



# Yukon Legislative Assembly

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34<sup>th</sup> Legislature

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## HANSARD

Thursday, October 15, 2020 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable Nils Clarke

# YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

## 2020 Fall Sitting

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

### CABINET MINISTERS

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

### GOVERNMENT PRIVATE MEMBERS

#### Yukon Liberal Party

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

### OFFICIAL OPPOSITION

#### Yukon Party

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

### THIRD PARTY

#### New Democratic Party

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

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**Yukon Legislative Assembly  
Whitehorse, Yukon  
Thursday, October 15, 2020 — 1:00 p.m.**

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

*Prayers*

## DAILY ROUTINE

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

Introduction of visitors.

## INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I would ask all Members of the Legislative Assembly to help me welcome a few folks here today. First of all, since we will be tabling the Cannabis Yukon annual report, we have with us Mr. David Sloan and Ms. Mieke Leonard, the chair and vice-chair of the Cannabis Licensing Board.

We also have some terrific folks from our libraries: We have Chris Struc, Mairi Macrae, Carman Brar, Taryn Parker, Melissa Yu Schott — the director of libraries — and Louise Michaud — who is the assistant deputy minister responsible for libraries. Finally, we have two other very lovely people. We have my wife, Ms. Susan Walton, and we have my mother-in-law, Ms. Freda Walton — if we could welcome them all, please.

*Applause*

**Speaker:** Tributes.

## TRIBUTES

### In recognition of Global Handwashing Day

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** I rise in the House today on behalf of all Members of the Legislative Assembly to acknowledge this day as Global Handwashing Day.

It is both funny and of course deadly serious that I am even doing this tribute today. A year ago, I might not have thought to make this tribute. We all took handwashing for granted, but recent events have been a reminder of the importance of this simple yet profound public health tool. Our “safe six” response to the COVID-19 pandemic outlines that one of the most effective ways to stop the spread of the virus is also one of the simplest.

It is recommended that we practise effective handwashing routines, washing our hands frequently with warm water and soap for at least 20 seconds. With influenza season upon us, it is crucial that we continue this practice avidly. This year’s theme, “Hand Hygiene for All”, speaks to me particularly here in the Yukon because, if there is one thing that Yukoners have shown that they are good at, it is caring for each other. I am proud of our territory and our citizens. Their collective health and safety efforts continue to keep us in a fortunate position throughout this pandemic.

Here in Yukon, we are fortunate to have ample access to soap and water. Today is a reminder that not everyone has been so lucky. The World Health Organization notes that only 60 percent of the world’s population have access to a basic handwashing facility with soap and water at home. Let us continue to use this fortunate position to our advantage and be vigilant in our efforts to protect ourselves and our neighbours.

In closing, I would like to acknowledge that something as simple as good handwashing routines can save lives and thank all those who continue to practise good hand hygiene.

*Applause*

### In recognition of Canadian Library Month

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Mr. Speaker, I rise today on behalf of the Yukon Liberal government and the Yukon NDP. It is my absolute pleasure to rise to pay tribute to libraries. It is my pleasure, as our libraries are so absolutely tribute-worthy.

Today there are two things that I would like to highlight, and the first has to do with the pandemic and how much we missed our libraries.

During the time of shutdown, staff and library friends made a little stop-motion movie called *Mr. Lonely Cart*, which was and is incredibly endearing. It reflected how we missed our libraries and how the libraries were missing us back and, in a way, how we would manage getting through it together. So, a huge shout-out to Dan Bushnell and Sarah Gallagher — our outreach librarian, who I notice has joined us now in the gallery. Your little film was touching, kind, and uplifting in a time of worry — and a huge shout-out to the whole library family across the Yukon who make the magic happen.

The second thing that I would like to acknowledge today is a milestone that we passed a month or so ago, which is of course the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Dr. Seuss’ *Green Eggs and Ham*. I remember 50 years ago, at age 7, when Dr. Seuss was my favourite author. I would head to Victoria Village school library and load up on Dr. Seuss books. Each week, I would take my little brother on public transit to go to his tap-dancing lessons, and I looked forward to it because I would take three or four Seuss books with me. I would only get through one or maybe two, but it was pure joy to be able to choose from so many great options.

I admit, Mr. Speaker, that my tastes have matured over the decades. Now my favourite children’s author is Oliver Jeffers. You may recognize titles like *The Incredible Book Eating Boy*, *This Moose Belongs to Me*, *The Day the Crayons Quit*, or *Here We Are: Notes for Living on Planet Earth*.

Dr. Seuss, though — I think it is fair to say — changed reading. His books spoke to kids with humour, rhyme, and thrust. *Green Eggs and Ham* was beguilingly written, using only 50 words — 49 of them one-syllable words and one three-syllable word.

Children’s literature, like our libraries, inspires pure imagination, and so I have written a Seussian poem that I would like to share:

Look a book

Beaucoup, beaucoup de livres

Little books and wide books and books that are tall

A book is a book no matter how small  
 Books set apart, books on the shelf  
 Choose à la carte, choose for yourself  
 Poems of titles, from yurts to yachts  
 From Yertle the turtle to yeses and nots  
 From the spectrum of love to the whimsies of wishes  
 One fish, two fish, bugs and fishes  
 Look, more books...  
 For uncles and aunts and nephews and nieces  
 For whom the bell... Tolstoy's War and Peace-s  
 Detectives' perspectives, rhythms and flow  
 Defective invectives, Oh the Places You'll Go  
 Stories of COVID eclipsing our fun  
 Tales about corvids stealing the sun

Look, a book you can borrow  
 Read it today and return it tomorrow  
 One card opens up, one million possibilities  
 From thing one to thing two to a zillion infinities  
 And more than just books there's places to sit  
 You can browse, you can pause you can breathe for a  
 minute  
 You can have an idea and put yourself in it...

Look a book  
 You can read it here or you can read it there,  
 You can read it anywhere  
 This is a tribute to our library librarians  
 Bibliophiles and humble humanitarians

Look a book  
 Thank you, thank you Sam I am  
*Applause*

**Ms. Van Bibber:** I rise today on behalf of the Official Opposition to pay tribute to Canadian Library Month October. One of my favorite topics: books and reading. I actually get a little panicky if I don't have a pile of books that I can access at any given time. It is so comforting to hold a book and to discover what the pages hold and to form pictures in your mind. A well-written horror story like *The Stand* by Stephen King, a courtroom drama like *A Time to Kill* by John Grisham, or a twist-and-turn thriller story like *Gone Girl* by Gillian Flynn — all have their own special hold on the reader and can take you to a place that only you can feel and understand at that time.

When one thinks of a library, it's always the public library that comes to mind. But there are also other interesting places to access information such as the Yukon Archives and the Yukon Public Library, if that's your thing — just to name a few. We are so fortunate to have such a broad network of libraries for Yukoners to access — from how-to books to research to educational resources, to historical books to the latest best-selling novels.

As times change in how people get information, they use their personal devices and technology more and more. Our libraries also provide movies, e-books, and audiobooks and are available to those who like these options.

This month from October 6 to 30, residents in Haines Junction can stop at their public library and take part in a fun way to encourage the reading of something different — a “blind date with a book.” This is an event where one can choose a wrapped book, then read it and complete an evaluation form for a chance to win prizes. Such fun to read a book without judging its cover.

Friends of the Whitehorse Public Library are hosting a book sale by donation through to October 18, so check it out if you haven't done so yet. School libraries are so important as well to support student learning, to teach them how to respect books and access information if needed, and also to provide a quiet place to study. Tomorrow, October 16, is recognized as Canadian Library Workers Day. We send kudos to all librarians and staff who make sure that the books are ready for distribution, who take care of them, and who assist anyone who may need help during their library visit.

Remember, the love of books and libraries is a learned behaviour, so take your children to get their library card and teach them how to borrow books. Enjoy the learning experience together, read to your children, and make sure that they have access to them. It is soothing to a child to hear their favourite stories and they will have them. You will tire of reading the same story night after night, but what fun when they correct you when you try to skip over the bits as you hurry up the ritual. It just can't be done. Let's all thank the librarians for keeping us sorted and in order.

*Applause*

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

#### **TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS**

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I have for tabling the Cannabis Yukon Annual Report for 2019-20, pursuant to section 16 of the *Cannabis Control and Regulation Act*.

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Pursuant to section 22 of the *Yukon Development Corporation Act*, I have for tabling the 2019 annual report for the Yukon Development Corporation. I also have for tabling the 2019 annual report for the Yukon Energy Corporation.

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

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

#### **NOTICES OF MOTIONS**

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

THAT this House supports the COVID-19 call centre in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Ms. Hanson:** I rise to give notice of the following motion:

THAT the Chair of the Standing Committee on Rules, Elections and Privileges convene a meeting prior to the end of the 2020 Fall Sitting to consider the recommendations made by the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly on February 28, 2020.

**Ms. White:** I rise to give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to introduce species at risk legislation.

**Speaker:** Are there any further notices of motions?

Is there a statement by a minister?

## MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

### Cannabis legalization update

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I rise to provide an update on cannabis and the progress that the Yukon has made over the last two years since legalization.

Our first private licence was issued to Triple J's Canna Space a year and a half ago, in April 2019. We now have five private retail licensees serving the territory. Phase 2 products, such as edibles and extracts, were legalized and launched this past winter.

In the Yukon, between October 17, 2018 and August 31, 2020, the corporation sold approximately \$9.25 million in cannabis.

Comparing per capita legal sales, the Yukon has outperformed all other Canadian jurisdictions. This includes when we began with the government-run store only, while we were operating as a hybrid with government and private retail, and over the past year, when it has been private retail only for brick-and-mortar stores.

According to Statistics Canada, our Yukon private retail is outselling Saskatchewan by 65 percent, our sales are twice those of the Northwest Territories and 4.5 times Ontario on a per capita basis. So, hats off to our private retail sector.

Yukon's transition to a legal retail cannabis market has been a journey, with hard work from the corporation's staff, the Cannabis Licensing Board, and Yukon's cannabis licensees. Thanks also to the original government store staff, who helped introduce, inform, and guide Yukoners safely to the legal cannabis market.

Over the past year and a half, private licensees have been providing quality cannabis service, which has helped to displace the illicit market. When cannabis was legalized in October 2018, displacing the black market was one of two main goals.

The black market was well-established. There were concerns with legal supply, price, and quality. However, after a lot of hard work by the sector, we are seeing dividends. Canadian producers have worked to meet demand and increase the quality of their products, while also reducing their prices.

Phase two offered consumers a large variety of cannabis products that were up until then only available on the illicit market. The Yukon was one of the first jurisdictions in Canada to have access to phase two products. To date, Yukon cannabis

licensees have access to over 150 cannabis products from 12 different licensed producers.

With supply and the variety of products increasing and prices decreasing, we are seeing legal cannabis sales trend higher in the Yukon and across Canada, and we know that this is displacing more and more of the illicit market.

In August 2020, Statistics Canada reported that the estimated expenditure for illegal cannabis is at a multi-year low, and spending on legal cannabis in the second quarter of 2020 outpaced the illicit market for the first time. This is a significant milestone in legalization.

Here in the Yukon, cannabis sales increased by almost \$3 million over the past fiscal year. This increase was due in part to the growth in private retail licensees, consistent supply, new cannabis products, and consumers switching from the illicit market to the legal market.

Mr. Speaker, the past two years since legalization have gone by quickly. Our Liberal government's approach to cannabis legalization is working as planned.

Once again, I would like to thank the staff at the Yukon Liquor Corporation and the tremendous efforts of our cannabis licensees for making this year a success, even during these difficult times.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Istchenko:** We are pleased to speak to the two-year anniversary of the legalization of cannabis. The Yukon Party has taken a position that the private sector should be responsible for the distribution and retail sale of cannabis in the Yukon.

When the Liberals first released their framework for cannabis legalization, it took pressure from the Yukon Party to convince them to change their approach — to actually allow for private sector involvement. In fact, the CBC tweeted at the time — and I quote: “The Yukon government's plans revealed today amount to total government control...”

So, while the government has said that they want to get the government out of the business, in the case of cannabis, they have inserted government right in the middle of the business. They have granted themselves a monopoly on the distribution of cannabis in the Yukon and thus inserted government directly in the middle of the supply chain. This means that the private retailers cannot deal directly with suppliers and distributors of cannabis products. The private sector has to rely on the government agency to negotiate supply agreements with cannabis producers. Local retailers cannot access products from producers directly. As anyone from the private sector would understand, this government involvement prevents the normal relationship between a producer and a retailer. Retailers can't go out and seek new producers, establish business-to-business relationships with distributors or producers, or seek exclusive distribution agreements that are common in much of the retail sector.

This has had a negative impact on product availability in the Yukon. Anyone who has seen the diversity of product available in a retail store in the south or in the US will notice a lack of product diversity in the Yukon. This is no fault of the local retailers, but the unfortunate speed of government.

A perfect example of this is cannabis beverages. Beverages have become a common way that legal cannabis users enjoy their product. But here in the Yukon, retailers can't keep beverages on the shelf. This is because a government-run cannabis distributor can't keep pace with a private business. While we must give credit for some of the improvements in the availability of certain product lines, the fundamental problem still remains that government has inserted itself in this critical position of the cannabis supply chain that is much better suited for the private sector.

Another problematic aspect of the government role in the cannabis business is their impact on the price. The minister has said that we have made strides in cutting into the black market, but we know that there is still a very robust black market in the Yukon — in fact, we would be interested to hear from the minister when he gets back on his feet about how he calculates how much he has reduced the black market. We believe that the only way the black market will be substantially reduced in the Yukon is if the legal market can compete on price. With current government markups set where they are now, that is simply impossible. If we truly want to displace the black market, we need to give the private sector the tools to do it. We need to increase product availability, they need lower prices, and they need modern sales channels like online and remote options.

This government is standing in the way of all those things with their flawed Liberal big-government approach.

**Ms. White:** Although Canada has come a long way since it legalized cannabis, there is farther that we can go. The minister focuses on recreational cannabis, but the Yukon NDP believe that we should also talk about medical cannabis. What support does this government offer those who have a cannabis prescription and are using it for health reasons and not recreationally?

The term “medical cannabis” is used to describe products derived from the whole cannabis plant or its extracts, containing a variety of active cannabinoids and terpenes, which patients take for medical reasons after interacting with and obtaining authorization from their health care practitioner.

Patients taking cannabis for medical reasons generally use cannabinoids to alleviate symptoms while minimizing intoxication, whereas recreational users may be taking cannabis for euphoric effects. Medical cannabis is authorized by a prescriber who provides a medical document allowing individuals to obtain it from a licensed producer or apply to Health Canada to grow their own. Medical cannabis in Canada is pricey, and it is hard to access. Patients are required to pay full price without any help from their insurance companies, unlike other antidepressants or painkillers. This is because medical cannabis does not have a drug identification number.

So, what work is being done by this government in conjunction with the federal government to ensure that those requiring medical cannabis are able to have it covered under extended health benefits?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** My recollection of the Official Opposition, the Yukon Party, was that they were unsure about

whether or not they would support cannabis. They talked a lot about it being grey — uncertain about whether they should or should not support the legalization. That is what I heard during all of our debate here in the Legislature.

I am happy that they now support legalized cannabis. That's great — although now it sounds like they are saying that we shouldn't control it, even noting that it's an intoxicant. Well, sorry — our two chief goals here have been, all along, to displace the black market and to support the health and wellness of Yukoners. Like alcohol, it is a controlled substance, and we will continue to control it. Unlike alcohol, we are not selling it as a government; it is only private retail.

That model, by the way, is what we stood up and announced that we would do, which the opposition said would never happen. It has happened, and it is going very well because — as it turns out — the Yukon is doing the best in Canada, but apparently that is not good enough, even compared to those jurisdictions where they have chosen to give over to the private sector the control of an intoxicant. Okay, that is the choice of Saskatchewan — but as I pointed out, we are doing 65 percent better than Saskatchewan in sales.

