



Yukon Legislative Assembly

Number 233

1st Session

33rd Legislature

HANSARD

Tuesday, November 17, 2015 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable David Laxton

YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

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

DEPUTY SPEAKER — Patti McLeod, MLA, Watson Lake

CABINET MINISTERS

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

GOVERNMENT PRIVATE MEMBERS

Yukon Party

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

OPPOSITION MEMBERS

New Democratic Party

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

Liberal Party

Sandy Silver	Leader of the Third Party Klondike
---------------------	---------------------------------------

LEGISLATIVE STAFF

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

**Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Tuesday, November 17, 2015 — 1:00 p.m.**

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

Prayers

DAILY ROUTINE

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

Tributes.

TRIBUTES

In recognition of International Education Week

Hon. Mr. Graham: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to acknowledge International Education Week, which started yesterday and runs through Friday.

International Education Week is celebrated worldwide every third week of November. It originated in the United States in 2000 as a joint initiative of the US Department of State and the US Department of Education. It's now celebrated worldwide in over 100 countries, including Canada.

Canada's International Education Week is hosted by the Canadian Bureau for International Education with leadership from the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada.

According to the bureau's website, International Education Week showcases the impact international education has in preparing Canadians for the world and supports Canada's efforts to engage effectively on the international stage. It shines a light on efforts and initiatives that prepare Canadians to take their place on the global stage and also to attract future leaders.

International education should be seen as a two-way street. We often think of it in terms of students from other countries who come to Canada to study, but we should also think of it in terms of Canadians going abroad to study. Those who leave their homes to study in other countries return enriched and broadened by their experiences, and they carry those experiences and those perspectives with them as they move forward in their lives. International education reflects the spirit of cooperation and collaboration among people from different corners of the globe with different languages, cultures and world views. It both requires and cultivates openness to other ways of living, and a willingness to view one's own cultural and personal values from another's perspective. Students who come here from other countries go back home changed forever by their exposure to a culture that may be very different from their own. They also carry with them the deeply personal connections that are a valuable aspect of studying abroad.

Here in the territory, Yukon College plays an instrumental role in our international education efforts. At this moment, 56 international students are studying at the college

with another 25 students due to join us in January. They come from Austria, China, France, India, Ireland, Japan, Korea, Mexico, Norway, Pakistan, Philippines, Spain, Switzerland, Thailand and Vietnam. Of the 56 who are here now, Mr. Speaker, approximately half of them are enrolled in academic programs as diverse as business education, circumpolar studies, culinary arts, early learning and childcare, general studies, liberal arts, multimedia and, one of the favourites, northern outdoor and environmental studies. One is also enrolled in the School of Visual Arts in Dawson City. The others are studying English as a second language through the college's international division.

Nineteen of these 56 students are housed in private homes throughout the city in the college's homestay program. This program provides a safe and friendly home environment for students during their stay at Yukon College. The homestay experience is as integral to international education as any academics they learn at the college. It is in these private homes that students learn about the day-to-day lives of Yukoners — valuable cultural knowledge that they would not otherwise so readily gain.

I'm grateful to the many generous residents who open their houses and their lives to these students. I know that many of them go above and beyond their responsibilities as hosts, providing their guests with unforgettable experiences of life in northern Canada. The relationships established during these homestays often last a lifetime and provide unforeseen benefits. In my own case, approximately 15 years ago, I sponsored an international student here in the territory. That student, I am very proud to say, is now a gainfully employed, tax paying, contributing member of Yukon society, and that's something I think that we all should experience.

Yukoners most certainly benefit from having these students here. Today at lunch time at the college a group of international students from 12 countries hosted International Students Day with food, music and conversation. The promotional poster for the event created by the students themselves included a section called "human library" with the following description: to increase tolerance and understanding; to promote respect for people; to enjoy the oral tradition of storytelling; to meet new people; and to strengthen ties. This is as good a promotion for the benefits of international education as any I have seen.

As I mentioned earlier, international education is a two-way street. So far I focused on the students who come here to study, but of course there are many Yukon students who study abroad. Those who do come back, not only with new knowledge and skills, but with a much deeper appreciation of home and an awareness of the fact that Yukon truly is a marvelous place to live, work, play and raise a family. They never again take for granted what we have here in the territory.

We don't have statistics on the number of Yukoners who have studied in other countries, but I personally know many who have done so and I'm sure many members of this House also are aware. Not only do these students bring their international experiences home with them where it informs

their work in the private and public sectors, but through their roles as unofficial ambassadors for the Yukon, they promote our territory as a destination for travel, education and even immigration to a global audience.

I would like to end this tribute by highlighting a few initiatives in Yukon schools that relate to my theme today. International education is not only about physically crossing borders; it is also about thinking globally in local situations. Fostering that thinking can start as early as elementary school. For example, students in Amanda Bartle's grade 6 class at Takhini Elementary School have an ongoing correspondence with Tebeson Primary School in the village of Mosoriot, Kenya. Students from both schools co-wrote and illustrated a book last year. Two copies of the book were bound — one for each school. Our copy is proudly on display in the Takhini Elementary School library. Takhini students also raised money to help buy a water pump and a generator for the school.

The F.H. Collins Social Justice Club has an ongoing correspondence with one of the high schools in Mosoriot. They also raised funds for the water pump and generator. Vanier Catholic Secondary School is supporting the village as well. A volleyball tournament this coming weekend will raise money for a hand-powered water drill endorsed by the World Health Organization called the "village drill".

All of these initiatives have arisen out of the personal passion of Vanier Catholic Secondary School counsellor, Katrina Brogdon, who has travelled in Kenya and will be going back in the spring to continue her work with teachers and students in Mosoriot. I thank and commend Ms. Brogdon, all the teachers and administrators involved and, of course, the students in these schools themselves. I have no doubt that these early experiences in reaching out beyond their own lives are planting seeds that will take root and bear fruit far into the future. International education, in whatever form it takes, is a win for everyone.

Since I am on my feet, I would like to take the opportunity to have all members join with me in welcoming Alison Morham's grade 5/6 class from Selkirk Elementary School. Welcome to the Legislature, and I hope you enjoy yourself.

Applause

In recognition of Girl Guides of Canada

Hon. Ms. Taylor: I rise on behalf of all members of the Assembly here today to pay tribute to Girl Guides and the guiding movement, which has and continues to make a difference in the lives of young women and girls in our territory and across the globe. Guiding in Canada began back in 1910. It was some four years later that it made its way to the City of Dawson — Dawson City. The first gathering of some 25 10- to 12-year-old guides took place at St. Paul's Cathedral. Martha Black was their patron and Harriet Osborne was their leader. The early groups met at school and church and they did marching drills by the government building. They spent a couple of weeks every summer at Rock Creek on the Klondike River, borrowed tents from the Royal Northwest

Mounted Police and slept on spruce bough beds with Hudson Bay blankets. During the war years, they made candy, cookies and long knit blue stockings for soldiers overseas and raised funds for the Red Cross.

By the 1960s, extensive guide camping was taking place, and the land from Sprucewind, the campsite at M'Clintock Bay at Marsh Lake, was leased from the territorial government. In 1987, it was purchased outright and hundreds of Girl Guides and Brownies have camped there ever since from across North America.

Yukon guides have hosted cadets from abroad; they've played important roles as ambassadors; they've won a number of various distinctions and have formed an integral part of our community response, dating back to the 1979 Dawson City flood.

As one of the largest organizations for women and girls in Canada, Girl Guides continues to play an important role in the lives of our youth and this may be because although Girl Guides is a long-standing tradition in Canada, the organization has also been able to change with the times. From learning to bandage wounds during the First World War to learning about Internet safety and privacy in today's digital age, guiding continues to change with the times to reflect the needs and the interests of contemporary girls and women.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the MLA for Klondike across the way for handing me a real jewel of a piece of information. It was brought to my attention that a decade ago, back in 2005, it was actually the City of Whitehorse, Yukon College and Girl Guides of Yukon who collaborated to develop the first-ever climate change badges. It was a series of four badges. I know I'm not able to provide props, but it is a beautiful badge for everyone to see. I would tend to agree with the author that it is kind of cool leading up to the COP21 conference in Paris. So thanks for that.

Mr. Speaker, guide laws and the guide promise have also evolved over the years to reflect what girls and young women value in today's world. Likewise, uniforms, the badges, as well as the recipe for the infamous Girl Guide cookies have also evolved over the last 101 years. What hasn't changed, however, is the Girl Guides' overarching vision of supporting and enabling girls to be confident, resourceful and courageous and to make a difference in the world.

Last year marked the 100th anniversary of Girl Guides in the Yukon and to commemorate the celebration, MacBride Museum organized and hosted an exhibition, which showcased the evolution of guiding in the north, including a diverse array of uniforms, pins, badges, activities and events hosted in our communities. For those who were able to take part or who were able to actually look at the exhibit themselves first-hand, they would have the opportunity to see former MLA Joyce Hayden's camp poncho, former MLA Pat Duncan's blanket, and thanks to my mother's own organizational skills, two of my own original uniforms that I wore a few years ago.

To mark the centenary, a reunion of Girl Guides was held in Dawson City at the place where it all began, wherein some 42 women, spanning several generations from women in their

early twenties to the oldest, 82-year-old Lena Emma Tizya, who travelled to Queen Elizabeth II's coronation in 1953, when she was a guide. Ms. Tizya was originally from Old Crow and joined the Dawson City unit when her family moved. She was chosen to be one of a few Canadian girls chosen to attend the coronation and the visit would be her first trip away from home, and what a trip that was, as was the purse her mother made to accompany Lena — an item that also formed part of the exhibit at MacBride Museum.

As minister responsible for the Women's Directorate, I was also very honoured and pleased to acknowledge the excellent work and the contributions of the Girl Guide movement over the years, with the unveiling of a poster during Women's History Month. I have also been very pleased to host a number of tours in the Legislative Assembly here and to speak to the topic of women in leadership with some of our local troops.

Yukon area Girl Guides have made a significant impact on the history of Yukon and have contributed to the lives of many individuals, including government leaders — our own past Premier, Pat Duncan — and commissioners — Commissioner Geraldine Van Bibber — and managers, directors, teachers and many others with successful careers over the years. Ask any woman who has ever been a Girl Guide about the meaning and value it has played in their lives and they will undoubtedly share with you some very profound and valued memories of how their lives were influenced by this highly respected organization and the camaraderie of their fellow guides.

I had the privilege of serving as a Brownie and a Girl Guide here in the Yukon. My mother was a huge advocate of guiding in the north and, as such, she served as a team leader for a number of years in the Watson Lake division. My experience was nothing but a positive one. Above all, it taught us the importance of teamwork, having fun and pursuing interests beyond what in fact I thought were my interests at that time. I learned various skills and crafts and engaged in the sale of a lot of Girl Guide cookies, a skill that has served me well to this day.

I believe there will always be Girl Guides, as long as there are girls and young women who are interested in being part of our community and making it a better place for everyone.

Most importantly, being a Girl Guide is about being true to yourself, which can often be a challenge for girls and young women in today's world.

In keeping with the practice that was first started by our former Premier, Pat Duncan, some years ago, I have asked our staff to deliver a box of Girl Guide cookies today to every member of the Legislative Assembly, to our media in the press gallery as well, and to the Hansard office staff. As members are all aware, all funds raised from the sale of Girl Guide cookies support girls throughout the Yukon in their respective unit activities.

Mr. Speaker, in closing, I would like to thank a number of individuals who have gathered here today and who have joined us here in the gallery this afternoon starting with

Kerri Scholz, whose official title is the area commissioner for the Aurora Adventures Area. It was just brought to my attention that last October, about a year ago, that Yukon actually merged with Northwest Territories — so encompassing a fairly large area, to say the least. Thank you to Kerri Scholz who has joined us.

I would also like to recognize someone who is also joining us here in the gallery today — Jennifer Moorlag, who is also a former territorial commissioner, and we also have with us a couple of Brownie leaders — Mary Bradshaw and Morgen Smith. They are all very highly successful women in our territory who have contributed and continue to contribute to our territory as we know it today.

I want to thank these women who have joined us here today and to the many countless volunteers for imparting their values and helping to shape the lives of Yukon girls and future citizens for the past 101 years in our territory.

I would ask all members to join with me in giving a warm welcome to each of these individuals. Thank you for your ongoing contributions.

Applause

Speaker: Introduction of visitors.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Mr. Nixon: Albeit already introduced, I would just like to take this opportunity to introduce and welcome a couple of constituents of mine, Kerri Scholz and Jennifer Moorlag, from the riding of Porter Creek South. Welcome.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Ms. White: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have for tabling *Yukon Greenhouse Gas Emissions: The transportation sector — Updated Report 2015*.

Speaker: Are there any reports of committees?

Are there any petitions to be presented?

Are there any bills to be introduced?

Are there any notices of motions?

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to use the community development fund to work with the Centre for Human-Wildlife Conflict Solutions to communicate the recommendations of the bear hazard assessment through public presentations and through the updated website.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to use the community development fund to support the Village of Teslin to carry out landscaping on both sides of the Alaska

Highway for the benefit of residents and to enhance economic development through tourism.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to release greenhouse gas emissions for its own operations for 2013.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to inform Yukoners, in light of retweets from the Minister of Justice, whether it supports:

- (1) Yukon's effort to bring Syrian refugees here; and
- (2) the Government of Canada's plan to resettle 25,000 Syrian refugees in Canada by the end of 2015.

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

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Greenhouse gas emissions

Ms. Hanson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the Paris climate conference is only two weeks away, and it does appear that the Yukon delegation will be going to the talks armed with inaccurate data on Yukon's greenhouse gas emissions.

The goal of the Paris climate conference is to get a legally binding and universal agreement on climate with the aim of keeping global warming below two degrees Celsius. To do this, governments around the world will need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The first step in reducing greenhouse gas emissions is knowing how much you produce.

Yesterday, when the Member for Takhini-Kopper King asked the Minister of Environment if the government had produced any annual reports on greenhouse gas emissions for the Yukon since 2012, she didn't get an answer.

Can the Premier confirm that the most recent annual report of greenhouse gas emissions that Yukon will be taking to COP21 was released in 2012?

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the member opposite for the question.

The report that was tabled today is one of the reports that the Climate Change Secretariat had commissioned. The Yukon government believes, Mr. Speaker, that it is important to demonstrate leadership in reducing our greenhouse gas emissions that contribute to climate change. Our Yukon government here is taking a sector-by-sector approach to managing greenhouse gas emissions while supporting Yukon's economy and growing population.

