

**Whitehorse, Yukon****Thursday, December 7, 2006 -- 1:00 p.m.**

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

*Prayers*

**DAILY ROUTINE**

**Speaker:** We will proceed with the Order Paper. Are there any tributes?

**TRIBUTES****In recognition of International Human Rights Day**

**Hon. Ms. Horne:** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to International Human Rights Day. This day is celebrated on December 10 of every year. The theme of Human Rights Day 2006 is "Fighting poverty: a matter of obligation, not charity." In setting this theme, the United Nations has issued a challenge to each of us. It reminds us that human rights play a critical role in people becoming fully contributing members of society.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Louise Arbour, a fellow Canadian, has spoken eloquently about the importance of economic resources to promoting and defending human rights.

Commissioner Arbour commented that poverty is both a cause and a product of human rights violations. People whose rights are denied are more likely to be poor. Generally they find it harder or impossible to participate in the labour market and have little or no access to basic services and resources. As a result, they cannot enjoy their rights to education, health and housing simply because they cannot afford them.

Low incomes can prevent people from accessing education and economic and social rights, which in turn inhibits their participation in public life -- a civil and political right -- and their ability to influence policies affecting them. Having served as the chief prosecutor for the international criminal tribunals for the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda, this is a point that Commissioner Arbour understands clearly.

This year's theme reminds us of the importance of educating today for jobs tomorrow. It challenges us to provide the environment in which people can achieve a better quality of life. I would like to thank our local Human Rights Commission for their contribution to Yukon. I appreciate the good work they do.

Thank you.

**Mr. Inverarity:** I rise on behalf of the official opposition to join my colleagues in the Legislature in paying tribute to International Human Rights Day. On Human Rights Day, it is celebrated around the world that human beings are born with equal and inalienable rights and fundamental freedoms. In 1987, members of the Yukon Legislative Assembly passed a Yukon *Human Rights Act*. The objects of the act were to promote human rights in the territory, recognizing freedom, equality and the dignity of Yukon residents, and to discourage and eliminate discrimination.

To carry out these goals, the act established a Yukon Human Rights Commission. The act protects Yukon residents against discrimination in several areas of public life. Discrimination is not allowed in providing goods and services to the public, employment or applications for employment, membership in trade unions or other related associations and in public contracts.

For the celebration of Human Rights Day in the Yukon, the Human Rights Commission will be participating in the Disability Expo, taking place at the Elijah Smith Building on Friday, December 8, from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. The Human Rights Commissioner will be speaking in tribute to International Human Rights Day at the Elijah Smith Building at noon. All are welcome.

The Yukon Employees Union will be holding their open house at their union hall on Friday, December 8 from 2:00 to 4:00 p.m., also in celebration of Human Rights Day.

Finally, Amnesty International is sponsoring a Write for Rights event, which will be held December 10 from 2:00 to 5:00 p.m. at the Whitehorse Public Library.

Human Rights Day reminds us of persistent human rights problems in our communities and in the world and of the enormous effort still required to make human rights a reality for all. I encourage all Yukoners to recognize the work of the Human Rights Commission and pay tribute to them on this day.

Human rights are our common heritage and their realization depends on the contributions each and every one of us is willing to make, individually and collectively, now and in the future.

**Mr. Cardiff:** I rise on behalf of the third party to recognize International Human Rights Day, December 10. Canada has a proud history of promoting and protecting human rights around the world. The UN *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* was drafted by a Canadian. We are also justly proud of Canadian Louise Arbour, the High Commissioner for Human Rights, who has fought tirelessly to have that office revitalized.

We note with dismay that human rights are violated not only in other parts of the world, but the human rights of many Canadians are being eroded by the current desire for international security. The cases of Maher Arar and other Arab Canadians should shock us and make us more diligent in evaluating how even democratic systems can be used against us. Not only high-profile cases with international intrigue should alarm us, however. There are many Canadians whose daily lives are lived without human rights. For instance, we should be disturbed by the lack of human rights of children in poverty in Canada. The 2006 report card on child and family poverty in Canada shows that one child in six in Canada still lives in poverty. That figure does not include the shameful situation for First Nations' communities where one in every four children grows up in poverty.

The United Nations *Convention on the Rights of the Child* was ratified by Canada and all provincial legislatures in 1999. It recognized an inadequate standard of living for children, and we have yet to reach that standard in one of the richest countries in the world.

The ideal of human beings born free and equal in dignity and rights recognizes that we are all endowed with reason and conscience. That idea demands that we should act toward one another with compassion and support.

Human rights are not just theories or ideals; they are a way of life that must be defended and upheld whenever we see them being breached -- especially for those who are unable to do that for themselves.

**Speaker:** Are there any further tributes?  
Introduction of visitors.

## INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

**Hon. Ms. Taylor:** Mr. Speaker, I would ask all members of the Legislature to join with me in welcoming Rod Taylor, the president of the Tourism Industry Association of the Yukon, and Darielle Talarico, who is with him.

*Applause*

**Mr. McRobb:** It gives me pleasure to introduce a very long-time citizen of the Kluane area and respected elder, Fred Brown, Sr.

**Speaker:** Are there any further introductions of visitors?

Returns or documents for tabling.

Reports of committees.

Are there any petitions?

Are there any bills to be introduced?

Are there any notices of motion?

## NOTICES OF MOTION

**Mr. Nordick:** I give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urge the Government of Yukon to work with First Nations to implement the corrections actions plan that includes measures to address

- (1) the construction of a new corrections facility or facilities to replace the Whitehorse Correctional Centre;
- (2) programs, services, treatment and case management;
- (3) human resource development training and support;
- (4) community capacity development;
- (5) Victim and Family Services;
- (6) information and communications; and
- (7) legislation and policies.

**Speaker:** Is there a ministerial statement?  
This then brings us to Question Period.

## QUESTION PERIOD

### Question re: Education reform

**Mr. Mitchell:** First Nations are genuinely concerned about the education achievement levels attained by their children. Year after year, the overall test scores of the Yukon achievement test show First Nation test scores are lower than the Yukon average. First Nation parents, like any parent, are concerned. They have spent years, and even decades, trying to have their concerns addressed; now they are saying, "Enough."

We have several First Nations speaking publicly about drawing down education or forming their own school boards. Their frustration is clear, understandable and real.

The Premier should comprehend the gravity of this situation and the potential impact on the entire Yukon education system. Will he respect all parents and students and give his undertaking to deal expeditiously with the education reform project report, or will he wait until the entire system sinks into a black hole?

**Hon. Mr. Rouble:** As the Education minister, I certainly share many of the concerns that the leader of the official opposition has raised. He has brought forward valid concerns, and they have been brought forward in the past. These are issues that are before our education reform group right now.

As I said in this Assembly last week, we have made a commitment to work in the best interests of all Yukoners, especially for Yukon people of First Nation ancestry, to improve the quality, calibre and content of education. Our education review process is underway. We are seeing tangible results and will see more results down the road.

**Mr. Mitchell:** I do appreciate the positive words from the Education minister, but I think that time is of the essence. This week, the Chief of the Kwanlin Dun First Nation was very clear, very sincere and very frustrated. He said he was fed up with being ignored. He said that Kwanlin Dun was proceeding with its own school.

Mr. Speaker, lack of consultation and cooperation and a lack of respect for First Nation needs have taken their toll. The relations with First Nations are on a downward spiral. Does the Premier comprehend what these decisions will extract from the Yukon education system? What, if anything, does he propose to do about it?

**Hon. Mr. Fentie:** Mr. Speaker, obviously this is a matter of opinion. To claim in this House that the relations with the First Nations are on a downward spiral flies in the face of all the evidence. The Yukon forum is a joint process to develop legislation giving force and effect to the relationship, which is the *Co-operation in Governance Act*, finalizing three agreements under our last mandate, the establishment of such processes through the forum as joint investment with the northern strategy, joint investment for the northern housing trust and the correction action plan. This is one of the best work ever done in the public domain in this territory to reform our corrections system. There is also a partnership in education reform with joint shares with First Nations. That's hardly a downward spiral. It is definitely an upward trend in improving relations with Yukon First Nation governments.

**Mr. Mitchell:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I hear the Premier, and it's clear that he does not comprehend this. Yukon finds itself in this position because his government has not respected agreements and has paid only lip service to the idea of consultation while ordering up more studies and reviews. One can understand, Mr. Speaker, why "schools" has not been a popular term in First Nation vocabularies.

Mr. Speaker, we understand that the Yukon Teachers Association already has a draft copy of the education reform project report. Will the Premier now table a copy of that report so

we can begin the process of addressing the many concerns facing not only First Nation parents but all Yukon parents?

**Hon. Mr. Fentie:** You know, Mr. Speaker, it's hard to figure out where the leader of the official opposition actually wants the government to go. Moments ago it's all about being expeditious and consulting and doing all the hard work, and moments later it's all about "we want information immediately".

Well, the government is going to go and do its work. It's going to live up to its obligations to consult, which the member just criticized the government for, and once all that work is done and all the input has been consolidated and we are at the stage of coming forward with new policy, possible amendments to the *Education Act*, and other matters with respect to Yukon's education system and its improvement, we will do so. We will table it in this House.

#### **Question re: Outfitters land tenure**

**Mr. Mitchell:** Mr. Speaker, I have another question for the Premier. There has been public outcry. There was frustration by First Nations, and there is a failure on the part of government to adequately consult the Yukon First Nations on the controversial lands policy for outfitters. By that I mean the big game outfitters land tenure policy.

The government and this Premier have received extensive feedback on this issue, and numerous requests to rescind this policy. As recently as October 24 of this year, CBC news reported that even government land officials say there is too much public interest to make quick decisions. Does the Premier recognize that First Nation culture includes a deeply held commitment to stewardship of the land and, if so, will the Premier respect the First Nations' request to rescind the big game outfitters land tenure policy until adequate public consultation has been completed?

**Hon. Mr. Fentie:** According to the files transferred vis-à-vis devolution, consultation has been ongoing with respect to this policy and hundreds of other files in this territory, in some cases for decades. Again the member is incorrect.

The policy is very important, however. In the preceding days of this House, there have been many questions from the official opposition with respect to a certain activity on the Yukon land base with respect to a hunting concession. That's without the policy. Today's policy will ensure there are parameters for what happens on the land base. What's even more important is that each and every application can be scrutinized and positions submitted with respect to First Nations and their traditional territories and beyond.

We've improved the situation by providing the tools to those individuals in government responsible for managing Yukon's land base.

**Mr. Mitchell:** The Premier is referring to consultation that occurred prior to devolution with the Government of Canada. First Nations are asking for this Premier's government to consult with them on this policy.

I would like to file a letter sent to the Premier on May 23, 2006, from the Council of Yukon First Nations. CYFN is adamantly opposed to this outfitter policy and maintains that the government is failing in its duties to consult with Yukon First

Nations. CYFN has further stated that it will support any First Nations that use any lawful means necessary to resist any infringement on their aboriginal and treaty rights.

The government has received fierce opposition to the big game outfitters land tenure policy. The message is: do not open the floodgates, allowing big game outfitters to grab land in traditional territories. Will the Premier trust that First Nation governments possess the knowledge and experience and have the right to challenge any government policy that erodes the First Nations' land base, denies First Nation citizens access to prime real estate within their traditional territory and gives a few select outfitters a monopoly on Yukon's wilderness tourism?

**Hon. Mr. Fentie:** I am aghast, Mr. Speaker. That dissertation by the leader of the official opposition simply is out of touch with reality. This policy does not allow for access to new land base; it has nothing to do with wilderness tourism; it has everything to do with pre-existing sites on existing concessions. What is even more important is that any lease that may be applied for and delivered upon with respect to a hunting concession is tied to the concession licence. The member opposite is so out of touch, Mr. Speaker. I would encourage him to go back and do some homework on this matter. For example, read the policy.

**Mr. Mitchell:** By definition, outfitting concessions are areas in which limited rights are granted to outfitters to provide guide services for the purposes of harvesting big game. Under the big game outfitters land tenure policy, the lease and licences will ultimately limit and infringe on aboriginal treaty rights of Yukon First Nation citizens. Under this policy land tenure applications can avoid an environmental assessment.

Mr. Speaker, under this policy the government can give away land within First Nation traditional territory without ever consulting the affected First Nation.

Does the Premier understand the impact on First Nations and all Yukoners of supporting a land tenure policy that gives more rights to foreigners and outfitters than to First Nation citizens who have lived here in Yukon for countless generations?

**Hon. Mr. Fentie:** This is actually a serious matter. The member opposite is interjecting into debate his opinion on areas that obviously the member has very little knowledge of.

I must point out that the policy speaks to pre-existing sites, and there are parameters even around the size of land base that this would impact. What is even more disturbing is that the member has just stood up and conveniently ignored the law in the Yukon. It is called YESAA, and all through this territory, when activity is being applied for on various levels -- a litany of levels -- there are all kinds of thresholds and triggers in Yukon law today that ensure the correct processes, consultation and input is going to be part of any decision. It is very convenient to criticize based on little knowledge of the facts, but it has no bearing on the issue at hand.

Let me be clear: we are not rescinding the policy; in fact we are going to ensure the policy is applied in the appropriate manner and in the intent for which it was developed. We are going to get a handle on what is going on in the Yukon land

base to ensure that the issues that his member just put on the floor of the Assembly do not happen.

**Question re: Addictions treatment centres**

**Mr. Edzerza:** This government is fond of using the substance abuse action plan to show that it is doing something about the Yukon's severe addictions problems. Part of that plan outlines a Yukon community court to deal with offenders with drug or alcohol addictions, symptoms of FASD and/or mental health issues. The substance abuse action plan states that the court will provide "a comprehensive treatment plan that will include judicial supervision, substance abuse treatment, random and frequent drug testing, incentives and sanctions, clinical case management, and social services support." It says that the court will provide a treatment plan. It doesn't say who is to activate the plan or what services will support plans made by the court.

With offenders already going through this court, will the Minister of Health and Social Services explain what services his department has established to meet the treatment plans for clients of the court in Whitehorse and the community?

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** I would point out to the member opposite that, first, I would have to express gratitude that at least he's actually reading the corrections action plan now. It's a pleasure to see. The Department of Health and Social Services and the Department of Justice have jointly implemented the Domestic Violence Treatment Option Court. The lead on this, of course, is the Department of Justice. The Department of Health and Social Services plays a supporting role, and we are very committed to moving forward on our platform commitments to implementing our platform commitments to improve the treatment services that are currently available within Yukon and to implement the direction laid out under the substance abuse action plan.

**Mr. Edzerza:** I won't follow the previous speaker. I will not personalize anything here.

One of the objectives in the substance abuse action plan is to work with First Nation governments, NGOs and other stakeholders to develop more treatment centres and programs throughout the territory in order to support the operations of the community court. The last time I looked, there had been no changes at all in the number of treatment centres or programs, particularly land-based treatment facilities, another promise made by this government. Offenders coming from this court need something to happen with their plans.

In my experience, building up client expectations and not coming through with substantial support can lead to relapse, violence or even suicide. When does the minister intend to follow through on his government's commitments and provide real support and funding for community treatment centres? If not immediately, will it be in the spring budget?

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** I have to remind the Member for McIntyre-Takhini of the Domestic Violence Treatment Option Court. We are very proud of it. It's a collaborative initiative with the Department of Justice as the lead, supported by the Department of Health and Social Services. It was implemented in the summer of this year. The substance abuse action plan work has been ongoing for the last few years. The steps under-

neath it have been rolling out one piece at a time, as we have to do with government processes.

