

Whitehorse, Yukon
Wednesday, May 16, 2007 -- 1:00 p.m.

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

Prayers

DAILY ROUTINE

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

Tributes.

TRIBUTES

In remembrance of Frank Ursich

Speaker: It is with sadness that I inform the House that Frank Ursich, a former Sergeant-at-Arms of the Yukon Legislative Assembly, passed away on May 10, 2007. He served this Assembly from 1979 to 1991, first as Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms and then as Sergeant-at-Arms.

Frank joined the Royal Canadian Air Force during World War II and stayed with the Armed Forces following the war. In 1961, he transferred from Trenton, Ontario, to Whitehorse. He retired from the military in 1968, when the Whitehorse base closed down, but he and Peg and their family decided to stay in the Yukon. He then worked as the superintendent of public works with the City of Whitehorse and later as the engineering inspector for the Yukon government until he retired in 1982.

He was a founding member of the Midnight Sun Pipe Band, and his other passions included baseball, curling, golf, casino hopping and travel. He also collected stamps, coins and music in his spare time.

In May 1991, members of the House paid tribute to Frank upon his retirement as Sergeant-at-Arms. At that time, the then Premier said, "Frank Ursich was a veteran who had served our country, and now he served the Yukon Legislature as well, lending dignity to the proceedings that did not always demonstrate it."

On behalf of the House, I would like to extend our condolences to his family. Some family members are with us here today.

On behalf of all the Members of the Legislative Assembly, we extend our condolences.

Are there any other tributes?

Introduction of visitors.

Are there returns or documents for tabling?

Are there reports of committees?

Are there any petitions?

Are there any bills to be introduced?

Are there any notices of motion?

Is there a statement by a minister?

This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Childcare funding

Mr. Mitchell: The executive director of the Child Care Advocacy Association of Canada has reported that the Yukon has not filed a report for 2004-05 on monies provided by the federal government for childcare. I understand that there is approximately \$1.3 million at stake here. It is now 2007 and childcare providers are in desperate need of assistance. Parents are in need of assistance, and some of these parents are not in a financial position to absorb any more of this burden.

What is the minister prepared to do, now that he has studied this problem for years, to offer immediate relief to those who need the help?

Hon. Mr. Cathers: Once again the Leader of the Official Opposition is failing to see the big picture and to accurately reflect the facts of the matter. The member needs to recognize that this government stepped forward in our past mandate with the largest investment by any government in the Yukon. We created an increase amounting to \$900,000 per year, bringing the total level of investment by the Yukon government into childcare to \$5.3 million per year, which was an average investment of \$5,462 per child last year. This is just the first step. In the election held last fall we committed that we would take the second step in the development of a five-year plan to move forward and further address the priorities within childcare in providing a sustainable system. We're following a process very similar to what we did last time in developing the four-year plan, by seeking the feedback from the operators and workers. I am currently waiting for a report from the Yukon Childcare Association, and I look forward to taking the next steps in that area and continuing our investment in this matter of great importance.

Mr. Mitchell: This sounds an awful lot like the answer I received from this minister on social assistance rates. He is talking about the past; people are asking questions in the present and into the future.

The minister has publicly asked, in response to the request for funding, "Should the system be revised?" This sounds like, "Just wait two to three more years while we work on this problem."

The minister is sitting on \$1.3 million of federal money earmarked for childcare in the Yukon. His government is sitting on more than an \$85-million surplus while those charged with working with our children get \$12 to \$14 an hour. The minister said the money is coming in the near future. Let me quote what he said publicly on April 9: "I would expect it probably some time this month." Well, that was last month. Where is the money and when can Yukon childcare providers and parents expect to see it?

Hon. Mr. Cathers: Once again, the Leader of the Official Opposition should take a second look at the facts. He is not accurately reflecting them in this Assembly. This government has already made in the past mandate a significant investment and those are the facts of the matter. The member doesn't want to talk about it because it is good news and it is a good record and we are proud of that record. We will continue this. We are working right now on the development of the five-

year plan, which will be occurring in the near future. I will, of course, advise members when that takes place. We will do so through a press release.

We asked for feedback from the community, through the Child Care Board, and we are waiting for them to come back to us on that. I would again remind members that we have already made a significant investment and committed to doing more in the election. We committed to delivering a territory-wide childcare and early learning strategy for children and parents based on the priorities of: creating more available spaces for children of all ages, especially those younger than 18 months; reducing the rates parents pay for childcare; increasing financial support and reducing disincentives to allow parents to participate in the labour force; ensuring that parents with children in kindergarten are not charged full-time, preschool rates for childcare; a greater focus on early learning for preschool children; and to do this all through a new five-year plan to address the issues, including the issue of wages.

I would remind members of what we have already done. I understand my time is up.

Mr. Mitchell: What we're talking about here is playing catch-up and I'm not convinced the minister is even doing that. I can appreciate the need to retool the system. What I can't appreciate is why this government does not act with the same sense of urgency it does on other matters. It has been seven months since that election and that platform came out.

This is not all that complicated: give immediate financial relief through an increase in the childcare operating grant to licensed childcare centres and family day homes, increase the subsidy to qualifying parents, and then go to work on your integrated approach and long-term plan.

Will the minister stop using studies, revisions and reviews to justify his government's inaction and announce increases today?

Hon. Mr. Cathers: The member is right on one count: we are playing catch-up, catch-up from the fact the Liberals and the NDP failed to do anything when they had the chance to do so. When the Liberals had their shot at office here in this territory they did nothing.

We have already increased the investment by \$900,000 annually, but I would remind the member from the Official Opposition the reason we are seeking feedback on whether there are impediments within the system resulting in inefficient use of funding is that the operators told us that \$900,000 increase, though it was done in the manner they requested -- through an increase to the direct operating grant -- did not allow them to increase wages because of inefficient use of the money. So the obvious question is: how is it being used inefficiently?

As soon as they get back to me with that information, we will be moving forward based on that information and based on the internal review done by the department. Once again, this government has the second-highest level of funding for early learning and childcare of any government in Canada and we're proud of that record.

Question re: Power rates

Mr. McRobb: I have some questions for the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources. Yesterday we established that he has decided to increase Yukoners' power bills by 30 percent within the next 14 months, and the Yukon Party government has so far taken a rather callous approach to charging each electrical consumer \$400 more each year. Let's follow up on some bold promises the minister made this week. In a newspaper story from yesterday he said, "At the end of the day, I am very optimistic that this rate reduction will more than address this subsidy." In other words, Mr. Speaker, bills will be lower next year than they are now. For the record, let's nail this down: will Yukoners' electricity bills be lower after he axes the rate stabilization fund than they are today? Yes or no?

Hon. Mr. Lang: In addressing the member opposite, we didn't axe the rate stabilization fund. It's going to be continued for another 12 months. We also are looking at the bigger picture. We're looking at economic development. We're looking at rate reduction. We're looking at conservation. All those things will be addressed with the extension of the power line from Carmacks to Pelly and eventually to Stewart. This government is looking at the customer base there, and that will be reflected on the bills the consumers pay in the Yukon.

Mr. Speaker, we're looking at rate reduction, not subsidization.

Mr. McRobb: Well, that's only a half-axe answer, and he avoided the question. What part of "bill increase" does the minister not understand?