In the 2012 *Climate Change Action Plan* progress report, the Yukon government established emission targets in our four sectors: electricity, building, transportation and industrial operations. The Department of Environment is preparing the next climate change action plan progress report as we speak, which will provide a detailed update on the Yukon sector-by-sector specific targets and actions.

Ms. Hanson: Thanks, Mr. Speaker.

When the minister actually reads the 2015 report on Yukon's greenhouse gas emissions in the transportation sectors, he will see it revealed some troubling findings when it comes to measurement and reporting mechanisms.

The report found that this government "substantively under-report Yukon emissions" and that "under-reporting is prevalent across all Yukon sectors, not just transportation." The report indicates that actual emissions could be up to 75 percent higher than what is reported.

Again, Mr. Speaker, emission reduction targets can't be met if the levels of emissions themselves are underreported. What will the Premier do to ensure that the Yukon delegation to COP21 will be travelling to Paris with accurate data on Yukon's greenhouse gas emissions?

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: The government on this side does appreciate the fact that we do need the transportation sector to get goods and services to the north. It is the largest source of our greenhouse gas emissions in the Yukon. It accounted for 57 percent of the Yukon's emissions in 2012. Key reduction targets identified in 2012 include: by 2015, reducing emissions in the transportation sector by 10 percent from 2012 levels and, by 2015, reducing emissions from the Yukon government fleet vehicle operations by five percent from 2012 levels. We're making progress toward this Yukon-wide transportation goal. In 2013, transportation emissions were 9.74 percent lower than 2012. Since 2012, Yukon government vehicles have become two percent more fuel efficient. We are doing things and we look forward to taking Yukon's story to COP21.

Ms. Hanson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

In-house emissions are one thing. When we talk about climate change, the bottom line is comprehensive knowledge of greenhouse gas emissions. The average winter temperature in Yukon has increased five degrees Celsius over the past 50 years. This is happening now and the implications for Yukon are serious. What does it say when a territory that will disproportionately experience the effects of climate change cannot accurately say how much greenhouse gas emissions it produces? Meanwhile, this is the same government that is investing millions of dollars to develop an oil and gas industry that will certainly further increase Yukon's gas emissions.

The government's inaction on tackling or even accurately reporting greenhouse gas emissions is a real barrier to real action on climate change. Will the Premier commit to developing accurate greenhouse gas emissions reporting and actually producing up-to-date annual reports on progress on Yukon's greenhouse gas emission targets?

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

To the member opposite: we are taking action. That's why we have a climate change action plan; that's why we have an energy strategy; and the Yukon government's partnership with the Government of Canada implementing climate change adaptation measures across the territory. Some of the recent projects have focused on documenting ecosystem changes: mapping areas of flood risk; examining the impacts

of permafrost on highways — I see that in my riding all the time; buildings; agriculture; and water sources.

The Yukon government supports eight different monitoring projects that help us understand the impacts of climate change in the Yukon. These projects focus on areas as diverse as bats, pika, snowshoe hare populations, caribou habitat, permafrost temperatures and glacier monitoring. The Yukon government is also installing 25 new water monitoring stations to improve flood forecasting capabilities, monitoring climate change and to inform the development of our infrastructure planning in various locations.

We are doing a lot, Mr. Speaker. The government on this side is very proud of the staff working in the Climate Change Secretariat, the staff working in the Department of Environment, and all the work that this government has done.

Question re: Oil and gas disposition process

Ms. White: In its current YESAA application, Northern Cross Yukon is proposing to mix, bury and cover the waste from up to 20 oil and gas drill sites. They plan to use clay and permafrost as barriers to keep drill waste from contaminating ground and surface water.

Mr. Speaker, next door in the Northwest Territories, drill waste from oil and gas exploration was thought to be frozen into permafrost; however, it has since been found to be leaking into four lakes. This brings into question the idea of relying on permafrost as a barrier for oil and gas waste in the Yukon.

Mr. Speaker, is the Minister of Environment aware that disposing of oil and gas drill waste in sumps has failed in similar areas of extensive permafrost?

Hon. Mr. Kent: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. When it comes to oil and gas activities and regulations, we have a very strong and robust set of regulations. The Yukon Territory borrows from jurisdictions like British Columbia and Alberta, and also borrows from our northern neighbours when it comes to developing these types of regulations.

With respect to the project in question, it is currently undergoing a YESAA review. I believe there is an outstanding information request for the company that they need to respond to before that project goes any further. I am sure that some of this will be addressed. I wouldn't want to prejudge or interfere in any way in the YESAA process. Again, once those recommendations are done, whether the project should be accepted, rejected or varied, then the Yukon government will be in a position as a decision body to make a determination at that time. These types of activities are subject to strong, modern, robust regulations, as I mentioned, and we have the ability and I have confidence in our Oil and Gas Resources branch in Energy, Mines and Resources to do the necessary work to ensure that the environment is protected.

Ms. White: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Yukon Party government's position is that disposing of drilling mud and cuttings in sumps will not require a water licence if the Alberta Energy Regulator Directive 050 is followed. To be clear, the Yukon Party does not choose to follow all of the Alberta directives — only some. The problem is that Directive

050 from Alberta does not address permafrost. Permafrost is extensive where Northern Cross wants to generate and dispose of waste, but the regulatory framework that the government prefers for our rapidly warming north Yukon makes no mention of permafrost.

Can the Minister of Environment explain why the Yukon Party government is relying on a regulatory framework for the disposal of hazardous waste that is not suitable to the environment in which Northern Cross Yukon plans to drill?

Hon. Mr. Kent: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

As I mentioned in my first response, we not only borrow from jurisdictions like Alberta, we also borrow from jurisdictions like British Columbia. We are looking to our northern neighbours as well when it comes to our regulatory system. We recognize that some of the oil and gas basins that we have — particularly the Liard Basin — are close to British Columbia — shared with British Columbia, in fact — so it makes sense, when regulating activities in that particular basin, to perhaps lean a bit more heavily on the BC Oil and Gas Commission and their associated regulations. When it comes to activities in the northern Yukon, of course, we do share that similar terrain and topography with the Northwest Territories, so it makes sense to perhaps adapt some of the things they are doing over there.

Again, we have a very strong and robust regulatory system when it comes to oil and gas and mineral resource development. We are a party that believes in responsible resource development. We want to ensure that we protect the environmental integrity of the Yukon, but also focus on jobs and business opportunities and economic opportunities for Yukoners as well.

Ms. White: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

What I was looking for was environmental leadership — not even a mention of permafrost or the challenges we face with it. Not all drilling waste is suitable for disposal in the mix, bury and cover sump. When waste is not suitable for a sump, Northern Cross Yukon says it will apply for disposal approval to assist specific landfills and follow the transportation and tracking requirements. Northern Cross already generated oil and gas waste from its drilling project between the summers of 2012 and 2013. They said its drill cuttings were transported to — and I quote: “an approved facility located in Whitehorse.”

Mr. Speaker, in the interest of transparency, can the minister responsible for protecting our water tell this House what was in that drill waste? Was it disposed of in a public dump? How is it being monitored?

Hon. Mr. Kent: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. With respect to the Northern Cross project in Eagle Plains, first of all, I would like to speak to some of the economic benefits that it has brought over the past years. They've spent almost \$100 million in the past number of years on that project. Many of the individuals who were employed there are from communities like Old Crow, Mayo and throughout the Yukon. Again, there were a number of service and supply companies that helped them as well.

With respect to current activities that are proposed for that site, they are currently undergoing a YESAB assessment. Again, it is my understanding that there is an outstanding information request from YESAB to the company at this point. It's important, again, for Yukoners to know that it's still in the environmental and socio-economic assessment process. Once it comes out of that process with recommendations, the Government of Yukon will be in a position to accept, reject or vary those recommendations when it comes to this project. These types of things can be taken care of at that stage.

Question re: Dawson City Airport

Mr. Silver: Mr. Speaker, this spring I asked the government when it was going to move ahead with paving the Dawson City Airport runway. It was the spring of 2014 when the former Yukon Party Minister of Tourism returned from a meeting in Dawson where he had heard concerns about a gravel runway. It was limiting the number of tourists that Air North could fly in and out of Alaska, for example.

The minister said in this House that the government was going to pave the runway. He also told a local newspaper — the announcement was — and I quote: "...meant as a message to Yukoners and the tourism industry that the government takes their requests seriously." Unfortunately, there's no money in the spring budget to pave Dawson's runway. There's no money in this fall's update and no money in next year's forecast either, Mr. Speaker. Why is paving the Dawson Airport runway not a priority for this government?

Hon. Mr. Kent: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There are a number of priorities that many communities identify — including, of course, Dawson City — with respect to infrastructure development. This is something that has come forward from a number of parties.

Perhaps it's worth turning back the clock a little bit. As I mentioned in the Spring Sitting of this Legislative Assembly, we were waiting for confirmation from Transport Canada that jet service would be able to use the approach path to the Dawson runway. We've since received verbal confirmation and are awaiting written confirmation on that. There is a bank of geotechnical knowledge with respect to the permafrost that underlies that runway. We are updating that knowledge base right now so that we can have a true estimate on what the costs are going to be to pave that runway. Mr. Speaker, it's about \$11 million capital right now: \$4 million for paving and the balance in additional equipment for O&M — another half a million a year for O&M.

This is a project that we know is important to a number of Yukoners and many Yukon businesses. We want to make sure we get it right and have a proper estimate going forward, because we know, Mr. Speaker, that if we are a dollar over, the Member for Klondike would be the first to complain that we were overbudget.

Mr. Silver: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Since I asked questions this spring, it has become increasingly obvious that the holdup seems to be on the Yukon government side here. Air North supports paving and so does Chief Isaac Inc. of Dawson. In February of 2014, former Minister Jason Kenney

agreed that this project would be worthwhile. He said that he would support and endorse the application for Building Canada infrastructure funding. The former Yukon Party Tourism minister supported it — or at least he did before he was replaced.

Finally, the federal Conservative candidate who the Premier warmly endorsed also backed this project as well. It was interesting, however, to see that the project was not on the list of priorities to the new federal government that the Premier recently released.

Mr. Speaker, why are so many organizations behind this project and why is the Yukon government not one of them?

Hon. Mr. Kent: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Again as I mentioned, I know this is an important project for the community of Dawson City. There are a number of projects throughout the Yukon that are important when we develop priorities — infrastructure priorities going forward. Of course we've heard about access roads into mineral-rich areas like the Dawson Range and improving those roads as important priorities.

With respect to the Dawson runway, Mr. Speaker, we want to make sure that we've done all of our homework. We need that written confirmation from Transport Canada that the approach slope is available to have jet service land there. We've received verbal confirmation on that and that's where we are.

Mr. Speaker, with respect to the capital cost of paving the runway, we're adding to our geotech knowledge base. Right now we're doing our homework on that.

Mr. Speaker, it's an important project — we recognize that — to the community of Dawson and to many businesses and tourism operators throughout the territory. I know that the Minister of Tourism and Culture has spoken directly with Holland America about the importance of this as well; but Mr. Speaker, it's also important to do our homework, and that's what we're doing right now.

Mr. Silver: Mr. Speaker, paving the runway is obviously not a priority for this government or it would be done by now. This project has the support of the community; it has the support of the private sector, the development arm of the local First Nation but not the Yukon Party. Air North has been flying into Dawson City for years now and has introduced an opportunity to increase the flow of passengers through the airport by using more modern and fuel-efficient jets on that route. This move gives more passengers-per-flight at a lower cost-per-passenger in a more fuel-efficient way, thereby reducing greenhouse gases.

The paving of the runway will create an opportunity for Air North and others to operate more effectively into the airport and allow them to bring in more tourists, more workers and more residents at a lower cost and will also allow for expanded cargo operations in the area to feed our primary industries.

Mr. Speaker, will the minister release the results of the approach slope study? Also, why did the government make the promise to pave in the first place if it had no intention of following through with it?

Hon. Mr. Kent: Mr. Speaker, once again the Member for Klondike is about three or four months ahead of himself when he makes all of those accusations, I guess, in his question.

Mr. Speaker, of course we recognize the benefits of paving the Dawson runway. We have a number of airports and aerodromes throughout the territory that are important to each and every one of our communities. They're staging grounds for not only tourism opportunities, but also mineral development and exploration opportunities. We've heard from the business community about the importance of this project. Underway right now is a business case study on the paving of the Dawson runway.

Mr. Speaker, there are a number of unanswered questions that we're looking into right now — whether it's geotech or waiting for that written confirmation from Transport Canada. I know this is important to the Member for Klondike, but also doing our homework is extremely important when we come up with cost estimates.

As I mentioned in a previous response here today, the Member for Klondike would be the first to criticize if we were even one dollar over cost estimates when the budget came out for this. If he'll show a little bit of patience, let us do our homework so that we can make an informed decision on behalf of Yukon taxpayers.

Question re: Ross River suspension bridge

Mr. Barr: Mr. Speaker, last month the Miles Canyon bridge was closed by the government, following news that wood rot had made part of the structure potentially unsound. The Department of Highways and Public Works, which handles most government infrastructure, has been working diligently to secure assessments of the problem before creating an action plan.

A local news outlet reports that a planning process could begin by the end of the month. Meanwhile, in Ross River, the Department of Community Services' work on the long-standing and known problems with the Ross River bridge are only in their second phase of repairs. In September, the Community Services minister wrote in a letter that they were seeking funding options for that work.

Has the government secured funding to proceed with phase 2 repairs of the Ross River bridge?

Hon. Mr. Dixon: The simple answer is no, we have not yet secured that funding. I indicated in a letter previously to the community, to the Chief of the Ross River Dena Council, that we would be seeking funding going forward. We have completed the first-stage engineering work and now we are considering how to come up with the funds to do the work necessary to bring that bridge back to good standing.

I have noted before that there is currently a significant degree of uncertainty with federal infrastructure funding, but we are hopeful that this bridge will indeed be eligible for that type of funding. It remains to be seen what sort of priorities and what sort of structure the new federal government will put in place for infrastructure funding. Once we have an understanding of what that is going to be, we will move

forward with our partners to explore options for funding that project.

Mr. Barr: Mr. Speaker, in Ross River the suspension bridge is a primary piece of community infrastructure. This project has been in the works for far too long, unlike the quick reaction to problems on the Miles Canyon bridge. It took years for the Yukon Party to act on what they knew about the Ross River bridge. It's time to end this saga. It has taken far too long to complete the Ross River bridge.