It is not me who is claiming that the black market is being displaced; rather, I give the credit to our private licensees, to the Yukon Liquor Corporation, to the board, and to all those who have been involved. It is not up to me, but I am here to report on it. The statistic that I use, Mr. Speaker, is the fact that usage has not gone up in all of our measurements.

I won't say that it's as robust as we would like, but every data point that I have says that cannabis usage is pretty much the same — except, as Statistics Canada is reporting, the one demographic where there is a slight increase in usage turns out to be seniors, which turns to the point from the Third Party, which is that seniors look at cannabis as helping more with ailments.

As the Minister responsible for the Liquor Corporation, I am not going to talk about the role of our Health and Social Services minister, but I will say that we're happy to work alongside of Canada and talk with the federal government about medical cannabis.

One more point that I will add: I continue to direct the Liquor Corporation and was informed as of today still that our target is to have a zero balance. We are not trying to earn any revenue for the government through cannabis. Our goal is for it to be revenue-neutral from a government perspective. The reason is that we want all profits to go toward the private sector, and we want to try to keep the price as low as possible. We'll continue that work.

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

## QUESTION PERIOD

### Question re: Cannabis retail sales

**Mr. Hassard:** As we all know, many businesses have been hit by this pandemic. Many businesses in the retail sector have seen reductions in sales. This is also true for the cannabis sector. In an effort to assist local cannabis retailers, the government issued an order that allowed for the remote sales of

cannabis online. This measure was well-received by local businesses, as it gave them a new channel to generate sales and gave them a way to safely offer their products throughout this economic lockdown.

Much to the disappointment of these businesses though, the Liberals abruptly shut down the ability of businesses to do this in September. Can the minister tell us why he cancelled this measure that was helping Yukon businesses navigate the challenges of staying afloat during this pandemic?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I'm going to rise as the Minister of Community Services, because it's my responsibility under that role regarding ministerial orders. I would like to thank the members opposite for their very first question on ministerial orders. I'm excited to have this. I know that they asked.

Over the summer, we offered to come into this Legislature to answer all questions on ministerial orders. It wasn't an offer that was taken up by the members opposite, but I'm happy to say that now, today, we have our first question. I'm not sure, but I think we're on day 8 or 9. That's great.

I'm not sure though — in the question from the Leader of the Official Opposition, he is now saying we shouldn't have cancelled the ministerial order. In other words, all the questions to date have been that we shouldn't have been putting in place ministerial orders because they were inappropriate. But now I'm hearing that what we should have been doing is not cancelling them.

I'm happy to get up and talk about why we chose to drop this one — and I support the private sector, as I have just stood in this Legislature and said — and I will be happy to answer why.

**Mr. Hassard:** It doesn't sound like the minister really is all that in favour of helping those local businesses.

Anyway, allowing online sales for local cannabis retailers provided an opportunity to mitigate the impacts of the pandemic on these businesses. For the summer months, local retailers were allowed to sell their products online. Then, without debate or discussion, the Liberals abruptly ended this opportunity for these businesses. What is not lost on many in the private sector is that, while private retail stores were forbidden from selling their products online, the Yukon government was not. The government-run cannabis online store continues to allow Yukon citizens to select product online. So the Liberal government is directly competing against the private sector.

So why does the minister allow the government store to sell cannabis online but not these private retailers?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, although I will switch back and forth.

First of all, Mr. Speaker, online sales for cannabis have been \$25,000 compared to brick-and-mortar sales of \$1.3 million. It's a very, very small portion. This has been to allow our remote communities — to make sure that they have access; that's all.

We think it is a great idea. In fact, I stood up in the media and said that we do believe that this is a great idea. The thing though is that we believe that it shouldn't happen under a pandemic rule.

When we brought the order in place, it was because at first we were concerned about lineups at our stores and we wanted to make it easier so that people could order online and just come in and pick up so that we would allow for physical spacing. Later on, after we entered through various phases, we saw that it was getting safer and safer for Yukoners to be in stores, so we felt that it was inappropriate to continue to use the pandemic to bring in an order. We only want those orders that are going to support Yukoners though a health and safety perspective and only those that are necessary because we don't want to overexert our authority; that's why. But it is a great idea. I have said this to the private sector. I know that the department is working with private retailers and I'm happy to talk about ways to bring this back in through a proper process.

**Mr. Hassard:** It is unfortunate that the Liberal government's flawed legislation brought forward two years ago prevents the private sector from doing what the government-run retail store is allowed to. We would obviously like to see this legislation changed, as would the businesses.

So will the minister commit to making legislative changes to allow for private retailers to sell product online, just like the government store does?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** There is no bricks-and-mortar government store; it closed one year ago. That's what happened. We said that it was going to close and we got it done in the first year — again, thanks to all those staff who helped to introduce cannabis to the Yukon. The private retail is doing a great job.

Am I committed to work with them to bring forward the ability for them to have online orders? Yes, I am.

I have stood up in the public and I have said it; I will say it here again today. But of course, we want to work through our normal regulatory channels to do that work where we engage more widely and where we take the time to make sure that it works with the existing act.

#### **Question re: Many Rivers Counselling and Support Services**

**Ms. McLeod:** Yukoners who utilized Many Rivers Counselling and Support Services followed closely the events of 2018 and 2019 when there were questions about the finances of Many Rivers. The last we heard on this issue was in October 2019, when the minister in charge told a media scrum outside the Legislative Assembly that she would not be ordering a forensic audit. On October 25, 2019, the minister was quoted in the *Yukon News* as saying: "The only time you can trigger a forensic audit and bring in the RCMP is when there's criminal wrongdoing..." She went on to say, "The Third Party audit did not find criminal behaviour and, therefore, there wouldn't be a forensic audit." This is why, on Tuesday this week, it was interesting to hear the Premier say that Many Rivers was now under a forensic audit.

Can the Minister of Health and Social Services tell us when the forensic audit began?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** The situation involving Many Rivers and the investigation therein continues. The determination to undertake an investigation — and, in this

instance, including a forensic audit — is in the jurisdiction, of course, of the RCMP — perhaps not “of course”, based on the question.

The Government of Yukon is fully cooperating with the RCMP in this investigation, Mr. Speaker, and as the matter is under investigation by the RCMP, the Government of Yukon will not be providing further comment. It would not be appropriate to do so. That investigation is continuing.

**Ms. McLeod:** The question was whether or not the Minister of Health and Social Services could tell us when the forensic audit began.

On Tuesday of this week, the Premier said — and I quote: “Mental health services have been expanded from one NGO — now under police investigation...” As stated, the Minister said in October of last year that there was no forensic audit but that it now sounds like something may have changed since that time and there is some sort of police investigation.

Can the Minister of Health and Social Services tell us what changed between October of last year when there was not going to be a forensic audit and this week when the Premier told us that there was a police investigation?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I am not sure that the member opposite understands that, if we were to discuss this in any way, that could improperly infringe on the investigation that is ongoing. The investigation is ongoing. The RCMP are leading it. The government is fully cooperating and the same question was asked twice — fine; I have no trouble responding in the same way.

The matter is under investigation by the RCMP. They have determined that it warrants an investigation. Whatever that investigation determines will be made known eventually by the RCMP, and the matter will continue.

**Ms. McLeod:** Can or will the minister tell us if the Government of Yukon — if any Government of Yukon documents, records, or files — have been included as part of the investigation and forensic audit that the Premier referenced in this House on Tuesday? If so, what is the nature of those records?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** I think that this is a great opportunity to talk about the services that we are providing for Yukoners. Clearly, the member opposite is aware that I am not required and not able to speak to the specifics, but I will talk about the great work of mental wellness supports across the Yukon. We have initiated correspondence early on and made arrangements to ensure that all sectors of our society are supported, including our LGBTQ2S+ community and those who require supports who may not have historically been supported. We have supports for our rural communities. We had two counsellors under their watch — and the members opposite perhaps know that — and we now have 22. We have mental wellness hubs. We have supports across the Yukon. That is what Yukoners need to know.

I’m not going to speak on the floor of the Legislative Assembly about a matter that’s under review. The Minister of Justice has spoken very clearly to that and I will speak about the exceptional work of the department to respond appropriately to Yukoners to ensure that they are well served

and well supported in all sectors of our community, including rural Yukon communities.

#### **Question re: Affordable childcare**

**Ms. Hanson:** Yukon families have been promised universal childcare twice over the last three months — first by the Premier and then by the Minister of Health and Social Services. If this government is serious about following the *Putting People First* recommendations, it can start by taking action now on steps to implement a better childcare system in Yukon.

The *Putting People First* report said that the first step is to move early childhood education from the Department of Health and Social Services to the Department of Education. I quote: “This should not be a difficult task for the Yukon government...” The Premier and his ministers need to move from talking about universal childcare to acting on it.

Will the Premier confirm that he has directed the Minister for Health and Social Services and the Minister of Education to work to move early childhood education from the Department of Health and Social Services to the Department of Education?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** I certainly recognize that high-quality early learning opportunities are a key priority to improve long-term outcomes for children in all aspects of education and development. We indicated that we would look at suggestions and recommendations of the independent expert panel, *Putting People First*, to work with the Department of Education and the Department of Health and Social Services. We are currently doing that.

**Ms. Hanson:** In response to our question on Monday, the minister said that universal affordable early childhood education needs to wait until Yukon is aligned with other jurisdictions. Why the Yukon government needs to wait on other jurisdictions when we have the ability to make changes to our childcare policy is baffling. Both BC and Québec made changes without waiting for Ottawa to tell them how. They prioritized the needs of their citizens and their children instead of stalling on such an important policy. Yukoners deserve to know when this is going to happen.

Is this government seriously saying that it will not take any steps to develop affordable and accessible universal childcare until Ottawa gives the green light?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** Let me correct the record. What we are doing with respect to investing in children — we know that surely, we have to look at engagement with all of our stakeholders. We are looking at best practices across the country. The federal government just made an announcement last week around universal child care. We have committed to doing that. *Putting People First* — the independent expert panel — recommends that we proceed that way, and that is exactly what we are doing.

Over the last three years, we have increased early learning childcare through a multi-year funding agreement with the federal government. We have significantly increased our direct operating grants. We have significantly increased supports in funding to the NGO community — which has not been supported historically. We have created pilot projects. We have



integrated cultural integrity, humility training, and safety training among all of our daycares.

I am really happy and pleased to say that the daycare in Watson Lake is working with the Dawson City Little Blue Daycare, which in turn is working on a successful project with the Haines Junction child care centre — which integrates language, by the way — and I want to just acknowledge all of the supporters and acknowledge the child care centres, the operators, and our stakeholders for doing such a great job moving forward on child care needs.

**Ms. Hanson:** Having announced universal early childhood education not once but twice in the last three months, this government has a responsibility to follow through.

Universal affordable child care has in fact been a recurring topic in Canada for many years now, but Ottawa never followed through. Meanwhile, the cost to parents is continuing to go up. A lack of affordable, quality child care means that many women are unable to rejoin the workforce. It appears that this government is following Ottawa's playbook — promising but never delivering on those promises.

Can the Premier tell this House when the *Putting People First* recommendations on universal, accessible, affordable child care will be implemented?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** I would say that we have committed and we will follow through. Yes, we made the announcement. The Premier has indicated and advised that we must proceed, and the communities have advised that we proceed this way. It is always about ensuring that those in our community who are not able to finance or able to live to a certain standard to provide services to their children — of course, universal child care is a priority, and we will implement that. There is no going back on that. We are moving forward full steam and we are currently in the process of negotiating and we are also consulting. I'm sure that the members opposite would not know what that means because they haven't done a very effective job of working with the communities on ensuring that supports were given equally to the NGO communities, including the daycare in Watson Lake, the daycare in Dawson City, and the daycares in our indigenous communities.

We are equalizing, and we are providing equitable, fair, transparent support for all of our communities, because all of Yukon matters.

### Question re: Midwifery legislation

**Ms. White:** Midwives provide invaluable care to expectant mothers, babies, and their families. Yukon is one of two jurisdictions in Canada that doesn't have a funded and regulated midwifery. The Liberals promised to fix this. In 2017, the government said that it would be done — and I quote: "... later next year".

Midwifery is an example of a commitment and a lack of follow-through. Four years into its mandate, this government has yet to deliver. When will midwifery be funded and regulated in Yukon?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I would like to acknowledge that midwifery is important and that we remain committed. We are further back than we intended to be because it has been a

complicated file. I think that it is our responsibility to continue moving on.

I know that when COVID first hit, there was a conversation from some of the stakeholders that they wanted more time, and we said, "Well, look, we really need to keep this moving." We are committed to moving forward.

My job in the role of Community Services is the regulatory aspect of midwifery, and we have taken a phased approach to the integration of midwifery services in the Yukon with the establishment of full midwifery services in Whitehorse as a first priority. Once the program is up and running, we will then look at how midwives can best provide services in our Yukon communities.

We know that there has been a great deal of work that has been done by midwives, by our doctors, and by the public as stakeholders to move forward in establishing a sustainable and safe midwifery program in the Yukon.

I am happy to answer further as we get further questions.

**Ms. White:** Government inaction means that, four years into their mandate, midwifery is still not regulated or funded despite the ongoing commitment. This means that families that can't afford to pay out of their own pocket don't have access to the health care they need. It also means that Yukon is losing qualified midwives at a time when jurisdictions across the country are already struggling to recruit enough of them. A midwife who recently chose to practise in a different jurisdiction told us that she made that choice because, unlike in Yukon, her work is honoured and respected, and she gets to work with all families who want her services, not just those who can pay.

Does the minister realize that this government's inaction on midwifery is having an impact on both families and midwives?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** Our government remains committed to moving forward with the integration of funded and regulated midwifery services in the Yukon health care system. We are very thankful for the ongoing support and time given to this work from the physicians, the Community Midwifery Association Yukon, the Yukon Hospital Corporation, and the Yukon Registered Nurses Association, among many others. The successful implementation of midwifery will take the support of all of our health care providers and we look forward to continuing this work with them. We are taking a phased approach to the integration of midwifery services in the Yukon, with the establishment of full midwifery services in Whitehorse as a first priority.

Once the program is up and running, we will then look at how midwives can best practise in Yukon communities. We are proceeding with that right now, Mr. Speaker. We have proceeded with the competition, which concluded. So I am happy to say that we have moved in that direction despite the fact that we are still waiting for legislation.

So we are moving, and we are committed. We are going above and beyond to ensure that we meet the needs of Yukoners with respect to the services that they have asked us for, which is ensure that we provide midwifery services to all of our communities.

**Ms. White:** Actions speak louder than words, and again, all we are getting from this government on midwifery are words. Advocates for midwifery have spent years engaging with this government. They have showed resolve and an incredible amount of patience. We are four years into this government's mandate and midwifery is still not regulated or funded. The minister can say that it is an important issue and that it is a priority, but their track record says otherwise.

With COVID-19 limiting birth choices in a hospital setting, demand for midwives has increased internationally. Having properly funded and regulated midwifery in Yukon would have helped many families during this pandemic. This government's mandate is coming to an end.

Will the Premier commit to ensuring that midwifery is regulated and funded before the next election?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** I want to just confirm and acknowledge that we are committed to midwifery in the Yukon. We have the resources and we are moving in that direction. As we speak, that is actually what is happening. We have a position that we have just recruited for. We have other opportunities for which we have reached out to the community about. At the same time, we need to wait for regulations so that we can work with the medical association so that we can have access to the hospitals. Despite that, we are moving ahead.

We are in consultation with our communities, Mr. Speaker. I am happy to say that we will continue to do that good work and I am happy to say that we are listening to our stakeholder groups — all of them.