The Minister of Justice has recently announced the implementation of the *Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act*, which is an important component under our substance abuse action plan. I have announced our support, along with the minister responsible for the Women's Directorate, for the Outreach van and other important components of the substance abuse action plan. Treatment centres are a key priority under our substance abuse action plan. We will be moving forward on that. We will be working with First Nations and others in determining the exact mechanics of where and how it will work. We will move forward on this as expeditiously as possible, but we are going to get it right.

**Mr. Edzerza:** Well, I'm pleased to hear that the minister is intending to get it right, because it certainly needs to happen. The need for substance abuse and FASD services has been ongoing in this territory for decades, but there really hasn't been much action. There has to be. One of the crying needs is for Yukon-based certified addictions counsellors. A few years ago this was nearly a reality, until this government fired the person who had done the planning for training and was prepared to act on that plan.

Will the minister demonstrate that he is committed to a long-term investment in Yukon people who work with our substance abuse problems and immediately reactivate plans to provide local opportunities for Yukoners who want to be trained in addictions counselling? Will the minister do that?

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** The member is simply not reflecting the facts of what this government has done. We are very proud of the steps we have taken and, of course, we recognize that more work needs to be done, but the work we have done in moving forward on our five-step FASD action plan, working with groups such as Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Society Yukon -- which, I would note, has been commended by national experts, one just on the radio as recently as this morning, referring to the groundbreaking work the Yukon has done in this area.

As members of the Canada Western FASD Partnership, which is composed of the western provinces and the northern territories, we have been one of the leading forces, as a jurisdiction, in moving forward on new steps to deal with the problem of fetal alcohol spectrum disorder. In terms of treatment, we are the government that reopened the Sarah Steele Building with the 28-day treatment for alcohol, which was cancelled by a previous government.

The plan the member is referring to -- I think he's referring to the work done by a previous government in attempting to recover from their ill-fated decision to shut down Crossroads.

We replaced it, we have stepped forward, we're going to do more but we are very proud of what we've done to date and will continue moving forward.

**Question re: Canada Winter Games, athletes village**

**Mr. Cardiff:** The minister responsible for the Yukon Housing Corporation has apparently added a new refrain to his song and dance about the zoning requirements for the athletes village buildings. The corporation will inherit those buildings after the Canada Winter Games.

According to a newspaper report yesterday, the minister is still insisting that rezoning isn't needed because it's a government building on government property, but now the minister is using the building permit to support that claim. He even resorted to an offensive and abrasive question about city officials. I quote: "Who in their right mind issues the building permit without the zoning?"

The municipal people are in their right minds. They issued the permit for two buildings to be used for an athletes village. Will the minister now apologize for the second cheap shot he has taken in less than a week at municipal employees who are simply doing their jobs?

### Unparliamentary language

**Speaker:** Before the honourable minister answers the question, Member for Mount Lorne, describing debate in this Legislature as "song and dance" is not appropriate. I would ask the honourable member to respect this Assembly and not use that, please.

You have the floor, Minister of Economic Development.

**Hon. Mr. Kenyon:** Again, for the member opposite, the zoning is clearly on the building permits and they were properly issued. Discussions are continuing between city officials and the Yukon Housing Corporation.

The application for a permit to erect, alter, et cetera, a building clearly shows the use as residential, clearly identifies the 24-unit building and the 48-unit building and is clearly zoned for public service. There appears to be some debate between the city and Yukon Housing Corporation in terms of the appropriateness of that, and I leave that to the discussions at the officials level.

The city is a partner in this project to the tune of about \$8 million. This government is committed to make the Canada Winter Games a resounding success. I invite those members opposite to join us in those efforts.

**Mr. Cardiff:** Well, the minister doesn't get it. It doesn't matter if it's the Yukon government or the Hell's Angels who own the building, the law is the law. It is what the building is going to be used for that determines what zoning is needed. The minister can't just simply command the city to do his bidding. The city understands what the zoning requirements are and his officials understand that but the minister doesn't seem to understand that.

Unless he wants a repeat of the Dawson City fiasco, he has to recognize that the city has the authority over zoning. Will the minister now admit that he has been wrong on this question and that the building might require a change in zoning, depending on what the Housing Corporation finally decides to do with it?

**Hon. Mr. Kenyon:** I hope the member opposite isn't implying that a different group owns the building -- particularly the Hell's Angels. We are working as we speak between Yukon Housing Corporation and other departments within the Yukon government and with the city officials to clarify exactly what is the status of this as there is additional work such as kitchen islands, refrigerators, removing privacy barriers, modifying the hot water systems because of the large number of showers that

will be needed, et cetera, et cetera. It will be a number of months before the buildings are there and in use and occupied.

The Yukon Housing Corporation Board of Directors meets regularly. They are considering their options on that. Again, the building went up very quickly; we are very proud of the project team and what they managed to do with that. Anyone who has been through the building I think would agree that it has been an incredible project. This government is committed to making the games a resounding success and to provide affordable housing. Again, I invite the member opposite to join us in that desire.

**Mr. Cardiff:** You are right. It is an incredible project. The other thing that is incredible is that the minister doesn't understand what is going on. I am staggered that he doesn't even seem to be concerned about how this is playing out. Yukon Housing Corporation has known for two years that it would be getting this building. Millions and millions of taxpayers' dollars have gone into this piece of real estate, and yet the Housing Corporation, after two years, still doesn't know what to do with it. The latest speculation is that it will be used for seniors, in spite of the fact that it is miles away from services like grocery stores and medical facilities; it is miles away from the seniors drop-in centre. There is a major issue with the lack of public transportation. Not least, there was a study done of seniors who said that they wanted to be downtown. What study or other documentation can the minister provide to support the notion that this would be a good location for a seniors facility when there is ample reason to believe that it wouldn't be and that seniors won't even be interested in moving there.

**Hon. Mr. Kenyon:** The Yukon Council on Aging either has gone through or is going through today.

The member opposite refers to a one-page questionnaire that was in a newsletter some time ago that asked seniors where they wanted to be. There was a wide selection. The misinterpretation that the member opposite is making is that, while the larger group wanted to be downtown -- in looking at the actual statistics of whether downtown was the majority -- clearly in that questionnaire, in a newsletter, distributed to a limited number of people throughout Yukon, the majority did not cite downtown as their first choice.

There are flaws in both directions, and both of us are entitled, I think, to that interpretation. The necessity, of course, is to do a proper consultation, and that's exactly what the board of directors has requested of staff of the Yukon Housing Corporation. We will be doing those consultations. We will be doing a proper study, not just a one-pager in a newsletter with limited distribution, and we will look at the options on that.

Again, Mr. Speaker, the long-term investment on this, of 30, 40, or 50 years, is a major, major legacy coming out of these games, and with a major partner of that being the city, we will be looking at transportation and other issues.

### Question re: Outfitters land tenure

**Mr. McRobb:** Mr. Speaker, it has come to my attention that another unauthorized outfitting cabin has been constructed. This one is on Ittlemit Lake in the Kluane region. It is in the traditional territory of the Champagne and Aishihik First

Nations, and it is also on a trapline owned by a local trapper who is present in the gallery today.

Mr. Speaker, First Nations across the territory are upset by the way this government seems to be allowing outfitters to do whatever they want. Buildings are being constructed with no permits, no discussion with First Nations, no discussion with people who already have an interest in the land, including trappers, and no discussions with others who use the land. What's clear is that the outfitters don't seem to be following the rules, and it's time to shed light on this. The public wants to know who is giving the outfitters the thumbs-up and how many more of these intrusions is the government aware of that the public hasn't yet been told about?

**Hon. Mr. Fentie:** Mr. Speaker, I am glad that the Member for Kluane brought this question forward. Obviously, the member has not been engaged to any great degree in the previous debate.

A complaint has been laid with one specific issue that the government is aware of. That complaint has been acted upon. There has been a demand by the government that the outfitter provide legal documentation that would prove legal standing for occupancy. If none is forthcoming by December 15, the government will be seeking a court-ordered removal. If there are other instances out on the land base of similar context, I would assume that the same process will apply. No one can go out on the land base and just do what they want. There has to be some sort of legal instrument that allows that to happen.

I will close by suggesting to the Member for Kluane that it is a stretch to be telling this House that anyone in government has told anyone in the outfitting industry that they can do something. What we have told the outfitting industry is that there are parameters to the policy and what they are. They need to apply, and these are the goalposts within which they need to work.

### Unparliamentary language

**Speaker:** Order please. Before you further answer the question, the Hon. Premier, characterizing a question as a "stretch" is implying that there may be an intention that is not necessarily honourable. I would ask the Hon. Premier not to do that.

### Withdrawal of remark

**Hon. Mr. Fentie:** I will retract that, Mr. Speaker, and instead characterize it as "flexible".

**Speaker:** I appreciate that.

### Question re: Outfitters land tenure

**Mr. Fairclough:** My question is for the Premier.

Mr. Speaker, a comprehensive land claims initiative for the big game outfitter is well on its way under the Yukon Party government. The first up for negotiations is Lone Wolf Outfitters. The deal was done behind closed doors, with no public input, and then rubber-stamped by the minister. Next up is Bonnet Plume Outfitters for pre-negotiations. All that is needed, apparently, is verbal approval by this government. When will the Premier do the right thing and rescind the big game

outfitters land tenure policy and take it to the public for proper consultation?

**Hon. Mr. Fentie:** A few moments ago we were doing too much consultation, because the education reform process was not expeditious enough. Here we have a file that the federal government was working on for almost 20 years, consulting and consulting. It was a file transferred to the Yukon government. We did go out on this matter; policy has been developed.

The suggestion here that this is, in any way, shape or form, a land claim -- I'm shocked that the Member for Mayo-Tatchun would diminish the spirit and intent of the land claims and self-government agreements in this territory, which are leading edge in the country. The Yukon is a leader in the claims process.

Surely the Member for Mayo-Tatchun recognizes the error of his ways.

**Mr. Fairclough:** By no means am I ever going to diminish the land claims agreement. I'm trying to enhance it. Hopefully the government will respect it the way it's written.

The big game outfitter land tenure policy is flawed and it's very flawed. Let me make a few points to the Premier in regard to the Bonnet Plume case.

First of all, permission to proceed on a half-million dollar project was verbally given by persons unknown. No building permits were ever applied for, nor were there occupancy permits issued. This is a business serving the public. There is no fire marshal inspection; no inspection by the health department; no inspection of the food preparation area; no YESAA assessment, although it's built on the banks of a heritage river. The evidence is there.

So I'll ask the Premier again: will he rescind the policy and take it out to the public to do proper consultation, which it hasn't had as yet?

**Hon. Mr. Fentie:** We have to add, "No research by the official opposition."

What does the policy have to do with Bonnet Plume? I have already stated numerous times in this House that a complaint was registered with the government -- in this case, the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources and its lands branch. The complaint has been acted on, Mr. Speaker. I repeat for the Member for Mayo-Tatchun: it has been acted on. That complaint has now progressed to where the government has demanded that the outfitter in question provide documentation of legal standing for occupancy. If none is forthcoming by December 15 of this year -- not next year -- then the government, through legal services branch and the lands branch, will seek a court-ordered removal. I don't know how I could be any clearer than that other than maybe spend some time with the Member for Mayo-Tatchun and go over this whole issue one step at a time.

**Mr. Fairclough:** Apparently, that's our job -- to make the Premier's vision on this very clear. The only public consultation the department was able to produce was minutes of a meeting -- an information session at the Heritage Hall in Carmacks. That was all. The minister ought to know that.

Let me go on and take the minister through this one. Under LARC, the Land Application Review Committee, applicants

had to first identify the land of interest and then go through a process that included assessment of the land and public input about the proposed use. Applications were denied if no planning was in place.

Now, under the big game land tenure policy, YESAA is not triggered -- contrary to what the member was saying. The department then makes a final decision and there is no public input. First Nations don't even have input at the internal review.

Again, out of respect for the public and the First Nations, will the Premier rescind the policy, as he was asked to by CYFN and other First Nations around the territory?

**Hon. Mr. Fentie:** The member opposite, in referring to these issues and processes like LARC, has to recognize that YESAA is implemented. It is the law of the land. It replaced LARC. What is even more important is that the member should understand that all through YESAA and its regulatory package, which is very extensive, there are triggers that ensure that assessments take place. One of those triggers includes square footage -- that is point number one.

Second, this particular issue about the Bonnet Plume has got nothing to do with what the member is articulating, and the government has taken action on this issue. If we do not have legal documentation of legal standing for occupancy, a court-ordered removal will be sought. The government has even gone further in discussions with the Grand Chief in recognizing that there are going to be situations in the territory when it comes to access to land that may fall outside the parameters of YESAA. We are in discussions about how we can set in place a mechanism that will ensure that we can deal with those matters also. The government is doing its work, Mr. Speaker.

Finally, no, we are not going to rescind the policy.

**Speaker:** The time for Question Period has now elapsed.

## INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

**Mr. Elias:** I ask that all members join me in recognizing the presence of my mother and former Vuntut Gwitchin MLA, Norma Kassi, in the gallery today.

*Applause*

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

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** 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:** Order please. Committee of the Whole will now come to order.

## Motion re appearance of witnesses

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** I move

THAT Craig Tuton, chair of the Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board, and Valerie Royle, president of the Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board, appear as witnesses before Committee of the Whole, from 3:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. on Monday, December 11, 2006, to discuss matters relating to the Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board.

**Chair:** It has been moved by Mr. Cathers

THAT Craig Tuton, chair of the Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board, and Valerie Royle, president of the Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board, appear as witnesses before Committee of the Whole, from 3:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. on Monday, December 11, 2006, to discuss matters relating to the Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board.

Is there any debate?

**Mr. McRobb:** We the official opposition will support this motion; however, given the shortage of time remaining in this sitting and the importance of applying time to scrutinize the supplementary budget, we will support this budget only with the understanding that if it completes early -- and I believe it will -- we will resume debate on the supplementary budget late afternoon on Monday.

**Mr. Cardiff:** Just for expediency, I would echo what the official opposition House leader said. We support the motion and we look forward to having them here, but if it does end early, we would like to go back to the budget so that we can complete the business of the House.

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** Certainly the government would be happy, if the appearance of the witnesses ends early, to move back into business regarding the budget.

I would point out and remind member opposite that the reason we brought forward the motion with the appearance times of 3:30 to 5:30 p.m. was at the request of the House leaders from both opposition parties. The appearance of the witnesses is one-half hour earlier than normal to accommodate the fact that the House now adjourns, by Standing Order, at 5:30 p.m.

**Chair:** Is there any further debate?

*Motion agreed to*

**Chair:** We will be discussing Bill No. 3, *Second Appropriation Act, 2006-07*, Vote 11, Women's Directorate. Would the Committee like to recess for 15 minutes?

**Some Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**Chair:** We will recess for 15 minutes.

*Recess*

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

**Bill No. 3 -- Second Appropriation Act, 2006-07 -- continued**

**Women's Directorate -- continued**

**Chair:** The matter before the Committee is Bill No. 3, *Second Appropriation Act, 2006-07*, Vote 11, Women's Directorate.

**Hon. Ms. Taylor:** I am pleased to add to the remarks that I was commenting on yesterday with respect to questions surrounding community consultations with women's organizations and women particularly in rural Yukon. As I seem to recall, I made reference to the Yukon Advisory Council on Women's Issues, or YACWI, which has been in place for a number of years. It is a legislated body. It's the advisory council to the minister responsible for the Women's Directorate and its job is to keep me and other ministers apprised on emerging women's issues in all Yukon communities.