Will the government commit funds in specific terms and complete the repairs on the Ross River bridge in a timely fashion?

Hon. Mr. Dixon: Mr. Speaker, I need to point out that we have expended considerable money on this project already. Government of Yukon has approved a budget of \$1.5 million of Building Canada funds to stabilize the Ross River bridge, which enabled the preservation of its heritage value and ensured public safety. This work has been completed.

The next phase of work will be added to add stairs, repair the decking of the bridge and replace the cabling system. This work is required before the bridge can be reopened. We are awaiting response from the Government of Canada regarding our application for the next phase of infrastructure funding. We don't know exactly what that funding is going to look like yet. I'm sure, from the commitments made in the election, that it will be robust, new federal infrastructure funding, and I look forward to discussing options for funding this bridge in Ross River with the department and seeking funding from our federal counterparts.

Question re: Contaminated sites

Ms. Moorcroft: Mr. Speaker, environmental liabilities held by the Government of Yukon have increased every single year since 2011, both in cost and in the number of contaminated sites. Yukon Public Accounts show that, as of March 31, 2015, the government has recorded \$29 million as a liability for the costs related to the remediation of contaminated sites for which the government is responsible. There is \$12 million, or 40 percent of the liabilities, for highway maintenance camps and airports.

Why is the number of contaminated sites in Yukon on the rise?

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do thank the member opposite for the question.

The Yukon government is investing almost \$3 million in 2015 on remediating eight Yukon government-owned properties around the territory. In addition, there is work underway to begin remediating the Marwell tar pit.

Remediating contaminated sites does reduce the risk to human and environmental health — that's why we remediate them — and the result is a cleaner and safer environment.

In addition to the remediation work on eight properties, assessment and/or monitoring is occurring on 50 other government-owned sites. We're working and moving forward on some of our government liabilities and we look forward to seeing them cleaned up so we can have a cleaner, safer environment.

Ms. Moorcroft: The government is now aware of 86 sites as of March 31, 2015 — up from 74 sites in 2014 where the government is obligated, or is likely obligated, to incur costs for the remediation of contaminated sites.

As the minister said, remediation work is in progress in the Marwell tar pit where the Government of Canada is funding 70 percent of the remediation costs and for one other highway maintenance camp. That leaves 35 highway maintenance camps and airports that are contaminated with no remediation work being undertaken currently.

How does the government identify which sites receive remediation work, and will the minister table the schedule for the remediation of the 35 Highways and Public Works contaminated sites?

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: How we come up with which site needs to be cleaned up — they're prioritized by the ones that are the worst. For example, the Marwell tar pit is a multi-year project co-funded through an agreement with the Government of Canada. Phase 1 assessment activities are now complete, and the project is moving into phase 2 remediation.

A request for proposals to procure this remediation construction will be developed this fall. It is anticipated that the contract will be awarded early in the new year so the remediation can continue.

Regular project updates are communicated to the affected First Nations — so the Ta'an Kwäch'an Council and the Kwanlin Dün First Nation — as well as the affected individuals and businesses.

We have a liability list of environmental liabilities that we clean up — the worst ones first — and we work away. As we clean it up, then we have one off our liability, but there is always going to be another that appears. When you develop in the Yukon and you believe in economic development and you believe in moving forward with better infrastructure for Yukoners, you're going to come across liabilities.

Ms. Moorcroft: You can avoid creating environmental liabilities. The minister has said they are prioritizing the work based on what the worst ones are, and he has talked about the work that is being done at the Marwell tar pit, largely being funded by the federal government, but he hasn't said how they are prioritizing or said that he will table a report of when they are going to be doing the work.

We know all too well the harms and the costs of historical environmental liabilities. Many of them occurred when people either didn't know or didn't care about the harms that were done to the environment, but the minister is making it sound like he thinks that they're inevitable. Government could be providing leadership on reducing environmental contamination through responsible waste management, using less harmful practices and products that are less hazardous to the environment.

What direction has the minister provided to ensure that more Highways and Public Works camps and airports are not added to the current list of 36 contaminated sites in that department alone?

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Leadership is exactly what this Yukon Party government has

done. Mr. Speaker, it's under this Yukon Party government that a Site Assessment and Remediation unit was created, where there is ongoing assessment of properties across this territory. This is reviewed by the Auditor General of Canada, Mr. Speaker.

We continue to work at identifying areas that are booked as environmental liabilities, Mr. Speaker. As we do the work, we have an ongoing reassessment of what the value of that liability is. As we make those investments, we then are able to remove those liabilities off of our books.

I can also assure the members opposite, as all Yukoners know, that when we look at all of our assets — our cash and our assets — and we subtract our liabilities, including our environmental liabilities, Mr. Speaker, this government continues to have money in the bank. We are soon to be the only jurisdiction in this country without any net debt.

Question re: Children's dental health program

Ms. Stick: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Oral health starts at birth. That's why Yukon's preschool dental health program delivers presentations to Yukon parents who play a key role in keeping their children's teeth healthy and clean. But the number of presentations to parents has fallen from 18 presentations five years ago to only five this year.

Last spring, I asked the minister to explain the drop in service and he responded that there's a shortage in dental therapists due to the closure of the training facility in 2011. He did say that the government had converted three vacant dental therapist positions to hygienists and that these positions had been filled. What he didn't explain though, Mr. Speaker, is why the number of dental presentations to parents had fallen over 70 percent over the past five years. Can the minister today provide Yukon parents with an explanation?

Hon. Mr. Nixon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Addressing the member opposite, she is correct that the National School of Dental Therapy in Saskatchewan closed in November of 2011. This was the only school in Canada that provided training for dental therapists.

Yukon's children's dental program is focusing on preventive treatment and has been converting vacant dental therapist positions to dental hygienist positions, as the member indicated. As I understand it, there are a total of four dental hygienist positions within that program. Certainly, we thank those individuals for providing the service throughout the territory. This Yukon Party government continues to look at options for all Yukon communities and, Mr. Speaker, we will continue to have those discussions and continue to have dialogue with stakeholders here in the territory to see how best we move forward.

Ms. Stick: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's the same answer as last spring, but it doesn't tell us why the numbers are down and what we're doing to increase those. The children's dental program is a school-based dental health program for children from preschool up to grade 8 in Whitehorse, and up to grade 12 in the communities. The number of visits taken by dentists to our rural communities has fallen over 50 percent over the past five years. There are

90-percent fewer health fairs and presentations given in our communities. The impacts of these cuts are already evident. A Dawson City dentist said earlier this month — and I quote: “I just visited a community in the north and I examined 31 children and of those 31 only three had no decay, so it’s going downhill.”

Mr. Speaker, what is this government doing to restore services to the Yukon children’s dental health program in the face of these challenges?

Hon. Mr. Nixon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would certainly take the opportunity to thank the dentists who we do contract for a number of Yukon communities. Certainly the program, as I had indicated, is contracting with local dentists to provide services in Whitehorse schools, where existing staff are not able to provide the services. Most local dentists, we do know and understand, may not be interested in servicing some of the outlying communities. We’ll continue to work with our stakeholders. We have identified that there is an issue in the territory; that issue has been created because of the closure and the reduction of the dental therapists that were available to Yukon, but we’ll continue to work with the stakeholders and we’ll continue to have discussions within government to find out the best move forward on this issue.

Ms. Stick: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think I heard the minister confirm that there is an issue and we’re not getting appropriate dental health care in the communities to our preschoolers or to our schoolchildren. Health Canada says there is a direct link between oral disease and other health problems, such as diabetes, heart disease, stroke, and respiratory illnesses later in life. The evidence is clear. Investing in preventive and therapeutic dental health will lead to better health outcomes for all Yukoners.

We have dentists; we have dental hygienists — they are able to do some of these fairs or educational programs. There are ways to fill these gaps. This government said it even looked into setting up a northern training school for dental therapists, but it would be difficult and expensive. What are expensive are long-term health impacts on Yukoners.

Will the minister provide this House with the announcements —

Speaker: Order, please. The member’s time has elapsed.

Hon. Mr. Nixon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

In addressing the member opposite, we do understand that there is an issue in the territory. We will work toward mitigating that issue and looking for options on a move-forward basis. We will continue our dialogue with stakeholders here in the territory to see if there is local capacity that can pick up some of the schools. We do currently contract dentists to go to some Yukon schools, but certainly would be interested in seeing how we can move that program forward.

The member opposite indicated that the National School of Dental Therapy closed in 2011. It certainly put some pressures on Yukon, but it has put pressure on a number of other territories and provinces as well, so we will continue our dialogue with stakeholders and caucus discussions, but this

Yukon Party government is committed to seeing some sort of program in place to address a number of Yukon communities.

Speaker: The time for Question Period has now elapsed.

Notice of government private members’ business

Mr. Elias: Pursuant to Standing Order 14.2(7), I would like to identify the items standing in the name of government private members to be called on Wednesday, November 18, 2015. They are Motion No. 1047, standing in the name of the Member for Watson Lake, and Motion No. 1054, standing in the name of the Member for Watson Lake.

Speaker: We will now proceed to Orders of the Day.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BILLS

Bill No. 94: *Act to Amend the Education Act* — Third Reading

Clerk: Third reading, Bill No. 94, standing in the name of the Hon. Mr. Graham.

Hon. Mr. Graham: Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 94, entitled *Act to Amend the Education Act*, be now read a third time and do pass.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Minister of Education that Bill No. 94, entitled *Act to Amend the Education Act*, be now read a third time and do pass.

Hon. Mr. Graham: Mr. Speaker, I’ll be relatively brief in my comments because most of the points I made during my second reading speech or during Committee of the Whole.

I think it’s really important though that we understand exactly what the Education Appeal Tribunal does and what it was intended to do by the Legislature back in 1990. The Education Appeal Tribunal is an independent body that derives its authority from the *Education Act*. The scope of the Education Appeal Tribunal is clearly defined to me in the *Education Act*; however, last year or two years ago, in 2013, the Education Appeal Tribunal agreed to hear an appeal of a decision made by CSFY, the school board responsible for French first language here in the territory; and the appeal related to a CSFY decision to not allow a student to meet the requirements of a French first language diploma through distance education while attending F.H. Collins High School. The tribunal agreed to hear the appeal of this decision brought forward by the student’s parents to the tribunal and the tribunal argued that under the *Education Act*, it has the right to hear appeals of any decisions that significantly affect the education, health or safety of their children so long as those decisions are not made by persons employed by the school.

CSFY appealed that decision — or went to court to appeal that decision — because they did not believe that the tribunal had the ability to hear an appeal of its decision on French first language programming. The Yukon Education department supported CSFY in this decision because we, at

the time, believed that the *Education Act* clearly stated the four areas under which the Education Appeal Tribunal may hear appeals. To further clarify the authority of the Education Appeal Tribunal, I informed the tribunal in September of this year that we would be proceeding with changes to the *Education Act* to further clarify the authority of the Education Appeal Tribunal. That's all that this bill does, Mr. Speaker. It specifically authorizes the Education Appeal Tribunal to hear appeals of decisions respecting special needs, student records, a suspension decision by a school board, council or superintendent, and to hear appeals of the Minister of Education's rejection of a proposal for a locally developed course of study. Those were the four areas outlined in the *Education Act*, which was passed in 1990.

Mr. Speaker, we then went back to 1990 and to Hansard at that time to further inform ourselves about the scope and authority of the Education Appeal Tribunal.

During those debates, it was confirmed to us over and over that the Yukon government established the tribunal only to deal with those four particular kinds of disputes. There was no intention for the tribunal to take over from the courts in all other types of disputes. This is the reason for the change.

As I mentioned yesterday, we have also requested that CSFY create an appeal mechanism for appeals such as this that have been brought forward that would mirror closely the appeals system that is available to other students in the education system so that we don't have two separate and distinctly different appeal systems. CSFY has agreed to do that. I apologize for not having that information available to me today, but I will have it and I will provide it to members opposite as quickly as I possibly can.

We sincerely believe that this will avoid a costly court battle, and we also believe that it will negate further scope creep by the Education Appeal Tribunal. We do not believe that the Education Appeal Tribunal should expand their authority into other areas covered by other appeal mechanisms in the *Education Act*.

I think that outlines our position. We are not intending to change any functions whatsoever of the Education Appeal Tribunal. We are not intending to change any other areas in the *Education Act* whatsoever. This is simply an amendment to clarify the authority of the Education Appeal Tribunal. I hope that is clear enough to all members of the Legislature and I hope that we can go ahead with this change as quickly as possible.

Mr. Tredger: Mr. Speaker, I'm disappointed in how this government has chosen to deal with a situation that occurred in one of our schools. I'm used to taking a thoughtful and reasoned approach to resolving issues with the full participation of all partners. I find myself in a position where I have to make a decision without having time to discuss or talk to various partners and members of our education community. It's highly unusual to change an act without a period of consultation. Yet, 15 days of consultation — just 15 days — wasn't provided. What we end up with is, to my mind, an

imperfect solution. In our haste to resolve a situation, we may be setting a precedent that in future years we come to regret.

We had second reading just yesterday. A number of people listened on Hansard and were formulating suggestions. I asked the minister a number of questions. They haven't been answered. The minister talks of avoiding the courts. To my mind, an independent tribunal is one that ensures students, parents and school communities have a right to appeal to an independent body. I'm not convinced that an appeal to our school councils, boards, department personnel or the deputy minister satisfies the need for an impartial appeal. Lacking that, it could result in more court cases, but those court cases then would have to be taken on by individuals, parents or communities.

The Education Appeal Tribunal, by all accounts, has been very successful. Yesterday, I asked the minister for the number of cases that the Education Appeal Tribunal had heard and the number of rulings they made. What were the outcomes? How many were resolved before a ruling had to be made that were resolved through remediation? I didn't get a clear answer but, as near as I can ascertain, those were very few. The vast majority of cases that went to the Education Appeal Tribunal were resolved in a matter satisfactory to all parties involved. To my mind, the Education Appeal Tribunal has been very effective in doing its job.

When we're writing acts and when we're producing acts — and in this case, the *Education Act* does not and cannot contemplate all particular possibilities. That is why the Education Appeal Tribunal — an independent appeal tribunal — has been given the authority to determine issues to be heard. My concern is we're defining that authority to what we know now with little thought for what may come in the future.