Mr. Speaker, Yukoners have good reason to be sceptical about commitments from this minister. He has increased people's power bills by 30 percent by cutting the rate stabilization fund. Then the Energy, Mines and Resources minister turned around and said, "Don't worry. There will be revenue from the mine that will make up for it." So why is he so reluctant to give us that assurance on the formal record?

Let's try again. Will Yukoners' electricity bills be lower after he axes the rate stabilization fund completely than they are today? Yes or no?

Hon. Mr. Lang: In replying to the member opposite, I'd like to correct the member. The rate stabilization subsidy will not be axed. It will be continued for 12 more months, after July of this year.

The only thing the member opposite doesn't understand is economic development. Economic development for this territory is very important. We're looking at expanding economic development through the hydro line, acquiring more customers, taking existing customers off the diesel grid. This is all good news. This is good news for the consumer because they will get lower rates because we will acquire more customers and, at the end of the day, that will be reflected on their electric bill.

Mr. Speaker, the government of the day is looking at extending the rate stabilization plan, up to 50 percent, and moving forward to rate reduction and looking at rate reduction as a way to complement the territory's economic engine.

A week ago, the member opposite was talking about economic development and how the Minto mine was being shelved in the business plan. We have good news for the mem-

ber opposite. We're going forward with the Carmacks-Pelly line, and we are going to go for rate reductions into the future.

Mr. McRobb: That was certainly not a yes answer -- something Yukoners should be very concerned about. The Yukon Party government has already decided to increase Yukoners' power bills by 15 percent starting July 1. That backroom decision will cost the average family \$200; furthermore, in a year's time, the minister will increase bills by another 15 percent.

The fact is this minister will increase power bills by 30 percent within 14 months -- that's \$400 a year for Yukon families. Again, the minister has promised publicly not to worry, because he has looked into his crystal ball and seen how that increase will be negated by a potential reduction in rates, but his vision is entirely speculative and Yukoners need clear assurance from him.

What's he trying to hide? This is a straight yes-or-no question. Will Yukoners' electricity bills be lower in 14 months than they are today? Yes or no?

Hon. Mr. Lang: Talk about speculation. The figures the gentleman across the floor puts on the floor here are inaccurate -- completely inaccurate. It's poor math. This government is going forward with the Carmacks and Pelly extension, looking at the Stewart extension to acquire a customer base so consumers in the Yukon can benefit from lower rates, not subsidization -- lower rates.

Question re: Education reform

Mr. Cardiff: I have a question for the Minister of Education. Yesterday in Committee debate on the Department of Education, the minister said his door is open to the Tr'ondek Hwech'in to discuss section 17.7 of their final agreement. The Premier has said the government is in active negotiations with the First Nation. The minister claimed there had been numerous meetings with the Tr'ondek Hwech'in on this issue. Since the Chief of the Tr'ondek Hwech'in First Nation says the government has been unwilling to negotiate on 17.7, can the minister tell us what the purpose of those so-called numerous meetings has been?

Hon. Mr. Rouble: Mr. Speaker, as I have said on the floor of this Assembly many times, it's the purpose of the Department of Education to work with all our partners and stakeholders in education to ensure that we provide the best possible education system for all Yukoners. Indeed, we're going through an education reform process right now. The purpose is to engage all partners and all stakeholders in education as to how to make the system better, how to respond to identified needs. Some of the needs that we have heard include additional cultural training and capacity training for teachers and people in the school system. We have dealt with how to include more culturally relevant information in the curriculum. Mr. Speaker, we're actively doing that. If anyone wants to come and sit down and have a discussion with me on how we can work to make our education system better, my door is always open. It's open to the members of the opposition too.

Mr. Cardiff: Well, unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, we don't believe the Premier and we don't believe the minister. The only explanation we can come up with is they're using a very

different definition of "negotiation". It's completely different from the First Nations' definition. It's like what Humpty Dumpty said, "When I use a word, it means what I choose it to mean, neither more nor less."

Let's see if we can get a little more clarity about what this minister really means. A yes-or-no answer is going to suffice. Is the Government of Yukon engaged in any negotiations with the Tr'ondek Hwech'in on the division and sharing of responsibility for the design, delivery and administration of education as required under section 17.7?

Hon. Mr. Fentie: Well, Mr. Speaker, we all know what happened to Humpty Dumpty. I'm not sure if they ever put him back together again. But I can tell you this: the members opposite, once again, are reflecting inaccurate information. The government side has been saying that we are obligated to negotiate 17.7, but it takes two to negotiate. We're very clear about it, and the members opposite are digging themselves a hole when it comes to this issue. This government will not devolve public jurisdiction. The members opposite are talking about sharing power, which can only mean sharing authority and division of authority. That can only be done by devolving public jurisdiction. That is their position; that's not the government's position.

Mr. Cardiff: The Premier is like a child: he doesn't even know how to share. We are back in the sandbox again.

Speaker's statement

Speaker: Order. Sit down. That is an inappropriate comment for this Legislative Assembly -- to speak in terms like that. That is not appropriate at all.

Mr. Cardiff: The minister has said in Committee that his door is open. It is right there on page 757 of the Blues: "I am willing to sit down and have these discussions." Those are the minister's words. So let's figure out what that really means. "I am willing to sit down", not "I am sitting down" -- "and have discussions" -- discussions not negotiations. The fact of the matter is it doesn't matter how far the door is open; it could be off the hinges. Implementing final agreements is the Premier's bailiwick, not the minister's. The Premier has said he won't negotiate shared responsibility -- shared responsibility.

Is the minister willing to acknowledge that his hands are tied because of the Premier's refusal to honour the spirit and letter of section 17.7?

Hon. Mr. Fentie: This member has just stood on this floor and said that this government is not honouring and living up to its obligations that have been negotiated through the land claims. That, frankly, is not the case at all.

I wish the member opposite would focus in on what the real issue is here. It is about children and it is about our obligation to deliver a public education system. It is not about sharing power; it's not about sharing responsibility. We all have a responsibility to educate our children. I ask the member and challenge him: how does he explain then the partnership in the School of Visual Arts in Dawson City with the Tr'ondek Hwech'in? How does that member explain our partnership and investment in a new early learning daycare centre in Dawson City with Tr'ondek Hwech'in? I call that involvement, not de-

volvement. I call that mutual sharing of our responsibilities collectively.

Question re: Education reform

Mr. Cardiff: I'd like to cut to the chase on the matter of education reform. The whole process is in peril because of the Premier. It could very well collapse for the same reason that the *Children's Act* review went off the rails. The government is unwilling to share responsibility.

First Nations have acted in good faith because governance was on the table at the beginning. They knew that and the Premier knew that. If he didn't understand what it meant, then shame on him. Now it's off the table and the Premier needs to say why.

When was the decision made to take governance out of the education reform process and who made that decision?

Hon. Mr. Fentie: The member is correct about one thing and that is "chasing." The Official Opposition and the third party in this House are chasing the education system in the Yukon. The government side in partnership with First Nations is leading in education.

When the member speaks of governance, let's cut to the chase. The members across the floor have talked openly about devolving public jurisdiction, so let's be very clear. That's their position; it's not the government's position. This government will never share public jurisdiction. We have a responsibility to deliver a public education system. However, we will involve all -- First Nation governments, teachers, parents, children and anyone who wishes to get involved in the education reform process to make it better. That's not an issue of governance. It's an issue of all of us living up to our responsibilities to educate our children.