#### **Question re: Macaulay Lodge closure**

**Ms. Van Bibber:** The Macaulay Lodge building has sat empty for a number of years now, with officials from Highways and Public Works doing regular maintenance and checks, awaiting a plan for the government on the building's future. A story done by CKRW in May of last year found that no firm decision had been made. A follow-up story that aired on CKRW this morning quotes a department official saying that the building can no longer be repurposed and that there are two options: tear down the building and construct something new or sell the land.

Can the minister tell us what the plan is for Macaulay Lodge?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I'm happy to talk about this issue on the floor of the Legislature this afternoon. Highways and Public Works is conducting a future-use analysis for Macaulay Lodge in collaboration with the Department of Health and Social Services. Highways and Public Works completed a building condition assessment in the spring of 2020 that confirmed that the current facility is not suitable for repurposing. Upgrades required to critical envelope and safety systems make the option of repurposing cost prohibitive.

At this time, it's too expensive to fix to use again.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** As I mentioned, since residents moved out of the building in the fall of 2018, the department has been doing basic upkeep. The CKRW story this morning revealed that some hazmat work has also been done. However, as noted by many Riverdale residents, a family of foxes has moved in

under the west side of the structure. Can the minister tell us how much has been spent on the upkeep of the building to date, and what is being done to address the animal situation?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I heard the member opposite talk about hazmat suits, or hazmat, and I will say, Mr. Speaker, that hazardous materials are evident throughout the facility, and should a change in occupancy be considered, code improvements, hazmat removal, and structural upgrades will be required.

At the moment, two options for the future use of the site include: selling the property, or demolishing the facility and building a new structure to accommodate government program needs. That's really what we're looking at — whether to sell it or repurpose it or to demolish it, keep the land, and build something else there.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** As we are well aware, all types of land are scarce in Whitehorse right now. While the focus is on the development of Whistle Bend, the city has been working on infill over the years and I am sure it will be discussed as part of the development of official community plans. New construction on infill lots cuts down on the need to build entirely new water and sewer infrastructure.

The now-closed lodge is on a prime piece of Riverdale land close to schools, transit, and a grocery store. With the lack of housing in the city, will the government look at selling it to a private developer to be used for more residential housing?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** The Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources stood yesterday, I believe, to answer a similar type of question. First of all, we work in partnership with all of our municipalities. We ask that they lead first by planning and by telling us, through their official community plans, where they would like to see development, including infill. So, it isn't for us — I think the Minister of Highways and Public Works has just stated that there is some work that he's going to be doing with Health and Social Services. But anytime that land is going to become available, we are in conversation with — in this case — the City of Whitehorse.

We work closely with the planning department around how to repurpose land. We have examples going where we are working parcels — significantly sized parcels — that could go straight over to the private sector. The Premier has tasked me with exploring that option.

At the same time, my purpose is to ensure that we have an adequate supply of lots being developed. I work on both of those fronts, so it's "yes" to bringing the private sector on board and also to working with First Nations — noting that they are starting to develop land, and we will continue to work with them as well.

#### **Question re: Mining working group mandates**

**Mr. Kent:** At the conclusion of the Yukon Forum on October 2, a news release issued updates on the Yukon Forum working groups. One of these was an update on the mining file. I share this information with many in the industry, so what I'm looking for today is some additional information.

According to the release, a new joint working group for the management of on-claim roads was established. I'm wondering

if the minister can update us on the mandate of this working group.

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** We have a number of working groups and it is usually priorities that are identified between both the Yukon government and our technical teams who work at the memorandum-of-understanding table — that's our MOU table.

As Yukoners may remember, in January 2017, all self-governing First Nations identified the fact that they wanted to work together with us. Then in turn — something that I think was quite ground-breaking — was the signing of an agreement between all 11 First Nations and the Yukon government.

Since then, we have worked on a number of issues — whether it be water quality, identifying some of the challenges that come with road infrastructure, looking at reclamation, and following through as well on commitments that the Yukon Party made but didn't fulfill around class 1. There are a number of pieces of work that we have done and we continue to do at that particular table.

**Mr. Kent:** So, as I mentioned off the top in my first question, I am just looking for some updates and some information that I can share with those in the industry who have taken an interest in this specific release, after the October 2 Yukon Forum.

The first question was about the mandate of the working group for the management of on-claim roads. The second question also involves the release that there is also a new joint working group for compliance monitoring and enforcement.

Can the minister update us on the mandate of this working group? Are changes being contemplated to the way enforcement and monitoring are conducted, and would these changes be for hard rock or placer or both? Hopefully in this one, he can also answer that question that he missed in the first one about the on-claim roads working group as well.

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** I apologize to the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources. Hopefully he will get up for the third answer, but I do want to expand on the Yukon Forum and the great work that has been done through that forum.

The members have approved a set of joint priority lists — so just a little bit of expansion of the good work that is happening there: signing of an agreement to clarify how resource royalties will be shared under chapter 23 in the final agreements — a really important endeavour for the industry; and an advanced mining memorandum of understanding — as explained — including the establishment of progressive reclamation working groups; as of April 2020, we now require notification and review of all class 1 mineral exploration programs — and of course the minister can speak to that; implementation of the representative public service plan — *Breaking Trail Together* — excellent work government-to-government; we have made significant progress on Yukon First Nation procurement policy — more to come on that very soon; the review of the Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board to create improvements that will ensure that it continues to be an effective and critical component of the agreements and management of fish and wildlife; signing a memorandum of understanding to manage heritage; creating a new joint senior executive committee — JSEC — to support a whole-of-

government approach to collaboration to ensure that the federal government has a more unified and strategic way of engaging at Yukon Days in Ottawa — and many more.

**Mr. Kent:** So these questions, I thought, were relatively straightforward, but unfortunately the record today is going to reflect that so far the minister and the Premier are 0 for 2 on answering these questions about working groups that were announced after the October 2 Yukon Forum.

Mr. Speaker, I will try again. Hopefully we get some answers to the first two questions, but I do have another one here in this final supplementary.

The Yukon Mineral Development Strategy Panel has been consulting with groups on what changes they would like to see to the way that we manage and develop resources, and their recommendations are expected later this year. Can the minister describe how these working groups interface with the Yukon Mineral Development Strategy Panel and its work? Is this part of the process, or is it in addition to it? Perhaps, at some point today, we will get answers to the other two questions that I asked as well.

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** I will try to quickly go through it. What I did in the first question was explain what the MMOU table is. I think that is something in context. If you are inside these discussions all the time, you may know it, but I want to share that with Yukoners.

Quite simply, as we said, the on-claim roads working group is just focused on developing recommendations related to the construction, operation, and decommissioning of roads on mining claims that are not covered by resource road regulations. That's quite simple — exactly as it says.

The next one was about compliance monitoring and enforcement. It's focused on sharing information and developing recommendations related to how the Yukon government and First Nation governments can better share information and collaborate on compliance monitoring — one, two.

As for this group, what we have asked in every case — whether it be the Yukon Chamber of Mines, the MMOU table, the Yukon Minerals Advisory Board — whatever they are working on, whatever their recommendations, whatever their priorities are, please ensure that you reach out to the mineral development strategy table. They have done a fantastic job — all three individuals — to go out and get that work.

You will remember that another one — start and stop — was way back a number of years ago when the previous government announced that the mineral development strategy was underway, there was a big splash right before Roundup, and then it evaporated. What we did was that we went back we actually had First Nation governments come to us and say that they wanted to do this work in collaboration. It is very important that all of these priorities, again, get shared with this group, and then we will have an opportunity to read that report in the near future and discuss it.

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

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** 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 (Mr. Hutton):** Order, please. Committee of the Whole will now come to order.

The matter before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 15, Department of Health and Social Services, in Bill No. 204, entitled *Fourth Appropriation Act 2019-20*.

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. 204: *Fourth Appropriation Act 2019-20* — continued

**Chair:** The matter before Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 15, Health and Social Services, in Bill No. 204, entitled *Fourth Appropriation Act 2019-20*.

Ms. Frost, you have eight minutes and 20 seconds.

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

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** I would like to start where I left off on the last day, where we were with respect to the programs and supports that we are currently providing for Yukoners. The fact is that we have looked at extensive supports, and the supplementary budget of \$2.546 million really reflects on our commitment to Yukoners — our commitment that we have created, and we will continue to build on those strong, respectful partnerships.

We are working to improve the health and well-being of Yukoners in all aspects of our society. We know that Yukon's most vulnerable people have been underserved for years, which is why we have expanded the services at the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter and opened the territory's first Housing First project. These important projects have been successful because we are working with all levels of government and stakeholders.

Recognizing that supporting Yukoners is an issue that concerns our whole society and all levels of decision-making, our government believes that the best way to care for Yukoners is by integrating our health care services, by offering health care that considers the whole person, the situation and supports as well as their physical health. We make sure that we can access the services that they need to be healthy.

Our government will be implementing the recommendations of *Putting People First*, creating a road map of a people-centred approach to health and wellness, which is more effective and more sustainable going forward. We know that all Yukon communities matter; they matter very much. The comments that were in general debate — I would like to maybe go there for a minute just with respect to the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter.

There were some comments made — and I read them my last time coming into debate on the supplementary estimates — that the shelter, I don't see it as a problem. I see it as an opportunity, an opportunity to provide services for our most vulnerable community members.

We also see that the businesses that have come forward within that general vicinity have indicated that they wanted to look at a partnership initiative. They came up with some recommendations, which we are exploring right now with our partners — answering the call for a community plan with our partners through the community in Justice, the City of Whitehorse, and our First Nation communities.

I also wanted to just stop and acknowledge that the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter and the staff there — I don't see it as a debacle, as the member opposite has classified it. I don't see the management as a problem either, because I see the management as going above and beyond in providing essential services, necessary services, to a population base that has historically never been served.

I think, for the record, that we can say that early on, in the point-in-time count which I participated in — so I walked the downtown core, sat on the river, sat in the parks, met with the folks, participated in doing the interviews — which I was honoured to do because a lot of the community members on the streets in Whitehorse come from rural Yukon communities. A lot of them are members whom I know — citizens who come from each one of our communities. They're people — they're people who are fathers, grandfathers, aunties, uncles, and children. These are people who have fallen into unfortunate circumstances and they need a little hand up. The little hand up is to help them to get access to the services.

I've happily purchased many tickets for residents to go home. Why? Because the system doesn't support individuals once they come into the city. If they miss an airplane, well, there is no other way to get home. They are essentially forgotten about. We see this throughout our system.

I have an elder who came to Whitehorse for cancer treatment. He got let go. It was Friday afternoon. Everything was shut down. He called me and he says, "What am I going to do? I don't understand the system. I don't know where to go. How is this going to work? I need to go home. I have no money." So, you have to think outside the box and try to build a system that meets the needs of everyone and clearly addresses the needs of individuals, especially during such trying times. Right now, through COVID, we're seeing perhaps a society that we've never seen before. We've seen every day the residents of our community accessing the shelter.

Suggesting that it's in shambles, Mr. Chair — we've had one full year to manage that facility. The one full year we've

had allowed us an opportunity to do comprehensive assessments and review around what's required. Why is that? The 2018 numbers came in showing that we've seen a reduction in homelessness in our city — in Whitehorse. We've seen early on — in early years, we've seen well over 200. So now we're seeing some really great programs and initiatives that have been offered. I just want to take note and say how much I appreciate the work of the department, the work of our NGO partners, and the communities as we look at supporting the clients.

The fact that we have learned some things about our external services and supports and with our care centres outside the Yukon — how important it is to look at alternative options, which we are currently doing — \$2.2 million in 2016 — that is down to \$1.4 million. Do we bring that down even further by bringing more surgeons and more specialist supports to Yukon? We certainly recognize that it is not something that you want to do on a yearly basis, but you do want to look for options going forward to better align services with the cost factors and then, of course, deliver out to rural Yukon communities essential services and supports in a collaborative fashion.

**Ms. McLeod:** I have some questions for the minister around the \$100,000 that was budgeted in the 2019-20 budget for the Watson Lake men's shelter. In November of last year, the minister confirmed in a letter that Health and Social Services had entered into a transfer payment agreement with Help and Hope for Families in Watson Lake to lead the work on a housing needs assessment and a men's shelter feasibility study, with a full report expected at the end of 2019.

Can the minister confirm that the \$100,000 was spent in full?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** I want to just paint a bit of a picture around what is happening in the community of Watson Lake — long historical trauma in that community associated with the residential school. We know that. I have relatives in Watson Lake, so I know the impact. I know that the indigenous community has had some challenges. What we have seen most recently is that we have seen a shortage in housing. We have seen some programs and services not being addressed. I have gone there quite a few times. I have met with the seniors and I have met with the elders in that community — holding community engagement sessions — really to look at where we are seeing shortfalls and where we are seeing some flaws.

A year ago, Lakeview Manor — which was owned by the development corporation of the First Nations — was shut down. First it was around the land leases, and then it turned into more about — oh, now there are some discrepancies in the safety of the building. So, the department brought in security guards. We brought in fire watch. We brought in supports to keep the facility running. At the same time, we couldn't keep that on and the fire marshal came in and we must shut it down.

We sent down a critical incident team from Health and Social Services and Yukon Housing Corporation to work with Liard First Nation, to work with the municipality, and to work with our partners down there to look at ensuring that every person who walked out of that building and defined themselves as now being displaced had a place to go. Now, realizing that there is no men's shelter in Watson Lake, we only had the Help

and Hope for Families Society, which we have worked with, and they have an aspiration to look at meeting the broader needs of the community. The executive director there is a very exceptional community member — a long-time resident of the community who has had a passion for a while — a passion for ensuring that residents' needs are being met.

We have worked through the Department of Health and Social Services to put resources aside to essentially look at trying to address a positive outcome, a positive outcome for the community with respect to a shelter facility or some form of transitional housing in the community. We currently have the Help and Hope for Families Society, which addresses some shelter, and then, of course, some transitional housing. In conjunction with that, we have lined them up with the Yukon Housing Corporation and Health and Social Services.

Having done that, we also saw a great need to work with the Liard First Nation. In working with the Liard First Nation, we have also realized that — we often talk about reconciliation and about supports for all sectors of our society without distinguishing one individual from another. We have a community obligation. We have a societal obligation.

So we went ahead and did two things — one is that the Social Supports branch contacted the NGO, the Help and Hope for Families Society, to look at the community housing needs assessment — and that was right on the heels of the closure of Lakeview Manor — and to also look at giving them a hand to address additional capacity and supports so that the Homelessness Association of British Columbia could start working on a point-in-time count for our men's shelter. Given that COVID, of course, happened, they haven't had the opportunity — that posed some significant restrictions on the engagement and the focus groups, which resulted, of course, in the delay of that specific project.

What I'm happy to say is that the Yukon Housing Corporation started work on the supportive housing needs assessment early on to identify the size and scale of new supportive housing projects in the community — the possibility of what we might want to look at for 2021 — and then start looking at some engagement in the community.

I'm happy to note that this is completed, so we do have some early indication from the Yukon Housing Corporation of the recommendations on some options. Right now, we are working with the community; we are working with the Liard First Nation very closely. We are also working with the municipality and, of course, Community Services around the continuation of initiatives in that community. I can speak more about that should the member opposite desire more information with respect to some of the initiatives being suggested for the community.

**Ms. McLeod:** The transfer agreement of \$100,000 to the Help and Hope for Families — was that money expended, or has any of that been revoted?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** I'm just seeking a little clarification around the transition and how the transition happened — appreciating that we have two jurisdictions that we're working with in the community of Watson Lake. We clearly have to

work with British Columbia as we look at the core base of the community, Lower Post, Liard, and the community proper.