Another concern I have is that this issue revolves around distance education. The minister mentioned yesterday that there was one situation already that the tribunal has heard. Distance education and correspondence are becoming increasingly important in our society as we go to computer-driven technology. This, to my mind, is a time when an appeal process may be most needed. I would ask that the minister instruct his department upon the passing of this bill that they would develop a policy framework that would clarify the options and courses available to students and how that determination will be made in the future. Again, technology has advanced to the point that we're doing things that weren't even contemplated five years ago, let alone 20 years ago when the act was written. How can we ensure that our students maintain the right without a policy framework around it?

I mentioned yesterday that it's unwise to legislate changes to an act as complex as the *Education Act* in response to an incident. It's unwise and highly unusual, especially given the previous success of the Education Appeal Tribunal in resolving cases. Surely, there were other solutions possible.

We're changing the act — even if it is, as the minister says, a minor change — without consultation with our partners — with YTA, with First Nations, with school councils, with the wider school community. Surely a 15-day consultation period with our partners would not have been too

much to ask. Quite likely, as the minister stated, there would not have been objections, but there may have been solutions proposed. I have faith in our educational partners to come up with reasoned and responsible solutions.

Again, I'm concerned that issues not contemplated by the act may fall between the cracks of our appeal processes, necessitating court cases and battles, and winners and losers, rather than, as the Education Appeal Tribunal did, by taking time to resolve their issues through mediation.

I am also concerned about the haste with which this is being done. It's an unusual measure — extraordinary — to pass an act effective retroactively. I remain unconvinced of the legality of that, but rely on the minister's assertion that he has legal opinion stating that indeed it is legal.

The NDP does support the right of the Department of Education, First Nations, school boards and school councils in their efforts to provide quality education for children in their care. We will support the Commission scolaire francophone du Yukon in pursuing francophone education, including distance education. I am, I guess, dismayed that more options weren't on the table — that other solutions didn't come forward — but despite our strong reservations with the process that the Yukon government has followed, we will be voting in favour of Bill No. 94. However, I do encourage the minister to work with all educational jurisdictions in the Yukon to establish independent, clear and accessible routes for parents, communities and students to appeal education situations, including those not currently contemplated by the act and arising through the normal course of events, to an arm's-length independent body.

As well, since consultation has not been done, I would encourage the minister to set a time for review of Bill No. 94 to ensure that unforeseen circumstances have not arisen and to ensure that the wider school community is aware of and familiar with the entire appeal process.

Mr. Silver: I am rising to speak to the third reading of the *Act to Amend the Education Act*. We too share the statements of our colleagues here in the opposition. It's a matter of timing. Here we are at second reading in Committee of the Whole — Committee of the Whole being yesterday — and today we're on third reading. There are other bills that we haven't even begun to debate yet; yet this seems to be pushed through. That alone isn't enough of a reason for us to say that we're not going to vote against this act to amend, but it does bring up a lot of concerns. It would be different if our phones weren't ringing off the hook on this one, either.

A couple of statements need to be said before we commit this to a vote. We were presented this bill as minor housekeeping, although, after speaking with stakeholders in education, it's clear that there is more at play here. There is absolutely more at play here. I too agree that there should be more public consultation on the bill so that the public could decide what it considers to be major or minor changes to the *Education Act*.

It seems clear that a difference of opinion between the government and stakeholders exists on this bill. When we

spoke in Committee of the Whole, we weren't satisfied with the answers that we got about the appeal process, and there are still questions remaining there and whether or not that applies evenly to all students. There are still issues as far as the explanation.

The minister tried to answer some of the questions but, at the end of the day, there are still many, many questions as to whether or not this is minor housekeeping or much more major than that.

It's also hard not to think that this is being pushed through because, like I said, we have bills on the roster right now that haven't even been into second reading yet and we're already trying to book the Commissioner for assent here on this bill. That's a little disconcerting.

When we're in opposition, it's hard not to get a little suspicious sometimes. When we've asked for some help on this — we've received it in other departments. For example we had questions for the Minister of Community Services about the approaches to the changes to the *Municipal Act*. I spoke to the minister directly about concerns, about municipalities that didn't have a lot of services to which to apply levies, and we were met with the response of "more information", and AYC — more information was given there. The municipalities were given an opportunity to walk through different scenarios. In that case, we were concerned with the process but we got a positive response.

We had another concern with the changes to the *Elections Act*. When you're presented a huge bill and only given a limited amount of time, right away, in opposition, it is our due diligence to make these concerns and considerations vocal to the general public. In that particular case, we met with the Yukon Party government, which said, "Okay, let's discuss this more. Let's give more time. Let's open this up to some shareholders and let's have a more robust conversation here." In the end, we were satisfied with those changes.

The minister has to give us a little bit of leeway here, because here we are in another situation where something seems to be rushed, but here we are, in third reading and assent is coming. We do have concerns. The minister stated at the beginning here that we're talking about taking this tribunal back to its original intent, and we have a majority Yukon Party government and this bill will pass regardless, and I guess we're going to have to take the minister on his word as to whether or not that is what's happening here and what's at play.

Many questions are still unanswered from the education community. After much thought I will be voting in favour of this bill; however, I've made it known for the record our concerns.

Speaker: If the member now speaks, he will close debate. Does any other member wish to be heard?

Hon. Mr. Graham: I listened with some interest — quite a bit of interest actually — and some dismay to the two members opposite — that we didn't have time to consult — the haste to resolve the situation, by the Member for Mayo-

Tatchun. This situation arose in 2013. We have attempted since then to find a solution. We didn't start the legal action. The legal action was taken by CSFY because they were unable to resolve the situation with the Education Appeal Tribunal, nor did the government, which also agreed with CSFY, to have the ability to change that situation at all.

Mr. Speaker, this was the only method to resolve this situation. Obviously mediation wasn't going to work. The members opposite talk as if there is a great conspiracy underway here to take away the authority of the Education Appeal Tribunal. That couldn't be further from the truth. What we're attempting to do is to allow the Education Appeal Tribunal to deal with the same four particular kinds of disputes that they were set up to deal with in 1990. It is only because the Education Appeal Tribunal members have taken it upon themselves to expand their mandate beyond what was established in the *Education Act* that we've had to take this step.

The Member for Mayo-Tatchun — by all accounts the Education Appeal Tribunal has been successful and we agree, and that is because, up until now, they stuck to their mandate. They have been successful within that mandate. We are saying that they should stick to that mandate. That's why we're doing this. The Member for Mayo-Tatchun says that the Education Appeal Tribunal has been given the ability to determine what they hear, and that is simply not accurate. That is what we want to prevent by making this specific amendment. We want to ensure that they stick to the mandate established under the *Education Act*.

For the member opposite again to say that it's extraordinary to pass an act retroactively — I had the opportunity to look back and see how many acts were changed retroactively, and all I would do is direct the member opposite to look back to the last NDP mandate and see how many bills were passed retroactively. It isn't a daily occurrence, but it's not an extraordinary happening.

I found it interesting to see the member opposite supports CSFY, but he doesn't want to see the Education Appeal Tribunal's authority being denied, and therefore the Education Appeal Tribunal and CSFY should go to court. I don't understand his attitude in that area.

The other thing I have to point out is that the member opposite, when he makes statements — be sure of the facts; that's all. You have to be sure of the facts. When he isn't sure of the facts — like even something as trivial as saying we went through second reading yesterday. Well, Mr. Speaker, we didn't go through second reading yesterday. We went through Committee of the Whole yesterday. For the fact that I'm rushing this bill forward — Mr. Speaker, I was prepared for this bill. I've had a lot of time to think about it because we've been involved in this situation since 2013 and I volunteered to go ahead with this bill because I thought it was relatively simple, it was relatively straightforward, and it made no changes to the act whatsoever. What it did was clarify what was already in the act.

Mr. Speaker, I have to say that I was wrong when I spoke to my caucus and said this is a very simple change and I'm

sure the members opposite will understand why it's being done when I give them the facts. Well, I'll have to apologize to them later. Mr. Speaker, it's a very simple change. There's nothing subversive. There's nothing that we're trying to do in this, other than clarify what already exists.

So having said that, Mr. Speaker, I commend the bill to the House and look forward to its passage.

Speaker: Are you prepared for the question?

Some Hon. Members: Division.

Division

Speaker: Division has been called.

Bells

Speaker: Mr. Clerk, please poll the House.

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: Agree.

Mr. Elias: Agree.

Hon. Ms. Taylor: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Graham: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Kent: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Dixon: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Cathers: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Nixon: Agree.

Ms. McLeod: Agree.

Ms. Hanson: Agree.

Ms. Stick: Agree.

Ms. Moorcroft: Agree.

Ms. White: Agree.

Mr. Tredger: Agree.

Mr. Barr: Agree.

Mr. Silver: Agree.

Clerk: Mr. Speaker, the results are 17 yea, nil nay.

Speaker: The yeas have it. I declare the motion carried.

Motion for third reading of Bill No. 94 agreed to

Speaker: I declare that Bill No. 94 has passed this House.

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

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

Motion agreed to

Speaker leaves the Chair

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Chair (Ms. McLeod): Order. Committee of the Whole will now come to order.

The matter before the Committee is general debate on Vote 11, Women's Directorate, in Bill No. 20, entitled *Second Appropriation Act, 2015-16*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

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

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

Chair: The matter before the Committee is general debate on Vote 11, Women's Directorate in Bill No. 20, entitled *Second Appropriation Act, 2015-16*.

Women's Directorate

Hon. Ms. Taylor: I am very pleased to present the supplementary budget for the Women's Directorate for 2015-16.

To start off, I would just like to thank our director of the Women's Directorate, Jennifer England, for joining us here today in the Assembly and to thank her and her team for their ongoing leadership, expertise and work day in and day out on behalf of Yukon citizens.

This budget that is before us today reflects many of the initiatives the Women's Directorate has undertaken and continues to undertake in collaboration with and in support of our many innovative partners. The additional resources for the Women's Directorate will ensure that a number of key projects continue. I would like to begin by highlighting some of those key projects and some of the recent successes as well.

The Women's Directorate continues to have a very active role in the violence prevention working group. This is an interdepartmental working group that is comprised of the departments of Justice, Community Services, Health and Social Services and Education.

Together this group has been working on a number of important initiatives over the course of the past year and a half or two years, including the development of training modules for staff, a domestic violence in the workplace toolbox and revisions to our communications guide. This reflects some of the innovative work that has been spearheaded by the Liard Aboriginal Women's Society over the years in collaboration with individuals such as Dr. Allan Wade, and the response-based approach to violence — whether in the workplace — working with victims of violence, working with organizations and of course other governments and the Government of Yukon.

This year, as members opposite will recall, the Women's Directorate, together with the Department of Justice, were able to establish and support the implementation of a three-year pilot project for a women's legal advocate. This pilot project includes \$281,000 in funding over three years. That is

available for a pilot position to be hosted by the Skookum Jim Friendship Centre. The new legal advocate is there to assist women navigating the legal system in Yukon. I would like to congratulate the individual who actually received the position through the Skookum Jim Friendship Centre, Chantal Genier. It was wonderful to see her there at the women and justice forum that was hosted recently by the Yukon Advisory Council on Women's Issues earlier this fall. It was wonderful to see her there and to hear her words and to speak to her new position. We're very pleased to be able to implement — this is one of the key recommendations, and in fact, one of the few remaining recommendations arising from the *Sharing Common Ground — Review of Yukon's Police Force — Final Report*. The report that was published back in 2011 included a recommendation to consider a legal advocate position to support women. It was premised on what was heard during the review. In particular, there were concerns voiced by women at that time and continuing, in association with the criminal justice system, about how to access services early on in the process and having the necessary information to make those informed choices, particularly for those who are often in vulnerable places due to issues of child custody, social assistance and, in some cases, having the dynamics of social isolation in communities. Women expressed that they considered many factors when deciding to report to police or seek services from a support agency and that more information made available earlier in the process would help them make appropriate choices for their safety.

Based on that particular recommendation, the Yukon Advisory Council on Women's Issues, with funding from the Government of Yukon, commissioned a report: *Gaps, Needs and Options: Legal Advocacy for Yukon Women*. Within that report and through engagement with communities and service providers, YACWI identified some unique challenges for women, particularly those who have experienced sexual assault and domestic violence. The decision, for example, to reach out to the RCMP or other service providers such as Victim Services or an emergency shelter because of violence in the home or because of intimate-partner violence is obviously a very difficult and important decision. It is one that often has implications — and legal implications at that — making the case for individuals to be aware of their options and the consequences and the outcomes of each path at the outset.

Based on all of the information that was provided — the due diligence and the consultation that YACWI did lead — they were also able to reference legal advocacy services not being well-understood among women, made available by service providers. Again, through collaboration and better understanding of the services currently being delivered — and making available those overall services and strengthening the communication among those various service providers was also a recommendation.

It was also communicated that services ought to be made available that are culturally relevant, that they are accessible to aboriginal women throughout the territory, that service providers — their appreciation of the cultural differences and

the services that are made available, that they are sensitive, reflecting on the intergenerational effects of residential schools and so forth.

From that work, YACWI did come up with a couple of recommendations, and one was to create a new legal advocate position in a non-government organization based here in Whitehorse. We were very pleased — the Minister of Justice and I — to be able to report progress and to move forward with the creation of a legal advocate position with the announcement of this new funding for a three-year pilot.

As I have referenced before, the position will support women living in Whitehorse and rural communities by providing information support and referrals for women navigating the legal system — also, as I was mentioning earlier, establishing and strengthening that strong network of collaboration for all processes with agencies such as the RCMP, Victim Services, Crown witness coordinators, Family and Children's Services — to name but a few.

The other item that this position would also be responsible for would be to initiate and coordinate regular training opportunities for and among those service providers who require up-to-date information within the legal system and on legal processes. This budget does speak to that very expenditure.

Through the prevention of violence against aboriginal women fund, also administered by the Women's Directorate, the Government of Yukon is pleased to provide \$200,000 of funding to support five new community projects in this fiscal year. This fund was established back in 2004 to assist or to help address the disproportionate level of violence experienced by aboriginal women in the Yukon.

To date, the Yukon government has, through the Women's Directorate, contributed almost \$2 million to the fund supporting some 70 local projects. It's really important to note that this fund has been very meaningful in that it has been very responsive in the fact that projects are derived from those communities and that they are delivered by aboriginal women for aboriginal women and are really borne out of the priorities identified by their particular communities.