Mr. Cardiff: If the Premier thinks that nothing has changed, he needs to give his head a shake. The Chief of the Liard First Nation says that governance has to be on the table. Council of Yukon First Nations co-chair of the project team says that if the government won't share control, First Nations will exercise their right to set up their own system. The Chief of the Tr'ondek Hwech'in says that if the government won't honour section 17.7 and negotiate shared responsibility, their only option is to draw down authority for education. The Chief of the Kwanlin Dun, the largest First Nation, says his government will set up its own school. Little Salmon-Carmacks and Na Cho Nyak Dun are studying the draw-down option.

What is the Premier's real agenda here? Is he deliberately trying to force the First Nations' hands so they have no choice but to take over control of their children's education?

Hon. Mr. Fentie: The member opposite is lost in the wilderness. First Nations have negotiated that right to take down this authority all through the land claims process. I would urge the member to sit down and look at the self-government agreements. All First Nations that have settled have the ability to exercise this authority, and governments have agreed to it.

The member also points out that a chief in Watson Lake, or the Chief of the Liard First Nation, has demonstrated, through his responses in public, that the system is failing their children. Is the member saying our teachers, education assistants and our administrators are failing children? How can he

explain the advances and increases in First Nation children graduating from our schools? How does he explain the number of teachers that have come out of the Yukon teacher training program and are in our schools teaching? Over 40 teachers have come from that program and are in our schools.

How does the member explain elders in the schools and language in the schools, the First Voices program and the injection of curriculum for First Nation culture? The member is lost on this issue, and what they're trying to do is dig themselves out of the hole they started earlier in this sitting about governance and the devolution of public jurisdiction.

Mr. Cardiff: For the record, we haven't been talking about the devolution of public jurisdiction. The Premier needs to think long and hard about what it could mean if he forces First Nations to go their own way on education. The impact won't just be felt by First Nations; it will affect what's left of the public education system as well.

Many existing programs may not be affordable, possibly school music programs or the experiential programs that contribute so much to the education experience. The Premier can't count on the federal government to bail him out or write a cheque to cover the Premier's failure to make the public education system work for everybody in the Yukon.

Perhaps he wants to see what's happening in places like Kitwanga, where the First Nation pays for its school from bingo revenues. Is the Premier willing to see segregated school systems based on race or see bingo halls or casinos pay to educate the next generation of Yukon First Nations, or is he willing to step back from the brink and negotiate --

Speaker: Order. Ask the question please.

Mr. Cardiff: -- meaningful roles for First Nations in the public education system?

Hon. Mr. Fentie: Well, Mr. Speaker, there's another good one. The member is now suggesting that we segregate. Does the member not understand what cooperation is all about? That's exactly what this government has undertaken since the very first day of its first mandate, and we've proven it on many levels -- when it comes to the Yukon Forum and the *Co-operation in Governance Act*; when it comes to the *Children's Act* review and partnership with First Nations. Education reform is a partnership. The First Nations are represented on the executive committee.

The member is also suggesting that we're going to lose programs. How does the member from the third party come up with that idea? In this territory, not only do we have the best student/teacher ratio, we also have one of the highest per student investment in schools nationally. This government is investing heavily in education, because we recognize the importance of educating our children and what it means to Yukon's future. And we're not going to do it by devolving public jurisdiction. We're going to do it by involving all Yukoners in our education system to make it better.

Question re: Power rates

Mr. McRobb: Let's dig a little deeper into the Energy, Mines and Resources minister's promises that Yukoners will be paying less for electricity next year than they are now.

There is a new show on television, entitled *Are You Smarter Than a 5th Grader?* Sometimes they pose math questions to the contestants. Let's see how this minister fares.

Now, the minister has said that power bills will be lower, because new revenue is coming from the Minto mine. That revenue will be up to \$4 million a year. The minister has announced that he'll be terminating the rate stabilization fund. But the RSF costs \$4.8 million a year to run. For the minister's information, \$4 million is less than \$4.8 million. Even a fifth grader can understand that. How can the minister promise lower bills when the numbers don't add up?

Hon. Mr. Lang: Again, that is more misinformation being put on the floor by the member opposite. We're talking about a customer base at Sherwood that consists of roughly anywhere between \$3 million and \$4 million. We're also looking at taking Pelly off diesel, Mr. Speaker. So that's an improvement. We're also looking at tying in the Pelly-Stewart section of the hydro line, acquiring more customers. We're also looking at economic development between Pelly and Carmacks with Western Silver.

Mr. Speaker, this is good news for Yukon. This is good news for Yukoners. This is looking forward to lower rates. This is looking forward to an economic engine for the territory. This is looking at a conservation question. We're working with economic development and conservation to move forward with the economics of the Yukon.

Mr. Speaker, again, we are talking about lower rates and not subsidization. Twelve months from now, we'll be looking at lower rates; we'll be looking at a larger customer base on our hydro units, and we'll be looking at an economic engine. This is good news for Yukon.

Mr. McRobb: Obviously, the minister has flunked the exam. Now, let's examine the new revenue number a bit closer. Once the mine is fully on stream, the maximum revenue is expected to be \$4 million. That's the best case scenario. However, there are costs associated with servicing the mine that will be charged against that revenue, and the minister has failed to account for those. Based on evidence before the board in the current hearing, after factoring in related costs, the true benefit to the system is only about \$1 million per year. So let's revisit the equation in consideration of that dynamic. It costs \$4.8 million per year to continue the rate stabilization fund. That we know. The actual benefit from the new revenue is only about \$1 million per year. That leaves a shortfall of some \$3.8 million. Who will cover the difference? Consumers?

Hon. Mr. Lang: I appreciate the member opposite's remarks here this afternoon, and it reminds me of the TV show, *Lost* -- very much lost in the figures of the territory. Again, we are looking at rate reductions; we are looking at an economic engine; we are looking at a larger customer base, which will include Pelly; we are looking at decommissioning diesels; we are looking at a very positive economic engine for this territory being run on hydro. This is good news for the Yukon. Again, I remind the member opposite that we are looking at rate reductions instead of subsidizations.

Mr. McRobb: The minister has axed the rate stabilization fund, and he announced it in the middle of May. That is

the period known as the "Ides of March." The term means that bad things are going to happen. That metaphor certainly holds true in this case. The bad news, of course, is this Yukon Party government's increase to Yukoners' power bills of \$400 a year. It is noted that the new revenue is less than the cost of the rate stabilization fund. The math just doesn't add up. For some unexplained reason the minister is still clinging to his belief that Yukoners' power bills will be going down.

How can the minister promise lower bills when the actual benefit from the mine is far less than the cost to run the rate stabilization fund?

Hon. Mr. Lang: There we go back to bad math. The member opposite is talking about a subject he knows little about. We will be acquiring a large customer; we will be taking that customer off diesel; we'll also be acquiring Pelly Crossing, which is on diesel now; and we will be moving forward with economic development in line with the Energy Corporation. We are looking at lower rates in the near future, and we are looking at extending the rate stabilization fund for another 12 months at the 50-percent level. Again, the member is wrong in his math. We are looking at rate reduction over the next 12 months and not at subsidization. This is good news for Yukoners.

Speaker: The time for Question Period has now elapsed.

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Mr. Mitchell: I have for filing an article from April 9 in the *Yukon News* with the minister addressing childcare.