Early on, as I indicated, the department contacted the Help and Hope for Families Society to look at a housing needs assessment. That work started, and then COVID-19 hit, so we had to take a bit of a step back. At the same time, we were moving with the Housing Corporation, given that they have an obligation in the community to provide some housing.

Point-in-time counts are really about meeting the core needs of the individuals, so we have to try to lay one over top of the other to ensure that we meet all the holistic and care needs of the individuals as they present.

The funding that was set aside — the \$85,000. All the work that was intended to be completed didn't happen. The work is now continuing with the Yukon Housing Corporation and working in collaboration, as I indicated earlier — and I will pull it back up — with the housing association of British Columbia and really trying to pull it all together. Right now, we have the assessment from the Yukon Housing Corporation, but we have to look at the other piece of that. Once we conclude that, we will put the package together and then start putting some effort into building a men's shelter. That is what we are hearing from our partners in Watson Lake.

Constructing in 2021 is a real possibility. We certainly want to do that in collaboration with our partners in the community, keeping in mind that we have a new mayor now in Watson Lake. We want to keep that connection there through our Community Services partners as well and, of course, through the Yukon Housing Corporation and through British Columbia to try to look at a very cohesive, collaborative approach to addressing some of the core housing needs in the community of Watson Lake.

**Ms. McLeod:** The minister has adjusted that figure from \$100,000 to \$85,000. I still don't have an answer as to whether or not someone wrote a cheque for that amount of money, or is it still in the budget? Has it been revoked and held over to this fiscal year?

The minister referenced delays due to COVID-19. The census report was expected at the end of 2019, which was somewhat in advance of COVID-19. Perhaps we are looking at a bit of a delay. Since COVID-19 is expected to be with us for some time, when is that report going to be completed and made available to the public?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** I apologize if I wasn't clear. The \$85,000 was spent; allocated in the budget was \$100,000. There is \$15,000 remaining. We're still in this year. We're looking at compiling the report.

With respect to the action plan for the community, I'm really extremely pleased and excited to say that the community of Watson Lake is finally getting recognized in terms of addressing their core housing needs. We will no longer have people displaced by shutting down facilities. We want to be able to look at opening up facilities. That means we have to move quickly, and we have to address what the core needs are in the community — which is exactly what we're doing right now — and addressing some historical wrongs in that community. We're doing that in collaboration with our

partners. The fact that we're looking at a Housing First initiative in the community, with direct access to some resources that are readily available to us — but that has to be done in partnership with the Liard First Nation and, of course, the municipality.

We will continue to do that good work to ensure that we address some of the challenges, the housing shortages that we've seen, and the lack of shelter for men. As the member opposite may know, being in government for quite some time, oftentimes you get draft reports in advance that give you a bit of an indication of what's happening and what you're seeing in terms of a schematic or an assessment. This information is to be used by the parties. It's not going to be made a public document, I don't believe, unless the parties desire that to be the case. We will certainly consult with the Liard First Nation and maybe ask if they want to share detailed information about their citizens. That might not be possible. The Help and Hope for Families Society may not want to share that information because of being a small community. We certainly want to protect the rights and identification of individuals, so we will proceed cautiously in terms of how we report on specific data from communities that are smaller in nature, but we certainly want to build on what we've heard and build on the feedback that we've received from the community.

I want to just say that the objective really is to work with the community, engage with the community, and continue to engage on some options going forward. We have some positive initiatives, some positive feedback, and, of course, some positive results that we are currently quite excited about moving forward on. Perhaps in the next year we will see a huge housing initiative in that community. It may happen sooner.

I just want to stop there and thank the community for their engagement and for participating in honest feedback and helping us to acquire the data and the supports needed there.

**Ms. McLeod:** So with the minister's partners being Yukon Housing and the Homelessness Services Association of BC, it sounds very much like they have already reached a conclusion — you know, if we look at this year's budget. Secondly, I don't think that the community is aware that they have been consulted.

Obviously, I can't think of anybody who wants to know any personal information about any citizen. However, the results — the conclusions reached by a report paid for with \$85,000 taxpayer dollars — would certainly be of interest to the citizens.

For the minister to say that it is none of their business is a little bit surprising. I would like to hear from the minister today — how do you go about consulting with a population when you won't release the data? Maybe the minister can tell us a little bit about how she sees that unfolding, because clearly the minister seems to already have this figured out without consultation with the community. I will just leave it there, and maybe the minister can inform us.

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** I chuckled, not because of the subject matter. I chuckled because I did not say such a thing. I said that sometimes, in smaller communities, it is imperative on us, as professionals, to be mindful of the fact that small communities

— when we do a point-in-time count or when we do assessments, we need to be mindful and respectful of the individuals. That was my objective.

I do want to say that the purpose of the debate today is with the intention of responding to the supplementary overage of \$5.246 million. The \$100,000 that's being highlighted right now is for a project in the community that has gone through extensive consultation already. Suggesting that this hasn't happened is absolutely not true. Consultation happened; that's why we have the results, and we can now say that there is a need.

The Help and Hope for Families Society has done a really great job. They have had the pulse of the community for quite a long time. The Yukon Housing Corporation, the BC Housing authority — we have had lots of input, and we will continue to do that.

I would like to suggest that, if there are any specific questions with respect to the budget before us today, I would like to respond to those. I'm sure I can respond to any other questions that the member might have, at the opportune time. The \$100,000 is not captured in this particular budget item up for debate.

**Ms. McLeod:** I'm sorry — that statement was just hilarious. We have been after this minister to provide us with the details of the \$5.2 million, which we have yet to get. I don't know if this \$100,000 factors into that, and the truth of the matter is that this is a debate on the financial obligations and implications of public funding for the year 2019-20. I don't think that can be any clearer.

Because the minister has stated that she has consulted with the Town of Watson Lake, my question is: Whom did the minister consult and when?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** I can say that I didn't do the consultation myself, as the minister. The staff of the Yukon Housing Corporation and the staff of Health and Social Services worked in collaboration with the community members. Perhaps the member opposite asking the question may be aware, given that she represents the community, that there was consultation happening — currently — in the community to gather this data.

I do want to also just respond by saying that the Member for Takhini-Kopper King asked a specific detail question with respect to the breakdown, so I provided that. I said that I would table the results, and I will do that.

I will break it down. If the member opposite requires it, I can read that again into the record. I would have great pleasure in doing that and breaking it down. There is no hiding of anything. Everything is on the books and identified, as I indicated the last time that I stood here on this budget item. Let me just get the numbers — but the total was broken down into three specific categories: insured health services; COVID; and then we had another amount, which was \$1.4 million. So \$1.3 million was allocated for insured health services, and then we had \$2.6 million for Social Supports, and then, of course, we had the COVID expenditures as well. I can certainly take the time to go through that breakdown, if that's appropriate. I

just need to know how much time I have, because it might take some time for me to get that down on record.

With respect to the budget area and the expenditures, the member opposite made some suggestions — that I'm not sharing the information. I would be happy to do that now.

The chief medical officer's expenditures there are associated with the increased staffing and program expenditures in response to the initial emergency situation. The allocated amount there was \$40,000.

The Health Emergency Operations Centre — for staffing and operations of the centre staff, the Respiratory Assessment Centre, and the self-isolation facility — that was allocated at \$265,000 for that facility. Just keep in mind that, of the overall budget, 25 percent was spent on COVID — and that's what I'm going through right now. Yukon Communicable Disease Control — a centre for staff and overtime — this allowed for additional support to address the public needs related to COVID — so we had to staff up and we had to bring in staff to the assessment centre and, of course, the wraparound supports for our chief medical officer of health.

The environmental health services — there was significant overtime associated with COVID as well related to inspections and concerns across the territory. As we know, we had to put in rules very quickly to address restaurants and to address our service industry, and we had to work with the sector. The allocated amount there was \$10,000.

We had the Emergency Coordination Centre. Social services deployed staff to the Emergency Coordination Centre to support the response to COVID-19. There's \$25,000 allocated there. The Yukon Hospital Corporation also required additional resources to support its initial response to the operational changes and enhancements to prepare for the pandemic and ensure the health and safety of patients, staff, and the general public.

We allocated at that time \$170,000 to the continuing care facility to support the staff there to ensure that residents of our long-term care homes had the appropriate supports and were safe, meaning that we had to put the necessary measures in place — as the member opposite knows, this seems to be the vulnerable population with respect to COVID-19. This was demonstrated across the country, so we had to quickly put in place measures to protect our seniors.

Licensed childcare — support to keep our centres available for essential workers and to ensure that licensed childcare centres would remain viable and open — there was \$600,000 allocated to that. So the total COVID-19 expense was \$1.42 million.

For social services — approximately 50 percent was spent on social services, extended family care agreements — supports for children and families through the extended family care agreements — so that was \$900,000. We went on ad nauseum around that — about why it's important to support the children rather than apprehending them, bringing them back to the community, and supporting the children and families in our communities — which we have not done historically. It's really about reconciliation and about repatriation. It's about the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's

recommendations. It's about ensuring that we provide transparency and support to all of our communities.

The majority of the children in care are indigenous. Of course, the population of our indigenous community is about one-third of the Yukon, yet we see 80 percent of our children in care. I say "our" because I am indigenous. As you can see, I am an indigenous mother. I am Vuntut Gwitchin and our children are in care. We have been advised that we must repatriate and bring them home.

Family and Children's Services and other expenses — we have seen through that allocation of \$500,000 — for mental wellness and substance use — unexpected increases and supports for mental health. Of course, we needed to put the resources in place for mental wellness supports in all of our rural Yukon communities where we have seen an uptake. We needed to accommodate that and respond appropriately.

There is a lot of debate around the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter providing services for significantly more individuals that we hadn't seen historically. As I noted in the record, we've seen, through Salvation Army's management, 13 people a night — 13 to 15 — and now we see in excess of 80 people a night. We were serving 350 meals a day — we were serving those pre-COVID — which is an indication that our citizens are coming to this facility now to use the services that they weren't allowed to access previously. Of course, we had to ensure that we provided additional supports like the emergency measures services, addictions services, social services — we have social workers there now who weren't there before — mental wellness supports, mental wellness counsellors, and emergency measures services.

Early on, we quickly moved to provide supports to our youth. We've seen an uptick in women there as well and so we had to start working on ensuring that we provided the services that they need — the specific and unique services.

With respect to health services — we've allocated, of this total amount, 25 percent that went to unexpected expenditures and insured health services, including a substantial growth in numbers of inpatient days billed for Yukoners being treated in the BC hospitals. I read that into the record, and I don't believe I should do that again given that we know the numbers are in excess of 20,000 bed days.

We've provided services to a number of Yukoners — a lot of Yukoners. We've also seen longer duration of stays and we see that neonatal care is essential. These are things we can't control, but we are obligated to legally provide those supports. That made up the \$1.3 million of the budget.

**Ms. McLeod:** So, I'm adding up the figures. I have my calculator here. I'm adding up the numbers the minister is giving us and she's going to give us a breakdown of the \$5.2 million, she said. So, I come up with \$2,510,000. Throw in figures like: 25 percent is for health services and 25 percent is COVID. That kind of leaves us with, "Where the heck are we?"

The minister said she would table the breakdown of the \$5.2 million.

I wasn't sure if she has already provided that to the Third Party — no? I thought that's what the minister had indicated,

but apparently not. So, you know, it's difficult to have a fulsome discussion when we can't get a breakdown of \$5.2 million.

I don't believe that there's any point in the minister spending additional time trying to detail these dollars on the floor of the Legislature, because that has proved pretty unsuccessful for all of us in the last couple of days.

I would like to go back to my original question, which was: Who has the minister consulted on the housing study in Watson Lake, and when was that?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** With respect to the tabling of the detailed breakdown of the \$5.246 million, I indicated that I would table that to the Third Party. If the member opposite would like, I will be sure to provide that to the member opposite as well so she can do the calculations: \$1.4 million, \$2.6 million, \$1.3 million — and with respect to the detailed breakdown, I will be happy to provide that.

With respect to consultation and engagement on housing and housing initiatives, I don't believe that's in this appropriation, but I would be happy to provide that information to the member opposite, if the member opposite would like, but right now, I wanted to say that we are prepared to support the community, and we will continue to engage and consult with the community.

**Ms. McLeod:** I don't know. Colour me silly — when the minister said that she would table those results, I thought it meant for everybody here. I didn't know that it was just for the Third Party.

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

**Ms. McLeod:** I know, yeah.

So, I'm a little surprised that it has taken today to get a commitment from the minister to provide it to the Member for Watson Lake.

However, I'm going to leave that, and I look forward to getting those figures because we are not on the same page in this matter.

As I said, the minister is refusing to discuss anything except \$5.2 million, which we can't get any details on. It makes this discussion — this whole use of the House's time — to be a little bit like — what the heck, Mr. Chair.

Part of what is concerning me about this study on the Watson Lake men's shelter that the minister won't talk about is her identification of the two bodies that she is working with — Yukon Housing Corporation and the Homelessness Services Association of BC — to come up with a plan, which appears to be done, without even mentioning the four other local groups that I know are working on this matter. I'm a little confused about who has been consulted and when they were consulted. If I can get an answer to that, I will stand down from this line.

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** I would respectfully say that the Help and Hope for Families Society is a community organization. The Liard First Nation is a community organization that represents a significant part of the community. If there are challenges with respect to who has been engaged and who has not been engaged, I would happily respond to that and ensure that they have had ample opportunity. The objective of the assessment was really just to find out what the core needs in the



community are and where we need to put our efforts — indicating that there is a desire and a need for a shelter for men in the community and the fact that we wanted to look at housing as a key priority. Not doing any of those assessments, the fact that Lakeview Manor was shut down meant that there were a number of individuals in that facility — perhaps in excess of 20 — who have been displaced, which is an indication that there is a need in the community and which meant that you needed to have some rapid response. That is why the Housing Corporation and Health and Social Services mobilized very quickly to get to Watson Lake.

As I said to the Member for Takhini-Kopper King, I will get her the details. I intend to do that. It is not in any way suggesting that I am going to exclude the Member for Watson Lake. Should she desire the information, I would be happy to do that. I can table it in the Legislature as well. There is nothing that prevents us from doing that, so I would be happy to do that.

We are working on getting that right now and just prepping up. It's not in any way about, as the Member for Lake Laberge suggests, being out of touch with reality. Well, the fact is, Mr. Chair, that we have to look at collaborative care, we have to look at facilities, and we have to look at housing as a human right. That means that we need to look at the community of Watson Lake. We need to look at shelters, and we need to look at ensuring that we provide necessary care. That is part of how we look at these overages and expenditures that we are discussing today.

Unforeseen circumstances required that we respond with services for our clients — had to be flown to Vancouver, British Columbia or to Alberta. We have children who require supports. We receive invoices after the fiscal year. The members opposite are well aware that this happened on their watch; it has happened for many years. We are working hard to address that by bringing specialist services to the Yukon — pediatricians and orthopaedic surgeons — and we are continuing to work with our colleagues to address the overages that we have seen historically, bringing those services here. I can bring some of that historical data as well, which really just justifies what happened prior to 2016 — and it was in excess of \$2 million — and bringing that down significantly. It really just had to do with bringing the supports to the Yukon.

I want to just acknowledge that there are other community organizations in Watson Lake, as there are in every community. As we proceeded with our seniors action engagement through our aging in place, we consulted with the elders societies in the communities. We will continue to coordinate with most of our community partners. I would be happy if the member opposite would share the information with us for those organizations that perhaps she thought were not consulted. We would be happy to bring that back, of course, to the Help and Hope for Families Society and the housing authority that is working on the current assessments — and the summary of that.

**Mr. Hassard:** I would like to thank the officials for being here today. I have a few questions regarding the numbers as well, and it has been interesting listening to the minister this afternoon. We are talking about \$5.2 million. The minister talked about \$1.4 million for COVID-19, \$1.3 million for

insured health services, \$900,000 for extended family care, and \$500,000 for mental wellness support. According to my math, that actually adds up to \$4.1 million.