Some of the accomplishments through the prevention of violence against aboriginal women fund include the funding and support for A Safe Place, along with additional funds from the Women's Directorate and the Department of Justice. This is an initiative that has been in the works for some time. It has been operating in fact for almost two years if I'm not mistaken — coming up to two years. It's a very invaluable program that has been operating out of the Victoria Faulkner Women's Centre and is a joint project between the Victoria Faulkner Women's Centre and the Yukon Status of Women Council, which, at that time, was working in collaboration with the Second Opinion Society.

It provides and it continues to provide a low-barrier, supportive drop-in space for women and children in the evening hours Fridays, during the day on Saturday — and Sunday evenings as well. During that time frame there are hot, nutritious meals included and the activities are led by the

participants through the wishes of those who drop by the centre.

The program was initiated by these individual organizations and they were able to access some funding through the Government of Canada and, in part, through a small investment by the Women's Directorate at that time. Over the first four months of the program, I know that over 100 women and some 47 children accessed the evening services, so we know that program was filling a gap in services for women who are in need of a place to be safe, to feel safe, to have a hot meal, to warm up on those cold evenings or just to simply spend time in the company of others in a safe environment.

It's a low-barrier program. It allows women to come at any point that they feel that they need to. There are really, as I mentioned, no barriers in entering the service. We know that because of this openness it has built some trust with the clients who have subscribed to the service.

We know that when that trust is gained, women start attending sober, bringing their kids, participating in self-care activities, and if those particular needs cannot be filled by A Safe Place, the facilitators who are there at the program — that they are referred to other services within and around the city.

Based on some of the successes of A Safe Place, we were able to also, through the community development fund about a year ago, access funding for additional data collection and some analysis and to carry on with the program. Earlier this year, the Women's Directorate was able to provide just over \$32,000 through the prevention of violence against aboriginal women funding, with an additional \$7,000 on top of that. In addition to that, through the Department of Justice, \$32,000 was provided from the Department of Justice and, subsequent to that, there was additional funding made available through the Women's Directorate.

Based on this, we recognize that it is a very important program and we have had — I know the Minister of Justice and I have had recent discussions with Victoria Faulkner Women's Centre and members of the Yukon Status of Women Council to really hear about some of the outcomes of this program — some of the highlights, the successes, and some of the challenges that we need to address — and some ideas for really continuing this important program beyond this fiscal year. I'm very pleased to be able to report progress on that front.

The Women's Directorate and First Nation and municipal governments have been working together to address the critical issue of murdered and missing indigenous women and girls. We know that this crucial issue lies at the heart of complex social challenges in the north. Violence against women in Yukon is some three times the national average, and we know that the violence experienced by indigenous women is far greater than that.

In consultation and in collaboration with women's organizations, we will be co-hosting a family gathering and a Yukon Regional Roundtable on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. In December, the family

gathering will happen and then, of course, in February 2016 will be the roundtable itself. The purpose of those events is to ensure that families of murdered and missing indigenous women and girls feel supported, that their voices are honoured and that their voices are meaningfully integrated both at the territorial and the national level.

The roundtable will really be an opportunity to highlight practices, opportunities for collaborative initiatives, to address gaps for families here in Yukon, and our hope ultimately is that, through these two territorial initiatives, we will be able to provide a strong northern perspective at the next national roundtable and of course being able to also be able to reflect upon the work of the federal government and the critical role that they will be playing in hosting, or in initiating a national inquiry, on this very subject.

As for several of the initiatives that I have just referenced, additional resources are required to continue the important work of the Women's Directorate and, as such, we are requesting an overall increase of \$123,000, bringing our budget to just over \$2 million. As I referenced, some of the money is going in support of three funding programs — revotes totalling \$81,000. The first is for year 2 funding for three organizations and the prevention of violence against aboriginal women; the second is to complete a project under the Yukon Aboriginal Women's Summit implementation funding; and the third is to carry forward funding for year 3 for one organization under the women's equality fund.

There is an increase of \$32,000 in funding also for the transfer payment agreement for A Safe Place program coming forward from the Department of Justice, with the Women's Directorate providing the remaining \$7,000. Finally, there is also a carry-forward of \$10,000 in lapsed funding to offset contracts for the gender-equalities indicators project and the gender-inclusive diversity analysis project.

Madam Chair, I see my time is up. I look forward to fielding any and all questions from the members opposite and again, I wish to thank our officials for their great work.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for her opening statements and I welcome the official to the Chamber.

I was just looking through Hansard, trying to figure out when we discussed the Women's Directorate in the spring budget and I couldn't find the date right now, but that's okay. First I am going to start off by apologizing to the minister because the last series of questions I had were hard-hitting and it was at the end of the day and she didn't have a chance to respond, so I am going to start with probably quite easily the most complicated questions, just to give her a chance to respond and then I'll move into a lot less rocky ground after that. I didn't give the minister the opportunity the last time and I'm going to this time, so I thank her for possibly listening to very similar notes that I had the first time. I was trying to find what I had originally said, so I wouldn't repeat it verbatim and that might be the case, so I thank the minister and her official for their patience.

In the spring, we started referencing the access to abortion services in the territory because of the critical importance for reproductive choice, including the choice to

have a safe abortion. It is important to note that it is a human right protected under international law. Yukon has one of the highest abortion rates in the country, yet Yukon women seeking an abortion have limited options. Referral for a surgical abortion must be obtained through a family physician or community nurse and they are only available up to 12 weeks at the Whitehorse General Hospital. Women without a family physician must go to an ER or a walk-in clinic for a referral. Some women must see more than one provider to get that referral and after 12 weeks, limited capacity means women are sent Outside for the procedure.

This government currently does not have a clear strategy to ensure women throughout the territory have unimpeded access to abortion. Dating ultrasounds are necessary for both surgical and medical abortions. Neither the Dawson City nor Watson Lake hospitals are able to do this in-house. They are only available in Whitehorse, and this means that women in rural communities must find a way into Whitehorse for a dating ultrasound. They often may have to return to their home communities to await an abortion schedule and then come back to Whitehorse for a day surgery, which may include extra days for pre- and post-operation care. It can take two to five weeks for the entire process from beginning to end. We do not hear a clear health strategy to ensure access to abortion. The first and only study of women's access to abortion in Yukon that I am aware of comes from a 2014 graduate thesis. It found that there are barriers to accessing an abortion close to home and in a timely manner. These gaps could be addressed — for example, an abortion clinic could be equipped to provide access to dating ultrasounds, therapeutic and medical abortions, abortion care and contraceptive counselling. These clinics exist in other jurisdictions with communities of similar sizes.

What is the Women's Directorate doing to help support unimpeded access to abortion services and care in Yukon? Will it look into the option of an abortion clinic in Whitehorse? Will it support the Department of Health and Social Services in developing one? Will it look into enabling nurse practitioners or physicians to provide abortions in rural Yukon?

Hon. Ms. Taylor: I was just getting a quick update from our official here in the Legislative Assembly. What I can say is that I know that the Women's Directorate, at the time, in terms of expanding options for women when it comes to sexual, reproductive, and menopause health-related concerns pertinent to women — I know that the Women's Directorate was very instrumental in informing discussions, helping with discussions and working with the Department of Health and Social Services. I believe also through the Yukon Hospital Corporation too — perhaps I'm wrong there on that front — however, as a result of those discussions, patients can now visit one of those two clinics that have just recently arrived in the last handful of years. The Yukon Sexual Health Clinic or the Yukon Women's MidLife Health Clinic is related to sexual, reproductive and menopause health concerns. Those clinics have a nurse practitioner as their primary care provider.

Again, they work collaboratively, as I understand, and consultatively with physicians on the ground and a variety of other health care providers. Of course we've been able to work over the years with other service providers — Victoria Faulkner Women's Centre, for example — on the operation and maintenance funding in support of operating the Rural Pregnant Moms program.

With respect to the specific questions, I do not have that information at my fingertips. That is really housed within the Department of Health and Social Services. We can certainly endeavour to look into those specific questions, but I don't have that information at my fingertips, other than to say, on a higher level, that one rationale for really working to come in partnership with those health providers is to expand those options for women through the availability of those two clinics.

Ms. White: I think there are a couple of things to focus on in the response the minister just gave. The Women's Directorate was involved in conversations to advocate for a menopause clinic for women going through midlife health issues. That is the complete opposite, essentially, of what I'm talking about, but the Women's Directorate has a role to play in facilitating those conversations within the community about women's access to reproductive health. I know, based on our experience in the spring when we were asking questions about this, that this was not an easy one. I appreciate that, but it goes back to the fact that it's a human right to be able to access these services.

Knowing that the Women's Directorate was able to have conversations and help develop these separate clinics for women — the midlife health clinic that the minister referenced and, of course, the sexual health clinic. But neither of those clinics deal with what I'm talking about, which is access to abortions in a timely fashion. I can't imagine being a young woman in a rural community who is faced with a hard choice — and then what has to happen for that final decision.

Can the minister let me know if this is on the radar of the Women's Directorate as a conversation that they're willing to have with the community in advancing women's access to reproductive health?

Hon. Ms. Taylor: Madam Chair, I guess I go back to the Women's Directorate. Over the years we worked on many different files all in support of advancing women's equality on many different levels — legal, social and economic equality and so forth. I think that the Women's Directorate has been quite responsive to challenges that are identified and to issues of importance. I think that over the years I have been able to articulate a number of various issues that we have worked on. I just outlined a number of them.

We have been really focused on a variety of issues from violence prevention, public education and helping inform housing options. In fact, earlier today, we were able to announce a new service provider to provide that overall management and deliver programming in support of the Whitehorse affordable housing residence in Riverdale. We have been able to work with Yukon Housing Corporation and that was really a strategic investment in support of single-

parent families, the lion's share of which, unfortunately, still remains women. That's not to say there are not any single men out there. There are increasingly single men as well, but that housing initiative is one example from the Women's Directorate, which has been very responsive and has identified the need for programming as well to assist those tenants. We were able to very proudly announce a partnership with the Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition earlier today, and they and a number of different partners will be able to help deliver enhanced programming in support of those tenants to be able to live independently in a safe environment for their kids and for their families — that's but one example.

I just mentioned earlier how, yes, one of those health clinics is for menopause health concerns, but I think the member opposite also missed the other words — sexual and reproductive. I'm very pleased to be able to have had our officials work with the Department of Health and Social Services and other health care practitioners to identify that there was a need and a gap in that service — so how can we close that gap? How can we be responsive? That work did take a role a few years ago and really helped to inform the development and the creation of those two particular clinics.

To the member opposite's question, of course the Women's Directorate is always open and always responsive to issues of concern. The Women's Directorate — our job — it's very similar to the French Language Services Directorate, working with and alongside all of our other aligned departments. In this case, it would be the Department of Health and Social Services and through the Whitehorse General Hospital, Yukon Hospital Corporation and so forth.

One thing that we have been able to help advance — and I've spoken to this in the past — is the gender-inclusive diversity analysis and how we did an evaluation of how we are doing in terms of our work with other departments. I have spoken at great length, and I don't want to repeat myself, but it did identify a number of areas where there were some gaps and how can we better work with those departments — how can we better track those requests for assistance? How can we better respond to those requests? How can we follow-up after having provided advice? We are working on that in the midst of many other initiatives.

I just referenced the Yukon Regional Roundtable on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. That is quite a priority of this government's party of mine. I am very proud of being able to collaborate with the Chief of the Kwanlin Dün First Nation and our Yukon aboriginal women's organizations on coming together and co-chairing this regional roundtable. That is of utmost importance and that's why we have developed programming. That's why we continue to work in partnership and help inform those decisions and those discussions that are ongoing, not just here in the territory, but across the country as well.

Likewise, we support the Yukon aboriginal women's organizations and, in fact, in this case, the Whitehorse Aboriginal Women's Circle has agreed to host the Yukon family gathering that will be taking place in mid-December. That is going to be a very pivotal gathering. We certainly look

forward to the outcome of that gathering, but having a place where those voices are meaningfully heard and are reflected at the regional roundtable will help inform our discussions and our decisions going forward in terms of what it is that we can do to address violence in our communities. That too is a priority.

I referenced the gender-inclusive diversity analysis — a huge undertaking. That review was a five-year retrospective of the Women's Directorate. It was really the first of its kind. In fact, we have spoken to it on a national front for other jurisdictions' reflection, and we're proud of that work. We are working with the Province of Alberta and the newly formed Status of Women ministry there as well. They are going over what they are calling the "GBA+" — another acronym. We are looking for the results of their work and we are working seamlessly with the Government of Alberta as well as other jurisdictions to help inform the implementation plan for our GIDA evaluation as well.

We've also been very much focused on the gender-equality indicators project. Again, that has been a very huge project in the making. We haven't really had a project of this kind since 1999 and so that will also help inform the blueprint on where we go from here.

That and — not to mention that funding streams have probably close to quadrupled over the last decade in terms of supporting a number of different organizations in the territory. There is a lot going on in the Women's Directorate — and being mindful that we have to be strategic and we have to be very focused, and very responsive to the needs of the community that we are working to represent. Hopefully that provides a little bit of additional clarity for the member opposite.

Ms. White: Clarity certainly to other good initiatives within the Women's Directorate — but certainly veered away from the topic of conversation.

The minister mentioned strategic investments in women's health and talked about facilitating programming at the single-parent units, and I think that is all really important work. Absolutely the National Roundtable on Missing and Murdered Aboriginal Women and Girls — I will get back to that.

But right now, my focus is on Yukon women's access to reproductive choices.

If the Women's Directorate was approached by Yukon women's organizations to champion a conversation around Yukon women's access to reproductive choice, would the Women's Directorate be open to facilitating that kind of territory-wide conversation?

Hon. Ms. Taylor: Madam Chair, with respect to any and all requests, we're certainly responsive to hearing any and all concerns out there from among the organizations or individuals, but the Department of Health and Social Services is a major key player in all of this. In terms of whether or not we would have a conversation with the Minister of Health and Social Services and determine where this lies within the priorities within the Department of Health and Social Services, I'm not entirely clear as to where this sits without

having recent information or statistics in front of me or concerns brought to our attention.

Again, like we have on many different fronts over the years, we'll continue to work with the communities that we have worked pretty closely with over the last number of years.

The Yukon Advisory Council on Women's Issues has provided strategic advice over the years. Again, just making reference to the number of different forums that they've held over the years, speaking to a number of different priority areas — those are all very key in helping to inform decisions and discussions, for example, as it refers to the women's legal advocate who we were able to help go to work with the Department of Justice. That was a recommendation that also came and was born out of the *Sharing Common Ground* report, the review of Yukon's police system. Hopefully that provides some added clarity for the member opposite.