I've had the privilege of being able to work with this particular group, and it's made up of eight members, comprising women of the Yukon, including rural and urban First Nation as well as non-First Nation women. The council meets four times throughout the year, and it does a great job.

Over the last three years, we have been very supportive of their work, and we have provided additional monies for an annual Yukon women's forum to occur, based on a number of different priorities, but most importantly coming from the recommendations made by YACWI.

In fact, earlier this year, I believe it was back in March, YACWI successfully hosted in collaboration and in conjunction with the Women's Directorate the second annual women's forum in March, and that was on women and health. So we were able to help facilitate this forum and, as I seem to recall, it happened over a two-day spread and enabled over 100 women from all over the Yukon to come in and discuss issues of importance surrounding women and health.

Other topics of interest that YACWI has been able to successfully raise over the last couple of years have been on violence in our communities, violence prevention, and looking at priority housing -- working with the Yukon Housing Corporation to facilitate a very comprehensive policy to address those women and children in particular who are fleeing from abusive relationships in order to see that they receive the appropriate housing that they require on a timely basis.

They have also been able to raise awareness about public education initiatives on violence prevention and women's equality, to name but a few.

So YACWI has been very much engaged with me as the minister responsible over the last number of years. As I mentioned yesterday, they made recommendations to go to each of our communities over the next period of time rather than hosting an annual women's forum to take place next spring. In part, one of the driving forces was the fact that the Canada Winter Games will be taking place around the same time. We all know how very busy each of us will be when we are engaged with the Canada Winter Games.

Most important is the opportunity for members of our Women's Directorate and members of the Yukon Advisory Council on Women's Issues to go to each of the communities and sit down with women in the communities to hear the issues of priority and then report back as to what interests, needs and priorities are identified within each community. As we all

know, each of our communities hosts a number of different challenges as well as opportunities, so it's therefore critical to keep that dialogue open. I look forward to hearing the feedback garnered from those consultations over the next few months with YACWI.

I had spoken a bit to some of the accomplishments garnered by the Women's Directorate over the last number of years, but I did want to speak to a couple in particular. I know there has been a great degree of discussion in this Legislature and in the communities on violence prevention in particular.

One of the core mandates of the Women's Directorate is to strive and work with women's organizations and women in the territory to enable the full participation of women in Yukon's social, economic and public life -- including politics, about which we have had a great debate over the last number of years in this particular institution.

Violence, as you are very familiar with, is a dire problem. It has been a problem particularly in the north where women are subjected to far greater rates of abuse, spousal assault and violence in many different forms versus other women and other groups of Canadians in the rest of our country. We have heard time and time again throughout our communities and through our many different forums over the years that public education and raising awareness about what a healthy relationship is are of utmost importance to our communities.

There is an opportunity to provide tools to support women who are in need of assistance and are suffering from abusive relationships and to provide different support mechanisms, such as safety kits. The Women's Directorate has been able to work with agencies such as Yukon Family Services Association and other stakeholder groups. These initiatives have worked very well over the last number of years. That said, we are also in the second year of a long-term public education campaign on violence prevention. We have focused on a number of different target areas over the last number of years. This particular year, we have been focusing on the prevention of sexualized assault against young women.

Yesterday, in our tribute to the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women, we made reference to a photojournalism exhibit that will be showcased and officially launched next Wednesday at the Elijah Smith Building. I very much look forward to the exhibit and seeing it in place over the next week or so. This initiative was a collaboration of different organizations, including the Department of Health and Social Services, the Yukon Family Services Association and many others, especially the nine youth who offered their participation in this very important exhibit. I think that it is incumbent upon all of us to support youth to have the opportunity to speak out about violence and to oppose sexualized assault in our communities. So it is venues, different creative ways and innovative mechanisms for reaching out to different target groups and raising awareness about this very dire situation.

In addition to public education and raising awareness, there are many front-line services that continue to be delivered by our Department of Justice as well as the Department of Health and Social Services. We have been able to garner suc-



cess with respect to the continued implementation of the domestic violence treatment option. We're about to launch the community court, which is an alternative, therapeutic court that will make provisions for offenders with mental illnesses, FASD and addictions. It will provide perpetrators of crime with the resources they need to make substantive changes in their lives and return to our communities.

We have also been able to work on the 1-800 toll-free crisis line, VictimLINK. The Women's Directorate has worked very actively to raise awareness of this. As I understand, it has been very successful over the last year as a result of these communication efforts.

In addition, we as a government continue to provide resources and have increased resources to the family violence prevention unit, providing additional training to front-line workers and also members of the M Division of the RCMP so that they are fully informed and fully aware of the provisions outlined in legislation such as the *Family Violence Prevention Act*. We were very pleased to provide tougher penalties within this particular act, including penalties for the perpetrators as well as the expansion of the definition of "family violence" to include emotional abuse.

All these various tools are so critical. As well, it is working in collaboration with the Department of Health and Social Services to provide enhanced resources to the existing women's shelters throughout our communities. As I relayed to members opposite yesterday, it's also continuing that dialogue with our respective communities and finding creative ways to ensure there are safe places to go within the community and, if that should not be the case or the desire of the community, then ensuring that we have space available here in the City of Whitehorse or other places where there are existing spaces.

I'm very pleased with efforts taken to date. We have a very ambitious agenda in terms of the Women's Directorate and the continuation of fulfilling its mandate.

In addition, we continue to work with women's organizations. I referenced for the very first time that we are offering funding to each of seven women's organizations in the territory to do strategic planning to identify what they wish to focus on and deliver as their priorities, such as violence prevention, further women's equality work, and so forth. The purpose of making funding available for the completion of strategic planning would be to facilitate applications for long-term funding, which we also plan on making available in the upcoming budget.

This is something that has been referenced for many years. With respect to making long-term funding available to women's organizations that is consistent and stable, it has been identified within CEDAW -- the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women -- and that is part of our response to CEDAW's recommendations, which I believe we have already submitted to the Government of Canada as Yukon's participation in this process.

We continue to work on delivering gender-inclusive analyses within our policy work across the government, and I believe this is important work. In fact, I am very pleased to be able to report that we also have been able to successfully deliver a gender studies course for grade 10s and grade 11s. We

have managed to accredit these particular courses in our Yukon schools.

We have been working with the Department of Education, Yukon Status of Women Council and Yukon College women's studies program and we hope to complete the course -- first as a pilot -- in the upcoming school season next year. Depending on the success of the pilot, we hope to actually be able to fully deliver it in all Yukon schools.

We continue to work with aboriginal women's organizations. I made reference yesterday, I believe, to the aboriginal women's violence prevention initiatives. It is \$100,000 in new funding that, through the good work of our Premier's previous minister responsible, we have provided funding and continue to provide funding to women's organizations throughout the Yukon -- again, providing dollars available for projects to address violence in their communities.

This year, five projects focused on the prevention of sexualized violence against aboriginal women, again keeping with the theme of our public education campaign. One project was "Young women regaining their power". That was provided through Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation education department. Through the Ta'an Kwäch'an Council's health department, they provided women's craft healing circle. "It's okay to tell" was delivered by Kwanlin Dun First Nation justice program. "Healing through participation" was delivered through White River First Nation, as well as "Aboriginal young men and women against sexualized violence" was another project delivered by Skookum Jim Friendship Centre.

We also have engaged with a number of women's organizations with respect to land claims training for women. This was in response to requests made by aboriginal women. Again it focuses on women's roles in the land claims negotiation process and the implementation of self-governance in their respective communities.

We have also worked with aboriginal women to provide leadership initiatives. I mentioned that was through land claims training but also just raising awareness of aboriginal women as leaders in their respective communities.

Thank you, Mr. Chair, for giving me the opportunity to outline some of the very important strategic priorities.

**Chair:** Is there any further general debate?

Seeing none, we will proceed with line-by-line consideration.

**Mr. Edzerza:** I request the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all lines in Vote 11, Women's Directorate, cleared or carried, as required.

### **Unanimous consent re deeming all lines in Vote 11, Women's Directorate, cleared or carried**

**Chair:** Mr. Edzerza has requested the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all lines in Vote 11, Women's Directorate, cleared or carried, as required. Are you agreed?

**All Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**Chair:** Unanimous consent has been granted.

### ***On Operation and Maintenance Expenditures***

***Total Operation and Maintenance Expenditures in the amount of \$50,000 agreed to***

*Women's Directorate agreed to*

**Public Service Commission**

**Chair:** We will continue with the Public Service Commission.

**Hon. Mr. Hart:** I am pleased to have this opportunity to speak about the Public Service Commission's budget for 2006-07. This is an opportunity to provide an update on the work being carried out by the Public Service Commission.

One initiative that falls to the Public Service Commission is investing in the public service serving Yukon people, which was first introduced in 2005-06. This initiative was created with a budget of \$1.38 million and it has provided funding for six new training programs focused on succession planning and employment development to the best position in the public service to deal with our aging workforce and emerge as an employer of choice.

The Public Service Commission has established a new unit to promote safe and healthy workplaces, including a plan to improve return-to-work processes for employees who have experienced disabling conditions. Awarding people for excellence -- APEX -- an employee award and recognition framework, was officially announced in June 2005. The APEX framework is the basis for the Premier's award of excellence and a department employee recognition program. The third Premier's award of excellence process has begun and awards will be announced in June 2007. The Public Service Commission employees are an integral part of the success of this award. Communication with employees has been enhanced by the creation of a new position working on promoting corporate and Public Service Commission initiatives. A new electronic newsletter -- *The Sluice II* -- is published regularly with news and information from across the organization.

Other communication initiatives involve work on information for employees about benefits, annual reports and employee-related programs. The Public Service Commission is requesting additional funding amounting to \$4,867,000 in support of five initiatives. One is a contribution to the construction of a permanent workers memorial. Number two is the document shredding and recycling project. The third is a grad corps internship funding, brought forward from last year. The fourth is the position transfer from the Department of Finance. The fifth is an increase to the employee future benefits liabilities.

First, \$50,000 is requested to support the Yukon Federation of Labour's initiative to construct a workers memorial. A model of the memorial was unveiled on April 28 during this year's day of mourning ceremonies in the Yukon government main administration building foyer. The permanent bronze memorial, it is hoped, will be placed on display in the Whitehorse waterfront area. Second, the document shredding and recycling project is a one-year pilot project that addresses a number of issues. The budget request involves the cost to purchase the required equipment and set up the facility, \$35,000 for O&M and \$25,000 for capital. This program employs people with disabilities, whose job it is to safely destroy and recycle outdated materials. Raven Recycling receives the shredded material for recycling.

The third request is for the grad corps funding of \$82,000 not spent in 2005-06 to be moved to this fiscal year. Grad corps is an internship program established under the investing in the public service serving Yukon people. It provides placements for recent Yukon post-secondary graduates with little or no work experience in their field of study. This funding supports salaries for these graduates to return home to work to gain the experience they need as they begin their careers. We can report, and we are proud to report, that of the eight interim assignments, six individuals have been successfully rehired into similar positions within the Yukon government.

The fourth request addresses a position that has been transferred to the Public Service Commission from the Department of Finance. The budget addition of \$71,000 to Public Service Commission has been deducted from the Department of Finance budget base. This position works on human resource information systems, providing the support for human resource reporting needs, including staffing and payroll. The system support group is resident in the Public Service Commission, and it makes sense to have the position in the commission as well.

Finally, the last request for funds, \$4.629 million, is for the employee future benefits. The addition arises as a result of the actuary's most recent evaluation of the employee leave and termination benefits. The good news is that this results from an employee base that has chosen to stay within the Yukon government, providing experience and public service knowledge. The cost is an accounting estimate of the liability required to pay out vacation and severance benefits to all current employees if and when they terminate and/or retire. This increase reflects the requirement to amortize recognized increases to this future liability, based on the estimated remaining service life of active employees, which is 10.6 years. The Public Service Commission has no choice but to record this liability, as it is a requirement of the Public Sector Accounting Board.

Mr. Chair, thank you for the opportunity to provide details on the first supplementary, and I look forward to questions.

**Mr. Fairclough:** We're going to let the minister off the hook this time. We are satisfied with the minister's explanation of the department's expenditure and have no further questions.

**Chair:** Is there any further general debate? Seeing none, we'll proceed to line-by-line debate of Vote 10, Public Service Commission.

**Mr. Edzerza:** I request unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all lines in Vote 10, Public Service Commission, cleared or carried, as required.

**Unanimous consent re deeming all lines in Vote 10, Public Service Commission, cleared or carried**

**Chair:** Mr. Edzerza has requested the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all lines in Vote 10, Public Service Commission, cleared or carried, as required. Are you agreed?

**All Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**Chair:** Unanimous consent has been granted.

***On Operation and Maintenance Expenditures***

***Total Operation and Maintenance Expenditures in the amount of \$4,867,000 agreed to***

*On Capital Expenditures*

*Total Capital Expenditures in the amount of \$25,000 agreed to*

*Public Service Commission agreed to*

**Chair:** Next is Community and Transportation Services.

**Hon. Mr. Lang:** Mr. Chair, my people will be a few minutes.

**Chair:** Do members wish to have a brief recess? Five minutes?

**Some Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**Chair:** We'll recess for five minutes.

*Recess*

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

**Department of Highways and Public Works**

**Chair:** The matter now before the Committee is Bill No. 3, *Second Appropriation Act, 2006-07*, Vote 55, Department of Highways and Public Works.

**Hon. Mr. Lang:** It is my pleasure to present a supplementary budget from the Department of Highways and Public Works. This department spends one of the largest budgets within this government. With that budget comes the responsibility of ensuring that the objects set contribute to the continued development of the Yukon. Many of the items outlined in this supplementary budget are items to consider for revote, including approximately \$9 million in capital. A net amount of \$46,000 in operation and maintenance funds is requested. There are also new monies that our tabled supplementary budget will outline in the amount of \$9.2 million in capital spending, which is fully recoverable from the Government of Canada.

Mr. Chair, while I will table a complete supplementary budget for the benefit of the House and the members opposite, I wish to now present a brief summary of some of the supplementary's capital budget highlights. There is \$60,000 to be used for work to be developed under the Canadian geospatial infrastructure project. This project is designed to make geological, forestry, mining, oil and gas, and environmental geography information available on the government public Web site. Such items as Web-based maps of bedrock geology, logging roads, mining district boundaries, game management areas and oil and gas wells will be more readily available to the public via the Web.

I will also note that the monies expended for this project are 100-percent recoverable from the Government of Canada.

Mr. Chair, \$9 million will be used for the reconstruction of the Donjek River bridge and the Silver City highway reconstruction project from kilometre 1692 to 1702 on the Alaska Highway. These multi-year projects, the cost of which is 100-percent recoverable through our agreement with the Government of Canada and the United States, are ahead of the original schedules. Furthermore, Mr. Chair, Shakwak projects will also

continue to expend funds and create further development well into the 2007-08 year.

These projects represent continued investment in our critical transportation links, and we are working very closely with our partners in the United States to ensure that long-term funding is maintained for this key artery that links the Lower 48, southern Canada, the Yukon and, of course, Alaska.

I am very pleased to announce that this government has accessed over \$145,000 from the federal airports capital assistance program, ACAP, to install air-side directional and control signs for the Whitehorse International Airport. These air-side signs are installed adjacent to aircraft manoeuvring areas at airports in order to properly convey instructions and information to pilots. These signs are installed in accordance with Transport Canada's certification standards and will bring a greater degree of safety for the pilots who use our facilities each day.

The airports that unite us with the outside world and bring the world to us are managed through my department and a capital revote amount of \$3.8 million is requested to continue this work. At the Old Crow Airport, \$2.6 million was needed for the completion of a number of projects started last year.