When she spoke here just a few minutes ago, she talked about \$1.4 million, \$1.3 million, and \$2.6 million, and that is actually more than \$5.3 million — so maybe if the minister could just give a little bit of clarification there to see if I have missed something or if, in fact, she has — if that would be okay, Mr. Chair?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** With respect to the overall expenditures, as it's broken down, I had read into the record — so did the Premier — that the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter — the question from the Member for Lake Laberge spoke about the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter — we indicated there was \$800,000 allocated to the emergency shelter.

We also talked a lot about mental wellness and substance use during that time. I also spoke about it. There's an additional \$400,000 allocated to that. If the member opposite would like me to read that all over again, I can do that — including those two numbers — but it has been read into the record. If they were tracking it all, they would find that all of it is covered in the record, but I would be happy to do that again and slow it down a bit — because I know, when I spoke and broke it down for the Member for Takhini-Kopper King, I was going a little fast, and she asked me to bring it down a notch. So I would be happy to do that for the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin so that we can, in effect, get it on the record — but I have indicated that I would bring it back in writing, so I would be pleased to do that as well.

**Mr. Hassard:** It would actually be nice if the minister could do that, because, even with just what she said now — with \$800,000 for the emergency shelter and then the additional \$400,000, that brings us to \$5.3 million. Obviously, there's something that's not quite lining up there, so if she could clarify if that's all that's wrong, or if we could get that read into the record, please, Mr. Chair.

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** So, the member — as calculated, the numbers that were given were not precisely exactly down to the numbers. As we were calculating and getting ready for this supplementary request, we broke it down to the specific areas of where we spent the funding and broke it down into percentages and then went down into specific categories. Overall, we indicated approximately \$2,246,000. If you round the numbers, it would come in at about \$5.3 million. I said I would detail the numbers and bring it back, but in an effort to get it here and in an effort to provide clarity, that's what we have right now.

I would be happy to bring that back to the Legislative Assembly with the exact cents that we spent and the exact dollars on every one of these areas. Right now, we have rounded it up to get us to a number so that we can get it into the supplementary request and get that through Cabinet and get that to the table today. We're working on getting the exact numbers, but the numbers have been rounded and approximately totalled — as I said, \$5.246 million. The calculation is \$5.3 million and the adjustment that will be made on the actuals will come to the floor of the Legislature.

**Mr. Hassard:** I appreciate that, but I guess my concern still is the fact that, when we ask these questions of the Premier in general debate, he says, “You need to wait until the department gets here and then you can get all of the information. You can get the exact information.” So, now we wait for the department to get here and then we’re told, “Well, we don’t have all of that exact information for you. We have to get it for you.”

So, I guess, Mr. Chair, my question is: How long do we have to wait for this information? Also, why, when the Premier told us that this is where we get the information, are we in fact again told that we have to go somewhere else for that information?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** I would like to speak about the objective. What we said is we would bring the information — I’m here to speak about the budget and I’m happy to do that.

I have spoken now to the breakdown of what we spent the money on. With respect to the exact numbers, I said we would bring that. We have rounded it up to get us to this place right now. I am not in any way — I want Yukoners to know that there is no — we are not in any way hiding anything. We said we would bring the numbers, and that is exactly what we’re doing. We provided resources to the chief medical officer of health during COVID — 25 percent of the budget was spent on COVID-related expenditures, and that was \$1.4 million — approximately \$1.4 million. We will get the exact number and the exact breakdown of that. We know that we have spent \$2.4 million on social services and that equates to 50 percent of \$2.6 million and I broke that down — then, of course, health services.

I would be happy to support the evidence and argue the point that we have provided the services to Yukoners. These funds that were spent were spent on the well-being of Yukoners. They were spent on ensuring that Yukoners’ health was the utmost priority and we met them as required under the COVID-related pressures, but we also met the requirements for ensuring that families and children were safe and that they had the supports that they needed. With respect to mental wellness supports and services — we have to support that as well, and of course, I will say again that we do have a legal obligation to ensure that we provide insured health services to clients who are given services outside the Yukon, and that is what we have before us. The Premier was right in suggesting that I would respond to the questions. I would be happy to respond to the specifics of each one of these categories that I have mentioned today, but if the member opposite wants to quibble over the specific details of the difference in the numbers — as I indicated, I do commit to bringing that back to the Legislative Assembly.

The department has done a really great job amidst the fact that they were in the middle of a COVID crisis. We currently are still in a crisis. Of course, in the middle of a crisis, you are managing — you are managing health services, you are managing community services — we are managing all of the services required that are essential for Yukoners.

At the same time, we’re prepping up the detailed documents to get us ready for the Legislative Assembly, so I

want to just take a moment to acknowledgement the staff of Health and Social Services and the staff at Dr. Hanley’s office, and our front-line staff are doing such a great job — to let them know that, during this unprecedented time, sometimes there are delays. I’m not in any way condoning the fact that this difference in the numbers is acceptable. There’s no doubt about the fact that we went over our mains, and we’re here to say that these are the reasons why. That specifically explains to Yukoners that their health and their well-being is of the utmost priority to this government.

**Mr. Hassard:** The minister said a couple of very interesting things there: First off, there is the fact that she wants people to know that she isn’t hiding anything; and, secondly, she thinks that I’m here to quibble over specific details. Now, my question, Mr. Chair, was — when the Premier was asked these questions in general debate, the Premier told us, as opposition members, that we would get this information when the department came forward. Now the department is here, and the minister says that she will provide that information at a later date.

My question was quite simple. I said: When will we receive that information?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** With respect to the general debate, there were a number of things said in the general debate. The Member for Lake Laberge would be aware, as he spent most of the time speaking, suggesting that the Premier is out of touch with reality and that things are quite a mess — the operation and maintenance clientele whom we are serving — and going on to suggest that we have not provided the supports to Yukoners.

I want to assure Yukoners that we are fully prepared to address any debate with respect to the well-being of Yukoners. We changed our health care model.

The member very interestingly suggested that we were perhaps not clear on the difference between collaborative care — what does that mean and what does collaborative care look like? Well, collaborative care means that we take care of Yukoners no matter where they are, no matter where they reside, and no matter the circumstances.

When I indicate that we are going to provide services to Yukoners, we will do that, Mr. Chair. To say that we are proceeding along lines where we don’t have the information — exactly as I presented it today. The breakdown of the categories is exactly what the money was spent on. If the member opposite is not pleased with that, I don’t know what else to suggest, other than to say that we spent the funds as indicated on the specific areas to meet the needs of Yukoners. I personally would be happy to table the exact details of the budget as it is broken down.

What I presented are the rounded-up numbers. Perhaps the member opposite is not pleased with that, but that is what I am presenting today. I said that I would bring the numbers in, and I did. These are what we have. I indicated to the member across the way for Takhini-Kopper King that we would bring exact numbers. Those are still pending. I mean, we are in the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic and the department is working

really hard on getting those exact figures to us. That is what I have for today, Mr. Chair.

The health care model — as we move from an acute care model, we looked at a collaborative model. That means, of course, that we had to look at expanded practices here in Yukon, meaning that we had to look at the supports for mental wellness, we had to look at the supports for our vulnerable populations, plus we had to look at ensuring that we look at the detailed analysis around the overages and the expenditures specific to our external medical travel, hospital stays, and looking at the fact that historically our children were apprehended from their families. We have now repatriated and brought them back home. We will continue to do that good work. That is what this budget was spent on. I can certainly provide specific details around each of those program areas and the unexpected increases that resulted from them.

**Mr. Hassard:** It's interesting — the minister spoke about the Premier being out of touch. I guess I would have to agree, because he led us to believe that, when the department got here, we would get these answers. Apparently, he is out of touch because we aren't getting the answers.

Again, the question was very simple. It had nothing to do with the Member for Lake Laberge or the Premier. I asked when we would get that information that she says is going to be tabled.

Is it possible to get an actual answer to that question?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** I would like to just say again, for the record, that we broke down the budget into the categories and into the line items that we went over. We rounded those up because, obviously, as I indicated, we are in the middle of a pandemic. We did break it down. We said we would do that, and that's exactly what we did to give an indication to the member opposite and to Yukoners what the money was spent on. I said that I would table the exact figures.

With respect to the comments — inappropriate comments, by the way — made previously and made again today, that's absolutely not the truth. What that was related to was the fact that the member suggested that we, as a government, were out of touch with reality — suggesting that the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter was a collaborative care centre. Part of the money in this budget was spent on the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter. The essential care and core needs of the vulnerable population that had not been supported historically is funded under this budget. The member opposite suggesting that we didn't know — that we have no idea what collaborative care is — well, of course we do.

Collaborative care is not acute care. It's about whole care of individuals and ensuring that we meet them where they are in our society, where they reside in our society, and where they choose to come to us from our society. The shelter provides those collaborative wraparound services — social workers, mental wellness supports, working with the Referred Care Clinic, addictions services, housing, and Housing First — all of these initiatives. We've argued this point in this Legislative Assembly around philosophies of core needs of individuals, moving from acute care to collaborative care.

As I understand it, the engagement was really around the health care model for Yukoners, and *Putting People First* was really an effort for us to get to that place to look at engagement of Yukoners. We've done many point-in-time counts in the city; we spent a lot of time at the shelter — I have, personally — to meet and sit with the individuals who work at this facility and the individuals who live there.

This initiative, I guess, is defined by way of engagement from our communities through our Safe at Home initiatives, elaboration on our by-name list, the fact that we're moving from social services to housing with social supports, the efforts around the philosophy of Housing First — those are things we want to talk about in the Legislative Assembly. We want to talk about what this \$2.546 million was spent on. It was spent on core needs of Yukoners.

I know that it's not something that we want to do again or make a practice of. It's certainly not. We recognize that we have gone overbudget, and the objective is to come back to Yukoners and explain to Yukoners why we went overbudget, in what specific areas we went over in, and then quantify for them why that was — and to look at continuing care, licensed child care, Yukon Hospital Corporation, environmental health services, Yukon communicable diseases, our emergency operations centre, the office of the chief medical officer of health — speaking to each one of our Yukon families, with the children whom we have repatriated back to them through our extended family care agreements — they want to know that we have the resources in the budget to support them rather than apprehending the children and locking them up and taking them away. We don't want to be in the situation where our First Nation community, like Kwanlin Dün, early on — a few years ago — when they essentially locked out social workers.

That is no longer happening. Through our extended family care agreements, the funding was not available to support the communities, to bring the children back. We were taking the children away. Our group homes were maxed out. We were building more group homes. In fact, we have torn down group homes, and we have moved the children back to their communities. That's what this is about.

If you want to talk about mental wellness and substance use — we oftentimes in the Legislative Assembly speak about the opioid crisis. We talk about the pressures in our communities, we talk about addictions counselling services — the fact that children didn't have counsellors, the fact that we only had two counsellors — well, now we have mental wellness hubs in four communities.

We just went through an inquest. The inquest defined that we bring a collaborative care model to the community of Carmacks. We met with the First Nations, and that is happening. Mental wellness hubs are happening. Counsellors are happening. We have 22 counsellors now, and we want to make sure that we have child counsellors and nurse psychologists. We are ramping that up. We have looked at mental wellness and substance use and the unexpected increase was really because we had to meet the needs of Yukoners. Historically, they didn't have that. They had two positions to go to for all of Yukon. We now have supports, appreciating that

this is sometimes a challenge, because we see that Yukoners need support. Rural Yukon communities need support. They have not seen that support historically. We have had registered nurses in all of our communities — and appreciating that they have a limited scope of practice, we wanted to make sure that we expanded that by bringing in nurse practitioners.

So, when we look at our collaborative care models, we have to look at what is required in the communities. We also look at making sure — as we look at the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter and look at the clientele at the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter — those are community members who come from rural communities as well. It means that we need to work with our communities. We need to look at working with our indigenous communities and with our municipalities and bringing back the community members to their rightful homes and ensuring that we have housing available. Those are some of things that we look at as we provide services and the analysis.

There is an exceptional team there. We now have all of the services that I listed previously there that we didn't have historically. They didn't have any services when we took over. There were no services. There was a Christian organization running the facility, locking the doors and people were not allowed in. It took great effort to acquire the \$13.9-million facility that had no programming attached to it. All of the funding was in the budget to give to a company out of Toronto, by the way, that was running the organization. They had one person on the ground. That is not what Yukoners need.

So, part of what we want to do is make sure — as we look at the overages and we look at what we have learned from this exercise — is the fact that we have seen unexpected growth in specific areas and defining what we have learned from that exercise. How are we going to essentially look at the next fiscal year in addressing some of the overages and try to align that with the core needs so that we don't have to go into this situation? Given that, as my teachers would say: *Nakwhee K'agwaadhat nakwhah vili'* — wherever you go, you're going to be watched, but the thing is, COVID-19 is here. It's going to affect all of us; we have no control over that. The 25 percent might have increased — we don't know — but we have to be adaptive and responsible to whatever comes at us. That's exactly what is happening in the specific submission today. It's really about making sure that we address the needs of Yukoners.

The number of inpatient days billed for Yukoners being treated in BC hospitals — we have no control over that. \$1.3 million — it might be a bit more; it might be a bit less. What I said I would do is — we broke it down into the categories of the areas we know where the money went, and we justified why the expenditures happened. Why were the funds spent on the chief medical officer of health? Why were they spent on family services? Why were they spent on the Hospital Corporation? Because they demonstrated that they needed the resources.

Of course, we know that it's not something where we're going to say, "Sorry, you can't have the money; you can't have the resources to deliver the essential services" or "Sorry, family member, we can't fund you, because we're going to go over."

That's absolutely not the objective. The objective is to ensure that we have the resources to fund the core essential needs of Yukoners and that, as they come in the door and they ask for the support, that we provide that to them.

Now, suggesting that we're not providing the information and details — I can assure Yukoners that we are doing that. We're doing that every day. I've done that; the Premier has done that. Suggesting that we're not accountable and that the numbers are not there — well, I can tell Yukoners — and I said I would put it on the table, and I will be happy to do that as quickly as we can. I have no control over that, but I've advised the members from my department to get that turned around as quickly as possible, so we will work on getting that.

**Mr. Hassard:** The minister went on quite a lengthy speech about things that she wanted to talk about. It's kind of interesting, because I thought this was the time when we came to get answers. That is certainly what the Premier has led us to believe. I am starting to wonder who is out of touch here.

The minister talked about how she has nothing to hide. She isn't hiding anything from Yukoners. She has mentioned that a few times. I guess Yukoners don't know that. We don't know it here in the Legislature, because the question was very simple: When can we expect to see those numbers tabled in the Legislature? We know that there is an election coming sometime, so it's pretty easy for someone to say, "Yes, we will get that to you." Then the pressure is pretty much off once we walk out the doors here because we don't know if we will be back in this Legislature again after this Sitting. Maybe the minister knows that and maybe, Mr. Chair, you know that yourself, but I certainly don't know that.

It is important that we get this information for Yukoners. We were told that this is the place where we would get that information. We have been very patient in asking the minister for that information. She has continued to repeat talking points about everything under the sun. She seems to be quite infatuated with the Member for Lake Laberge because we hear a lot about what he has to say, but we don't, in fact, hear when we are going to see the numbers that we are asking to see.

Again, Mr. Chair, is the minister able to tell us — give us some sort of timeline — when we will see those numbers?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** I would like to thank the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin for his comments. I think that what I have indicated was to provide a summary for Yukoners on what the budget was spent on. It's not an indication that I'm just speaking and wasting time. They asked for a breakdown, and I've given the breakdown. I said I would table the documents, and I will do that. The Member for Takhini-Kopper King asked for that, and I said I would provide it. I will do that.