Ms. White: I think that if the Women's Directorate was involved with a push for women's clinics, they can be involved in this conversation as well.

I can't disagree — I absolutely agree that Health and Social Services is key, obviously, in the formation of, for example, an abortion clinic — but so is the Women's Directorate in championing issues that affect Yukon women: their health, their well-being, their futures. I'm just going to leave that on the table.

Part of this ability to make choices about our bodies also involves contraception. Access to effective, affordable contraception can avert two thirds of unintended pregnancies. Access to contraception has a multitude of benefits for women and for families, and has other health outcomes, including reproductive health, autonomy and, of course, STI prevention. Currently this government's approach to contraception is largely based on the provision of free condoms. To be perfectly frank, every bar you go into, there's a cleverly disguised pot or bowl or a thing on the counter, and some of the seasonal packaging of those condoms is absolutely spectacular. I think they have a lot of conversations, and that is a good thing to have those condoms available.

But condoms are among the least effective forms of contraception. Has the Women's Directorate done any research on the promotion or provision of long-acting, reversible contraceptives such as IUDs? Has it done any research on expanding the consultation of health providers permitted to prescribe contraceptives, insert IUDs and otherwise support expanded access to contraception? Has the Women's Directorate done any research on the impacts that providing subsidized or free contraceptives may have on the rates of unintended pregnancies, abortions and the health of women?

Hon. Ms. Taylor: I was just receiving an update from the Women's Directorate. We have not been actively engaged in discussions to actively promote other forms of birth control and contraception available for women. That's not to say that we wouldn't but, as I referenced before, I do know that in the past we were in discussions with the Department of Health and Social Services that helped lead to the creation of those two women's clinics that were referenced earlier.

I'm not trying to predict the near future of the Women's Directorate, but I can't say enough how very fully consumed the Women's Directorate is on a number of key initiatives right now. I'm very proud of the fact that this government reinstated the Women's Directorate back in 2002. Not only did we do that, but we've also helped staff up the Women's Directorate, leant to added capacity in the Women's Directorate, and we have also quadrupled the level of funding in support of women's organizations to do a lot of public education and prevention initiatives. It's not to say that all of that falls on their shoulders because it certainly does not.

It's a partnership, and much of that work falls to the line department, whether that's the Department of Health and Social Services, Department of Justice, Victim Services — or whether that is in the Department of Education, providing information in our classrooms or working with Yukon College, or working with the Yukon Hospital Corporation. There are many various departments that we work in collaboration with and we'll continue to work — as I referenced before, working on the gender-inclusive diversity analysis, providing some added focus as well to where it is that we focus our efforts on. That will provide us with some better options for providing training — whether that is for front-line service workers, policy individuals working within departments, or working with communications individuals working within the departments.

In terms of tracking the requests that we receive from departments from time to time, determining how effective that advice was, to be able to then report or to be able to solicit the feedback from those departments — was it useful? Where did it go? Did it go anywhere? Being able to measure in a very deliberate manner — how are we doing? That will also, in part, help inform our work that is currently underway with respect to the gender-equality indicators project — another massive project that we've had to work very hard on with many different departments throughout the Government of Yukon, utilizing all the different research papers, working on a number of reports that have been published over the years, working with Statistics Canada, the Bureau of Statistics through Executive Council Office in the Yukon government — whether it is working with the Council of Yukon First Nations — and obtaining all that information, compiling it in a very useful, methodical and clear way that is easily read and very relevant and responsive to what organizations are working on — and individuals and businesses and so forth. Between those particular projects, as well as — as I mentioned — addressing violence against aboriginal women and girls — has, and continues to remain, a priority for us as well.

That is why we have worked so diligently over the last decade-plus on a number of Yukon aboriginal women's summits and coming up with a series of recommendations and then working with those individual Yukon aboriginal women's organizations to be able to implement those recommendations.

In many respects — and I continue to hear it — Yukon has been leading the way in terms of addressing this particular

issue, the Sisters in Spirit initiative — one that was really spearheaded by Native Women's Association of Canada some time ago. The funding had been depleted, and the Government of Canada did not choose to renew that funding. The Yukon government, through the Women's Directorate, was able to support that initiative in going forward.

The Yukon Aboriginal Women's Council did a great job and from there we were able to allocate dollars — almost \$2 million — over the last number of years in support of implementing those recommendations coming out of those individual aboriginal women's summits. That work is very pivotal, as is the youth gathering that took place at Jackson Lake.

For a couple of years in a row, we've had a couple of very successful Yukon First Nation youth gatherings that have been held — the first one in Brooks Brook, the second one in Jackson Lake. From there, there was a report in the works and a series of recommendations. Also, there's a Brothers in Spirit report as well. I know that the Whitehorse Aboriginal Women's Circle has worked very diligently on engaging men and boys. I know that the Liard Aboriginal Women's Society has also been working very hard and diligently in our schools and has just been able to leverage our funding to access dollars from the Government of Canada to initiate a great, innovative, creative project engaging young men and boys in our schools when it comes to violence against women.

Our work has really been over the years to support those grassroots organizations on the ground through women's equality funding, but also through the prevention of violence against aboriginal women fund and through also separate funding streams in support of implementing those recommendations from those aboriginal women's summits. Now we are looking to take that one step beyond and really take all of that information at our fingertips, tabling it and reflecting on what has been accomplished, what the gaps are that remain and what we need to do to address violence in our communities — that means not just the Yukon government, but also First Nation governments, aboriginal women's organizations, youth, elders and individuals who represent our municipal governments. We need to convene a roundtable to be able to bring all the various players to the table, including the RCMP.

I commend the working group that has been assembled and has been working the past couple months on this initiative getting ready for the regional roundtable in February. It's very timely in terms of the change in government in Canada and how that fits within their overall mandate of holding a national inquiry on missing and murdered indigenous women.

Again, Yukon is taking leadership on many different fronts and that's just talking to a few key initiatives, but again, the Women's Directorate has been very busily engaged with the community on many different fronts.

I commend their leadership and we're very fortunate to have such expertise in our shop to help inform and help work on addressing some of these issues that have been around for many, many years. So we are making progress on a number of fronts. Is there more work to be done? Absolutely. There will

always be more work to be done and we are always open and responsive.

Right now, as I mentioned before, we certainly are fully engaged on these handful of different files that we want to do well. That will also help inform the work that goes forward in a very targeted, strategic and responsive fashion that will be for the benefit of all women and girls in our territory.

Ms. White: Thank you Madam Chair. There is phenomenal opportunity now that we allow access to, for example, the Internet in the Assembly. It's interesting to note that the population of the territory is now at 37,343 people and, out of that, 18,222 are women. So it seems to me that the fantastic work that's being done right now by the Women's Directorate with the less than \$2-million annual budget could even be increased and strengthened by increasing that budget. It would be a great thing.

Imagine if the Women's Directorate doubled their budget for next year and the great work they could do — the research they could do — and the advocating with the Department of Health and Social Services for women's ability to access services that affect them.

I'm just going to keep going because that seems like the thing to do.

I think that it's important to note that this government, in all departments, does not track access to contraception or abortion. What information that is tracked is really poor. It's really hard to make decisions about how to move forward when we don't have that information. I am putting out the pitch that it would be fantastic if it was the Women's Directorate that was leading that because women are the best to understand issues that other women are facing.

There was a really disturbing interview with Yukon's chief medical officer of health earlier this month when he told us that Yukon was experiencing an alarming rise in the rate of gonorrhoea infections. He said that so far this year there have been 90 known cases of gonorrhoea, twice the number of cases than last year. That is nine times the number of cases since 2013. Dr. Hanley then went on to say that chlamydia continues to be a big problem, as it's still far more common than gonorrhoea, and both sexually transmitted infections can cause sterility if they are not treated properly. The chief medical officer says that this spike is largely concentrated in teens and young adults. We know that the current spike in Yukon's STIs include disproportionately higher rates in rural Yukon, and we also know that the onus of being tested is largely falling on young girls and women.

Was the Women's Directorate involved or consulted in the development of the current No Big Deal STI testing campaign being undertaken by Health and Social Services? What, if anything, is being done to promote equal responsibility for sexual health among our young people so that the onus is being shared equally? What role did the Women's Directorate play in the No Big Deal STI testing campaign?

Hon. Ms. Taylor: According to the Women's Directorate, I don't believe there was any discussion or collaboration on that particular campaign. I don't have access

to the entire Women's Directorate, so that is just at first blush — speaking to that particular campaign.

Ms. White: In asking about that was just making sure that — one of the roles of the Women's Directorate is to view everything through that lens. It seems like that would have been something that could have been steered in a different way so that the onus of responsibility wasn't solely put on young women.

We were talking about access to contraception. It also really comes down to teen pregnancy. The rate of pregnancy for women under the age of 19 rose 33 percent from 2012 to 2013, and I think it's really important to note that this is the most recent data that we have. Unfortunately we don't know the breakdown of pregnancies for Whitehorse women versus in rural communities, which is also really important in directing how we look at the data.

We also know from local and national research that northern and rural communities are at a greater risk of unintended pregnancies, and that is in part due to a lack of appropriate contraception and sexual health education. What, if any, other research or analysis has the Women's Directorate done on the status of sexual health education in Yukon schools? Has the Women's Directorate been involved in the development or the delivery of SHER, which was designed by Yukon educators and the Health Promotion unit within Health and Social Services and offers comprehensive sexual health education resources for grades 4 to 7? What is being provided to other grades outside of the grades 4 to 7, and is the Women's Directorate involved in that conversation?

Hon. Ms. Taylor: When it comes to whether or not the Women's Directorate delivered sexual health curriculum, again, I refer to the line department, Department of Health and Social Services. It is the lead department when it comes to delivering sexual health curriculum.

As to whether or not the Women's Directorate has a role to play — yes we do have a role to play in terms of sitting on a committee that helps inform. I could not speak — this would be more of a line discussion with the Minister of Health and Social Services, with whom I'm sure the member opposite can carry on that line of questioning.

In terms of Women's Directorate, we sit on a variety of committees. There have been interdepartmental, collaborative initiatives over the years. We've been doing more so — again, with added capacity.

I will just refer to — when we were first elected in 2002, I think the whole budget for our department was sitting at about \$500,000, if that. I believe at that time we were helping fund Victoria Faulkner Women's Centre and the Yukon Status of Women Council. Today we are on a number of different funding sources. We are supporting the very valuable work of many different organizations beyond Victoria Faulkner Women's Centre and the Yukon Status of Women Council.

In fact, we provide funding for many different organizations. The Yukon Aboriginal Women's Council, the Whitehorse Aboriginal Women's Circle and the Liard Aboriginal Women's Society are but three of those organizations that continue to be leaders in our territory in

terms of helping to inform the work going forward. We have been funding other organizations, as I mentioned before. I don't have the list right in front of me.

The point is that we have been working towards expanding the capacity of those organizations and expanding their ability to leverage additional sources from other funding mechanisms as well. I think that, over the years — and I have not been around for a long time, but over the past 13 years that I have been around, I've seen great proliferation of organizations out there doing some invaluable work on behalf of the women's community. The creation of the women's coalition is great to see — in terms of even coming up with the 12 Days to End Violence Against Women campaign, which will be kicking off next week. You know, the work of Victoria Faulkner Women's Centre and Les EssentiElles — 17 different organizations that they've leveraged partnerships from — it is very invaluable and it's great to see that by working together and collectively that we're able to even be more strategic in our work.

So in terms of, again, working on a more cohesive, strategic effort, I keep referring to the retrospective evaluation of GIDA that took place over the past five years and, again, it was to really assess the effectiveness of our work on GIDA over the past five years to identify those lessons learned. What has worked well? What needs improvement? Identifying gaps in sources, collection of data in what areas — it has also helped frame a new evaluation framework that will help support our Women's Directorate to track and to modify how and what is offered.

That is very important work that is going on and I know that we're working on the implementation plan of that evaluation that took place and we know that there are many areas that we need to work on and we're very much committed to. That is why we triggered the GIDA evaluation and the analysis, and we're now working on the implementation plan, drawing upon expertise from other jurisdictions. We're not trying to reinvent the wheel, but looking to other jurisdictions like the Province of Alberta.

Whether it's working to enhance training for our stakeholders and where we can help influence the quality of analysis and the outcome of government policy-making, we're looking on many different fronts. I just cannot say enough about the work that is being undertaken internally by the Women's Directorate.

At the onset of my opening remarks, we referred to the violence prevention working group. It is another strategic initiative that we have been working on over the past two years with the Department of Health and Social Services, with the Department of Justice, with the Department of Community Services and many others — coming up with ways to support our employees through the organization to address violence in the workplace and how we can assist victims of violence in the workplace. Again, we are coming up with training to help deliver that response-based training to those front-line service workers to be able to be more responsive to the needs and also by being able to reach out to a number of other key stakeholders.

On the violence prevention front, we are coming up with a toolkit to assist with management and providing that outreach that we could be doing a better job internally, within each of our departments. This may not be as external to government, but it is important work and it is something that has been identified as a priority. It is another collaborative way of reaching out across the spectrum in our government organization and working to see how we can better address this issue — likewise, there is the outreach that we're working on as co-chairs on the regional roundtable for missing and murdered indigenous women and girls.

Of course, we have been reaching out to our federal counterparts as well, engaging the Government of Canada in a dialogue as to how they can also assist our efforts — by being able to work with youth, elders; being able to work with representatives from municipalities. Of course there's much to do. There is always going to be more work to be done, but one of the things that we were able to do early on with the Women's Directorate was have a full-time position working on and working with aboriginal women's organizations, providing strength to those organizations and working with them on priorities — their priorities for bringing about meaningful change in a culturally relevant and meaningful way.

I'm very proud to be able to work alongside those organizations and I am very appreciative again of the work of the Women's Directorate that continues to grow — it continues to work in many different ways. The member opposite has referred to other ways that we could be working and we are, but we're trying to be very focused in terms of doing a good job and in terms of identifying a path forward, not just in the Department of Health, but the Department of Education, the Department of Justice — reaching out to all of our various departments and being able to track and assess how we're doing and being able to provide various tools necessary for those departments to do their work as well.

It's a work in progress, Madam Chair, and I would like to again thank the member opposite for her questions. Certainly I will be able to pass along those specific questions as well with respect to sexual health curriculum, whether it's within the Department of Health and Social Services or the Department of Education. But yes, the Women's Directorate does contribute to those discussions and yes, we will continue to contribute to those discussions.