At the Whitehorse International Airport, \$1 million is designated for projects such as airport parking improvements and airport terminal building expansion. With our ever-growing tourism industry becoming more and more of a reality every year, significant investment is needed to maintain and develop this critical aviation infrastructure. Mr. Chair, each of these projects ensures that Yukon airports are effectively maintained for all stakeholders.

The Yukon continues to excel in the development and sustainability of the information and communication technology sector. This growth, managed in part by the information and communication technology -- ICT -- branch of this department, plays a vital role in the advancement of information technology for the Yukon and all people. It is with this in mind that I announce capital revotes in the amount of \$284,000 to be used to continue systems development projects and bring better capacity for our telecommunication and information access.

Mr. Chair, over \$4 million of revote funds will be used for major highway and road reconstruction and several bridge rehabilitation projects other than Shakwak. A special initiative in my department that I would like to highlight is the work being done with intelligent transportation systems. \$345,000 will be used for the installation of three environmental sensor system stations in the Whitehorse area. The installation of these road weather information systems will provide information to transport maintenance managers, enabling them to respond to weather conditions affecting the Alaska Highway at three key sites on a more timely and accurate basis.

Data from the sites is also provided to the national weather information system operated by Environment Canada, who will use the information in preparing local weather forecasts. This work is jointly funded by the Yukon government and Transport Canada on an equal share basis, making 50 percent of the expenditures on this project recoverable.

Mr. Chair, I would like to remind members opposite of the critical role the Department of Highways and Public Works plays in the work we all do, as well as the activities that are taking place every day across this great territory.

Many of us who came to this Chamber today drove on the roads and highways engineered and maintained by this department, local contractors and others. Our children go to excellent schools across Yukon on roads that are maintained and upgraded by this department. The information technology connections and systems link our schools, office buildings, emergency personnel across the Yukon. Technology coordinated by my department supports court proceedings and ensures that social support cheques and drivers' licences are issued.

The Department of Highways and Public Works looks after the government's key assets, including this very building the government uses to conduct business. These buildings are valuable assets for our people and our culture. This department ensures that necessary investments are made to guarantee their sustainable strength and longevity.

My staff prints in Canada's two official languages the documents we use here in this House, resources that are used in the courthouse, as well as materials needed throughout our education system. They also procure the fleet vehicles that are used by government staff to travel in our communities and throughout Yukon.

Through significant investment in our roads, airports, buildings, vehicles and information technology systems, we are revitalizing the Yukon's economy and creating an infrastructure that will open the door to new investment and opportunity in the future.

I would be pleased to answer any questions the members opposite may have on the Highways and Public Works supplementary budget.

**Mr. McRobb:** We in the official opposition intend to be very expeditious with this department and have only two or three questions. We anticipate clearing all the lines together.

The first question I have pertains to the Auditor General's investigation into the department and contending with allegations of political interference and favouritism in contracting. Can the minister give us the timelines of this investigation? When can we expect to see some of the results become public?

**Hon. Mr. Lang:** I find the question worded in an odd way. There is no Auditor General investigation going on at this time in the department. Audits do happen on a regular basis in all of government. We have routine audits in the department. Like all departments do in government, we audit our department: the work that's being done, the value of the dollars being spent and capital programs, property management project delivery.

In answering the member opposite, there's no overview of the whole department from the Auditor General's point of view, so I can't deliver anything on that. I can tell the member opposite that there is a regular process in place for auditing all parts of the Department of Highways and Public Works. Remember that this is a very large department; I think it's the second largest expenditure of taxpayers' dollars in the Government of Yukon.

Without audits on a regular basis, I don't think the management team could do what they're doing today to make sure the taxpayers of Yukon are getting proper value for the money expended. Audits go on on a regular basis; audits will proceed no matter what government is in place. There is a process; it's ongoing and it's part of how the department is managed internally.

**Mr. McRobb:** Well, Mr. Chair, I'm not referring to any kind of normal audit. This is not business as usual. This audit interviewed a number of employees and homed in on the political interference in terms of contracting and value for money expended in terms of a lot of different areas.

The minister is not prepared to 'fess up to this, so we will tackle it in a different way. Maybe I will just go down to the access to information office and get things rolling on this. In the spirit of getting things rolling, I want to ask about another area.

It has been brought to my attention that there was some kind of survey done recently with personnel in the department on their views on the efficiency of departmental command and operations. It was explained to me that the results of this survey showed that morale in the department was extremely low and efficiency was also extremely low. There were a number of concerns identified.

The minister has not given us any information about this exercise. I would like to ask him what information he can provide to us now.

**Hon. Mr. Lang:** In answering the member opposite, I would like to correct the statements that have been made about audits and the reason we have audits. I guess that the member opposite can hand pick different conversations with different individuals, but I would remind the member opposite that audits are done on a regular basis. I imagine, although I don't do it myself, that the department interviews staff to see if departments can be run better and more efficiently and if we, as the employer, are doing right by our employees. That's part of the tools of how this department runs internally. So as far as insinuating that somehow the Auditor General is doing something that isn't normal in the department, the member opposite is wrong on that. It is a process. The process moves ahead, and all departments in the government are answerable to the Auditor General of Canada, our accounting firm.

So there is a process, and they come and they audit our books. That's what they do, and that's because this is a government. We utilize the Auditor General because the Auditor General is a very high-calibre, internal federal government agency that we get access to, and we can utilize it as a tool to critique financially how our departments are doing or how our government is doing, and also answer some of the questions that arise when you're employing one of the largest groups of individuals in the government.

The Department of Highways and Public Works is a very large employer. I'm sure if you went through the Department of Public Works, you would find somebody in the Department of Highways and Public Works who wasn't happy, and it's just the nature of the business we do. But to not ask him questions and not have these discussions, I think, at the end of the day does

not make the department a better place to work but rather it makes it more productive at the end of the day for the government, because the government is charged in the Department of Highways and Public Works to do just what it's charged to do, and that's to keep our roads maintained and do the other things that we are in charge of -- airports, all the issues that are out there.

So to cherry-pick and decide in a conversation that there is an Auditor General out there who is doing something that is not normal, I say to the member opposite that that is wrong. These reviews go on, on a continual basis, not only in the Department of Highways and Public Works, but in all government departments. We have been doing that in years past, and we'll continue to do that in years forward. That, again, is a part of a management tool.

Without the Auditor General, without these kinds of critiques, you could not run a department with the number of employees that the Department of Highways and Public Works works with on a daily basis. The daily basis is that we go to work every day as a department and make sure that our roads are open to the general public. We have four seasons to work with; we have airports to work with; we have public buildings to maintain and to keep up to a certain standard. It is important that when we have these assets on the ground, these public buildings, they are well maintained and they have a shelf life that is acceptable for the investment in them. This all takes individuals and those individuals are part of a team that works for the Department of Highways and Public Works.

By having conversations with them or putting out questionnaires about how we as a government can work better and more efficiently, I don't think that is negative in the department; I think that is a plus. We should compliment the department for doing that kind of overview -- getting down to the grassroots and looking at the ideas that individuals have who work for the department. This department has maintenance camps throughout the Yukon: you know, Tutchitua, Eagle Plains, all of these places -- Drury Creek -- that are communities within themselves. Tutchitua is a camp that maintains a section of the Campbell Highway and it is stand alone. It has all the responsibility of maintaining it that you would have in a small community. We have water; we have sewer; we have buildings; we have accommodations; we have caterers to accommodate the food end, and Drury Creek and all the other camps. To not involve those individuals and to think that, just because there is a questionnaire out there, there would be a question of some kind of intrigue to it -- I think that we have to do those kinds of things because it is important that we as a government or we as managers listen to the people in middle management as well as the actual workers on the ground. I think these questionnaires will come back to us and I hope they will be critiqued and that we act on them if we find merit to act upon.

The Auditor General is a tool that this government uses in the department. There is a routine audit of this department -- whether it's an IT department or a public works department. He mentioned the bidding process -- all that is audited by the Au-

ditor General who comes up to make sure we are following the proper process when we are dealing with taxpayers' money.

**Mr. McRobb:** As I listened to the minister's speech, it dawned on me that maybe he is living in some kind of dream-land because this was not a regular audit. Furthermore, perhaps those employees on the ground would have something more to say if whistle-blower protection had been in place. But because the employees would put their jobs at risk by speaking out publicly under this Yukon Party government, we are not getting --

**Some Hon. Member:** Point of order.

#### Point of order

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

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** The Member for Kluane is making very serious allegations. To suggest that employees would be at any threat of losing their jobs for professing a private opinion is an absolutely unfounded accusation. I would suggest to you that it is certainly in contradiction of Standing Order 19(g), imputing false or unavowed motives to another member. I would ask you to direct him to retract it.

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

**Mr. McRobb:** On the point of order, Mr. Chair, Standing Order 19(g) applies when one member accuses another member of motives. That clearly was not the case.

#### Chair's statement

**Chair:** The Chair will take the point of order under advisement and will return at a later date, if necessary, with a ruling.

**Mr. McRobb:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, for that ruling.

Now, given the lack of whistle-blower protection and the lack of the minister agreeing to provide the documentation about the survey and given the minister's lack of awareness of this special investigation by the Auditor General, it really makes me wonder how well connected this minister really is to what is going on in the department.

Mr. Chair, as mentioned at the outset, we intend to be brief. If there was more time, believe me, we feel that this matter is very deserving of pursuing to get to the bottom of it. Unfortunately, today is not the opportunity to do so. Perhaps it is better dealt with in the Public Accounts Committee or some other instrument of this Assembly.

I want to ask one more question that deals with the disappearance of the highway lodges, because this government doesn't make available the means for them to afford the high cost of infrastructure upgrades or replacements in order to meet this government's own regulations. Now, in my riding, this winter there won't be any services open between Destruction Bay and Beaver Creek once the Burwash Landing Resort deal is concluded. I understand that it is ready to close. That's a long distance. That road is full of a lot of heaves and I have seen a lot of breakdowns on that highway. This past summer, I saw countless vehicles pulling trailers and the trailers had broken away. They had become completely disconnected from the towing vehicle. From some reports, there were up to 15 vehicles in tow behind motorhomes that had broken away. In a lot of those cases, the drivers of the motorhomes weren't even

aware that the vehicle had broken away. In one case in particular, the owners of the motorhome doubled back to the Customs station in Beaver Creek and reviewed hours of video until they saw their unit come in so that they could establish that the tow vehicle was connected when they entered Canada through Customs. They went back and eventually found their Lincoln Navigator hidden among the trees just this side of the Kluane Village at Mile 1118.

There were other cases too. This is a hazard. Obviously, the standard specification for tow hitches is simply inadequate given the heaves, jolts and twists that are experienced on the north Alaska Highway on the Shakwak revisions. This wasn't my original question. This is another question. I want to ask the minister: what is he prepared to do to ensure that vehicles on the road are safe and don't present a hazard to other vehicles on the road, especially in terms of breakaways of tow vehicles? What is he prepared to do?

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** It is incumbent upon me to enter into the debate at this point. The matters that the member is raising with regard to highway lodges are a matter that the government side is very concerned about. I would caution the member to recognize the facts of the issues. The issues related to water quality are creating some level of problem for many businesses, from coast to coast. The events in Walkerton brought very clearly into the public mind and into the minds of government the need to ensure that water quality standards are appropriate and are indeed enforced. The environmental health branch within the Department of Health and Social Services makes every effort to work with the owners of lodges and other businesses in providing them with timelines and with reasonable steps to make necessary improvements and ensure water quality and provide them with examples of mitigatory measures such as, in some cases, the use of bottled water for certain elements of running their businesses, when possible, to provide them with time to address costs and improvements. Efforts have been made, as well, in terms of assisting businesses with accessing the needed land, in terms of licences of occupation and other steps to provide them with the ability to install septic systems.

However, at the end of the day, the Yukon government cannot and will not politically interfere with environmental health officers doing their job and enforcing the public safety standards, which have been in place for many years. I would remind the Member for Kluane of that and I would suggest he take a look at the effective date of those regulations.

I must also point out with regard to the previous conversation that I would urge the Member for Kluane be a little more cautious in the debate he brings forward and the suggestions he makes on the floor of the House with regard to matters he claims are taking place. To suggest there is, in some way, some impropriety going on within the Department of Highways and Public Works is unfounded. The member should be well aware of the fact that the Auditor General, as a matter of course, reviews departments and agencies on a rotational basis, paying greater attention with greater regularity to large departments and areas, such as the Department of Highways and Public

Works, that fulfill the role of a line department as well as an agency for other departments, in terms of contracting.

Each and every one of our departments, the finance branches and the Department of Finance, work together with the Auditor General on a very cooperative basis in performing these reviews. I would remind the member that the Auditor General herself has expressed great satisfaction with the steps the Yukon government has taken -- that our government has taken under our watch -- to comply with the Public Sector Accounting Board standards, to improve the financial accounting in terms of full disclosure through full accrual accounting, and under our watch the Auditor General has given us unqualified approval of our audits, contrary to the situation under previous governments and, particularly, I would point out to the member's new party, the Liberals.

In fact, in our last term, we had to take significant steps in cleaning up the mess left under the Liberal watch. We had to call in the Auditor General and request a review of the Mayo-Dawson transmission line. We had to call for a forensic audit into the actions with the City of Dawson and the involvement by the political level and other levels from the former Liberal government in dealing with putting Dawson City far beyond the pale in terms of financial mess, far beyond what they could dig out from themselves. We are the clean-up crew.

We have worked very carefully with the Auditor General and we have an excellent working relationship with the Auditor General. We lay our books open for the Auditor General to review any matter. For the member to stand up here and engage in these criticisms is simply unfounded and I would urge him to be a little more temperate in the comments he brings forward in the House.

In past days, we have seen him stand up and attack businesses. It is inappropriate for him to engage in this level of debate, particularly when he and his leader make claims about raising the --

#### Chair's statement

**Chair:** Order please. I would like to remind members that we are not to personalize debate.

**Mr. McRobb:** Exactly, Mr. Chair. The only salvation I can glean from that type of speech is that it becomes obvious to everybody, including our listeners, that when the government ministers start their personal attacks instead of simply conveying information, we know what is really going on -- we hit a nerve.

We certainly hit a nerve with the Health minister and he is way off base. Water quality regulations are not the issue. Affordability for these people is the issue. The government has done nothing to help them.

Here we go, the minister responsible for the Yukon Housing Corporation now has been flagged by the Health and Social Services minister to stand up and give a 20-minute rant about what programs --

#### Unparliamentary language

**Chair:** Order please.

**Withdrawal of remark**

**Mr. McRobb:** Pardon me, I withdraw that.

**Chair's statement**

**Chair:** Order. I would like to remind all members that we are in the process of discussing Vote 55, Department of Highways and Public Works and, in the past, it has been ruled out of order to refer to members' speeches as "rants".

**Mr. McRobb:** Thank you for that statement, Mr. Chair.

We also believe there is no need to interfere with the environmental health officers doing their job. Again, affordability is the issue there.

I would respond to the Auditor General discussion, Mr. Chair, but in the interests of staying on topic within this department, I again want to repeat my question to the minister that was interrupted and sidetracked.

What is the Minister of Highways and Public Works prepared to do to ensure the safety of all travellers on Yukon highways, especially on the north Alaska Highway, given the excessive twisting and turning of the road and the breakaway vehicles?