I'm working with the department right now to get the fine details of the exact numbers. What I have, and I have read into the record — perhaps the member opposite would like me to read that again. I would be happy to do that. As I understand it, the team indicated that they can pull those together for tabling by next week. Early next week, that will come. They are working on the documents. Was it ready today? Probably it wasn't, but I can certainly ensure that we get the numbers.

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

**Chair:** Ms. Frost has the floor.

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** I do want to again acknowledge the department for doing a great job during the pandemic to get us the information as quickly as they can. I want to say to the floor of the Legislative Assembly that I indicated to the Member for Takhini-Kopper King that I would get her the information. That was last week. We are working on that. We were hoping to have that today; it's not here. It will get here by Monday of next week.

Now, the Member for Watson Lake indicated that she wanted access to all that information. I would be happy to do that. I will table that information. I don't know what more I can offer to the member. Perhaps he wants me to read into the record again the breakdown of the \$1.3 million, \$1.4 million, and \$2.6 million and the categories it was broken down into in terms of the expenditures, but I do believe that we already have that document so I'm not sure what else to offer the member opposite.

**Mr. Hassard:** I think the thing that the minister doesn't understand here is that the government dictates the business of the day in this Legislature. The government has brought forward Health and Social Services for debate. The government wants us to pass this supplementary budget. So we're supposed to pass a supplementary budget without receiving all of the information from the department. If the department was going to have the information ready by next week, then why did the government not hold off on bringing the department forward with this supplementary budget until the department was in fact ready? That's not fair to the department officials to have to come here to the Legislature to try to help the minister defend the supplementary budget and the funds, the monies, that they have listed in that budget when they haven't been able to get all of the work done that needs to be done.

The minister says that she doesn't know what else to tell me here in the Legislature. I guess I am not sure what else to ask, Mr. Chair. If the government brings this forward as their business of the day but is unable to provide the Legislature with the answers to our questions, then I guess my question to the minister is: How are we supposed to, in good faith, pass this supplementary budget or allow this budget to carry on without the information that we are asking for?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** Again, I want to thank the department because the staff are here to provide support to respond to the questions.

With respect to the assessment that we have provided, we are, of course, working on getting the detailed numbers. There are some overages on some specific areas that we are getting back the detailed information on. We do know for a fact that we are currently at \$5.246 million. There is a possibility that we will adjust that according to what is here. We will account for that within the existing appropriation — with the existing budget.

What we have adjusted, according to the breakdown, is what we receive. The department is doing its utmost — and I can assure the member opposite that I can respond to the questions that he has — and with respect to the specific numbers of breaking it down into the exact breakdown. What I

understand the department did is that they took the numbers and rounded them up to even them out for discussions here today, with the objective that they would bring the exact, specific breakdown on each of these areas, recognizing that the Department of Health and Social Services is under immense pressure right now. We are in the middle of a crisis. We are managing the change from the COVID pressures and, at the same time, we have to deal with the pressures that we are seeing right now.

So, it's not in any way to suggest that the department is not doing a good job. The department is doing an exceptional job, and we are working with the department to get the numbers to the table. I want to just say that this is where we are, Mr. Chair. We have rounded the numbers up for the purpose of today. We have broken it down into the specific categories and into the sections and given the numbers as they have been presented. I will provide that to the Legislative Assembly on Monday of next week.

**Mr. Hassard:** It's certainly frustrating. We all come to the Legislature every day. We have been told a couple of times by members opposite that we, as opposition, need to come to work prepared and we need to be providing accurate information to all of our constituents in the Yukon. Here's a perfect example of the government bringing forward a department for debate without having the work done first.

This is year-end of March 31. This isn't something that happened yesterday. The pandemic began in March, so this excuse that the minister says, "We're dealing with a pandemic." Yes, we've all been dealing with the pandemic. This money was supposedly spent by March 31. So we are asking the questions.

The government wants us to pass the supplementary budget, but they cannot provide us with an accurate breakdown of the money spent. My question again to the minister is: How can she expect us, in good faith — in good conscience — to pass this supplementary budget without the information being provided to us?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** What I presented today in the Legislative Assembly was the breakdown in the specific areas. The difference of what the member opposite is asking was just around one percent. I will provide that on Monday, so it is the difference.

The difference is categorized. There are no other expenditures outside of this or other categories. It's all classified as defined in these specific areas. You will see some minor fluctuation within about 1.0 to 1.4 percent. I can provide that to the member opposite on Monday. The department is currently working on that. That is the difference.

**Mr. Hassard:** It's interesting — a few minutes ago when the minister was talking, she said, well, it was this and that, but we might adjust it. Now she's saying that it's between 1.0 and 1.4 percent and that she will provide that information to the House on Monday. I guess my question is: Would the minister like to stand down on Health and Social Services today? We can move on to Highways and Public Works, and when we come back on Monday, we can get the information that the opposition parties are asking for. Once we have that

information, we can move forward on passing this supplementary budget.

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** I will not stand down. The difference between the \$5.3 million and the \$1.246 million is about 1.4 percent. I said I would provide the details of that breakdown on Monday. That difference is allocated within the specific categories. The department is working really hard right now to get the difference in where the expenditures are. Perhaps it is in insured health services or perhaps it is in the COVID-19 expenditures. They will get that information to us. I would be happy to debate the specific areas about where the funds were spent. I would be happy to have further debate on those specific areas.

Perhaps the member opposite would like to ask me about environmental health services, the Yukon Hospital Corporation, or the extended family care agreements. Those are the areas in which we have spent the resources. The adjustment of the difference is what will be brought to the floor on Monday.

**Mr. Hassard:** It is absolutely mind-blowing that the government would want us to pass this supplementary budget and bring a department forward that doesn't have the information that is required and is needed.

I certainly appreciate the hard work that the department is doing. I am in no way, shape, or form blaming the department for this. I am simply amazed that the government would bring this forward as the work for the day without having all the information, Mr. Chair. I honestly don't know what to say.

I'm going to move on for a few minutes and let my mind process that a little bit. But, Mr. Chair, today in Question Period, the Minister of Highways and Public Works said that Highways and Public Works had worked with the Department of Health and Social Services on an analysis on Macaulay Lodge that was completed this spring — that's money from the 2019 budget.

Is it possible to get an update on that and how much money was spent on that analysis and if there was any further information other than what was provided by the Minister of Highways and Public Works in Question Period today?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** With respect to Macaulay Lodge, as responded to today by the Minister of Highways and Public Works, the analysis for Macaulay Lodge is currently being conducted and also looking at the — Highways and Public Works will complete a building assessment. That's ongoing. They were compiling that information. I would be happy to work with the Minister of Highways and Public Works to get that information to the Legislative Assembly; I indicated that. Perhaps he indicated, in responding appropriately, that he would be working on the assessments on that property.

**Mr. Hassard:** I'm not sure if there's some confusion there between the ministers or not, but the Minister responsible for Highways and Public Works said in Question Period that he had worked with the Minister responsible for Health and Social Services on an analysis on Macaulay Lodge that was completed in the spring.

Could the minister confirm if this analysis was actually completed, or has it yet to be completed, as she seemed to be leading to in her previous answer?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** I was just conferring with the Minister responsible for Highways and Public Works. Noting for the record that Macaulay Lodge was a facility that was managed by Health and Social Services — and the collaboration of the Department of Health and Social Services with Highways and Public Works was really around whether or not that facility is usable or not. The analysis that Highways and Public Works is completing on the building condition — I will leave that to the minister responsible.

The department has worked with Highways and Public Works to determine whether or not Health and Social Services can still acquire or use that facility. The answer is no, given that it's not in a state of usage.

**Mr. Hassard:** So, was the statement that the Minister of Highways and Public Works made in Question Period with regard to the fact that Highways and Public Works was working with Health and Social Services to do this analysis — was that statement maybe not entirely correct?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** I will say that the Department of Health and Social Services worked with Highways and Public Works to determine whether or not Health and Social Services can still use the facility. The determination was no, so now the property reverts to Highways and Public Works. They are responsible for the facility. It was really just some early indication on whether or not the lodge could be used now or in the future, and the answer is no.

**Mr. Hassard:** I'm not very clear on that answer either — but anyway, moving on.

With regard to the health and wellness centre in Old Crow, it was in the 2019-20 five-year capital concept. I am wondering if the minister could give us an update on where the government is and how much money has been spent on that project as well.

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** I can say that we are in the planning process — early indication around wellness centres across the Yukon. Some of the older centres are being replaced, and Old Crow is one of the centres that is required to be replaced. That is not in this appropriation request; it is in the mains. We would be happy to talk about that if that is where the member wants to go. I can certainly talk about the health centre and the requirement there and give more details, but specifically for the budget today, I would be happy to respond further — but the response around the Old Crow health centre, that is in the budget for future years.

**Chair:** 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.

The matter before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 15, Department of Health and Social Services, in Bill No. 204, entitled *Fourth Appropriation Act 2019-20*.

Is there any further general debate?

**Mr. Hassard:** It's unfortunate that we've been put in this situation — all of us here in the Legislature, as well as the department.

As I said before, the government has made the comment many times about coming to work prepared and providing accurate information to Yukoners. I don't think it's appropriate at all that the government could possibly expect us to pass this supplementary budget without all of the information. I know that the minister thinks that the information we're asking for isn't that important. It's a small amount. According to her, it's no big deal; we'll get this information on Monday.

Mr. Chair, I have asked the minister if she would consider standing down so that we could come back to Health and Social Services next week. We could continue on the debate or possibly not even have to have any debate, once we have the information that we're requesting. We can very easily move on to Highways and Public Works. I know the officials are here, ready and willing to debate Highways and Public Works, so I guess I will make that offer once again to the minister: Would she be amenable to standing down on Health and Social Services — and allowing us to move forward with Highways and Public Works — until next week?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** I said before, and I'll say it again, that I'm not going to stand down. I think the purpose of the debate today is to talk about the budget. As I understand it from the department — and the member opposite would know — generally, as you do the presentation, you adjust the numbers to round it off. The difference in the budget is \$74,000.

Overall, the budget for Health and Social Services is the biggest budget in all of government. The member opposite would know — \$442 million. Of that \$442 million, we went over by \$5.246 million. We've adjusted that, and we presented the details of how that was spent.

There is a \$74,000 difference. I said I would bring that difference back on Monday. I'm still going to do that, with respect to the specific areas, but the difference is really — and no disrespect whatsoever — in the grand scheme — and if you look at the overall budget and take \$74,000 off of a \$444-million budget — the department rounded it up for presentation purposes — what I understand is common practice. I am not a forensic auditor — I'm sure the member opposite isn't a forensic auditor, either — but the auditors in the department, the financial accountants who are certified, have indicated that this is general practice and is what they do.

I would be happy to go back, and they have indicated that they will adjust the \$74,000 for the record and bring that specific number back to the table on Monday, so I will not stand down.

**Mr. Hassard:** We certainly look forward to seeing that breakdown of that \$74,000. Before the break, we were at somewhere between one percent and 1.4 percent. Now we actually have a number. Who knows, by the end of the day, we might actually have that breakdown.

Just as a courtesy, I would let the officials from Highways and Public Works know that we certainly are not interested in passing this supplementary budget today. Those officials are here waiting to get into Highways and Public Works. We will

not be getting into Highways and Public Works; I can assure them of that. We will continue to debate Health and Social Services for the rest of the day. Maybe next week we will have all of the information and we can carry on with the supplementary budget. As I said, this is just a heads-up to those officials who are on standby that they need not be.

The government has indicated that the Meditech system used by health care professionals was going to be upgraded. I am wondering if the minister can give us an update on this upgrade of the Meditech system.

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** I will not respond to the question because it is not specific to the appropriation. If the member opposite wants to speak about the appropriation, I would be happy to speak about the specifics of the program area. If he wants to talk about Meditech, I don't see that as part of the submission, so I will not respond.

**Mr. Cathers:** It has really been quite interesting this Sitting during debate on this supplementary estimate. The Premier has tried to invent new rules of debate restricting the matters that members can ask about on the supplementary estimates. Well, we hear him laughing off-mic. It is small wonder, considering this government waited 201 days before bringing the topic of whether or not to declare a state of emergency here to the Legislative Assembly after they had implemented and passed dozens of orders — which had a sweeping impact on people's lives — without democratic oversight. The Premier considers it a laughing matter. Yukoners don't, and we don't.

Now, Mr. Chair, as you and members will recall — if the Premier has any interest in the facts about the traditions in this Legislative Assembly — the practice has been in debate — and for any of his colleagues who are buying into these new rules restricting debate that the Premier invented — that, during any budget bill, it is typical, common, and perfectly within the procedural rules of this Legislative Assembly to ask general questions about the department and its activity.

It is not limited, as the Premier and his ministers would have Yukoners believe, to only talk about new appropriations. It is perfectly reasonable — and in the past, ministers would typically answer questions about activities within their departments. Those include statistical questions, program questions, and policy questions. That is part of what being a minister entails. You need to be prepared to face the Legislative Assembly, and you need to be prepared to answer questions about the activities for which you are responsible.

Now, unfortunately, we have seen a situation where, as members will recall, I asked the Premier a number of questions during general debate on this supplementary budget, and the Premier repeatedly dismissed those questions about departments as being too detailed. He assured us that ministers would answer those questions yet, just as I predicted during debate with the Premier, when it actually comes down to getting into those details, the minister will tell us that they are not prepared to answer the question or that we shouldn't be asking it.

Ultimately, all of the questions that I have asked — all of the questions that my colleague, our Health and Social Services

critic and the Leader of the Official Opposition, have asked — relate to the public's money. It is the public's business what this Liberal government chooses to do with the public's money. They don't get to invent new rules of debate and refuse to answer opposition questions about their activities.

I think the Premier seems to be saying off-mic that, yes, they do. Well, they can invent new rules all they want —

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

### Point of order

**Chair:** Mr. Silver, on a point of order.

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** The member opposite can say whatever he wants, but we are over here having a conversation. It has nothing to do with the diatribe that we are hearing from the member opposite.

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

**Mr. Cathers:** On the point of order, the Premier didn't cite a standing order. He did use a word that has been ruled out of order in the past, and I am not sure how he has come to the conclusion that it is a point of order. It simply seems to be a case of the Premier being overly sensitive to legitimate criticism.

### Chair's ruling

**Chair:** For the time being, I'll characterize this as a dispute among members.

Member for Lake Laberge, please.

**Mr. Cathers:** So, I do point out that for anyone who is listening — when they hear the criticism from my colleagues and I about the manner in which the government is choosing to refuse to answer questions, it is in part because this is a significant departure from past practice.

If ministers are curious or if people listening are curious, they can look back to the time when I was Minister of Health and Social Services or any of a number of departments that I have been minister for and see the type of questions that were asked and the wide range of responses that we provided in response to those questions.

We unfortunately see again this situation where some of these questions have been asked by me, some have been asked by my colleagues, and some of it we have all asked. The response from the Premier and the response from his ministers is to tell us why we either shouldn't be asking the question or why they don't have to provide that information.

The \$5.2-million cost overrun in this budget that we're discussing this afternoon in Health and Social Services was not only illegal spending because it violated the *Financial Administration Act*, but in fact it's the tip of the iceberg — is our understanding — in terms of increased spending within the Department of Health and Social Services.

We understand that there has been money moved to cover cost overruns in a number of areas. We asked a number of questions about it. We asked about lapses that we should have seen in other departments. Unfortunately, the government's response, in refusing to answer the questions, certainly increases our suspicions and the suspicions of Yukoners who

have contacted us with concerns about the activities of this department and of the government as a whole.