Chair: Would members like to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

Chair: Order. Committee of the Whole will now come to order. We are resuming general debate on Vote 11, Women's Directorate.

Ms. White: The conversations from my side today have predominately been about women's abilities to make choices about their bodies, to be perfectly honest. I think it's an

important thing to point out right now that this government does not have a sexual and reproductive health strategy. That has really resounding effects on women in the territory. The question is always: How does the government know whether or not the services and quality of care are improving? How do they know if there are improvements or deterioration in access or the quality of care and where are those changes stemming from and all of those issues? Without having a strategic plan with clear health targets and measures, we can't answer a lot of those questions about women and women's health. Will the Women's Directorate advocate for the development of a sexual and reproductive health care strategy? Will they use their ability to sit at the table with government and the Minister of Health and Social Services and say that this is an important thing for Yukon women — keeping in mind of course, that there are 18,222 of them in the territory — and that a strategy for sexual and reproductive health is a big deal?

The minister has referenced a bunch of times in speaking this afternoon about the importance of roundtable discussions. Would the minister consider having a roundtable for women on reproductive choice, on the access to contraception, on women's sexual health? Is that a roundtable that she would be interested in hosting as the minister responsible for the Women's Directorate, maybe in partnership with her colleague, the Minister of Health and Social Services? This is a big issue. Just to recap: Would the Women's Directorate advocate for a sexual and reproductive health care strategy? Would they be willing to host a roundtable on the issues that affect women's health?

Hon. Ms. Taylor: I guess one thing I am not going to do is proceed with making decisions on the fly on the floor of the Legislative Assembly.

Usually when we come up with strategies we hone in on a specific area that is identified as an issue of importance within the community. To be perfectly honest, I haven't been engaged on this matter other than this discussion that we're having on the floor of the Legislative Assembly. I say that out of complete respect, but I have not been approached by members of the community, the organizations — that is not to say we won't. Before we embark upon strategic planning on any specific issue, not just with respect to health or education or economic development and so forth, it would be identified as an issue of importance within our community and within the government and coming up with a clear, methodical process for looking at an issue and coming up with a strategy.

At this particular time, I'm not going to commit on the floor on behalf of the Department of Health and Social Services. I did make reference to a couple of examples as to how the Women's Directorate has helped inform discussions on those two particular women's clinics that have come about. I am very proud of that work. Likewise, we are contributing to discussions on the midwifery file. We are contributing to discussions with the Department of Justice on violence prevention and fully implementing all of those recommendations that came about from the *Sharing Common Ground* report. We are working to implement the one specific

recommendation that is reflected in the budget that we are talking to — the women's legal advocate.

On the Regional Roundtable on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, we are working with Yukon aboriginal women's organizations on hosting a Yukon family gathering that will ensure those voices are reflected at the regional roundtable. Those two are priorities that have been made known and clear by our community — and by the nation at that — and we'll continue to work with those various departments and governments. It certainly is not just within the Government of Yukon. There are other governments, orders and levels of government and agencies involved — and communities.

I go back to the GIDA evaluation and how this work is going to help inform how we can better influence decisions and how we can better effect and inform debate and discussion within all of our respective departments and how we were able to take that evaluation, how we were able to glean from that some gaps and some proposed areas for improvements, but we're looking for a meaningful way of engaging with our departments that will help us be more strategic, help us be more responsive to not only working with our departments, but also working in response to those identified issues of concern and importance to those we represent.

As I mentioned, we were looking to discuss those levers — those opportunities for all of us as ministers — as it relates to gender decision-making, and that is in fact why we have embarked on this process, this evaluation of GIDA, to really create an opportunity to provide quality advice and be able to leverage our reach within those departments so that it is very much a two-way street in terms of us not only reaching out to departments, but departments also reaching out to the Women's Directorate as well, and being able to track that engagement both ways and being able to report progress.

Again, Madam Chair, I'm very proud of the work that is going on, whether it is violence prevention, whether it is working with Education or Health and Social Services — there are many different areas, many different committees that we share information with and collaborate with departments on, again being very strategic and focusing on those issues that are of significant importance to us.

I just outlined a number of those and that's not to say that the priority is not going to change or isn't going to shift or we aren't going to respond; of course, they will. We have seen that over the years, but it's this government — we have been able to enhance resources available to the Women's Directorate. We've been able to help initiate initiatives such as the GIDA evaluation, the implementation plan, the gender-equality indicators initiative that is currently underway — very comprehensive research, very information-rich initiative that is currently underway. That will help better inform where those gaps are identified — what we're doing well and what we aren't doing well — within our territory and within the context of the nation. From there, that will also help influence our implementation plan on the GIDA evaluation, which will

also help feed and build on what it is that we are working to accomplish in that particular regard.

I always refer to the evaluation that we have been working on because that is going to provide a fairly concrete framework for us to work from, keeping in mind that we will continue to be responsive to the community. There is a process for identifying strategies and for identifying an area and coming up with a strategy — coming up with an implementation plan. We have undertaken many, many reviews over the years, but as I mentioned, we are currently engaged in some significant reviews — internally on the violence prevention initiative within the Government of Yukon; interdepartmentally supporting our employees; being a better employer of choice; and being more responsive in terms of engaging with employees who are also victims of violence.

We are also working on, as I mentioned, the gender-inclusive diversity analysis and the evaluation, working with other partners from across the country in developing that implementation plan and looking to how we can integrate and promote gender-based analysis within the delivery of our policies and our programs — also how we can improve the quality of implementation of that analysis, and how we can also be better partners with our departments.

We have been an independent department since 1985. We have grown significantly over the past 13 years. We have been able to enhance the funding for organizations. We have been able to initiate a number of various housing projects — the second-stage housing initiative, Betty's Haven, in conjunction with Kaushee's Place, the Yukon Women's Transition Home Society and the family-focused housing initiative in Riverdale.

We have been able to provide that partnership now with the Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition on providing programming in collaboration with their many partners that they are currently working with to enhance the delivery of programming leading to independent living and safe environments for families for raising kids. I am very proud of that initiative as well.

We have been able to undertake various marketing campaigns on violence prevention over the years, but policy analysis is one of the most influential ways that we have to promote women's equality. That is in fact why we are promoting this GIDA and implementation and how we have been promoting GIDA over the past number years — 16 years to be exact — and how there is more work to be done and how can we better improve. That's how we can better identify ways to integrate that GIDA throughout all of government — identifying those levers and those opportunities through our formal policy-making decision process, coming up with more professional development opportunities through GIDA training and looking at various tiers of training as to what we heard from employees who have subscribed to that training over the years and looking at the quality of advice — the evidence-based research, the analysis. As I mentioned, we are involved with many different cross-departmental committees at various levels and will continue to be very engaged on many different fronts.

Getting back to the member opposite's question — I know that the member opposite will raise that question with the Minister of Health and Social Services. I can't speak for the Minister of Health and Social Services at this particular time, but we are not going to be making those decisions on the floor of the Assembly to begin with. That is not to say that will not emerge as an issue of fundamental importance. It just has not been brought to my attention or to our government's attention — at least to my attention with respect to that particular area of sexual health.

In terms of hosting a roundtable or coming up with a particular strategy, I am not fully informed, so I don't want to speak out of turn as to what we have or have not done fully on that front — without having consulted with the Minister of Health and Social Services.

Ms. White: I am surprised that the minister found the questions about a sexual reproductive strategy unexpected because we have been speaking to the Minister of Health and Social Services about it for some time. I would have thought that the communication among ministers might have allowed her to be aware of that.

I think it's really an important thing that we are doing here in debate on the Women's Directorate.

We have been going for quite some time, and I do thank the minister for her responses but, in the interest of time and the importance that we both place on gender equity and women's rights for all Yukoners, I'm going to roll a bunch of questions into a section in hopes of using the remaining time in Committee of the Whole to ask questions that are important to all of us and all the people we work with in hopes of maybe getting more direct answers in response.

I'm going to start off by talking about Yukon women in business. So, 40 percent of Yukon businesses are owned by women according to the government's 2013 Yukon business survey, yet a quick scan of the recent Opportunities North speakers list shows that 24 of listed speakers were men and just nine were women. That's just over one third. Similarly, a quick review of the speakers, moderators and panelists listed in the daily agenda shows roughly 30 men and just 12 women — again, just about one third.

Opportunities North was co-sponsored by the Yukon government Department of Economic Development, so the Yukon government did play a role in sponsoring that event.

I'm sure there's not a single person in this room today who questions the importance of female representation as speakers, as panelists and in conferences, and I'm also sure that the organizers — the Yukon Chamber of Commerce, in partnership with the Northwest Territories and the Edmonton Chamber of Commerce — made efforts to ensure that women were able to participate in the conference both as speakers and as attendees, but the real question is whether or not this government is doing enough to support the participation of Yukon women in positions of economic leadership in industry and business and in leadership positions on boards.

For example, in Ontario there are the Ontario business loans. It is microlending for women entrepreneurs. In January 2013, the Ontario government released \$760,000 for a two-

year program to assist more than 800 low-income women become entrepreneurs. The initiative includes financial training and microloans of \$500 to \$5,000, and this funding has been given to a number of community organizations across Ontario to support microlending programs and business advisory programs to low-income women looking to start their own small businesses.

Another example is the provincial Small Business Networks for Women Entrepreneurs. In a number of Canadian provinces, including Saskatchewan, Alberta and British Columbia, they all have women entrepreneur or women enterprise centres. These organizations provide women starting or growing their small businesses with business services and resources to ensure they are successful. Their teams are trained to understand and relate to the unique circumstances of women business owners and typically include mentoring from other women entrepreneurs.

Then there is the Government of Canada's Advisory Council for Promoting Women on Boards. In a 2014 report, entitled *Good for Business: A Plan to Promote the Participation of More Women on Canadian Boards*, it highlights how the public and private sectors can increase the representation of women on boards and includes some of the current best practices in use within corporate Canada to successfully advance women into leadership positions on boards of directors.

They made recommendations influenced by best practices from across Canada and internationally, and they include but are not limited to: the aspiration of 30 percent over five years as a reasonable national goal to achieve gender balance with a long-term goal being gender balance on boards; they want to monitor and report on gender diversity in Governor in Council appointments — so this is something that we take into account here when we're appointing people to boards; we do look at the gender inclusiveness — and to promote networking and mentoring between public and private sector corporations; institute a comply-or-explain approach for moving publicly traded companies toward an identified goal within published annual reports, with an explanation of results or lack thereof; to promote increased representation of women on boards by mobilizing and working with key stakeholders; develop a coordinated pan-Canadian approach by working with provincial and territorial governments; support the adoption of short- and medium-term goals in the private and public sectors, recognizing that some sectors are further ahead than others.

The research is very clear, Madam Chair. Increasing the representation of women on boards is good for business and associated with higher profitability. Studies in Canada, the US, Australia and Europe demonstrate that businesses with more women on their boards and in senior management outperform those with fewer women, and I think this would apply within government boards and committees as well.

A further 2011 survey by Canada's Institute of Corporate Directors concluded that board gender diversity contributes to better governance and decision-making. This is especially true in times of economic stress. Board diversity, including gender,

enhances the competitive advantage of firms and committees by expanding their labour pools, increasing the availability of diverse knowledge, skills and experience. As labour shortages increase, Canada, Yukon — we all have to maximize our labour pool and compete internationally and nationally for top business talent. It is also making sure that we have good representation on our own boards and committees.

As we all know, the Yukon is facing hard economic times. Does this government keep statistics of the representation of women in public and private sector senior leadership roles, on public and private boards, as a percentage of OIC appointments? If not, will they commit to do so or — I know the minister doesn't like to commit to things on the floor — to at least look into doing those investigations in the name of gender equity, social justice and economic sustainability and the profitability of Yukon businesses and industry?

I am going to just look at the time and if I get a 20-minute response, I will be able to wrap everything up in my last question, so I will leave the minister with that in hopes that we can just reflect on those quick questions and I will move on to what comes next.

Hon. Ms. Taylor: Madam Chair, I just wanted to add a few things in response to the member opposite's questions.

When it comes to women and boards — of course, the member opposite touched upon a couple of different items — one public and one private — there has been a significant amount of work that has been taking place at the federal/provincial/territorial level by ministers responsible for the status of women in Canada. I know that we have been engaged in these discussions over the years. It's always highlighted as a topic for discussion at each and every FPT meeting, which is held annually around the country.

There has been a tremendous amount of progress made on that front. I know that our own director for the Women's Directorate was just recently — actually, within the last couple of years — able to co-chair a national knowledge exchange initiative on this very issue, speaking to gender parity or at least speaking to the private boards that we have out there. In fact, the work of those forums, as well as research that has been undertaken by many of the larger provinces — in particular, Ontario, and the member opposite just referred to that — did actually help inform a change in regulations in Ontario, which led to the bigger corporations having to comply or explain, in other words. As a result, that change in regulations has pretty much been adopted in every jurisdiction around the country, including Yukon through the Department of Community Services. I know the Minister of Community Services can speak to that at a much broader scale than I can at this particular moment.

I do know that, on that scale, there has been a lot of progress made. It is an example of the work that has been done by the ministers responsible for the status of women in helping influence those changes within a province — one province, and of course, clearly reaching out to all of the other provinces and territories in the country.

In terms of here at home, I mentioned the change in the regulation, of course, that also took place within the past year here in the Yukon and refers to those private boards. In terms of the public scale — the boards and committees, at least within the Yukon government — I know that we're pretty much on par with respect to gender parity on those boards and committees. I do know that in terms of tracking — again, it comes down to the gender-equality indicators initiative that we have been working on over the past year, going on two years.

I have always said that we are committed to the promotion of gender equality, making us a very attractive place to raise a family, to live, to invest and to travel to. Promoting gender equality here makes us all the more attractive in the territory and to others abroad and beyond. The indicators on the Yukon gender-equality initiative website that we have, and will continue to work on, are opportunities to share data and stories from a wide range of areas, such as leadership. We just spoke about boards and committees, public and private, the issues of violence and crime, childcare, parenting, sports and physical activities. There are a lot of different areas that this website will be able to report on progress in attaining gender equality by being able to not only share data that is currently available, and has been available through different sources — governments and agencies across the country and here in the territory — but also by being able to share some sound stories from women here in the Yukon, as well as from men, and setting out a timeline of achievements dating back to 1999.