Speaker: We will proceed to Orders of the Day.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

MOTIONS OTHER THAN GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

Motion No. 112

Clerk: Motion No. 112, standing in the name of Mr. Nordick.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Member for Klondike

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to continue to implement and expand its very successful decade of sport and culture initiative and Best Ever program by increasing its investment through the bilateral agreement with Sport Canada to enhance:

- (1) athlete development;
- (2) rural and aboriginal participation;
- (3) coaching and development support; and
- (4) high performance and elite support.

Mr. Nordick: I rise today to urge all members of the Assembly to support this motion. Sport, recreation and active living are essential to a vibrant and healthy Yukon. The decade of sport and culture that began in the year 2003 established the

Best Ever program. This very successful program targeted sports and athletes for the 2007 Canada Winter Games. The Canada Games have been proven to jump-start many athletes' careers. In fact, in the last Olympics, one-third of the Canadian athletes had been previous Canada Games participants.

Preliminary indications show the targeted investment of the Best Ever program had a very positive impact on athlete development in targeted winter sports at the Canada Games. For example, in cross-country skiing, Team Yukon athletes won three medals: a gold in the men's 10K classic, a bronze in women's relay, and bronze in the women's 7.5K classic.

In judo, Team Yukon captured a bronze medal. The 2007 Team Yukon men's hockey team won a silver medal in the provincial championships, the second medal in the territory's history.

These young athletes are competing and winning at the national level. This is no small feat for our small population base. Clearly the support we have provided for sports and athletes is paying off.

There are dozens of other Yukon athletes who participated in the Canada Winter Games. These athletes also gained the experience of competing at the national level as elite athletes in the biggest sports forum for Canadian youth.

These experiences enrich the culture of sport for youth and adults alike in the Yukon. As young people participate in various sports, their parents, siblings and friends come out to watch and cheer them on. This is another important benefit of supporting sports -- that is, promoting the culture of sport, being part of a team. The culture of sport gives youth and people of all ages a sense of belonging. It challenges people to work in a group and encourages them to think of others. Of course, there are many other benefits to participating in sports.

Investing in sport is investing in quality of life now and in the future health of young people. By participating in sport, young people develop healthy physical and social habits. Regular sporting activities reduce body fat, strengthen bones, improve coordination and balance and improve stamina and concentration. Young people learn how to become team players and work with others to achieve a goal. An active child is more likely to become an active adult, so encouraging youth to participate in sport is an important aspect of this program. These sport activities must include central and rural communities so that the youth have the opportunity to participate and interact in organized sports programs. During the Canada Winter Games, aboriginal sports were showcased and received great interest. With our First Nation heritage in this territory, these sports, too, will benefit from program support.

Mr. Speaker, so far, I've talked about how sports affect youth; however, an important component to any successful sport involves solid, rigorous coaching. Quality coaching organizes athletes and provides for effective, progressive training programs. Coaching provides leadership for the team and guides youth in their athletic development.

Mr. Speaker, coaching is the key to developing athletes at elite and national levels. Athletes from around the country have access to excellent coaching, and so we, too, must provide excellent coaching. By supporting this motion, members can sup-

port the development of coaching capacity that will build stronger, faster and more competitive athletes. Mr. Speaker, for these reasons, I urge the members of this House to support this motion. Supporting this motion helps build stronger communities and a better quality of life for all Yukoners.

In closing, I would like to highlight the excellent performance of our athletes in the Canada Winter Games just two months ago. With the games completed, we now have a strong legacy of sport and athlete development established. Now is the time to build on the success and provide more support to athletes in a broader range of sports.

Mr. Speaker, by supporting this motion, we are achieving a better quality of life.

Mr. Elias: I'm honoured to be here today to speak to this motion regarding the expansion of the decade of sport and culture and the Best Ever program and increasing the investment. This motion represents our high regard for the entire sports and culture community in our territory. It also indicates the government's total commitment to the promotion and development of sport and recreation among all Yukoners. This commitment is derived from our knowledge that sport and recreation serve to build our territory and are an essential part of our effort to improve the quality of life for all Yukoners, especially in rural Yukon communities.

All of us in the Assembly today have witnessed the phenomenal success of the Canada Winter Games. My children Bohdi and Johnny are already asking to go to Prince Edward Island as athletes or spectators for the next games. The government's financial contribution to the decade of sport and culture and the Best Ever program sets the stage and, as Yukoners, we fully support our sport and cultural stars.

I am confident that as we continue to invest and strive toward excellence in sport and culture, we will be a territory to be reckoned with at national and international sporting events.

I take this opportunity today to recognize and pay tribute to our talented men and women of sport and culture for being highly motivated, skilled and well-trained. To all the coaches and athletes who recently competed in the Canada Winter Games, we thank you for representing our territory to the best of your abilities and for making us proud to be Yukoners.

To many Yukoners, the athletes are heroes who have brought glory to us simply by their participation in the games. They have performed great deeds for all of us to remember and reflect upon, and they will continue to take us to even greater heights of fulfillment.

I believe that our sports and culturally talented men and women must see themselves as we see them -- as a crucial component part of our narrative of territorial progress. Their commitment to excellence in their respective sports and cultural experiences and the maintenance of high standards must serve as a reminder to all Yukoners to work hard, to persevere, and to strive to excel in all aspects of life.

As I have said in the past, I believe that one of the challenges facing us is to continue to nurture and encourage and, in some cases, revive our indigenous traditional sports.

I am confident that this motion will help us to draw greater numbers of our youth to sport. However, there is also need for large rural investments in infrastructure to prepare these young people to participate and be successful in the world of culture and sport.

My community of Old Crow is a good example. Our community is in the midst of finding committed partners that will work together with us to achieve a long-awaited and major priority to be realized, and that's to build a community recreation complex in Old Crow that will stand the test of time. Our community recognizes that an investment in a new community recreation complex in Old Crow will substantially assist in developing young, successful citizens, will encourage community healthy living and will contribute to long-term solutions to the needs of the community in social and economic areas.

Youth develop a mental, physical, emotional and spiritual well-being by participating in recreational activities because it builds on the feeling of accomplishment and being successful. Providing these opportunities for youth and all community members to participate in creates a springboard effect that leads to a balanced lifestyle and high achievement in all areas.

Clearly, the Yukon aboriginal sports circle will help to accelerate the elimination of the remaining obstacles to the development of sports opportunities for Yukon First Nation athletes, recently exemplified by the historical exhibition of the Inuit and Dene games in the Canada Winter Games.

I am also pleased to take advantage of this motion to thank and salute those within the private sector who are making a critical contribution by sponsoring our various sporting activities, including events such as the Canada Winter Games.

Whether in victory or defeat, we all have cause to be proud of all our Yukon sports and cultural people. May sport and culture go from strength to strength in the design, delivery and administration of sport and culture as we strive to build a great sporting territory.

Thank you.

Hon. Mr. Hart: I am very pleased to speak to this important and valuable motion.

Every member of this House is well aware of the importance of healthy living and positive lifestyle choices toward maintaining our individual health.

Sports and athleticism are important factors toward building a healthy body and the ability to enjoy more of all life has to offer.

In many ways, developing positive, healthy physical habits early in life is similar to the lifelong learning approach that we often promote for developing our minds. It is a lifelong aspect that I believe is vital to ensure continued health over the term of one's life.