**Hon. Mr. Lang:** I find it interesting that we would get a bit off the subject here.

Going back, I don't want to talk about the Auditor General any more. I think we straightened out the fact that the Auditor General in rotation looks at all the books in the territorial government -- has done in the past and will do it in the future. So it's not unusual to have the Auditor General asking questions.

The second thing is about the question about questionnaires and how we glean information from our employees. We do that through a private company. The private company has a contract to do exactly that. Then the private company takes back all the information and consolidates it and brings back a summary of what he found out through the questions and issues that employees have. It is all done in a very professional way, Mr. Chair.

As far as highways and cars breaking away and 15 cars being towed over the road, I've never seen that in my 50 years in the Yukon, but obviously it has happened on the Kluane section, or so the member says.

What are we doing? I think we should look at the resources we are putting into the north highway, in conjunction with the Canadian government and the American government. There were millions of dollars spent on that highway to make it better.

There are issues as to when we spend the money. The issue is that, because of the winter season, all the work -- 90 percent of the work that we do on the Alaska Highway -- has to be done in a very short window. There is traffic interference during the summer, of course, but we should look at the end result. The end result is a highway system that is getting better by the year.

By the way, most of that money is spent in the Member for Kluane's riding. If there is a car safety issue, we might have to look at the safety of the car itself.

In answering the question about what I'm doing as Minister of Highways and Public Works, I am spending the resources that we have in place to make the highways better.

**Mr. McRobb:** Well, with all due respect, that response is grossly inadequate to the situation described. I will give the minister an opportunity to redeem himself.

On the same section of highway, due to the closure of these lodges between Destruction Bay and Beaver Creek and given the severity of the climate in that region, particularly in winter, what is the government going to do to ensure the safety of all travellers between both points? It is in excess of 180 kilometres in distance.

**Hon. Mr. Lang:** We are certainly aware of the issues and the distances between gas stations. We have signs up notifying people when there is going to be a large gap between gas stations to remind people that they should get topped up. We have issues on the south highway; it is not just the north highway. The number of lodges that have closed between here and Watson Lake has been quite dramatic over the last 20 years. What we try to do is make our roads better. In doing that, a lot of the lodges find themselves in a crunch because, due to the better vehicles these days and the distances we travel in a day and the hundreds of millions of dollars we have spent on the highway system in the Yukon -- in some cases, some of the lodges on the south highway are no longer necessary.

That is just the nature of better roads, better vehicles, and the north highway is certainly probably going through that transition too.

**Mr. McRobb:** The minister did not answer the question, so it too is grossly inadequate. I don't see much point in continuing this game. We will conclude with a question from the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin.

**Hon. Mr. Lang:** The Member for Kluane has left it on that note, and as minister I think it should be clarified. Highways and Public Works does a fine job of communicating road conditions, distance between gas facilities and eating places to the traveller. We certainly are aware that if there is an incident on the back highway between the Campbell Highway, between Ross River and Watson Lake, it is an issue, but we have maintenance crews out there on a regular basis. People have to keep in mind that, if an incident happens on the Campbell Highway between Ross River and Watson Lake, the distance there is quite extensive. Of course we also have issues with the appropriate dress and other things -- to make sure that people have the resources to spend five or six hours in a situation before one of our vehicles or the travelling public can get there.

This isn't a perfect world. We have spent hundreds of millions of dollars on upgrading the highways, and we certainly are spending it on the north highway. The monster part of the resources for contracting in Highways and Public Works has gone to the Kluane riding. We spend \$10 million to \$20 million a year with our partners to upgrade the highways and make sure that the Alaska Highway is at a standard that will enable Americans to get to the Lower 48; in other words they have a road system that will facilitate travelling between Alaska and the Lower 48.

You only have to go -- I don't know, Mr. Chair, if you've gone between Dawson City and Inuvik, and you leave the Yukon highway system and get into the Northwest Territories system. You only have to understand the different conditions of those highways.

I say to you, standing up here as the minister, that we have one of the best transportation corridors in Canada. We only have to talk to our neighbours in the Northwest Territories. One of the biggest predicaments they have is transportation. How do you move products from community to community and how do you get to a place like Arctic Red River or Fort McPherson? They have periods in their year where they are inaccessible, Mr. Chair. All the fresh food items either have to be flown in, which adds that cost to it, or you go without.

In this community -- the only community we have in that situation in the Yukon is Old Crow, which is a remote community, the most northern community in the Yukon. Again, this government has been very conscious of that and we've put money into expanding and making the airport a better facility to get their member out and in this House on a regular basis. This government worked on building the air terminal, building the communications, expanding the airport, resurfacing the airport. We did that, and we did that because we understand remoteness. You have to be able to get to Old Crow, whether it's an emergency -- it could be a health issue or other issues. It has to be open 99 percent of the time, and this government does that.

I'm glad the Member for Kluane asked us for the list, because I think the list is very important for him to get. We were looking toward a Yukon-wide electricity grid so that we could complement the Liberals' line from Mayo to Dawson, and we can tie in Carmacks and Stewart, and we can manage the electric grid north and south. So that's very important. Of course, we have the Top of the World Highway, and, Mr. Chair, you understand how important that corridor is for six months of the year. This government is going to upgrade that road and make it more and more accessible to the tourists and to the people of Dawson. It will enable them to get some of the oil and things that they buy out of Alaska. This government is going to do that.

He wants to talk about the Shakwak project. This government, over the next five years, is going to complete the Shakwak and north Alaska Highway project. Building the bridges and the structures that are needed to finish that very massive project, which is about 90 percent -- all that money is being spent in the Member for Kluane's riding to make those roads better so he doesn't have the incidents of 15 cars pulling 15 cars, and those are the kinds of things that the Minister of Highways and Public Works and this very capable staff are worried about.

Then, of course, we have to continually upgrade the south Alaska Highway. The Klondike Highway has to be upgraded. Of course, there is the Dempster Highway -- again, it's in Klondike and north Yukon, and if we as a government are going to be able to work with the Mackenzie Valley pipeline, when and if it comes through, the Dempster Highway is going

to be a corridor. So it is very important for us to keep that on the radar screen. What are we going to do in conjunction with Northwest Territories and Canada to make sure that that road is up to standard so they can move the things they need to move up there without putting the communities of Dawson City and the other people who use that highway in danger's way?

So this government again -- the Dempster Highway. We have to keep it. What are we going to do? How are we going to upgrade it? Those are things this government has to address.

One of the highways that has been completely ignored by governments for many years is the Campbell Highway. The Campbell Highway --

**Some Hon. Member:** Point of order.

#### Point of order

**Chair:** Mr. McRobb.

**Mr. McRobb:** On a point of order, I'm not sure which rule it is but the previous Chair has ruled that the subject matter must stay within a reasonable parameter of the question. The minister is going on about other highways that were not asked about. I would remind him that we're trying to be expeditious with our time here this afternoon and he shouldn't be ragging the puck like this.

#### Chair's ruling

**Chair:** Procedurally speaking, what is before the Committee is general debate on the Department of Highways and Public Works. Questions and responses that fall within those parameters are in order.

**Hon. Mr. Lang:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, for that ruling. I would like to go back and review some of the things I've just talked about. The Campbell Highway is a concern to us as Yukoners because, as the member opposite was asking -- it was a question about our highway systems and what we're going to do with all these breakdowns on the north highway. There are also issues about the Campbell Highway.

In answering the question of the Member for Kluane: how do we as Yukoners move forward with upgrading the Campbell Highway? We have been doing that. We've been looking north of Watson Lake, working on the heavy equipment rental contracts involving Yukoners and Watson Lake residents to do the work they can do. Then we have to look at what we have to do over the next five years so we can upgrade that highway to eventually accommodate the general public as well as the resources that will be extracted from that area. There's Yukon Zinc, which is going ahead with their business plan; the Ketzmine is going ahead with a large exploration dollar expenditure; there's Pacifica, Howard's Pass, and then we look at Mac Pass.

With all of those mining exploration post-development situations, the corridor that they are looking at is the Campbell Highway. This government is going to look at the Campbell Highway before we are asked by those investors about what they can do. We want to have things such as a business plan in place so that they can plan around the upgrading of that corridor. The Shakwak project will be finished in the next two or three years. That will mean that a lot of our road-building con-



tractors will be available for the Campbell Highway system. This is very important to us as a government.

The HERC program has been positively received in the communities, which is all about employing small operators in small communities and getting them involved in some of the road building, instead of being shut out because of the size of the contract. When we look at Ross River, we look at whether or not we can get a HERC program in there. The North Canol is another corridor that we as a government have to look at to upgrade because of the resources at Howard's Pass and Mac Pass. Those are all things that the government and the Department of Highways and Public Works have to have on their radar. There have been conversations with the Northwest Territories about upgrading the North Canol and connecting it with Normal Wells again. Those are the kinds of things this department does. What is the merit for Highways and Public Works to invest in the Campbell Highway? Those are the kinds of decisions we make.

If one looks at port access -- again, for many years Skagway was our terminal. We came by train, we got on a boat, we went to Dawson and took boats from the south end of Dawson. We had a river corridor and a railroad. That was our corridor; and then, of course, with the onslaught of the Second World War and the necessity to tie North America into a highway grid, we had the Alaska Highway. What came with the Alaska Highway? The Alaska Highway came with the eventual expansion of the Dawson road; then in the 1950s it was the Dempster Highway. All these things came because somebody made a decision in the 1940s to build a highway from Alaska to the Lower 48 and, at the end of the day, created what we see today, which is a transportation grid that is top notch in a very large piece of Canada.

We can improve on it. There is always room for improvement but, at the end of the day, what we have to do -- we have the Campbell Highway -- we have to look at it from the point of what can we do to put that highway into a situation where it can be utilized by industry and still be safe for the general public to traverse the Yukon.

It also gives tourism another option, another safe option for our tourists to take advantage of this great country.

As far as investment in infrastructure, the Member for Kluane requested I go through it. I'm very, very pleased to see the White Pass coming back to Carcross. That is a big investment that the company made. It has been a work in progress for the last four or five years because it wasn't just a matter of saying we are coming to Carcross: they had to upgrade the track to make it sufficiently up to a standard that would take the traffic that they expect to bring into Carcross. As the train gets to Carcross, there is going to be 20,000 or 30,000 more guests come to Carcross. Those are people who probably would not have come to Yukon if they didn't have that option, and that option is now being offered by White Pass & Yukon Route.

Now, will they come back to Whitehorse? Well, they are back in Carcross. So, eventually, we would like to see the train, as long as it makes business sense for White Pass. If we could work with White Pass and encourage them to do it, we would

like to see them come back to Whitehorse and become part of our industrial base like it was for so many, many years.

Of course we have been working with First Nations and we have been looking at southeast Yukon. The Kaska territory is a non-settled land claim. We all know that. So we have been working with them to get access to their traditional territory for the mining community. We are working with them on forestry and oil and gas. All of those things are part of our infrastructure. That infrastructure is very important at the end of the day because transportation grids make an economy. If you don't have them, you don't have an economy.

The reason we have an influx of investors in the Yukon today is partially because of the government's go-forward attitude with industry; they look at our infrastructure and say that it's doable.

To have the Campbell Highway in the condition it is in is one thing, but to have the Campbell Highway there is another thing when you make decisions to invest -- like Yukon Zinc is doing, like Ketz is doing, like Pacifica is doing. All the issues that arise with our transportation grid -- and of course this department has the responsibility of keeping it open.

We maintain 90 percent of our roads for 12 months a year. We have the Top of the World Highway that is closed, but the Dempster Highway is kept open as much as we possibly can with the crew we have at Eagle Plains. Anyone who has utilized the highway understands that when you get to Eagle Plains. When you think of the job that those individuals do to keep that road open on a daily, weekly and monthly basis -- it's a monstrous job, Mr. Chair.

We do a good job. The Department of Highways and Public Works does a great job on our highways, maintaining them and getting people to and fro in the Yukon as much as we possibly can on a 12-month basis.

I hope this answers the Member for Kluane's questions on infrastructure and the need for it, and I invite more questions.

## INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

**Mr. Elias:** I would ask all members to join me in recognizing the presence of Andrew Charlie from my community of Old Crow. He's a 30-year employee of the minister's Department of Highways and Public Works. I just wanted to recognize him in the House today.

*Applause*

**Mr. Elias:** I have one question that's fairly straightforward, something to put on the radar screen for the minister. Mr. Chair, I have clear direction from my constituents to be respectful in here and to get things done for my riding, so I'm not going to stand here and poke the minister in the eye, in the hope I can get things done.

Straight to the point then: I'm following up on some comments regarding the condition of roads in Old Crow, which were made by the Premier at the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation general assembly in September. I was in the audience and one of my constituents asked the Premier about the conditions of the road in Old Crow. It is important to note that the meeting was recorded. My constituent said something to the effect of:

why has YTG not done anything to help make the roads better in Old Crow? The Premier replied something to the effect that, "There is equipment here and I'm sure we can address that issue quickly and we will find the funding for that" -- something to that effect. That exchange happened. I was present and so was the minister, I believe.

The roads and streets in Old Crow are in deplorable condition. The crown has been completely graded off. When grading does take place, there's no road surface to grade so the operator is turning over new material. What that causes are large ruts and potholes everywhere. In the fall, I rode with the school-children on the school bus, and when they're driving over the potholes, the bus driver said it damages the school bus and they end up having to constantly maintain the bus. Things like that affect the day-to-day life of the community.

The water, especially from the spring runoff, is unable to flow because of this. The culvert system is in disrepair. I believe 1996 was the last time any money was put into maintaining the roads. As the minister knows, there has been a large gravel quarry developed. There is crushed gravel -- surface road gravel -- that is ready to be used. I also noticed in the supplementary budget, again under the Campbell Highway, there is \$300,000 that was either saved or not spent on that project. Perhaps that could be used in Old Crow.

The budget for this winter for snow removal from the roads needs to be at a level that allows for regular removal and maintenance. Also, the maintenance budget for the Old Crow highways camp needs to be increased to levels that realistically reflect the ongoing cost of road maintenance in Old Crow in all seasons.

It's also important to recognize that the minister used the analogy that the minister holds the hammer. Basically, I am holding a very easy nail for the minister to pound in; I just need to know when to move my fingers. I have to ask the minister if he will fulfill my constituents' request, in consideration of the Premier's response to that request. Again, the gravel is ready to be used to resurface those roads in my riding.

**Hon. Mr. Lang:** I guess maybe I do hold the hammer. I didn't realize that. I certainly understand the community's issues and challenges. I understand that there are some overlapping departments -- Community Services and Highways and Public Works -- and therefore overlapping responsibilities. I don't want to hide away from our responsibilities, but I would say to the member opposite that we will sit down and answer his questions in writing and work with him to address some of those issues in his community. We will get it to him as soon as we can.

**Mr. Edzerza:** In respect to the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin, sometimes one needs to poke this minister to get results, but not necessarily in the eye. I guess we could ask the minister what he intends to do about the rail accidents on the White Pass rail tracks, or when is he going to put a power line to Fish Lake; however, responses from the minister have already taken us around the world, so the third party has heard enough.

We have no questions, and I request the unanimous consent of the Committee of the Whole to deem all lines of Vote

55, Department of Highways and Public Works, cleared or carried, as required.

**Unanimous consent re deeming all lines in Vote 55, Department of Highways and Public Works, cleared or carried**

**Chair:** Mr. Edzerza has requested unanimous consent of the Committee to deem all lines in Vote 55, Department of Highways and Public Works, cleared or carried, as required.