The data will help us showcase where progress has been made. I know that this is one of those particular areas that is being highlighted in terms of progress being made on boards and committees with respect to private and public as well. It will identify challenges that remain — the gaps, as I referred to over the afternoon — but also supporting those ongoing efforts to improve gender equality in Yukon. By being able to move that statistical profile on how we are doing as a territory in the context of the confederation and beyond to a web-based profile, this will enable us to update and to expand those statistics as time evolves and new information becomes available. It is something that we are tracking in terms of looking at senior management within the Government of Yukon and measuring the degree of success of women in various positions within the corporation at large.

We will continue to provide research and resources to help provide decision-making on issues related to equality for Yukon women. As I mentioned, there is a lot of work to be done. There is always going to be more work to be done to achieve gender equality. These challenges are not unique to the Yukon. They are felt on the national level in every province and territory. But by being able to take the initiative to actually come up with tracking — a retrospective evaluation of how we are doing — shows leadership. It does show that we are obviously very keen and interested in wanting to make some changes.

We are going to continue to work with our partners, including our organizations, again, to better understand those

emerging issues of importance to our territory. This statistical profile of women's equality will help shed some further light on the areas where we do need to do a better job and how best to get there.

On that front — particularly when it comes to board and committee representation and gender parity — there has been significant progress made on the national front, as well as within each of our provinces and territories. It's something that we continue to track and make adjustments. Obviously, by being able to articulate and monitor the progress being made or lack of progress, we'll be able to better fine tune where we go from here.

Ms. White: Just looking at the time, I'm now going to lump everything into the same statement just in the hope of getting them on the record. I'm going to talk about pay equity, access to childcare, the website and a couple of other things.

We know that income equality is an important indicator of equity and fairness in a society. When a society allows women to experience economic inequality, it places women at risk of being left behind on housing, mental and physical health, issues of childcare, education, social supports, food security, safety and employment. Coming into equal pay would improve the safety, security and socio-political autonomy and well-being of women in the Yukon, but it would also have a positive impact on our economy.

I asked a question earlier this spring and it showed that women working in the tourism industry earned 85 cents less an hour than men in similar fields. In short, no matter how you cut it, ensuring equal pay is not only the right thing to do but it's the best thing to do for our society and for our economy. The Yukon Bureau of Statistics tourism employment 2012 report shows that in the tourism sector the average hourly compensation for female workers — I'm going to correct myself: it wasn't 85 cents; it was \$5 an hour less than their male counterparts in that same year. So that's substantially higher than I said. I'm going to correct myself right there. This is the only information that I've come across that actually reports on the pay difference between men and women workers in the Yukon. I think we should look at expanding that scope. It is known that low pay, lower income, and insecure employment drag down women's economic security and place them at greater risk of poverty and violence.

In the spring, we were told by the minister that the Women's Directorate gender-equality indicators project website was due in October of 2015. As it stands right now, the only reference I found online was the women's advisory council and then, of course, in debates that we had. Will this project plan to publicly report on income equality, pay grade, employment type and status in jobs, security for all territorial sectors — public and private — as part of this project? When will we see it completed?

Equal pay and gender-based economic equality for women in the Yukon are not listed as a strategic goal in the Department of Economic Development's strategic plan. Since they are neither listed nor tracked there, how does this government or the Women's Directorate track Yukon's

progress on pay equity? Is that something that should move up on the priority list of the Women's Directorate?

In childcare, we know that high quality, affordable childcare is also an early childhood support that helps families, boosts the economy and plays a pivotal role in increasing women's economic and labour force choices, reducing income and gender inequalities for future generations. But as Canadian families pay some of the highest daycare fees in the world, not all Yukon families can afford it. Raising healthy and happy children is the most effective and least expensive way to promote a healthy society, but as the chief medical officer of Yukon says, "Not all Yukon children and youth are doing well." A key step to supporting healthy and happy children is to ensure that affordable, high quality early childhood supports are available and accessible to all Yukoners.

If we look to our neighbours to the east, in June of 2014, the Government of Northwest Territories tabled its feasibility study of universal, affordable daycare in the NWT. This study was commissioned by the Government of Northwest Territories and authored by two University of Toronto professors. They looked at what would be needed for NWT to implement a childcare policy similar to Quebec's, where parents pay an average of \$7 per child per day for childcare and where 85 percent of childcare costs are covered by the government. The study concludes that it would cost \$21 million a year to create universal, affordable childcare in the Northwest Territories and would be a major bump to the economy. Parents in Northwest Territories currently pay between \$45 and \$62 per child per day. Many people interviewed during the study said that they spend half of their monthly income on childcare. Imagine that — half of your monthly income to care for your children.

The report was also critical of the lack of subsidies given out by the government, which make up only one percent of childcare spending in that territory. The authors also said that there aren't enough licensed childcare centres in the Northwest Territories to meet demand, that parents faced long wait-lists and that about 250 additional childcare workers would need to be hired to staff these centres, some of which could share extra space in community schools. Now imagine the economic boost to that economy with those 250 new jobs. If universal childcare is created, the authors estimated that employment rates for Northwest Territories mothers would rise between one and seven percent — or from 76 to 727 more mothers in the workforce. Between an extra \$214,000 to over \$2 million in income tax revenue would be raised per year with potentially less demand on family income assistance.

Obviously, the Yukon is distinct from the Northwest Territories with our own unique challenges and opportunities. That said, I am curious to know whether the Women's Directorate has reviewed the Northwest Territories' report. Is it aware of any similar analysis being undertaken in the Yukon and if it tracks similar numbers — for example: What percent of Yukon GDP are we spending on childcare? What percentage of Yukon childcare costs are currently borne by government? What is the average a Yukon parent pays per

child per day for childcare? How much is the government spending on average per child for daycare? I think it would be important to note that too. When we are looking at those numbers, how many mothers have to make the decision to stay home because they can't afford to go back to the workforce because they can't afford childcare?

I think we all know people — when the minister was going door to door this summer, she spoke to my little sister, who mentioned the affordability of childcare as being a major hindrance on her family. She wanted to go back to work and more than 50 percent of her wages pays for her two young sons to attend full-time childcare. She is lucky because the third one is now in school full-time. I think that this is a conversation that, as a territory, the Women's Directorate could spearhead. This is something that really affects women's ability to participate in the labour force.

In one of the minister's earlier responses, she talked about the really important position of the aboriginal women's policy and program manager. We know that Amanda has moved out of the territory and we're excited for what she's going to do in her new home, but that leaves a gap in the Women's Directorate lineup currently. Does the department plan to hire another aboriginal women's policy and program manager? I saw a head nod and I'm sure the minister wants to fill that position.

I'm going to end my notes today, Madam Chair, with some really, really incredible things that have just happened in Alberta. It is interesting to note that the Premier has been having a time citing all the things he thinks are going to go wrong with the Alberta economy and the province since the newly elected NDP government was formed. I think there are a lot of things we can look at there for positives. I will find it and I will cite this one as an example.

A really amazing thing happened in the Alberta Legislature this week — well not even this week — yesterday. They unanimously passed a motion put forward by the Independent MLA Deborah Drever, and she proposed a private member Bill 204, which would amend the *Residential Tenancies Act* to allow victims of domestic or intimate partner violence to terminate their leases early without financial penalty by presenting their landlords with a certificate confirming the danger that they were facing. The certificate would be issued if victims have an emergency protection order or restraining order issued by the court, or if they have a signed statement from a social worker, a nurse, a physician, a psychologist or a police officer saying that they were facing violence.

This very basic legislative change will remove one of the many barriers women face when fleeing violence. Here in the Yukon, we know that housing is one of the major barriers victims of intimate partner violence face when seeking safe options to leave a violent partner and home. I think it's important to say that we've done a lot of work with both the ability of women to go to Kaushee's Place, and of course, now Betty's Haven is the transitional housing. Those are important things, but I think this is one further step.

Many of these victims are women and many have children in tow. Removing what amounts to a financial penalty for fleeing violence and seeking safety is a reasonable, essential legislative change that governments can make to help women and children be safer. Has the Women's Directorate reviewed the proposed Bill 204 to see if similar changes are appropriate and can be made to the Yukon and, if they haven't looked at it yet, will they commit to looking at it to see if it would fit for us here?

How often does the Women's Directorate scan other jurisdictions or speak with local experts to identify similarly simple, very basic legislative changes that can be made to support Yukon women? How does this government track the legislative process from problem identification to policy solution identification to implementation to reviewing and tracking changes and what role does the Women's Directorate play in making sure that issues that affect women are highlighted and brought forward?

I thank the minister for the afternoon and her official because it has definitely been educational. I think this might be the most time we have ever talked about this department. I thank the minister for her patience and her stamina, and I look forward to the responses.

Hon. Ms. Taylor: I would like to thank the member opposite for her questions as well.

Each of these areas is of fundamental importance to women, men and families. As I mentioned, it makes us competitive because it is one thing to find a job — our government has worked hard as well to have the financial capacity to be able to deliver on programs and services that are conducive to the growth of the private sector, but also in terms of continuing to invest in that strategic infrastructure that is so vital to all of our industries in the territory.

When it comes to pay equity, this is one of the many areas that our gender-equality indicators website will be referring to. I can say that, at first glance, Yukon is actually doing quite well in comparison to every other province and territory in the country. I know that there is still a gap. However, when you compare that to other provinces and territories, we have been able to narrow that gap faster than any other jurisdiction — or overall in the country, as I understand.

A work in progress — and I know that the member opposite referred to, I think, a tourism business survey. I think there will be another one coming out later this year, if I'm not mistaken. I think the one the member opposite was referring to is from 2013. The information that we're gleaning from is from Statistics Canada, and that will be reflected on the website as one of many different areas. But in terms of providing program services, training, education — the supports that we do have and that do ensure that our territory is an attractive place to do business and to live — and, of course, working on making it an affordable place as well. Childcare feeds into that argument as well, and it has come up over the years. It's an issue that our government continues to put great importance on.

Over the years we have been able to increase the level of dollars in support of childcare in terms of supporting direct operating grants for each of our family day homes and childcare centres and for other operators. We have been able to increase dollars in support of wages of childcare workers, targeted specifically to the level of training and education initiatives that those childcare workers have been able to obtain, whether that's through the Yukon College or another institution.

We have been able to increase dollars in terms of the childcare subsidies. In fact, I think there was a recent news release that the Department of Health and Social Services issued, expanding those childcare subsidies even more — so widening the number of individuals who can actually be eligible to receive a childcare subsidy. It is an area that we continue to put great importance on.

Childcare centres — I know that, over the years, there have been efforts to work in collaboration with Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in First Nation, for example, on partnering on the creation of their childcare centre.

There have been other examples. The Learning Together program through the Department of Education is another unique program of being able to reach out to those families before they reach kindergarten to get into the schools to become more familiar.

One exception, however, that has worked out really very well is our partnership with Kwanlin Dün — the early childhood centre — and we've been able to merge the two programs, Learning Together with their program delivered out of their centre at Kwanlin Dün, and it has worked really well — in turn, by doing that we were able to access and leverage the resources and the expertise of the Child Development Centre and other resources made available through different organizations that we partner with as a government.

There have been strides made. There is obviously more that we can always do. I know that the Department of Health and Social Services continues to look to ways, creative ways, as to how we can expand that. I know that even the Department of Education is looking at more — and through the Department of Community Services — after-school programs made available targeting that active living time between 3:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m. when kids are most susceptible. I know that the Department of Education has been able to partner with the Boys and Girls Club in years past, but they are also looking at doing a pilot project in one of our schools, as we speak, to provide that after-school programming at the school where there is space available and the resources available to the school.

It is an area that we recognize. There are more families — two-income families, obviously single-parent families as well — working, and so that means that we need to expand the number of childcare options. That is what we have been working to do over the years.

Like I said, the direct operating grant was increased, I think, by about 40 percent over the years. It may have even gone beyond that in the recent couple of years. The wages — but the childcare subsidies looking to expand the number of

families that can actually subscribe to those subsidies. It is very important and it's something that I've heard at the doorstep as well, as other members in the Assembly have as well.

I know that the member opposite made reference to Bill 204 that is currently before the Alberta Legislative Assembly. I actually just saw that on the Twitter feed not long ago, and I know that it is making its way through the Legislature. I don't think it has actually gone through, but I think it's making its way through the proceedings as we speak. It is an innovative way of looking at another approach in terms of being able to respond to victims of domestic violence and being able to have that security.

As to whether or not the Women's Directorate monitors on an ongoing basis other jurisdictions — again, we would work with the departments of Community Services, Health and Social Services, Education, Justice or Economic Development.

I go back to the GIDA and the evaluation and finding those trigger points that make it incumbent upon those respective departments to be able to reach out to the Women's Directorate and to be able to trigger those different processes — whether that is when a piece of legislation is being proposed in its infancy as a concept at that particular time — is that the area that we trigger gender-inclusive diversity analysis at that time, or do we wait until it makes its way through consultation? There are different trigger points along any spectrum of policies or development of legislation.

That is what this evaluation has really shown us — that there are gaps. How can we really trigger those areas in the departments to be able to be more proactive and to be able to engage? We as elected members around the Cabinet table — the Management Board — finding those triggers within different processes. We are looking at all touch points at this particular time as we come up with an implementation plan.

I know the member opposite referred to Alberta. We are looking at the Government of Alberta. We are looking at setting up a meeting at this particular time to sit down with the Status of Women office in Alberta so that we can share challenges and opportunities and work that we can also provide.

I also believe that the Women's Directorate in the Yukon government has a lot to offer in terms of showcasing all of these years of success stories. I know that the Government of Alberta is just starting to develop their office, so we have a lot of offer to terms best practices, but also sharing in some of the challenges and getting at some of these initiatives that we have triggered to identify those challenges — more importantly, to identify a way forward to lessening or narrowing those gaps as efficiently and expeditiously as possible.

We are very pleased with the number of different progress points that we are making and of course we will continue to work with our departments. Those departments will also continue to work with their stakeholders — whether it's the Yukon Childcare Association, individual operators, other orders and levels of government, First Nation

governments — and working to really integrate our resources the best way possible for the benefit of all families and for the benefit of our territory.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for her thoughts. I am just looking for a commitment to get the answer to the questions that I asked that weren't answered on the floor in writing and I hope that maybe there will be more funding for the Women's Directorate in the new year.

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

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

Motion agreed to

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

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

Motion agreed to

Speaker resumes the Chair

Speaker: I will now call the House to order.

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

Chair's report

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

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

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Speaker: I declare the report carried.

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

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

Motion agreed to

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

The House adjourned at 5:20 p.m.