Physical activity is a part of our lives that not only provides benefits for our health and physical abilities, but it also can play a very meaningful part of our social lives. Team play is something most people enjoy and want to participate in often and at all ages. The fun and excitement of youth at the Arctic Winter Games is no less than the good times enjoyed by team

participants in the Canada Senior Games. In fact, some would argue that seniors have even more fun.

Sport and recreation activity is a lifelong experience and one that our children should be involved with early in their lives. Yukon children have a natural enjoyment in physical activity. It begins when they first begin to move around on their own by crawling. As they become more familiar with their bodies and are capable of it, they delight in going faster and experimenting with other things they can do with their bodies, like climbing, grasping and throwing. Later they learn how to run and jump and perform elementary gymnastics on the floor and on the furniture -- hopefully with their parents watching.

Many are first introduced to organized sports in school, where they learn new games and activities and the importance of playing in a team setting. This is an important part of early childhood development and is instrumental for some in how they approach physical activity in their future.

In recent times, many young people have abandoned the physical sports in favour of electronic games that are typically played while sitting. It is no secret that this trend is having a decidedly negative impact on the physical health of our young people.

Childhood obesity is on the increase at an alarming rate. Coupled with poor snacking habits and the lack of regular exercise, many of our young people are establishing lifestyle habits that may have serious impacts as they grow older.

This is not a localized situation; it is widespread across Canada and other parts of the western world. Some have referred to it as a problem of epidemic proportions.

This issue is always on the agenda for the provincial and territorial ministers responsible for sport, recreation and physical activity, whenever we meet. Every jurisdiction in the nation is seeking innovative ways to get young people off the couch and engaged in some form of physical activity.

We here in the Yukon are very fortunate to be surrounded with our pristine wilderness, which is a significant factor in getting people active in the outdoors. Canadians who live in the inner city often do not have the same opportunity to enjoy being out of doors as many of them have to travel some distance to be near nature, as we are.

Between hiking, cycling, canoeing, skiing, rock climbing, orienteering and many other outdoor activities, there's a wide range of recreation opportunities that appeal to young people once they give it a try. Of course, there are many traditional organized sports that help to keep our young people active. Soccer -- both the outdoor and indoor kind -- hockey, badminton, squash, softball, swimming and many other sports all play a vital role in providing physical recreation that not only tones the body but also helps to develop interpersonal skills we use every day with others.

I would like to take a moment to acknowledge the many Yukoners who dedicate themselves to making sure these sporting organizations are in operation and are providing the training, coaching and sport official roles each and every year. Government can assist through funding and building facilities for sport and recreation, and we do so proudly. However, it is the mothers and fathers, the coaches and the trainers, the teachers

and other adults who provide their time to assist these young people to better appreciate the many benefits associated with physical activity, and the most important part of all is to have some fun. I recall the late Peter Milner's approach to getting more young people to participate in sports. He'd say, "Make it fun and they'll join."

Yukon sport organizers are from all walks of life and are in each and every community. They do the registration. They order the uniforms. They work the phones to make sure the kids turn out for practice. They hold the fundraisers so teams can travel to other competitions. They clean up the gym when everybody else has gone. They contribute a large part of their lives so that young Yukoners can enjoy theirs, and they make it fun. They are often a sympathetic ear that hears the challenges a young person may be experiencing, and they are also the voice of encouragement that counsels them to achieve higher goals and strive harder to improve their personal best. They are the people who share in the celebration of the achievement and the competition well won. They are also the ones who are there to provide encouragement and understanding when the competition results in a loss.

Mr. Speaker, we have an outstanding roster of remarkable people across the Yukon who participate in sport and recreation in ways that ensure others participate and benefit through improved health, a sense of achievement and the thrill of doing one's best. I say this to acknowledge the very important contributions they make and hopefully to also inspire others to become involved. While the government may fund sport and recreation programs, as we have in the past, the success of these largely depend on the dedicated and purposeful contribution of these very generous people.

The motion before us today is about funding programs for sport and recreation to achieve the goals of encouraging a healthy Yukon population and to foster top calibre athletes in a wide variety of sporting activities.

For the past five years, my government has contributed to this very important component of our society -- that is, sport and recreation through the Best Ever program. Announced in 2003, the Best Ever program was a collaborative four-year project co-sponsored by Sport Canada and was designed to help athletes and coaches to benefit from more access to the best training and competitive opportunities available as they prepared for the 2007 Canada Winter Games.

The program included \$140,000 each year, which was expended in a number of program areas. The goals and objectives of the Best Ever program were well-defined: to increase capacity of Yukon sport-governing bodies; to support coaching, officials and athletes; to create an integrated sports system that increased participation of the under-represented athletes participating in the 2007 Canada Winter Games; and to increase potential for medal performances of Yukon athletes at the 2007 Canada Winter Games. And Mr. Speaker, I think that we saw great evidence of that during the Canada Winter Games.

It was also to encourage more highly trained and qualified certified coaches in the Yukon. It was to increase opportunities for all Yukon athletes to access an improved level of coaching,

training and competition and to potentially represent Yukon in the 2007 Canada Winter Games.

It was also to develop an enhanced athlete development system throughout Yukon. It was to increase opportunities for under-represented athletes to participate, including aboriginal, female and disabled persons. It was to create successful, role-model athletes who will be able to give back to the community and provide inspiration for the younger generations. It was to increase participation of Yukon athletes in the future Arctic Winter Games. It was to increase training opportunities and cultural knowledge of Arctic sports and Dene games. It was to increase support and leadership opportunities for the recreation leaders in unincorporated communities. It was to provide cross-cultural training opportunities for sport and recreation groups in the Yukon and to leave a legacy of enhanced capacity and excellence in the Yukon's sports system by increasing the number of qualified coaches in the Yukon. It was to ensure that the Yukon was represented at the 2007 Canada Winter Games by athletes who were physically and mentally prepared for optimum success.

I believe that the Best Ever program achieves these goals as witnessed by the performance of Team Yukon during the recent 2007 Canada Winter Games. Once again, our congratulations go out to each young Yukon athlete as well as the coaching and training staff.

Looking forward, I believe that there is still a need for sport and recreation initiatives like the Best Ever program. While the 2007 Canada Winter Games may be behind us, there are still important targets that we are focused on reaching that programs such as the Best Ever program can help us achieve.

There are the 2008 Olympics in Beijing, China, and right now Yukon athletes are preparing for competitions in weightlifting, cycling and swimming, to name but a few. Of course the 2010 Winter Olympic Games in Vancouver will be hosting Team Yukon athletes as they compete for gold in cross-country skiing and other winter sports.

While these international competitions are extremely important for Yukon's elite athletes, there are many, many more Yukon athletes who have dreams of winning medals in the Arctic Winter Games and in the North American Indigenous Games and a number of other competitions which all contribute to developing the skills of individual athletes.

The Yukon is growing and more and more Yukoners are taking their place on the podium as a result of better training and coaching. We now have better facilities to help begin the training discipline that lead to champions in a number of high profile sports. We also have athletes who are inspired to win, because they know they can compete with the best the nation has to offer. They have the drive and ambition to succeed. They are motivated and they are willing to focus on their training, because they believe they have the same opportunities to advance as others across the country.

There is more we can do to help them to improve their rankings, and I believe the model we use in the Best Ever program has demonstrated the success we achieve through thoughtfulness and meaningful investment in sport and recreation.