When government will not provide information about where they spent the public's money and it tries to use procedural obfuscation and delays to avoid providing an answer — including claiming that, while they would like us to pass the supplementary budget this afternoon, the minister said that she'll provide information about it on Monday and refused to stand down and get a briefing and to get that additional information to provide to this House — Mr. Chair, whatever insults the government may wish to direct in return, whatever dismissive rhetoric or talking points they may choose to employ, the litmus test that we believe Yukoners will apply to this is very simple: Is the question about something that the public has a right to know? If it is, the litmus test they will apply is: Did the government answer the question, or did they refuse to answer?

If they refuse to answer the question that we will ask — and indeed, the members will find that Yukon citizens will ask on the doorstep — is: What were you hiding? Why wouldn't you provide that financial information to Yukoners?

I'm going to touch on a few of the things that we asked previously. I'm also going to ask about program changes that occurred in the 2019-20 fiscal year — which, despite what the Premier has apparently told his ministers to say, are not off limits during debate. They are perfectly legitimate items for discussion.

Again, touching on one of the items raised by my colleague, the Official Opposition critic for Health and Social Services, during debate — my colleague asked about the \$5.2 million cost overrun and noted that since the COVID-19 pandemic came into play in late March — which is the very tail end of this reporting period — it leaves us wondering what other things changed. What changed that contributed to the cost overruns that could not be foreseen? Again, that was a question that my colleague asked yesterday.

We have heard concerns. We mentioned in the past some of the things that we have heard from Yukoners about government spending. Also, previously, when I was in debate with the Premier, I asked him some questions — including about items that were in the budget highlights for the 2019-20 year, about projects the government initially bragged about — but the Premier bizarrely would not provide me with a status update on what was occurring in those areas. This is unfortunate.

Again, quoting from the government's own documents, we note that in 2019-20, the Health and Social Services portion of the overall operation and maintenance budget for the government was 35 percent of O&M funding. The budget for 2019-20 was \$1.2 billion. For the largest overall increase, again, according to the document that we were handed at the budget briefing a year and a half ago, Health and Social Services made up 35 percent of that total. Despite being 35 percent of O&M spending, the government used every procedural trick that it could in the spring of 2019-20 to avoid us getting the opportunity to ask questions about two of the biggest departments in government — one of them being



Health and Social Services and the other being Education — other than for a very small fragment of the total time. In fact, they wasted more time on useless ministerial statements than we spent debating 35 percent of the budget of the Yukon Territory.

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

### Point of order

**Chair:** The Hon. Mr. Mostyn, on a point of order.

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I am going to cite Standing Order 19(b) about speaking on a matter other than the matter before the House right now.

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

**Mr. Cathers:** This is the second day in a row that it seems that maybe the speaker on the Minister of Highways and Public Works' desk is not working. He is clearly not hearing what members are saying. I was directly talking about the budget for 2019-20 and the supplementary. The fact that the minister didn't get the connection is (a) clearly not a point of order and (b) quite frankly bizarre that he didn't get the connection.

### Chair's ruling

**Chair:** I tend to agree with part (a) of Mr. Cathers' submission.

You can continue, Mr. Cathers.

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

My point in talking about the supplementary estimate is that one of the challenges for us as opposition — and without putting words in the Third Party's mouth, I would assume that there is a challenge for them — is that in the absence of detailed information about the matters that we are discussing, it leaves many unanswered questions.

That does not mean that we know that the spending was inappropriate or went for purposes other than that to which we were originally told it would go — but in the absence of information demonstrating what it went for, we are left with questions in this supplementary budget. Since it is dealing with the 2019-20 fiscal year, this is our opportunity to ask about whether government followed through on the spending commitments that it made in the spring of 2019-20 regarding this, and whether the government — and the additional amounts that were added to it through the supplementary estimates throughout the year.

In the spring of 2019-20, we also had only 4.4 percent of the total time in the Assembly dedicated to this department and Education which, in total, comprise some 50 percent of O&M spending, according to the government.

I'm going to touch on another area that is an item within this budget that we're left asking and wondering about — what the government's results were in terms of completion. We know that, going back to the spring of 2018 in talking about the mental wellness hubs and the positions that government had created in the communities, the minister stated at the time that they had staffed seven out of 11 of those positions. We know that, in the comprehensive health review report that has just

been issued, one of the issues highlighted by the panel is problems with recruitment and gaps in those mental wellness hubs.

Could the minister please tell us how many mental wellness positions were in place in communities at the end of the 2019-20 fiscal year and how many of those positions were vacant, as well as how many of those positions during the fiscal year were vacant at some point?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** The question from the member has nothing to do with the supplementary, so I'm not sure what his objective is here. He went on ad nauseum about a number of things, and I'm trying to pin down what he's asking me. He wants to know numbers overall, FTEs, specifically related to the supplementary — is that the purpose of the question? Maybe he can help us to better understand what he's asking for that is specifically related to the supplementary before us.

**Mr. Cathers:** As I mentioned to the minister and to the Premier, I reminded them of the fact that, despite the Premier's attempt at writing new debate rules, in fact, on budget bills, members have the opportunity to ask questions about the department's spending, about policy issues, about program areas, and so on. That is the primary opportunity that we have and that the Third Party has to ask those questions during any given year.

For the Premier and his ministers to stand and dismiss those questions and refuse to answer is disappointing, to say the least. It is very telling in their attitude toward the public — that casual, autocratic attitude that they have where they feel that they don't need to answer questions if they don't want to answer the questions. Ultimately, this is the public's money. It is the public's business.

I asked the minister a question about one of their initiatives that they have touted frequently. The minister herself referred to the mental wellness hubs earlier today. The Premier kept bringing up the mental wellness hubs himself during debate, and so did the minister — as my colleague, the Member for Kluane, reminded me — but when we ask about it, the response basically boils down to suggesting that the topic is off limits and they don't want to answer it.

Mr. Chair, as any Yukoner knows, there is a big difference between government not being able to answer the question and simply refusing to because they don't want to. So, in the absence of the minister being willing to tell us how many of those mental wellness positions were actually staffed in the 2019-20 fiscal year, it leaves us assuming that the truth must be embarrassing for the government, because otherwise she could provide the information, demonstrating that they have done what they said they would. But, in fact, it looks like they issued the announcement, they talked about it repeatedly in their talking points, but we know, according to their own panel — their own hand-picked panel on health review came back and said that there are gaps in those rural positions and that it continues to be a problem.

Mr. Chair, as you know, at the tail end of this fiscal year that we are currently debating and into the current fiscal year that we are now in, it contained the start of the pandemic and a continuation of it. We know that, during that time period, it has

been tough on the mental health of a lot of Canadians, including Yukoners. We have seen national information suggesting that over half of Canadians are feeling more negative about life during the pandemic and have had some mental health difficulties during that time. Pardon me — I think that the exact phrasing was that their mental health has declined during the pandemic.

The question of what government has actually done in terms of these mental wellness positions versus what they said they would do is a very relevant one. It's also the public's business.

I'll give the minister an opportunity again. Will she provide an answer to that question, or is she going to refuse to provide that information yet again?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** I am happy to stand in the Legislative Assembly to inform Yukoners that this government is doing — well, I would say — a lot better than the previous government in terms of mental wellness supports across the Yukon.

The member opposite is asking for specific numbers on how many staff we have in mental wellness supports. Exactly what they're asking — they had two, Mr. Chair — two supports — no counselling supports in our communities for social workers, no child psychologists — no supports.

The budget before us today — with respect to the supplementary before us, I would be happy to speak to that. The mental wellness supports and services across the Yukon expanded significantly. The high-quality, accessible, and consistent services and the access to services are there. We have four hubs, and the hubs were established to provide regional supports to our communities. We have expanded the scope of services to provide our staff the opportunity to provide counselling to adults, children, youth, and families — mental wellness and substance use counsellors, relationship counselling, trauma counselling, and community supports and outreach.

The member opposite refers to COVID-19. Well, COVID-19 has posed some significant challenges, as we know and as Yukoners know, so, of course, the scope of practice had to change. Like everything else that we were doing, our world shifted significantly to a place where we had to look at virtual supports and virtual care, yet these very critical and essential services were required in our communities — associating the fact that we have children who are perhaps going through a very difficult time. We have families who are challenged and compromised as a result of COVID. The requirement to meet the demand on the ground and still provide the essential critical support meant that we had to put some adjustments in place.

The mental wellness support unit — in terms of improving services but also adapting services to ensure that we have Naloxone training and Naloxone kits in all of our communities, knowing that we had an increase — a spike — in opioid overdoses. We also know that the complexities of mental wellness are clearly compromised in our communities right now during this time. Individuals are compromised, their immunity is compromised, and their mental wellness is compromised. Currently, the Yukon has a great system. We have a great system in place. We have 22 employees providing

supports in all of our communities, working very closely with the Department of Education to ensure that we have wraparound supports for children and families.

As part of our extended family care agreements, Mr. Chair, that meant that we had to provide mental wellness supports for those families — families that were neglected, families that were rejected and not supported historically. The whole business around reconciliation and repatriation that the previous government neglected is not acceptable. We provided supports with mental wellness units in all of our communities. We are expanding our home support program with our First Nation partners. We know that the First Nations have devolved some authority through their arrangements with the federal government. We don't leave it there. We have expanded that. We are partnering with them. We are partnering with our communities through our indigenous child services initiatives. We are working directly with our health commission table.

The department is doing a really great job. I want to say that our work to enhance mental wellness and substance use services in Yukon aligns very well with the efforts about putting people first. This means that Yukoners had input into that. They directed that we look at improvements and look at the determinants of health and look at the outcomes and look at improving social outcomes for the territory.

The budget overall for Health and Social Services is \$442,080,000. The difference in the budget for the supplementary is \$74,000. As I understand it, for Public Accounts, that is usually rolled up and we don't see the specifics. I said that I would bring the difference of the \$74,000 on Monday. I would be happy to do that for the record.

With respect to mental wellness counselling — as we do with everything else in Health and Social Services — it's a massive department — and we do have vacancies. The vacancies that we do have, we work very hard to fill those as quickly as we can.

We do that in collaboration with our Public Service Commissioner and the staff at Health and Social Services. We have to look at the complement we have within Health and Social Services so that we can look at some placements throughout so that we have some — the numbers that we have on the staff who cover off some of the vacancies. We do use locum — we do locum positions like we do locum psychologists; we move them around where there's a vacancy.

I know for a fact that we have a shortage in my own community, and we moved in a temporary support. The staff are really great that way, in terms of service delivery, ensuring that we fill the process through itinerant support. We do have casual and temporary positions as well to cover these vacancies.

I want to just assure the member opposite that no Yukon community is ever left without the support. In fact, if required in a situation where we need to bring in an emergency support team, we do that. We do that with our partners. That means we bring in team members from other communities.

So very flexible services — very flexible to say that the supports we have right now and the staff are far and above what we had a few years ago, but they are very willing to work and

are quite flexible, in terms of the outreach services and the supports.

**Mr. Cathers:** I do appreciate that the minister did provide some information, but the specific question I asked relating to how many vacancies there were in the mental health positions that the government created in communities — the minister skated over that question.

I do have to remind her that I know that she got those talking points from the Premier, but when the Premier suggests that there were no mental health services or only two positions previously, that is really very disrespectful to the work of Many Rivers, which provided mental health services for almost 50 years in Yukon communities. It's really creating a false equivalency that's misleading to Yukoners. So I would encourage them to actually reflect the work that was previously done by that NGO and by the staff of that NGO, as well as their volunteers — because, for almost 50 years, it was an important part of serving Yukon communities.

I am going to move on to a few other areas that related to the government's performance and follow through on their budget in the 2019-20 fiscal year, including the question of health services in rural communities. Can the minister please tell me: In the 2019-20 fiscal year, how many physicians were under contract to provide doctor services to rural communities? Which communities were covered by those agreements and how many visits would be seen respective to each one of our Yukon communities under that arrangement?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** I am just trying to get a breakdown on the question specific to physicians in our communities as it associates with the supplementary budget before us. I was just trying to determine whether the question was about whether there were resources made available for physicians and how that was covered off. But I understand that was for this fiscal year, so it is not captured in this particular budget — in this particular submission.

For the benefit of responding, I think I want to just say that all of our communities are covered. In fact, we have now expanded the nurse practitioner program. We have a physician in Haines Junction, Watson Lake, and Dawson City who provides support through itinerant services. So, the physicians travel to all of our communities.

**Mr. Cathers:** Yet again, the Premier's new attempt at limiting debate through inventing new rules on budget debate is just not going to fly here in this Legislative Assembly, nor would it have in the past with anyone else in opposition. In fact, if ministers had refused to answer this type of question, the Premier, when he was the Leader of the Third Party, would have been very quick to criticize ministers for not providing an answer to a question about what the public's money was used for in that fiscal year.

The question that I just asked about the gaps in the number of mental health positions that have been created but not filled — and the question that I asked about physicians under contract — is not a “gotcha” question in any way, shape, or form. It's one that relates directly to the health services available to Yukoners. As the minister knows very well, the Minister of Health and Social Services sees the contracts for rural

physicians and will be aware of what occurs. The minister has seen those contracts pass her desk and should be well aware of those services. It's just a question about the health services available to Yukon families across the territory.

I'll ask the minister another simple question which is: In the 2019-20 fiscal year, how many specialists — and I'm talking about physicians — were under contract with the government? What services were covered by those contracts?

Moving on to an area that is slightly different but very directly related and very relevant to the government's spending in the 2019-20 fiscal year, what was the wait-list for continuing care during the 2019-20 fiscal year? I'm talking about what its longest wait-list was, as well as what the shortest wait-list was for continuing care in that fiscal year.

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** Mr. Chair, the members opposite indicated that they're not going to pass the supplementary, but they want to ask specific questions about everything else. They won't ask me specific questions about the supplementary budget. With respect to gaps in mental wellness supports, that's in the supplementary request.

We talk about mental wellness and the supports there. I can speak about that. I can speak about the supports that were required and the adjustments that had to be made.

Rural physician costs — I know that Yukoners are covered very well. We have supports there.

With respect to wait-lists — I would be happy to answer that for the continuing care facilities. That is not in the supplementary request. Perhaps the member opposite wants to deviate his questions and move them back to the supplementary estimates. I would be happy to answer questions there.

**Mr. Cathers:** The Liberals new attempted rules for debate unfortunately don't line up with the real rules for debate in the Assembly. We are going to continue to ask questions about spending. Again, Yukoners will judge this government by its commitments to be more open and transparent and by its refusal to answer questions about the spending of the public's money.

Not one of these questions that I have asked is about something that the minister can't provide or that is privileged information in any way, shape, or form. The minister, just like the Premier before her, is simply choosing to refuse to answer these questions. It not only is not in keeping with the commitments that they made to Yukoners about openness; it is a new level of secrecy here in this territory. It's really baffling why the government won't even talk about the status of some of their own commitments.

I am going to ask about one that I asked the Premier about previously, which is the status of the secure medical unit project at the Whitehorse General Hospital. This is something that, in March 2019, the government was more than happy to talk about in their budget highlights. The minister later in this Assembly actually rose and gave a ministerial statement about the project yet, since then, it has largely been crickets on the progress toward that. Perhaps the minister could tell us what the status of it is, whether the business plan and the operational plan have been approved, and what the estimated capital costs and O&M costs are associated with that facility, and tell us again — even

if she wants to refuse to provide us answers past the end of March 2020 — what the status of that project is.

They put it in the budget highlights. Why will they not tell Yukoners what the status is? Perhaps the minister will, but when I asked the Premier about the project, I didn't really get an answer about it. I'm just checking Hansard from that day, but I believe that this was one of the ones that the Premier referred to as a very specific question and suggested that I should ask about it later when the minister rose.

Talking points that don't answer the question aren't an answer. We're just asking for answers.

