looking at transferring the palliative care people from Copper Ridge. In essence, we are looking at providing the training and the staff in the new year, because we will be in place by then and we should be in operation, as I said, by April 1. We want the staff to be familiar with their surroundings and ensuring they're familiar with the equipment, as well as what goes where within the facility.

In the interim, as I stated, construction is underway and we hope to get the majority of the demolition work done in the next month or so, so we can start working on finalizing the Thomson Centre and the finish work, so we can have our staff in there in January and February to work and train for that facility.

Mr. Fairclough: I thank the minister for that answer.

While the renovations are taking place, between now and the opening date of April 1 — February, March, April 1 — existing hospital staff are working in this building. What happens to them — for example, the cancer coordinator?

Hon. Mr. Hart: We are taking the pod that is currently not being utilized at all in the Thomson Centre, so the facilities being utilized by the hospital will be maintained by the hospital and used by them. We are looking at dealing with the pod at the far end, which is currently, as I stated, not being utilized by the Hospital Corporation at all. In addition, I will advise the member opposite that when the residence is finished at the end of December, the hospital will be moving many of the individuals at the south end of the Thomson Centre into that residence, and they will be utilizing for additional specialists the room that's vacated by the current residents.

Mr. Fairclough: Perhaps I can ask a question with regard to that. There are some residences being worked on, there has been a design of this residence, and some changes were made. I would just like to know how many changes have been made to the nurses residence and the structural changes and so on.

Hon. Mr. Hart: I'm not sure where the member opposite is going with the question, but the Yukon Hospital Corporation is in charge of that contract with regard to the construction of the residence, and their project manager, along

with the board of directors, is in charge of that facility. I will advise the member opposite, though, that I was just in the facility recently. I had a view of the facility. I'm led to believe that they are on time and on budget with that facility. Again, as I stated, they are looking for an opening of that facility sometime around late December.

Mr. Fairclough: What I wanted to know was whether during construction there were any major changes, and whether it was structural, to the nurses residence. It was an understanding that we had that a big portion of this was going toward the nurses residence and the rest for other things, and I wanted to know whether or not there were changes to be made.

The minister said everything is handled through the Hospital Corporation and, if there's anything new, I'm hoping the minister can forward that information to us on this side of the House.

Recently we've been asking about energy drinks here on the floor of the Legislature and bringing forward motions. Is there an appetite for the minister to bring any changes to legislation to ban energy drinks in our schools or to make it illegal to sell energy drinks to those who are under the age of 18?

Hon. Mr. Hart: Our department is looking into all the issues related to healthy eating — basically excessive sugar items, excessive salt items, to ensure that our children can eat healthy food and maintain a healthy living standard.

It is something that we are currently looking into and something that the department is working on through its branches to ascertain just exactly what it is that we are looking at and what would be required for us to adjust the same. Also, depending upon what the results of that review are, we'll move forward where we can as long as it is within our jurisdiction and not a federal jurisdiction.

Mr. Fairclough: I was hoping the minister would say that and I'm hoping the minister and the department will look seriously at this issue. If we can, before this Legislature, make a difference with the federal government by a motion, I'm hoping the minister does have some input and the members opposite also have some input in regard to this.

Mr. Chair, I'd like to ask a question again. Since we are into this department already in the supplementary budget about the borrowing for the new emergency room — it's a lot of money we're talking about. Has this been approved by government?

Hon. Mr. Hart: I've discussed this question in the House previously, but for the member I will be brief. We've had preliminary discussions with the Hospital Corporation with regard to the emergency room. It is in the five-year plan — the requirement or request of the Hospital Corporation for an addition or replacement of the emergency room. That information has been conveyed to us and we are aware of that situation. The Hospital Corporation has indicated it's something for the five-year plan.

How we're going to finance that particular thing hasn't been identified yet, because we haven't sat down and worked out exactly what the actual costs will be, when it will take place, what will be available for us and how we can achieve funding the facility in order to provide extended, great services

of health to all Yukoners. We look forward to providing information on that at a later date, once we have finalized discussions with the Hospital Corporation on the emergency room.

Mr. Fairclough: When can we expect a timeline — approval of the amount, first of all, for this emergency room and ways in which to fund this emergency room? The minister said he's in discussion with the Hospital Corporation. When can the public know exactly what has taken place and what they're expected to do, as far as paying off and building this emergency room, whether it's government, the corporation, or if it's borrowed money? When will we expect to have that information provided to us?

Hon. Mr. Hart: Again, I've had discussions on this issue. As I said, we've had indications from the Hospital Corporation of their request for the emergency room; they have identified it in their five-year plan for the emergency room. Once we are able to sit down with them and work out just exactly the size and dimensions, et cetera, we will be in a much better position to ascertain timeline, scheduling and funding required for the improvement to be made to the Whitehorse General Hospital.

Mr. Fairclough: There's no timeline the minister is providing for us. Can we expect this to be worked out with the Hospital Corporation before the next budget is tabled in this House?

Hon. Mr. Hart: I stated it was in the Yukon Hospital Corporation's five-year plan, so obviously the answer will not be in the next budget.

Mr. Fairclough: It's interesting that the minister has taken that approach on this issue and it's pretty important. We have seen governments wanting to borrow money on a number of different fronts and this is a big expenditure on behalf of government and the Hospital Corporation — and the minister does not feel, I guess, at this point in time, that we will have anything worked out with the Hospital Corporation between now and tabling the next budget — if there ever is another one tabled in this House.

We could very well be going into an election — it's the call of the government. I believe the public will want some answers and they're going to be looking at the minister for answers. They're going to be looking at numbers coming from the minister opposite. Even though we have a Hospital Corporation, the minister is still responsible for this department and has to answer to the public on projects and costs that could affect the general public down the road.

I'm hoping the minister could perhaps tighten things up, have more discussions with the Hospital Corporation, bring forward information to the floor of this House and to the Official Opposition and the general public in regard to the borrowing for the new emergency room at the Whitehorse General Hospital.

It being close to 5:30 p.m., I move that you report progress.

Chair: It has been moved by Mr. Fairclough that Committee of the Whole report progress.

Motion agreed to

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

Chair: It has been moved by Ms. Taylor that the Speaker do now resume the Chair.

Motion agreed to

Speaker resumes the Chair

Speaker: I will now call the House to order.

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

Chair's report

Mr. Nordick: Mr. Speaker, Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 21, *Fourth Appropriation Act, 2009-10*, and directed me to report it without amendment. Also, Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 22, *Second Appropriation Act, 2010-11*, and directed me to report progress on it.

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

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Speaker: I declare the report carried.

The time being 5:30 p.m., this House stands adjourned until 1:00 p.m. tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 5:30 p.m.

The following document was filed October 5, 2010:

10-1-158

Fish and Wildlife Branch Highlights, 2009-2010; Department of Environment (Edzerza)