While not all Yukoners who get involved with sport and recreation will aspire to gold medals and carrying their flag for the television cameras, they all deserve to appreciate the improved quality of life and good health achieved through athletic activities.

As I mentioned earlier, physical activity is a life-long pursuit and benefits of an early appreciation for sport and recreation activities will serve us well into our senior years.

The athletes who participate in the senior games are a testament to the benefits of lifelong enjoyment of physical activity and sports. These senior athletes also possess a positive attitude and a verve that is with them every moment of their daily lives in all the things they do.

Prior to the games' opening ceremonies, Sport Yukon hosted a reception where athletes from the first-ever Canada Games in Montreal back in 1967 gathered together to reminisce. Together, these people are still very active and, while they may not be as quick as they once were, they possess an approach to life that includes physical activity in a number of beneficial and entertaining ways.

It is my sincere hope that all Yukoners will endeavour to maintain a level of physical activity so they may enjoy a long and healthy life, where they are physically capable and able to enjoy all that life has to offer.

My government is committed to making sport and recreation activities available to Yukoners, as witnessed by the recent investment in the new recreational facilities for Marsh Lake and Mayo. We are working with Dawson City to get the Margaret Fry recreation centre up and operating for the community once again. Noted last week, we are also working with the Vuntut Gwitchin government to begin planning for a new facility in that community.

Our goal is a simple one: we want to work with the local communities to enhance the quality of life for all Yukoners and a part of that is through the promotion and development of sport and recreation activities that contribute to better personal health and well-being. We want to provide alternatives to video games and other sedentary activities for our young people through programming at local sport and recreation centres. We want to curb the increasing trend of obesity of Yukoners of all ages.

We want Yukoners to take advantage of the sport and recreation facilities and programming available in their communities. We want Yukoners to stop smoking and adopt lifestyle habits that will contribute positively to their health, well-being and the enjoyment of their lives.

Canada has recently reintroduced the very popular Participation campaign to promote these same values at the national level. The Yukon government supports this program and we encourage Yukoners to get up, get out and enjoy some physical activity and have some fun at the same time.

There are many recreational options available for Yukoners of all ages to enjoy and participate in. This government will continue to invest in sport and recreational infrastructure and fund the programming that contributes to a better quality of life and the enjoyment of life and, along the way, we hope to en-

courage some of our young people to reach for the gold medals as an elite athlete in their chosen sport.

Yukoners have the capability and we encourage them to show us they can do it. I urge the members opposite to support this motion and I thank you very much for the time, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Cardiff: I am pleased to rise today to speak to Motion No. 112, which urges the government to continue to implement and expand its very successful decade of sport and culture initiative. I think everyone in this Legislature would recognize the role that sports activity plays in our communities.

It is very beneficial to encourage our youth and adults to be physically active, to participate in team sports to get that sense of team, and to encourage healthier lifestyles. I think that's important.

The motion speaks to the decade of sport and culture initiative. When you read what it's supposed to enhance -- it talks about athlete development, it talks about rural and aboriginal participation, coaching, development and support, high-performance and elite support -- there's no mention in the motion of any part of the cultural initiative. I know that sports are part of a culture, but there are also other things that are part of a culture.

We saw lots of examples from across the north, not just from here in the Yukon during the Canada Winter Games, of cultural initiatives that were supported through the Canada Winter Games and, more than likely, supported through this program.

The other thing about the motion is that basically it urges the Government of Yukon to continue to implement and expand the decade of sport and culture initiative. You have to go back to where this originated from. There is no dollar figure involved here. I know that there was a lot of money leading up to the Canada Winter Games. I'm sure it was well-spent money, both on cultural initiatives as well as athletic initiatives, and it benefited Yukon athletes who participated in sports during the Canada Winter Games, and it will benefit them in their future careers in sports.

The minister made reference to the Best Ever program that was announced. It was announced in 2003, and both the Yukon and the federal government contributed \$140,000 per year to that program, for a total of \$840,000. In 2004, the Department of Tourism and Culture gave \$157,000 to the Yukon Arts Centre to help plan and implement community cultural initiatives associated with the decade of sport and culture. So, although it doesn't appear in the motion, I hope that we're not going to lose sight of cultural activities that benefit Yukoners, both young and old, and hopefully in every community of the Yukon.

What I'd be interested in knowing -- and it's unfortunate the minister has spoken already, but maybe he can relay that to the next speaker -- is what kind of financial commitment are they making to continue this decade of sport and culture initiative. Obviously it will be coming up for debate in future budgets, if it's not in this year's budget. If it's in this year's budget, the motion is basically saying that we should do something that the government is already doing, which is basically patting

themselves on the back and saying that this is what we're going to do.

I do have some other concerns as well. I'm willing to support the motion but, as the member for beautiful Southern Lakes would say, I want to make my contribution to the debate. I know how much that means to him to get input from members on this side of the House because he spent a long time yesterday afternoon going on about that. If he would listen to some of what we say, whether it's in Question Period, motion debate -- like we're in right now -- or in budget debate, he would get some of those good ideas.

So the minister responsible for sport also touched on obesity. It's a sad fact that obesity is a big problem and is an increasingly big problem. We need to look at the causes of that. The causes of it aren't just kids and adults not participating in sports. We need to encourage people to live healthier lifestyles and to eat well. Are we really doing that in some of the other areas on which the government has some impact?

Canada ranked last of 45 developed countries in the amount of physical education time in schools, with an average of 50 minutes per week. Those are the statistics that were provided to me. Not that long ago, the Yukon Medical Association passed a resolution proposing mandatory physical exercise for students, a mandatory physical education program in the schools, to promote healthy lifestyles. That would go a long way, if we could increase the participation of our students in every community of the Yukon, in enhancing athlete development. It would go a long way in enhancing rural and aboriginal participation.

Those physical education teachers are mentors. They are coaches and they are the support those young kids need to develop into high-performance and elite athletes. There is a bit of a focus here. It talks about athlete development, high performance and elite support. That's all well and good, but we need to think about other kids as well, who are sometimes not able to participate in these areas.

One of the other things that is troubling -- and I know the medical community has spoken out on this too -- and is an increasing trend in North America and Canada -- and I may get a few raised eyebrows from our pages on this one; I'm not sure what their opinion is on this -- is the provision and availability of junk food and things like pop that are in schools.

What we need is to provide good alternatives for students in school to eat healthily, and we need to educate them to eat healthy food so that they can get involved in physical education and become athletes. There is a lot more that we can do.

The outdoor experiential education promotes physical activity. I think that we've seen recently that that program has been expanded, and I wish the French community all the success. I know several students who have gone through outdoor experiential education. I met with some of the teachers who have worked in that area, and it provides not just a tremendous outdoor experience and physical activity, but it also builds team spirit. It builds that team spirit, because they do those projects together, and it does build a team spirit.

I also would like to say that another area that could be improved -- and this would benefit lower-income families and

enable them to participate in athletics and develop as athletes and, hopefully, become high-performance and elite athletes, because it doesn't matter -- your physical capability and your ability to participate as a team member isn't based on income. It's based on who you are as a person and what drives you to do that.