**All Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**Chair:** Unanimous consent has been granted

*On Operation and Maintenance Expenditures*

*Total Operation and Maintenance Expenditures in the amount of \$46,000 agreed to*

*On Capital Expenditures*

*Total Capital Expenditures in the amount of \$18,320 agreed to*

*Department of Highways and Public Works agreed to*

**Chair:** Do members wish to take a 15-minute recess while we wait for officials?

**Some Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**Chair:** There will be a 15-minute recess.

*Recess*

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

**Department of Health and Social Services**

**Chair:** The matter before the Committee is Bill No. 3, *Second Appropriation Act, 2006-07, Vote 15, Department of Health and Social Services.*

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** It is a pleasure to rise in the House today to introduce the supplementary budget for the Department of Health and Social Services for the current fiscal year.

The government and my department are requesting an increase in the operation and maintenance expenditures of close to \$14.2 million. We are also requesting an increase in capital expenditures of \$2.6 million. Some of that cost will be offset by an increase in revenues: \$2.2 million in additional transfers from the federal government and \$965,000 in additional recoveries from operation and maintenance.

As you are aware, the Department of Health and Social Services is the largest department in the government budget.

With the requested amounts, it brings the total revised vote for operation and maintenance to \$189,807,000, plus capital expenditures of \$10.6 million. I should point out that the 2006-07 main estimates had a total O&M voted of \$175,622,000, with \$14,185,000 in the supplementary budget. That, of course, brings the revised O&M total to \$189,807,000, and capital expenditures, which is the original approved vote in the spring in the main estimates, was \$7,979,000. This supplementary estimate will add \$2.6 million, to bring the revised total to \$10.6 million in capital.

The objective of the department is to work with the community to ensure quality health and social services for Yukoners. This would be achieved by helping individuals acquire the

skills to live responsible, active, healthy and independent lives and providing a range of accessible, sustainable services that assist individuals, families and communities to reach their full potential.

That is a very simple overview of the department. The department affects the lives of almost every Yukoner -- possibly every Yukoner -- in terms of the services we provide, whether through the Yukon health care plan, which is one of the best in the country, and the cards that are administered to each eligible Yukon citizen, or the services provided, such as the involvement we have with the hospital. Although not directly a part of the department, we fund the hospital to the tune of approximately \$25 million for operation and maintenance, which I have to point out is a significant increase from when our government took office at the beginning of the last mandate. The total O&M contribution provided to the Whitehorse General Hospital was approximately \$20 million, so we increased that by over 25 percent -- some \$5 million -- as well as providing an additional \$10 million in capital contributions to the hospital.

Other areas of the department include the social services side, the family and children's services, the childcare unit that assists families with daycare as well as providing a direct operating grant to the Yukon daycares and day homes, the services I should have mentioned within the area of health, the physician claims and support for the community nurse centres, the Watson Lake Cottage Hospital, and the Dawson Health Centre. There are many areas we touch in terms of ensuring that Yukoners have access to health care when they need it, including regular doctor checkups and so on and so forth.

Members will be aware that the issue of access to a family physician has been a challenge in past years and we as a government have placed a very high priority on addressing this matter and ensuring health care access to Yukoners when they need it.

To that end, in the 2006-07 fiscal year, we introduced the health human resources strategy, to which \$12.7 million is allocated over a five-year period. The aim of the strategy is to improve Yukoners' access to health professionals, both in the immediate, future and long term. Again, I must remind members that although we have challenges immediately in terms of access to a physician, there are issues we anticipate in the near future in terms of planning, that being in the next five and 10 years, with regard to access to other health professionals such as nurses. In fact, I should point out to members that the most critical need is for family physicians but there are other areas -- radiologists, for example -- where we currently face some challenges in attracting the professionals we need. We also face challenges in recruiting dental therapists.

The health human resources strategy provided, as I have noted, \$12.7 million in terms of its total budget. Throughout this year, I believe beginning in June, we rolled out the first programs from the March announcement that we would develop the strategy. There has been significant work. The department has made yeoman efforts, Mr. Chair, in developing this strategy, bringing it to fruition and implementing it. I would remind members that in terms of the timelines, this also involved working with health professions, so there has been sig-

nificant work to bring forward a strategy of this magnitude in such a very short period of time.

The family physician incentive program for new graduates was the first of the two programs that we have implemented to improve Yukoners' access to family physicians. The family physician incentive program provides financial assistance to Canadian citizens who recently graduated medical school in exchange for five years of service in the Yukon. I would point out to members that the program was structured very carefully so that we would allow it to be open to Canadian citizens or landed immigrants who had graduated from another university, such as some of the universities in Great Britain or in Ireland. It provides that assistance, but the requirement for someone to receive funding under the program is that they have reached a level of qualifications that they are eligible for full licensure by the Canadian College of Family Physicians.

The financial assistance under the family physician incentive program for new graduates provides a new doctor with \$50,000 over the term of the agreement, which, as I stated, is five years. I would note to members that we are actually very pleased that this has received some national attention through such magazines as *Recruitment Canada*, which is a Canadian physicians' recruitment guide. This is the November 2006 issue. We have received coverage that we are very pleased to see on page 6. There is a paid ad, paid for by the Yukon Department of Health and Social Services. The ad has been worked on in cooperation with the Department of Tourism. As well, we are working with the Yukon Medical Association on this initiative. I would be happy to provide the members with a photocopy of the ad. It reads as follows: "Extraordinary Career Opportunities; Extraordinary Lifestyle". It is under a very beautiful picture of canoeists sitting on a beach.

It continues: "The Yukon has a lot to offer family physicians looking for a rewarding career and an extraordinary lifestyle. Whitehorse is a vibrant community offering white-water kayaking only minutes from the downtown core, a world-class performing arts centre, an indoor sports complex, and hiking and biking trails right outside your back door. The new Whitehorse regional hospital overlooking the Yukon River serves the territory's 32,000 people and provides a supportive and collegial environment. Whether you are into outdoor activities or looking for a safe community in which to raise a family, the Yukon has it all, and it's only two and a half hours from Vancouver by plane. The Yukon is served by 50 physicians and specialists, including visiting specialists. If you think the Yukon might be the kind of place you want to practise medicine, please contact Dr. Stephanie Buchanan at -- " and here there is a phone number, "-- or e-mail [hss@gov.yk.ca](mailto:hss@gov.yk.ca)".

We have paid for this ad, of course, but in addition to that on page 7 of the publication, there is an article referring to northern Canada and the changes that have been made. It begins with reference to the agreement we reached in September 2006 with the Alberta Capital Health Authority located in Edmonton to assist Yukon patients referred to Edmonton for medical care under the program that we have discussed previously, and we refer to as the patient navigation program. The intent of that program is to assist Yukoners who are travelling Outside

for medical travel by providing them with access to a service that we provide in cooperation with the Capital Health Authority -- providing them some level of navigation assistance as they move around the city to access different appointments and as they move around in what is often a very difficult and trying time in someone's life, which is often when someone is forced to travel outside the territory. They may be facing some level of discomfort and we have stepped forward in this area with the Capital Health Authority and, as noted on page 7 of this publication, we have received coverage and it recognizes as well the work that we are currently in the process of completing with Vancouver's Coastal Health Authority and the Calgary Health Region to provide similar services.

With the Yukon's medical travel program, despite our \$1.7-million increase to its services this year, we still face significant challenges in providing Yukoners outside the territory with access to care. We have some of the best access of any jurisdiction due to these agreements, but we are unable, unfortunately, to pay for medical escorts for compassionate reasons. We do so when a doctor recommends that it is medically necessary when an individual has a level of need requiring that service or for underage children.

This service we are implementing with the Capital Health Authority and with Vancouver Coastal Health and Calgary health regions will provide coordination services so there will be a friendly face and someone to help them from appointment to appointment and to ensure they receive the care they need, understand the care they need and do not run into issues either of trouble and stress through not being able to find services they require or perhaps even miss appointments, which has been a fact of life in the past. We're very pleased we've been able to provide this service.

The article in this publication also goes on to recognize the new program we have implemented, the family physician incentive program. It also notes the success we've had through immigration, in having new doctors come in through the Yukon nominee program, which is largely the responsibility of the Department of Education. It's a program under their auspices, although there is work and discussion at a departmental level on these issues. Through the Yukon nominee program, we attracted two new medical doctors in August of this year.

As I've laid out for members -- and I'd be happy to provide them with a photocopy of this publication, should they choose -- we are receiving national attention for the steps we have taken in implementing initiatives to attract physicians. There is interest among Yukoners and among Canadian citizens. We've been very pleased with the number of inquiries we've received under this program, and at this point we have one applicant who has successfully applied and committed to opening a practice under this, Dr. Huey Chau, who will be opening his services and accepting patients next month. We look forward to further announcements in this area.

The second program, of course, under the health human resources strategy that we implemented to improve our access to family physicians is the medical education bursary. Under it, Yukon students attending medical school are eligible for \$10,000 worth of assistance per year after graduation. If they

enter medical residency in a Yukon family practice, they are eligible for an additional \$15,000 per year.

Under that program, we are currently supporting five Yukon students who are attending medical school. We announced the names of those individuals earlier this year, and we are very pleased that we can help out in this area. It was a gap in our program before and, of course, as I mentioned, the real hook in this to get Yukon students to come back to the Yukon is the \$15,000 per year we provide them if they choose to enter their residency in a Yukon family medical practice.

Other jurisdictions have found that in attempting to create a requirement for students whom they fund with a bursary to come back to the jurisdiction is very difficult to administer. If a student chooses not to return and honour their obligations, the costs of trying to recover that money or trying to go after them are usually far in excess of the benefits. Often, individuals do not have the money or they may be difficult to locate.

Recognizing the experiences that other jurisdictions have had and in cooperation and discussion with experts in other areas, we recognized that there was no value to implementing a policy that would not be enforceable. We have instead provided the very attractive incentive of \$15,000 per year if Yukon students do come home.

Of course, the very fact that they are from here is often a very strong incentive. Results from other areas have proven that students attending medical or nursing school or a school for other health professions -- those who feel some compulsion to step forward and help their fellow citizens through medical education often feel a duty to come home and provide that service. It is often that same compassion and level of devotion to public service and the service of their fellow human beings that has compelled them to seek that education in the first place.

So we recognize that, and we certainly appreciate it. I would point out to members opposite and remind members opposite that the physician programs that I have referred to are ones that we have implemented largely due to the recommendations and requests of health professionals. In this case in particular, the Yukon Medical Association, at its 2005 annual general meeting, passed a resolution requesting we implement a program such as the family physician incentive program. That is something we have done. We have implemented that, largely due to their request. The government is pleased to act upon the advice of the health professionals and the requests of individual Yukoners, which I know I heard dating back as far as 2002. We will certainly not attempt to claim credit for the ideas. Any member of any party who stands up and claims otherwise and claims that they are responsible is quite simply not being factual. I would urge all members to give credit where credit is due: to the members of the Yukon public, to the health professionals who brought this forward, and to department officials who brought this program to fruition following the direction to bring it into place and the approval of the budgetary authority. I look forward to questions from the members opposite.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**Mr. Mitchell:** I thank the minister for his introductory remarks. I just would like to note for the record that we would appreciate a little more than 10 or 15 minutes' notice of the

departments to be debated. Even those of us who serve on the opposition benches make appointments to meet with our constituents and other members of the general public based upon the information that is transmitted to us after House leaders' meetings in the morning. We do recognize that sometimes events change, but we just wanted to get on the record that we do try to depend on the schedule as presented by the House leader, who happens to be the Minister of Health and Social Services.

Having said that, I look forward to engaging in some questions and answers with the minister. I would just like to start off, first of all, by expressing my appreciation to all the health care practitioners -- family physicians, specialists, nurses, physiotherapists, and all the other technicians and specialists that we have in the Yukon.

I have lived in the north for the past 35 years and counting, which is probably almost as long as the minister has lived here. I have been very fortunate and my family has been very fortunate with the treatment that we have received. Several years ago, my wife was injured in an accident in the bush. Not only did we get prompt and effective treatment, but in fact specialists Outside -- she did need to travel Outside afterwards as part of her rehabilitation -- remarked on the quality on the reconstructive surgery that was done by Dr. Storey at Whitehorse General Hospital. I think it's okay to name someone in this way. We were very fortunate in many ways, if one can be fortunate when having an accident, that the accident occurred in the Yukon, in terms of the care that we received and the follow-up care, as well, which has been excellent. I think that sometimes we need to debate the issues of access to health care and the shortage of practitioners, but we may sometimes leave the impression that we are critical of those people who are dedicated and working here. That is certainly not the intent.

Since the minister has opened his remarks by talking about the family physician incentive program, I have some remarks to make about that.

I appreciate that this minister appears to be open to good suggestions from members on this side, as he has already incorporated or made use of some ideas and, as he noted, those ideas are not exclusive to members on this side; they may be ideas that have been floating around for some time and perhaps we just brought them forward and reminded the government of some of these options. We appreciate the fact that the minister's department has brought forward the particular programs he has talked about.

In terms of family physicians and physicians in general, I wonder if the minister or his official could provide some numbers of how many doctors are practising here now, how many there were a year ago, three years ago and five years ago. I wonder if the minister has any idea as to the full-time equivalent, because there are two doctors I know in the family practice I go to who share a practice, so sometimes the number of physicians is not, in and of itself, indicative of the full-time equivalent -- if we can use that term -- of the doctors practising here now.

If we could do that as a sort of Q&A, I won't leave a whole bunch of questions out at once so the minister could respond to that, and we'll move on.

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** I'd like to begin by referencing some of the leader of the official opposition's first comments there and also take the opportunity, since he brought up Dr. Storey's name, to also express positive comments and thanks to him as an individual. As the member is aware, we have many doctors who have served Yukon citizens for a long time, he being one who, at times, has taken on the service of being the Yukon's only surgeon. There are many people throughout Yukon society who owe him thanks for his service as a family doctor, including me when he treated me for measles back when I was about three years old. My mother has the use of her hand following an accident, thanks to his fine work as a surgeon. I would just like to give credit where credit is due to him for his long service in that area.

With regard to origin of the programs there, I will resist the temptation to engage in debate with the member opposite on this. I think ultimately the Yukon public doesn't really care whose idea it was. Hopefully we've put in place sound programs, as I believe we have, and where the idea came from is, quite frankly, irrelevant. We are pleased to put the program in place and think it will stand us in good stead in addressing our issues pertaining to access to care.

With regard to the member's question about the number of doctors we have practising, I will have to get back to the member on the exact number. It does fluctuate somewhat. We have an increase in doctors this year compared to where we were last year because of some of the new physicians we have attracted. That is also offset by one physician who comes to mind who has retired from the family practice.

Retirements are a matter of fact; we have no control over that. That is a challenge from a public policy side we face and will continue to face in professions, including physicians. In fact, across the entire health spectrum, it is one factor of the challenge that Canada as a nation, from coast to coast, is facing with the increasing number of aging persons -- the demographics and impending retirement of the baby-boom generation. The fact is that at the same time people reach a more senior level of age -- the golden years, perhaps I should say -- there is often an increased requirement for care, particularly for those who develop health problems.

At that same time, of course, we are also facing the challenge that that same age group includes the ones who are retiring from our health professions. A significant number of our health professionals, including physicians and nurses and in fact across the spectrum, are of that age bracket where they will be nearing retirement in the near future.

And that, of course, is one of the reasons why we are acting in the health human resources strategy with bursaries in areas where we don't currently face significant challenges in recruitment, but anticipate that we may have a problem down the road if we don't act today.