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** With respect to the secure medical unit at the hospital and the planning and the budget for that, nowhere in my notes from the department, specific to the supplementary request, does it cover that. At another time and in general debate on our main budget, I would be happy to respond to the question around the secure medical unit and around the medical supports across the Yukon. The member opposite is suggesting perhaps that we're not prepared to do that; we certainly are.

I just want to assure Yukoners that we have historically supported the Yukon Hospital Corporation. We are continuing to support all of our communities to ensure that they are well-supported with mental wellness services and with physician services. We have brought into the Yukon additional supports to ensure that we meet the needs of Yukoners — that we meet the critical, unique needs of Yukoners that were not previously covered.

So, suggesting that we're not doing something — we are doing a lot. We have three pediatricians now in the Yukon. We historically didn't have them. It means that children are now covered. We have three psychiatrists. That wasn't here before. We have two orthopaedic surgeons. We're now looking at potentially a third surgeon. We have a physician in Haines Junction. We have nurse practitioners. We are doing very well despite what the member opposite is trying to paint in terms of a picture of this government not doing the services.

I want to just highlight that, in general debate, with respect to all of the great services that we have provided to Yukoners — everything that we're doing is intended to ensure that Yukoners' needs are met. We have put in place, through our partnership initiatives, through the Housing First, Safe at Home, aging in place, *Putting People First*, *Child and Family Services Act* review, extended family care agreements, and mental wellness hubs — we have just now entered into an agreement with Normandy place. We have the implementation of the aging in place. We are looking at a 47-unit facility.

We have looked at additional supports to ensure that we have housing as a key priority within this government. So, suggesting that we are not doing something is, I believe, absolutely not correct. The fact that we are now working with the Referred Care Clinic — they are working, in fact, with the Sarah Steele facility and the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter, and we are working with our vulnerable population.

We have supports in every one of our communities. We have nurse practitioners, and we have another one coming on very shortly. We are in the process of recruiting that individual. We have just now filled the midwifery coordinator position. We

are in the process of looking at two additional positions this year, and the department is quite progressive in moving forward in ensuring that we meet the needs of Yukoners in all aspects of their life.

**Mr. Cathers:** It is really unfortunate here that the Liberals have chosen to come up with a new set of rules that they have invented that restrict debate from beyond what has been the past practice in decades of the history of this Legislative Assembly where, in fact, the opportunity for members to ask questions about spending and policy matters was during debate on budget bills. Despite what the Premier and his minister would have this House believe, it has never been restricted to the ability to ask questions about new appropriations. It is about policy, spending in general, program activities, and so on and so forth. I have stood here many times in this Assembly and answered questions, as have my colleagues, about these types of matters, but now the Liberal government — which ran on being more open and transparent — is the most secretive government in Yukon history.

When even my colleague, the Leader of the Third Party, is acknowledging that the Yukon Party provided more information with its budgets, even though she had some areas where she would have liked to have seen more information provided, she has identified — and in the interest of quoting her 100-percent accurately — when the Leader of the NDP agrees with us that the information sharing was better under the Yukon Party than it is under this Liberal government, it is a damning testament to this Liberal government's pattern of increased secrecy and refusal to answer questions. Again, not one of the questions that I asked was about something that was privileged or that they couldn't answer.

The secure medical unit project was in the 2019-20 budget. Is the minister telling me that they didn't spend any money on the project? If not, then it is one of the matters covered by the total dollar amount of this budget that they're asking us to approve here after they broke the *Financial Administration Act* and spent money illegally.

The new appropriations, in a budget the size of Health and Social Services, are really just the tip of the iceberg. The real question is, where there were lapses and vacancies, such as the substantial vacancies that appear to exist in the mental health positions — when that money was not spent on personnel, the question becomes: What did it go to? We know that it has covered increased costs. We've heard reports from whistleblowers about what some of those costs may be. Ultimately, the questions that I've this asked this afternoon are not "gotcha" questions. I'm asking for information about the public's money. It is the Liberal government's choice if they choose to stand and refuse to answer those questions.

We've seen, with some of the questions, that we began with the Premier refusing to answer questions. He assured us that the Minister of Health and Social Services would answer questions, and now the Minister of Health and Social Services is refusing to answer some of the same questions.

She wants us to clear this budget even though she hasn't provided information that both the Official Opposition and the Third Party have asked for. She has told us that she'll give us

the information on Monday, and yet they want to clear this budget this afternoon. The \$5.2-million increase, though illegal itself, is just the tip of the iceberg.

We want to know about the other activities — some of them where money was reallocated to but also questions about what the government was doing in important program areas. Another one that I'll ask about is family supports for children with disabilities. I know that this program, if I understand correctly, has been renamed. I would also appreciate it if the minister could tell us what has changed in terms of the scope of the program, including the number of families served and the types of supports being provided. Again, it's a very reasonable question about what the government is or isn't doing for Yukon families and for children with disabilities.

Will the minister answer that question or is that another one she's going to simply refuse to provide us with information on?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** For the record, I would be happy to respond to questions relating to the appropriation before us. The member opposite is speaking about new appropriations specific to the overall budget. I certainly indicated earlier that the budget for Health and Social Services is in excess of \$440 million.

We are here to discuss the appropriation before us, and the questions around disability and services for disability — I would be happy to respond to that during general debate. Right now, I have provided specific details to the floor around how the supplementary requests are broken down. If the member opposite would like me to go into that to refresh his memory with respect to what was covered with the budget, I would be happy to do that. Then I can respond to the questions specific to the appropriation.

**Mr. Cathers:** Well, Mr. Chair, the minister just said that she would be happy to answer those questions in general debate. We are in general debate, and the minister is not answering the questions.

You know, Mr. Chair, it really is unfortunate that this Liberal government is choosing to refuse to answer questions that they have the information to answer — or they can easily get the information to answer those questions. This is the public's money that we are talking about. This is the public's Department of Health and Social Services. Every activity and every dollar spent is the public's business.

We are not asking for the minister to break down every dollar and every cent spent on every item. We are asking for the high-level amounts, including things that the government included in their budget highlights. What is really puzzling is why they won't answer the question — unless they have something to hide. If they have something to hide, we want to know what it is and Yukoners do as well.

I asked about the wait-list for continuing care. Again, we would like that information as to how it was applied during the year. I do have to remind the minister that she indicated that they have consistently supported the Yukon Hospital Corporation. That is not what the facts show. This government had an appalling record at the start of its mandate of not meeting the hospital's needs and, indeed, in some years — according to

the information we were given at budget briefings — they didn't meet the hospital's needs until the next fiscal year.

I am glad that they seem to have corrected that pattern this year — but just like with NGOs, the government can write a talking point saying that they have a great record, but the record is completely different. With NGOs — we know that there have been a number that have had a very frustrating relationship with this government, including during the 2019-20 fiscal year, when there were issues with NGOs and their funding. A number were frozen by the government for a while. They didn't receive the increases they needed, and that included the Yukon Women's Transition Home, among others. The Child Development Centre is another one that was having difficulty — one of our longest serving and very competent, capable NGOs — which had a great deal of difficulty getting the government to support their needs and to recognize them.

Mr. Chair, while we may ask questions that the minister or the Premier feel are tough, they are all questions about the public's money and the spending of the 2019-20 fiscal year. The government seems to have made a choice that they don't want to answer any questions about spending in 2019-20 and they just want to talk about new announcements and going forward, but that's not a reasonable choice on the part of government.

When we're asking about spending the public's money, the question is: Why does the public duly-elected government — a government that ran claiming that they were going to be open and transparent — why won't they just answer the question?

I'll ask another question about the youth mental health workers who were — previously, there was an indication that they would visit Yukon communities to work with residents. Could the minister indicate what the status of that is? What services are they providing?

I would also move on to another area and ask about the orthopaedics program at the hospital. We know that the last time that we saw a supplementary estimate from the government, the changes — based on the period 7 changes — we had the indication that one orthopaedic surgeon had started in 2018 and one in September of 2019. Can the minister tell us what the status was? How many surgeries were performed during the 2019-20 fiscal year?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** There is certainly lots to reflect on with respect to supports and lots to reflect on with respect to historical matters, as the member opposite perhaps wants to remind us about. Certainly, I am fully aware that these are the public's Health and Social Services. This is a department that provides people services to Yukoners. I am fully aware of that. I am aware of my obligations. I am aware of my obligations and I am aware of the mandate that I have been given, and that is to ensure that rural Yukon communities are no longer neglected, that families are no longer neglected, and that we don't apprehend children and burst our group homes at the seams because we apprehend children. We don't have 400 children in care anymore. We have moved those children back to their communities. We have done that to dignify and respect our families.

That is very important — and to just gently remind the member opposite how the previous government treated the communities — how they treated the indigenous communities specifically. I would say that it wasn't very well with respect to Health and Social Services and equity and transparency of supports.

I think that it is important, as we look at supporting our communities — it is vitally important to know that we respect our funding partners. Respecting our funding partners means that we need to look at working with them. Of course, the NGO community is a significant part of how we deliver services. The government can't deliver all of the services, so we rely on our non-governmental organizations to deliver on those services for us. We do that through direct transfer payments and the transfer payment agreements define the scope of service delivery and some of the models that we need to look toward. Of course, there have to be checks and balances and reviews as we go — so we did that, and we continue to do that with our funding partners. Of course, they are obligated to participate in that process because those are also public funds.

As we look at the supports that we provide to our NGO communities and our partners — they have received increases — at least the NGOs that we are responsible for have. The member opposite obviously knows a bit about NGOs because he has raised it a number of times. There are well over 700 NGOs across the Yukon, and 30 of those fall within Health and Social Services. We have reviewed and we are working with our partners to ensure that we align with the needs of our communities very succinctly in terms of ensuring that we provide supports to our care centres. There is a requirement for us to do that, as we have done through our coordination and through our supplementary request, and the supplementary request speaks about health services in many aspects. Yukoners are more interested in programs and services delivered in their communities on their doorsteps. Rather than having multiple barriers in front of them, we want to see those barriers removed and we want to see quick access to services.

Amidst COVID-19, we had to make some quick adjustments. We had to make adjustments with our partners. That means we had to work with our health centres. We had to work with the chief medical officer of health. We also had to work very closely with our indigenous communities and our municipalities to align with their essential core needs so that we can protect Yukoners. That is what this supplementary request is really about. It's about ensuring that the Emergency Coordination Centre was set up and responsive so that we can deliver appropriate and succinct messaging to Yukoners in terms of how we respond and where the services are. Where do I go? What about contact tracing? How do we protect the lives of Yukoners? That is still very much active and it will be so for some time. That is what this supplementary request is about.

It's about ensuring that the extended family care agreements are active now and into the future. It's not about how we can put all of the funding into our group homes, build more group homes, and put our children in these centres, removing them from their families and removing them from their communities.

In terms of virtual care and essential care during times of extreme challenges, it's important that we look at alternatives. Adapting on the move to ensure virtual care was readily available on the ground for physicians and for nurses — that the physicians can still correspond and collaborate with their patients — it is what we've learned from this exercise and the significance of the IHealth initiative and virtual care and what it means about a virtual platform. Have we learned something from this exercise that will lead us into long-term planning and initiatives for the department in collaboration with Highways and Public Works? We've learned a lot about what it means to be responsive and adaptive in a very short time.

That allows us to now focus more on expediting the services — expediting the services to our communities. As we know, that was very difficult, especially in my community of Old Crow. Connectivity is not the best; it's a little slow.

The fact that we couldn't bring patients in and out of the hospital without some measures in place — so we had to work with the community health centres. That's part of this supplementary request. The member opposite is suggesting that perhaps we're not being forthright in terms of sharing and answering questions. I said that I would answer or respond to the questions, and I'm prepared to do that — specific to the supplementary request.

The member opposite wants to go all over the place. I would be happy to respond to that at the appropriate time. As we're standing here in the Legislative Assembly to speak about the supports that we provided during this time, why we went over the appropriation, and why we spent more resources on licensed childcare centres to keep them open so essential workers could get to work so that we can help the health professionals at work providing services to our Yukoners — suggesting that we're not serious about this — of course we are. I am serious about this. I know that the Department of Health and Social Services is critical, it's essential, and it provides essential services to Yukoners.

Now, the emergency shelter — we've spoken a lot about that. The member opposite obviously is not supportive of that centre because he's made some pretty inappropriate comments about the centre, and I think that's very disrespectful for the clientele and the staff. I think that the centre is necessary. It is what it is. Where it was built was not anything that I had control over or that this government had control over. The previous government built this building where it's situated, and we had to adapt and try to be responsive. Is it ideal? It isn't ideal. It's impacting the businesses, it's impacting the clientele, and it's not built appropriately for its intended purpose.

During COVID-19, we realized that very quickly. All of a sudden, we had 80 people in the facility, but the facility is only built to accommodate 25 beds for a shelter, so we had to make adjustments very quickly to ensure that we followed the "safe six" practices, as recommended by Dr. Hanley. That meant that we had to bring in alternative adjustments and services.

Was that perfect? No, it wasn't perfect, but we have learned something from that exercise. We have learned that the building, as it was built by the Yukon Party government with the Salvation Army, was not built appropriately to meet the

needs of that clientele and that group of individuals who need critical and essential services.

To stand here and lecture us about not delivering on services is not acceptable. I do believe that every Yukoner — no matter where they reside, no matter their ethnicity, no matter their gender — requires support by Health and Social Services. Individuals who are required to travel outside of the Yukon for intense medical treatment sometimes require an escort. We have to be able to accommodate that.

Right now, during COVID-19, we have seen immense pressures everywhere, bursting at the seams, trying to get services to the hospitals in the south where they are also intensely challenged by COVID-19 and hospital beds are maxed out, but they're still required to provide services through a mutual agreement with the Government of Yukon.

I want to just say: Did we learn something from that? We learned a lot from that exercise. We learned that we couldn't rely on one specific resource centre, and using the St. Paul's facility as the only centre or the cancer clinic in BC — we had to look at alternatives. That means we now need to look at other service centres to better align with service needs.

Will that impact and affect the budget in the future? We'll see services reducing because we have brought more supports here, but we will also see the cost reducing because we now have better service delivery mechanisms.

We can go to Prince George. We can go to the Okanagan for supports. Some of these have already been negotiated and agreed upon. We have Victoria also. We have the Air North services that go on a daily basis, and we now have alternative routes. Have we learned anything from this exercise of going through the supplementary process? I have learned a lot, the department has certainly learned a lot, and this government has learned a lot about what we can do differently during these difficult times, but we also recognize that the budget was never there to support the extended families or the grandmothers and grandfathers who take care of their children. Why? Because they took the children away. They never had an opportunity to transition the children, repatriate, put them back into their communities, and make them whole again. That never happened.

To stand here and suggest that I am not prepared to respond to the questions and suggest that I am not respecting a process — I am absolutely respecting all Yukoners. I am respecting the process that has been established for us — and the fact that we, as a government, have taken that to the next level. The next level is that we are listening to Yukoners, and we are not in litigation to get our collaborated approaches enhanced or supported. We are communicating very respectfully with our communities to better meet their needs. That means that Watson Lake will get a shelter. It means that we will look at communities that are marginalized — those that haven't been supported. Families will be supported.

Mr. Chair, I could continue, but I understand that we are near the end of the day and move that you report progress.

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

*Motion agreed to*

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

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

*Motion agreed to*

*Speaker resumes the Chair*

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

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

### Chair's report

**Mr. Hutton:** Mr. Chair, Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 204, entitled *Fourth Appropriation Act 2019-20*, 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.

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** 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. on Monday.

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

### The following sessional papers were tabled October 15, 2020:

34-3-48

*Cannabis Yukon Annual report — April 1, 2019 to March 31, 2020* (Streicker)

34-3-49

*Yukon Development Corporation 2019 Annual Report* (Pillai)

34-3-50

*Yukon Energy 2019 annual report* (Pillai)