I think that another way of enhancing sport and culture, as this motion speaks to, would be to enhance things like the kids recreation fund. We heard about how, not too many years ago, the kids recreation fund had run out of money -- and actually if you go on the Sport Yukon site to the kids recreation fund, you can actually find out that, as a corporate citizen or private individual, you can make contributions to the kids recreation fund. But if the government really means what it says about sport and culture and recreation, about athlete development, about rural and aboriginal participation, about coaching and development, about support for athletes, this is a good place to start -- the kids recreation fund. It is to encourage those children who are less fortunate to go out and participate in team sports, to go out and do the best they can do and hopefully become -- if that is what they desire -- a high-performance or elite athlete and to receive that support as well.

I really don't disagree with the motion. I think there are other avenues where we should be promoting sports and culture. In short, it is about healthy lifestyles; it is about eating well; it is about providing an opportunity in our school systems to ensure that our children have available to them healthy food, good education and an opportunity to participate in a physical education program and live healthy lifestyles.

I will support the motion, and I thank you for this time to provide my contribution.

Hon. Ms. Horne: I rise to support this motion. This government made a commitment to ensure the 2007 Canada Winter Games would be a resounding success. I think all members of this Assembly would agree with me in saying it was. Through a considerable volunteer effort and financial investment, the Yukon, in a pan-northern approach, hosted the best Canada Games ever in the history of the games. This is not something the Yukon and the host society boasted, but it was said by athletes, coaches, mission staff and other governments across the country.

It was through the leadership of this government that we partnered with the Northwest Territories and Nunavut and included the Dene and Inuit winter games, which made this become the most successful games ever.

I would like to go over some of the information I have received about what the government did to support the 2007 Canada Games. Funding was provided to the Canada Winter Games sports in 2006-07 to assist with their preparations for the 2007 Canada Winter Games. This was joint funding by the Yukon government and the Government of Canada.

Financial assistance was provided to sports and recreation organizers in support of the Arctic Winter Games, North American Indigenous Games, Special Olympics and other sporting and recreation events. Funding was committed to pre-

pare Team Yukon for the 2006 Canada Senior Games in Manitoba.

In 2006, the Yukon Lottery Commission also awarded funding to non-profit groups. The second year of a sport participation survey was completed in conjunction with the Department of Education. Results will assist in determining the programming that is required in each community to increase sport participation in the Yukon.

Funding was also invested in aboriginal sport development, in partnership with Sport Canada and the Yukon Aboriginal Sport Circle, with capacity-building, coaching and athlete development in all communities being the focus.

A legacy plan was developed for the 2007 Canada Winter Games, which will ensure a lasting legacy for the sports system in the Yukon from the 2007 Canada Winter Games. Yukon government work and funding of the Canada Winter Games has built a legacy for Yukon, including the Canada Games Centre and the athletes village, which will serve as seniors and student housing for years to come.

Support for the development of Yukon's 2007 Canada Winter Games team means more trained coaches and community recreational leaders, aboriginal sport development and better sports programming throughout the Yukon.

The Yukon government is working with other jurisdictions toward a 10-percent increase in physical activity by 2010. Programs developed in partnership with Community Services, Health and Social Services, Education, and the Recreation and Parks Association of Yukon support active schools, communities, individuals and workplaces. Twenty-four of 28 Yukon schools are now designated active Yukon schools.

I believe sports and recreation are some of the best alternatives that we can offer our children, as the benefits include engaging young people in constructive and positive relationships and also channelling their energy into physical activity that makes for healthier children and youth.

Being proactive is critical to addressing the issue of finding healthy, positive alternatives for young people. Here in Whitehorse, my colleagues and I have made several investments in improving options for Yukoners. We invested heavily in the areas of sports and recreation, including new facilities and improved funding for coaching and development expenses.

For example, in addition to our \$20-million investment in the Canada Games Centre, Yukon is contributing toward the building of a new ski chalet through the municipal rural infrastructure fund, which is a partnership between Canada, Yukon and the local municipality.

Through MRIF, we are also investing in community centres in Mayo and Marsh Lake.

For those young people who cannot access these facilities due to cost, the Yukon has increased its contribution to the kids recreation fund to enable more families to access sports and recreation by paying for registration and equipment. Twenty-three sport-governing bodies and six special recreation groups that offer programming to keep youth active and healthy in our communities receive funding from the Yukon government.

While we applaud each athlete for their effort and commitment, I was very pleased to see Yukon athletes on the podium, and I say, "Well done."

Mr. Speaker, one of the concerns I have is that the momentum created by the Canada Games continue. I would like to see the Best Ever program continued. As you know, in the Justice portfolio we deal with adults who come into conflict with the law. I am convinced that some of these people would not have become involved in criminal activity if there were healthy, positive alternatives to occupy their time. I think it is important that we encourage people to pursue positive, constructive, healthy choices. We can encourage them by funding these options.

Also, as a rural MLA, I feel very strongly that our efforts must include rural and aboriginal participation. I have had discussions with my constituents who have requested we reconsider funding for the extra coaching and sport development.

We are so fortunate in the Yukon to have so many caring, compassionate and involved coaches. I think it is important that we find ways to support these coaches. A parent of an athlete told me that they were helping to coach and that the assistance they received enabled them to take training to be a better coach, which made it a lot more fun for them to volunteer their time.

On high-performance and elite support, I understand, Mr. Speaker, that you have a family in your riding whose son is quite an accomplished athlete. I am told that Yukoners who are exceptional athletes are often faced with the difficult decision of moving away to pursue their training.

I hope that we can find ways to help these athletes remain here in the territory at home. I urge all members of this Assembly to support this motion.

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

Mr. Nordick: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank all members for their comments and support for this motion. As my colleagues stated, sport, recreation and active living are fun and essential for all Yukoners. Sport, recreation and active living create a better quality of life for all. Athletes are role models for all people. Quality role models are very important in the education of our youth. I'd like to encourage all athletes to do their best and have fun. This is only one aspect of a large strategy that our government is working on to improve the health of all Yukoners.

Speaker: Are you prepared for the question?

Some Hon. Members: Division.

Division

Speaker: Division has been called.

Bells

Speaker: Mr. Clerk, please poll the House.

Hon. Mr. Fentie: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Cathers: Agree.

Hon. Ms. Taylor: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Kenyon: Agree.
Hon. Mr. Rouble: Agree.
Hon. Mr. Lang: Agree.
Hon. Ms. Horne: Agree.
Hon. Mr. Hart: Agree.
Mr. Nordick: Agree.
Mr. Mitchell: Agree.
Mr. Elias: Agree.
Mr. Inverarity: Agree.
Mr. Cardiff: Agree.
Mr. Edzerza: Agree.

Clerk: Mr. Speaker, the results are 14 yea, nil nay.
Motion No. 112 agreed to

Motion No. 116

Clerk: Motion No. 116, standing in the name of Mr. Nordick.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Member for Klondike

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to build a new correctional facility that incorporates a correctional philosophy that emphasizes treatment and programming support for offenders.

Mr. Nordick: I rise today to urge all members of this Assembly to support this motion. Mr. Speaker, a correctional facility is not the only component of a justice system. It is one part of a justice system. This motion proposes to incorporate a correctional philosophy that emphasizes treatment and programming, as opposed to simply building a strong box to house people who have broken the law.

In our jurisdiction, most offenders have some kind of substance abuse problem. Most offenders are not hardened criminals dedicated to a life of crime. Rather, they are troubled people who need help, who may not have been given the best circumstances in life. A correctional philosophy that can assess and address offenders' issues is the best way to treat and change the behaviours of offenders.