As far as a full-time equivalent-type count with regard to physicians, that's something that is not really feasible to come up with. The reality that we face is that family practices are run

by doctors; they are owned by the doctors; they are professionals, but they are also private business people. They choose their schedules. They may work extraordinarily long days, or they may choose to work part time, due to lifestyle choices, family commitments, et cetera. We don't control that. We don't have access to their schedules. We deal with it, of course, from the billing perspective, but the complexities and administrative effort that would be involved in trying to compile an exact picture of how many doctors are working, for approximately how much time, would be very difficult to do. It would fluctuate, and it would be a lot of staff time spent without much benefit.

We do know from the billings and from our work with the Yukon Medical Association, of course, and the comments of individuals, that we are facing some challenges in access to family physicians. In terms of total number of doctors, the Yukon has more family physicians today than we did back in 1996, when the population of the territory was at its highest. And although, of course, we are only about 1,500 people less than we had at that time, we do have a significant number more doctors. I believe the number back then was approximately 40, whereas right now I believe the number is approximately 60 in terms of family physicians.

So we do have challenges in that area. That is a fact of life. Some doctors in the territory who have been working here for many years are choosing to take partial retirement. It is a reality. We would far rather have them working part of the time than not at all. We have others who, for lifestyle reasons such as raising children, are choosing to not work as many hours. Again, that is a fact of life. With the natural environment we have here, some may choose to spend time skiing, kayaking or whatever their pastime is in the Yukon outdoors. That lifestyle choice is very often what attracts doctors here, especially in terms of some of the more recent additions to the physician community.

As a government, we have no realistic ability to control the number of hours or have any direct involvement over that issue. We have, through the Yukon Medical Association, an agreement. Of course, previously the first attempt we made as a government to increase the number of patients being served was a section under the agreement that provides physicians with an incentive for taking on new patients. That had some success, but it was not successful enough. That is one of the reasons why we implemented the programs under the health human resources strategy.

Again, I would remind members that in terms of the timing of this, the role of the family physician incentive program and the medical education bursary were both moved through very quickly. There was tremendous priority put on them and they were rolled out as quickly as we could get the program structure in place and the money out the door. We got that done because, as I have stated before and will state again, we are not prepared, as a government, to accept Yukoners not having access to the care they need. We are committed to take the policy steps necessary to address shortages and challenges within the system as quickly as we can.

We also recognize that the initiatives we have put in place won't solve the problems overnight. They are a start and will take some time to implement.

I should point out to members other areas of the health human resources strategy in addition to the ones we have implemented. One area that will be rolled out in the new year is our increased support for our family physician residency. That, of course, is an attempt to get more medical students doing their residency in the Yukon. That is primarily through an arrangement with the University of Calgary, to send more students to the north for their internship for that level of experience.

We are very pleased that that program is getting very near to being ready to roll out. There are some details being worked out but it's something that we will be announcing the exact details of in the not-too-distant future.

Of course, I would be remiss if I didn't remind members of the other efforts we have made under the health human resources strategy in terms of quadrupling the investment in the nurse education bursary. That is the only program that existed for some time prior to the health human resources strategy. However, we doubled the number of applicants that would be accepted and doubled the financial assistance to \$5,000 per year. Right now we are supporting nine nursing students at various stages of their studies, with an additional four to start in the next fiscal year.

The third bursary we rolled out was the health professions education bursary, which is designed to support Yukoners training for other health professions, including the identified priority areas of pharmacy, physiotherapy, occupational therapy, speech-language pathology and audiology, medical laboratory, medical radiology, dietetics and nutrition, and licensed practical nursing.

That is also a \$5,000-a-year support through that program. So again, I have to stress that we are placing a strong emphasis on investing in Yukoners, in helping them get the education they need in order to come back and serve the community. We're very pleased with the uptake that has occurred to date. Certainly, we will look at other areas moving forward, as I stated when we were on the health human resources strategy. We deliberately built some flexibility into the program over its five-year term. I have to again stress that the program itself uses the majority of the funding that we have under the territorial health access fund, which is one of the funds that resulted from the efforts of our Premier and the premiers of N.W.T. and Nunavut in laying out, successfully and historically, to the federal government the need for base funding in addition to per capita funding arrangements.

Were it not for the fact that they walked out on a nationally televised press conference, at which the then Prime Minister was attempting to make an announcement of how he had provided the mechanism to fix health care for a generation; were it not for their successful timing and the support of the provinces in their endeavours, we would still be in a situation our territory and the other territories have been in for decades in trying to get to federal recognition of the fact that per capita funding arrangements are inadequate to address the needs of our three

northern territories, due to our large areas and our sparse populations within our jurisdictions.

So under that funding -- the territorial health access fund -- the commitment made at that time was to \$29.6 million, of which \$8 million is broken out for the medical travel fund and was specifically identified for that. Under the medical travel fund we have invested \$1.6 million in our increases made this year to the travel for medical treatment subsidy, a medical travel subsidy. We increased the funding from its previous level of \$30 per day for travel outside the Yukon to a new level of \$75 per day, and we made it effective on the second day rather than on the fourth day, which had previously been the case.

As well, we increased the subsidy for travel within the territory for those in rural areas from 18.5 cents per kilometre to 30 cents per kilometre. For the first time, we also made this support available to Yukoners living in rural areas outside of communities.

We recognize that with both areas under the medical treatment program, the subsidies provided don't fully address the cost that Yukoners face in travelling for treatment or travelling outside the territory. It is, however, a significant support, particularly when compared to other jurisdictions and the support that they provide or, in some cases, simply don't provide at all. In fact, I would draw to members' attention that, for people living down in southern B.C., for example, in some cases they have to travel a similar length of time in terms of hours by vehicle, by public transportation, et cetera, as our citizens travel by plane to access care in a hospital such as Vancouver. Their support system, in comparison to ours, is far less attractive. In many cases they don't provide support at all, so we are happy that we can provide this treatment. Of course, as always, we look forward to continuing to review areas of our program.

The other thing I would point out to members is, when we look at the travel for medical treatment program or out-of-territory subsidies, when we look at issues around that, we have to also keep in mind the issues of what services we can provide here in the territory by reducing our costs; by enhancing the investment in capital terms, if we have the reasonable ability to provide a service; and very importantly, to attract the necessary professionals to run the service and maintain them. Then we look at doing things such as that, and I would be remiss if I did not at this point especially express my thanks to the Yukon Hospital Foundation and members of Yukon society for the efforts that they made in stepping forward to develop a charitable group that provides funding to assist the hospital in purchasing equipment quicker than it would be able to simply through its own budgets and through the contributions of the Yukon government. In real terms what it means is that we can purchase capital equipment -- medical equipment -- quicker than we would otherwise be able to hope.

These hospital foundations have been, for many years, a fact. In other areas of the country, they are a very valuable addition and an illustration of people choosing to make contributions to their own community. We really appreciate the support provided by Yukoners and volunteers in putting that together, such as the Northwestel Festival of Trees, which recently concluded. The contribution of Yukoners to the fund was very

moving. I believe that the most expensive tree sold for \$15,500. The contributions that were raised through the trees alone in the evening were over \$70,000. We really support these Yukoners stepping forward and taking ownership and assisting with their charitable contributions, for which, of course, they receive a tax receipt, but we do appreciate that they have chosen to provide this support.

As members will recognize -- or I hope they recognize -- from coast to coast, nationwide, we are facing increased challenges in terms of health services. Other provinces and territories face services that are far less than ours and have greater challenges in terms of cost. Through the hard work of officials within the department and efforts to ensure that our system remains sound, the Yukon's health care system is an excellent service. We provide a very good product, although at a high cost in terms of the challenges faced in other areas -- the job is being done very well here. I give credit to officials for their work in ensuring that good advice is provided, good research is done, and efforts are made to ensure that the system runs well.

We are very pleased with what we have. Of course, we recognize the need for moving forward on this, particularly in terms of the challenges we expect in years to come as a government. We are very focused on making the decisions now that are necessary to ensure that our health care system addresses any gaps that currently exist and moves forward to put our system on a sound footing for the next five, 10, 15 and 20 years -- that we make the decisions today that will set us up very well as a territory, as a jurisdiction, for ensuring that our health care system remains strong in the face of national pressures and challenges and that the decisions are made to provide Yukoners with the care that we all want and need for ourselves and our families.

**Mr. Mitchell:** I have to say, Mr. Chair, that I'm somewhat disappointed in how this is progressing because I did look forward to a focused debate. I would just like to note that when the minister has the opportunity to review the Blues, I think he will find that when he first stood on his feet for his opening remarks, he actually made the statement that he hoped that no one would seek to take credit for any ideas, because ideas such as tuition forgiveness, bursaries, and other incentive programs have been floating around for some time. I believe that when I responded to his remarks, I actually acknowledged that and said that, while we pushed forward or promoted some of those ideas last year, we acknowledge that others have as well, and they have been floating around for some time. I thought we would have sort of a collegial discussion.

I am also disappointed that, after lecturing that we should not be taking credit on this side, he then went on to proudly promote the credit that should be due to the Premier for walking out of a meeting with the Prime Minister, for leading the walkout, so to speak, and suggesting that all the credit for any funding that flowed, in terms of increasing territorial funding for health care access, was a result of the walkout, as opposed to having anything to do with the Government of Canada actually undertaking some of these things or anything else.

I guess if he wants to spend his time talking about that and the Festival of Trees -- I do appreciate that he left the CF-18s out of the remarks this time.

Looking back at his initial response to the Speech from the Throne, which perhaps set new heights or depths in rambling -- but perhaps we'll try this differently in order to make better use of time. Rather than asking a question, then sitting and getting an answer, I'll ask a series of questions. The minister and his officials can take notes, and then the minister can respond to the series of questions together.

So, we would wonder, as well -- the reopening of the Thomson Centre with 44 new continuing care beds. We'd like to know some timelines. When is this now projected to occur, and what are the estimated operation and maintenance costs for a full year? If the minister can respond -- and on some of these things that we ask, it's quite acceptable if we get them by legislative return. We recognize that the minister may not have everything at his fingertips, and that although the officials generally do, they won't necessarily have everything.

Another area that has been spoken about with great concern, and spoken to me by constituents who are also health care professionals, is the situation regarding treatment of mental health patients and the lack of any sort of dedicated or secure or separate facility for that purpose. I know that, right now, the people who are being treated for mental health problems are treated in Whitehorse General Hospital, and I've been told by health care professionals that they are sometimes concerned about the co-location of people who may be undergoing some level of distress in their lives being, you know, just a little bit away from the pediatrics ward or some other area of the hospital.

We know that the Thomson Centre is not going to be the facility that is going to serve for this purpose, and we know that, in the case of people who are being treated for criminal activity, the Whitehorse Correctional Centre does not have very good opportunities for this. So we're wondering what the plans are to provide a more appropriate and secure facility that is both better for the patients being treated as well as perhaps safer for other patients undergoing other treatments.

Now, the minister spoke at some length about the \$12.7 million health human resources strategy for improving access to family physicians and other health care professionals. I also wonder if the minister can give us some details on the collaborative health care facility that was discussed by his party during the election campaign. I know our party had our own proposal in our platform, and I know that the YRNA have also undergone discussions about this in the past. It has been not only discussed during the campaign by the government's party, but since then it was discussed, I believe, at the annual general meeting of the Yukon Medical Association.

I know that there are some concerns that have been expressed by physicians. It doesn't mean they necessarily oppose the concept but, rather, they have expressed concerns regarding how it would be structured, the costs, how the physicians and other health care professionals who take part will be compensated because, as we know, under the current model, the privately owned clinics -- it's publicly provided health care, but

the clinics are run as business enterprises, you might say, by the physicians that own them -- they cover their own overhead, they cover their own operating costs, everything from the heat and the lights and the cost of their equipment to the staffing on the front-end and the accounting and so forth.

I have heard expressed directly to me by physicians that they are interested in knowing whether there will be some adjustment in the compensation structure to cover the cost if the government is intending for the collaborative health care facility to actually be run by the government, or if the government, rather, is looking at a model where they will help to organize the concept of a facility where family physician specialists, physiotherapists, nurses, perhaps nurse practitioners and others, and pharmacists are co-located but it would still be run by the doctors and the other professionals.

Will this still be a fee-for-service remuneration process or not? We are hoping we can hear that also. When is the timeline for when we might see the pilot project move forward? Are there anticipated costs or budgets for the first year?

Another area to do with this portfolio is the Watson Lake health care facility. What will be the total budget for this building at its completion? We know this year, between the main estimates and this supplementary bill, Bill No. 3, that we are now looking at \$3.4 million being spent. We were previously told that the bulk of the spending in this supplementary budget is spending that has largely already occurred as opposed to simply anticipated, so we are presuming that the bulk of that \$3.4 million has been spent. Perhaps the minister can correct me if a portion of the additional \$1.058 million is in the future, or has the bulk of that already been spent in the current fiscal year? Can the minister confirm that the initial target of the budget of \$5.2 million is still planned to be met? If not, what are the new overall revised targets?

While we are on the subject of multi-level health care facilities, I have to ask about the Dawson facility because there certainly isn't any reference to that in this particular budget bill. I would have to ask: how much money has been spent to date on that project and what is the current status of the project? There was once a set of plans. The former Health and Social Services minister and the former MLA for Klondike together with some of his constituents expressed some concerns about that particular set of plans. Plans were modified a number of times and, as a result, the project didn't move forward and the money in previous budgets lapsed. Is there now an agreed-upon set of plans? If so, is there now a projected timeline for moving forward?

We know that we can anticipate, if this is moving forward soon, something in the main estimates in the spring, but we would like an update on the facility.

Speaking of seniors facilities in general -- and I know that the approach that has been taken by the government toward an elders facility in Haines Junction is via the Yukon Housing Corporation, which is looking at it as affordable seniors housing -- I am wondering if there are budgetary implications for this minister's department. Are there any plans to perhaps improve this facility, beyond the initial plans we previously heard through Yukon Housing Corporation, to incorporate more of



the things that have been asked for by the St. Elias Seniors residents at the public meeting that I attended out there? Also, are there any plans to make any changes or improvements to the existing nursing station in Haines Junction? I am wondering specifically about the coordination between the two projects, which will be closely located if not co-located.

Another area I would ask about is the 44 continuing care beds at the Thomson Centre. The minister has rightly pointed out that we don't just deal with short-term or immediate needs. Are there long-term plans coming forward from the minister to address the fact that we have -- as the minister has noted -- an increasing population? It has not yet reached its former levels, but we also appear to have an aging population here in the Yukon. As I have discussed with the minister previously, there are more and more seniors who are now living with the younger generations. In my immediate neighbourhood, there are several such families. There are three generations living in houses. Eventually, that is going to create a real bulge in the requirement for increased extended-care beds and other seniors and continuing care facilities. I would like to know if the minister has any long-term plan or vision.

I would also like to ask, again, whether the minister will consider, in terms of childcare, doing something short term. We recognize that there are long-term issues that need to be addressed but, for example, why not immediately look at increasing the subsidy by \$100 per month per preschool child? We know that an increasing number of parents are finding it difficult to pay for the increasing costs of childcare.

I would also ask the minister if he could give us an update on the progress of the *Children's Act* and the timelines. I know that we discussed this during Question Period and sometimes in that climate, due to the nature of the timelines for the questions and answers and the presence of the media, we sometimes don't get the answers we are seeking but, rather, we get references to former governments and whose responsibility it is.

I am hoping in this more moderately toned, collegial Committee of the Whole, the minister may find the ability to provide us with some answers on that.

Similarly, I know there has been public discussion of the need — the Anti-Poverty Coalition has raised it — for funding for a permanent or full-time food bank, I guess. I would agree with the minister. To say a "permanent" food bank would imply that we would accept the fact that there will always be this need. I think it's incumbent upon us as a society to work toward ending the need for food banks; rather, at this point, establishing a food bank that is secure -- at least for the period of time that it's required -- in its funding, as the NGOs that previously dealt with it have struggled to come up with stable sources of funding to meet the demand.

It seems to be an unfortunate corollary to the situation or economy that, while on the one hand, it is busy and, as has been pointed out, housing prices have gone up and there are labour shortages, it seems that those people either by lack of skills, opportunity or other reasons, do not find it possible to be fully employed or employed in such a way as they can meet all of their needs, that those people, for some reason, seem to struggle even more. Perhaps those reasons are the higher costs

of housing, food, clothing, fuel and gasoline that go with a busy economy.

I would also like to ask some questions regarding some of the commitments that were made in the minister's Yukon Party platform, specifically a social worker mentoring program to provide greater continuity and sharing of knowledge between experienced professionals and new graduates, working with the federal government to expedite the immigration of health care and other professionals into the territory, providing support services for children with severe disabilities such as cerebral palsy, muscular dystrophy, and Down's syndrome, in addition to the services already provided to children with autism, and creating a family support for families with disabilities unit. Does the minister have a timeline for creating that family support for families with disabilities unit?

Excluding the childcare benefit and residential school monies from income determination for social assistance -- again, that comes directly from the platform of the now Yukon Party government, so I'm sure the minister can speak to it.

Eliminating the clawback of the child tax credit from income tax -- if the minister can explain exactly what he means by that.

Reviewing the funding arrangements for foster families -- we would like to know just what timeline the minister has for undertaking such a review and what time the minister anticipates such a review would take.

Finally, again -- we have raised this in Question Period -- the minister has suggested that they need to do a proper review and study; and of course I'm talking about social assistance rates. The people who have to use social assistance programs are certainly telling us that they will continue to struggle while the minister conducts the review.

I'm wondering whether the minister might find some more immediate relief, in terms of providing additional new monies. Why are there no new monies in this budget, when this was such a topic of debate during the spring and summer and during the campaign?

I believe I'm at the end of my time, and I look forward to the minister's responses to these and other questions.

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** I will endeavour to reply to the member's questions. I'm not certain whether I'll be able to catch them all at once. There was quite a stream of them there but I'll begin here, and if the member has further questions, I would urge him to remind me. Of course I'll review the Blues before we engage in debate on further days, but if I miss anything I would ask the member to bear with me. There is no intent to miss any portions of the questions. I will attempt to provide full answers in these areas.

I would also hope for some patience from the member opposite. There was some criticism earlier on that he didn't quite like the manner in which I referred to things. It's a bit of a challenge in trying to answer the questions of the opposition, as I hope members will appreciate. Frequently we hear the complaint that either there is too much information and we spent too much time talking about it; or, contrarily, the members complain that we didn't provide enough information and didn't fully answer the question. So I will attempt to answer it with

just the right amount. If members have further questions, I'd be happy to respond.

Beginning with the member's questions with regard to social assistance rates, in our 2006 election platform we made a commitment to review the social assistance rates and provide incentives for those on social assistance who want to enter the workforce.

As I have previously stated on the floor of the House, we are currently reviewing the social assistance rates. I will also again stress to members that we do have the ability within social assistance to provide emergency funding at the discretion of the director if there is a need for people to receive additional money to meet basic needs. I would point out that there is a lot of discretion. If somebody can't afford to buy food, there is discretion; if someone can't afford to install a broken hot water heater, there is discretion; if they can't afford a new coat for their son or daughter, there is discretion. There is room in there to address the needs, so I would remind members and point out that suggestions that we may be in some imminent or current problem where the basic needs of individuals cannot be met through social assistance -- there is the ability through the structure -- through the emergency funding and discretion. It is more in terms of wanting to ensure operationally that we are meeting the basic needs at an appropriate level and not having to dip into that emergency funding process that requires us to review the rates. We will review those.

But the member also suggests that there are challenges and difficulties in meeting needs on social assistance. I would remind members that the intent of the social assistance program has never been to provide a luxurious level of funding; it is intended to ensure that basic needs are being met, that no one goes hungry, that no one goes without food, that no one gets cold, that they are provided enough to meet the basic needs. It is intended as a funder of last resort, so we will review that but we are also conscious and must be cognizant of the need to ensure that social assistance rates, when viewed comparative to the minimum wage or those working within areas for low income -- that we don't create an incentive that actually makes it more expensive for somebody to be employed within the system and is in fact a disincentive to them doing so.

We want to ensure that our system always meets the basic needs of every individual in our society. The system is intended as a safety net and we want to make sure that it remains an appropriate and effective safety net.

We are reviewing it right now. I again remind members that we are taking a look at incentives to assist people on social assistance entering the workforce. We are very cognizant of that. We want to ensure that there are not financial disincentives in place that would make it difficult for people to move from social assistance. We are taking a look at it and reviewing, right now, programs that are in place in other parts of Canada. Work is underway, as well, with the Whitehorse Chamber of Commerce on a pilot project that has covered, I believe, 12 individuals to assist people to move from social assistance into the workforce.

Members will recognize that we also made platform commitments on recognizing the need to improve skills training to

create increased access to the labour force and the necessary skills required to enter the labour force and improve the entry-level labour pool. This would be done through measures including reviewing the needs of those on social assistance, financial disincentives that make it difficult for them to enter the workforce -- including reviewing disincentives that make it difficult for seniors to enter the workforce without losing pension income. As members may be aware, a lot of people, including relatives of mine, retired early and, after that time, they are still fully capable of working and discover that they actually wouldn't mind making a little extra money and doing something for a few hours a day. We want to give them that opportunity. We want to make sure that it is a choice, but we want to give them that opportunity because nationally we are facing an increasing shortage of entry-level workers. So it is to provide that opportunity and to make the system work for everyone in it and provide lots of alternatives and capacity for living a lifestyle and engaging in part-time work, if they so choose, that is attractive to them.

We also are committed to taking a look at issues related to childcare that may make it difficult for parents to move into the workforce. I would point out in regard to the member's questions related to childcare, there was a very clear delineation in the election. I recognize the member's request that we do an immediate increase to childcare funding and childcare subsidy, and I would remind the member that it was very clear during the 2006 election that there was a clear delineation in position between the Yukon Party and the NDP, who recognized the need to do the work with operators, with childcare workers, and with parents to figure out the needs of the system and to act based upon that, and the Liberal Party, which seemed very anxious to pull numbers out of the air without knowing exactly what they meant.

We're committed to doing the work. We're committed to acting. And I remind members that it was our government that took action on this file after years of neglect by NDP and Liberal governments. We provided a 40-percent increase to the direct operating grant, an increase amounting to approximately \$900,000 per year, raising the total investment by the Yukon government into funding the direct operating grant and the childcare subsidy -- the assistance we provide to parents for childcare -- raising our total level of investment into childcare to some \$5.3 million per year. I would point out again that it was a \$900,000 increase from previous levels. That works out to, on average, \$5,462 per child enrolled in childcare, as of our most recent tally.

Mr. Chair, moving on to other issues raised by the leader of the official opposition, with regard to excluding the universal childcare benefit from social assistance, I would point out to the member that we have done so. We have honoured the platform commitment to exclude that from income determination for the purpose of social assistance. As well, as passed by the Assembly in third reading and waiting for assent by the Commissioner, we have excluded that from income tax, so we are honouring our platform commitments and we have, in fact, delivered on that already.

We have also excluded from social assistance the Yukon child benefit. We are delivering on those commitments and I am pleased to tell the member opposite that that has already been approved and the order-in-council will soon be released publicly and they will be able to hang it on their wall.

With regard to children with extreme disabilities, the leader of the official opposition asked questions about that. That is one that I am very pleased to talk about. We were approached during the last mandate by parents representing children with autism to provide them with increased control over the therapy services made available to their children, to the services provided by government through that. We acted and provided funding to Autism Yukon, which is an association for both their operation purposes and some level of administrative support, as well as increasing the funding within the department to assist them in this regard. If my memory serves, the amount we provide to families of children with autism, in terms of both the direct funding to Autism Yukon and the services within the department, is about \$480,000 per year.

The point has been brought forward by others -- families of children with other disabilities. The parents of one child -- I will not name the condition for reasons of confidentiality -- approached me, suggesting that services should be provided to their child as well. And we're very pleased that we're going to be acting on this and provide a similar level of support to children with severe disabilities, including cerebral palsy, muscular dystrophy and Down's syndrome. This will be based on the model of what we provide to families of children with autism, but we recognize the fact that, with many of these conditions, they face an even greater challenge than that faced by parents of children with autism.

Parents of children with autism certainly face great challenges in helping to raise their child and provide them with the therapeutic services they need. But it is a condition that affects a number of Yukon children and, by the number of those affected, and through the volunteer efforts and dedication of certain of the parents of children with autism, they have become more involved and are doing a great job of doing so, and I commend them for that.

But with some of the other disabilities there are, in some cases, one or two or a small handful of children afflicted, and it would simply not be realistic to expect the parents to be able to step forward in a manner similar to that done by Autism Yukon, in having an organization to manage and be involved in that service.

So, we're going to enhance the support within the department to facilitate their choices -- provide them increased control over the types of therapy provided to their child and increased involvement in that, because we truly believe that parents know best and have the right to be involved in decisions related to their child's education and therapy, and we are fully committed to moving forward on this.

As to the exact timing of an announcement, I wish I could stand up and name the exact date. It is one of the top priorities that we have identified in moving forward. I look forward to making an announcement about the exact timing of this early in the new year. There will be several phases to the roll-out of

support, but we hope to announce the first phase of it early in 2007, get it on the ground and to families as quickly as possible.

Moving on to another area, the member again asked about the *Children's Act*. I believe that, to a large extent, I answered this in Question Period. Again I would draw to members' attention that the *Children's Act* project is a partnership between us and the Council of Yukon First Nations to review that piece of Yukon legislation and make changes to it. We recognize the importance of this for all Yukon citizens. There are a significant number of First Nation children who are affected by this legislation. We recognize this interest and, although it is legislation that is on the Yukon government's books, it is a law of general application and we want to ensure that it works for all members of Yukon society.

We embarked on this project. Engaging in such a partnership with First Nations was a brand-new effort that had never been done before by any other government. In terms of timing, as I stated before and am happy to state again for members, there were some challenges in this process because it was new ground. It was not some long-established arrangement or process of discussion that could be pulled off the shelves or had been followed many times by another government. It was brand new. We were walking down a new road together, breaking new ground and moving forward together.

In terms of the project there were some challenges along the way. We worked together at the leadership level from both Council of Yukon First Nations and the Yukon government in bringing things back together -- in bringing the project to a point where it can move forward.

The policy work now has almost completely been done. That has been completed and we will be moving forward and the next stage will be jointly advising the legal drafters, which is the same process in terms of legislation development that we used to implement the Yukon forum. I believe the official title was the *Co-operation in Governance Act*. Again, that is done with policy people from both the Council of Yukon First Nations and the Yukon government working together to provide the direction based on the policy agreements to the legal drafters. This will be coming forward very soon and legislation will be tabled, I am confident, in 2007.

I am just looking at my notes here. The member asked a significant range of questions on a number of subjects.

Mr. Chair, the member also asked about the multi-level-care facilities in Watson Lake and Dawson City.

In Watson Lake as members will be aware, the work has begun on this. There were some challenges as members will be aware. One of the key individuals involved in the project unfortunately passed away and that resulted in some delays.

And though there have been other elements in there, that was not the sole cause of delays, but it was one of the reasons. We're moving forward on this; a significant number of the project tenders have gone out. I state once again -- I remind members that, as I have been committing to since the spring, the majority of funding under this project that is left to be done will be dealt with through public tender. The sole-source compo-

nents were done to create community benefit and involvement, but the majority of all future work will be publicly tendered.

With regard to the Dawson multi-level care facility, I'm sure you, Mr. Chair, are very interested in this. I know that you have raised the point with me a number of times regarding your constituents' interest in this. We did require some further work in the planning and completion of the designs. There was, I believe, \$100,000 that we allocated in 2006-07 for that work. Once those plans are complete and that work is done and we have another discussion with your constituents, Mr. Chair, we look forward to seeking the budgetary approval for the project implementation and moving forward on that. I believe that I am out of time in this response. I look forward to further questions from the members opposite, and I believe there are still some outstanding questions from his last round. I look forward to answering him in a further response.

**Mr. Mitchell:** I guess I would suggest that perhaps I've given a bit of a homework assignment to the minister. Tomorrow and over the weekend he can look at the Blues and, hopefully, answer some of the questions more precisely.

Now, I have to say that the minister seems to have taken the "LIFO" approach -- last in, first out. He first answered the last question I asked -- or, tried to answer it, or didn't answer it -- but then he moved backwards. I'm going to go to the "FIFO" approach, which is first in, first out, because the first thing he spoke about was social assistance. I have to say that I'm somewhat appalled at some of the statements the minister just made, indicating that social assistance is not intended to provide a luxurious level of existence -- that it's not intended to be a disincentive to gainful employment; that we're looking for incentives to encourage people to re-enter the workforce.

Now, first of all, obviously, we would like to see as many people able to be gainfully employed as they possibly can be, but there are situations where people are not able to find work that will enable them to support them and their families without additional help. I point out that there are single parents who, due to their skill level, are not in a position to find work that will pay for childcare, which is another thing we've talked about. If they have to pay for childcare, it will consume the vast majority of what they will make in entry level jobs, so sometimes, as much as they want to be working, they find themselves on social assistance.

Secondly, there are people who, due to various other disabilities, find it hard to maintain full-time employment. They need to use the social safety net, as the minister referred to it. I would hardly think that anyone thinks that the levels of social assistance rates are such that they would be considered a luxurious level of existence. If the minister can show me where one can find luxurious habitation in Yukon for \$390 a month for a single person, or how one can eat and pay for all the other needs on just a few hundred dollars a month, the minister has entered some form of economic nirvana that is not apparently available for others.

I find those terms offensive on behalf of the people who have come in, sometimes in tears, because of the circumstances in which they find themselves. They say that they don't want to be on social assistance, but they have found themselves there,

and they can't make do on what they are being paid. I would urge the minister to get away from this economic Darwinian view of the world where it is the survival of the fittest.

**Some Hon. Member:** Point of order.

#### Point of order

**Chair:** Mr. Cathers.

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** I believe the member is in contravention of Standing Order 19(g), imputing false or unavowed motives to another member, in suggesting I have a Darwinian approach to social assistance. If the member took my comments out of context, I certainly will retract those and apologize for any lack of clarity on that. I recognize that those on social assistance do face challenges. I stated that and will state it again.

#### Chair's ruling

**Chair:** Order please. There is no point of order.

The time being 5:30 p.m., the Chair will rise and report to the House.

*Speaker resumes the Chair*

**Speaker:** I call the House to order. May the House have a report from the Chair of Committee of the Whole.

#### Chair's report

**Mr. Nordick:** Mr. Speaker, Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 3, entitled *Second Appropriation Act, 2006-07*, and directed me to report progress on it.

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

**Some Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**Speaker:** I declare the report carried.

The time being 5:30 p.m., the House now stands adjourned until 1:00 p.m. Monday.

*The House adjourned at 5:31 p.m.*

#### The following document was filed December 7, 2006:

06-1-7

Big game outfitting land application policy: letter (dated May 23, 2006) from Andy Carvill, Grand Chief, Council of Yukon First Nations to Hon. Dennis Fentie, Premier of Yukon (Mitchell)