Simply building a more fortified detention structure to give offenders a time out does little to change young offenders' behaviour. In fact, it may even worsen unlawful behaviour through exposure to a negative environment. Instead, a correctional philosophy that emphasizes treatment and programming can address the needs of offenders. I urge members to support this motion that moves to improve substantially the quality of correctional programs and to change fundamentally the operation of the correctional system.

A corrections philosophy emphasizing treatment and programming offers a vision of a correctional system that reflects the Yukon's unique social context. It is a vision for a correctional system that is client-focused and offers a continuum of correctional services in the community, the correction facility and places of transition. It is also a vision in which the Department of Justice works in active partnership with First Nations and other service providers to participate in the delivery of high quality correctional programs to victims and offenders when they need them the most.

This correctional philosophy will be a paradigm shift in how we think about corrections. A correctional philosophy that emphasizes treatment and programming will reflect First Nations' culture in its design and operation philosophy and provide a multi-level healing and reintegration centre that provides the opportunity to heal while promoting accountability.

A correctional philosophy that emphasizes treatment and programming will include areas that are appropriate for offenders afflicted with different problems. To effect real changes in an individual's behaviour, for example, someone suffering from fetal alcohol spectrum disorder cannot be treated the same way as someone who suffered abuse as a child. A correctional facility needs to take into account all these issues.

The design and structure of a correctional facility needs to reflect the correctional philosophy -- a philosophy that will improve the quality of life of Yukoners, but particularly the offenders who require help in order to make our neighbourhoods and communities safer.

There are many programs available in the justice system and the Health and Social Services department to help offenders, such as the substance abuse action plan, a new program for children who witness violence, and the Outreach van, to name a few.

A correctional philosophy that emphasizes treatment and programming needs to link to these existing programs to ensure that the appropriate resources are engaged to treat offenders. Simply building a stronger box will not address these needs. A comprehensive correctional philosophy is required to fully address these needs.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I emphasize the need for a correctional philosophy that emphasizes treatment and programming. I urge all members of this House to support this motion, so that we can achieve a better quality of life.

Mr. Inverarity: I guess just before I get started, I was a little concerned about the glass rattling around up there. I'm hoping that we're all covered by workers' compensation here in the House. It struck me that maybe we should get a ruling from the minister, but we won't go there at this point.

I do have some comments to make with regard to the motion. First of all, I find it a horrendous waste of my time to be here discussing a motion about something the government has already said they're going to do. So we're going to sit here and spend all afternoon talking about building a correctional centre. What's really interesting is that the government is actually asking us to urge them to go ahead and actually build a correctional centre.

The minister stood up here last Thursday and said that she was going to make an announcement and, sure enough, Friday morning, we end up with an announcement that the correctional facility is going to go ahead, so I'm quite disappointed by the simple fact that we have to stand here and debate something that is already going to happen.

I have to say that we have waited five years, and certainly the government spent \$10 million on the old one, so I am pleased to hear that we are going to move forward, considering that the report issued in 1995 said that no more money should

be spent on the old correctional facility and that we move forward with a new one.

That is one of the biggest issues I have in trying to debate this particular motion today. I asked earlier whether the motion was even in order, considering that the announcement was made, but I gather that because they haven't actually built it, then we're here to continue to debate the merits of actually going forward. Maybe that is what the Member for Klondike is hinting at -- that he knows something that the Minister of Justice knows and that perhaps we'll never see this new corrections facility and that's why he's asking us to stand here and urge him to go ahead and actually build it. So, for that, I do urge the government to continue the process and build the new corrections facility.

So, where are we at this point in time? Last Friday the minister announced that we are going to go ahead and build this facility. They're going to build it on the same location that was decided five years ago. Luckily that money won't be lost. I think it was approximately \$1 million that was spent on the current location. I think it's worth noting that there was an opportunity here for the government to actually look at other locations for the new corrections facility but they have determined that the existing site is the best place for it.

I'm not sure if that's the best route to take, considering that Yukon College is looking for endowment land, and when you drive up to the college -- which will be a university one day, I'm sure -- the entrance to the university of the north will be a corrections facility. That's okay -- this government is going to move forward and it's probably a sound decision that they're going to build it where they did.

As an added point, I have another concern. It deals with the concept of building a corrections facility. I know the Minister of Justice has talked about a complete rehabilitation of the justice system in regard to inmates and people sentenced to the correction facility.

While I think that it's an important issue to talk about the rehabilitation of convicted felons, she talks about this particular centre as being the best corrections centre in Canada. I think that's an admirable goal, by the way. I think it would be nice to have that as an admirable goal. But I'm getting the impression -- in fact, I think the minister quoted the other day -- yesterday, if I'm not mistaken -- that this will be the first one of its kind in all of Canada. So when we tread into those areas -- I see that the minister is shaking her head, but I'm sure if she checks yesterday's Blues she will see that she said that the process that we're going to go through would be the first of its type in establishing a correctional facility and the rehabilitation of criminals sent there.

My concern here is that if it has never been done anywhere else in Canada, then why are we risking \$30 million on the actual construction of the facility, or maybe \$35 million, plus the hundreds of thousands if not millions of dollars on a rehabilitation concept that isn't tried and proven to be successful? At least that's what I got out of yesterday's Blues.

So I would add a word of caution here with regard to one looking at building a new facility and not having a clear path in terms of the programs that you're going to put into that. Now, if

you've got the programs and you know where you're going with the programs, then it would seem logical that you're going to build a correctional facility that will mimic or will enable that concept to happen. But really, the system is untried. It's unproven, and who knows if it's going to work or not. And do we have \$30 million to waste -- or to at least risk -- just on the construction of the facility if we don't know the system is actually going to work?

I would urge some caution. I hope the minister has the programs in place before the facility is actually built so we know the facility will meet the programs and the programs will be successful.

The other thing that concerns me a little bit -- and I won't speak a lot on this whole thing today because, really, why? We're going to go ahead and the motion is, let's "urge the government" to do something they've already decided to do.

But in fairness -- and I've mentioned this a couple of times before -- I have yet to see anything concrete come from this whole correctional plan that deals effectively in a new way with the victims of the people we're sentencing there. Every time I've asked the Minister of Justice about what we're going to do about the victims of crime, I get, "Well, we have this program; we have that program, and they've been around awhile." But clearly, if the goal here is to establish new programming in new facilities and new everything, maybe we might want to look at the harm that has been done to the individuals who have been affected by these criminals. That's what they are, rightly or wrongly.

I agree it's great to rehabilitate them if they're going to be rehabilitated, but we don't know that. We can only assume the programs that will be put into place will meet that goal. I will be holding them accountable regarding that goal, because I think it's important that we do.

I urge both the minister and the mover of this particular motion -- because they like "urging" -- that they consider the victims in this whole process too.

On that, Mr. Speaker, I have probably talked as much as I can about trying to urge the government to do something they've already done, so let's move on.

Hon. Ms. Horne: I rise to support this motion. I would like to correct the member opposite. My wording yesterday was not about the first correctional centre of this kind in Canada; it is the Community Wellness Court that is being pioneered by the Yukon.

The most significant change here and in the Whitehorse Correctional Centre is that, for the first time, we now have an alternative to the regular court system, which we refer to as the Community Wellness Court, instead of the other, which had no option, other than sentencing to the Whitehorse Correctional Centre. We're very proud of this new program and the Whitehorse Correctional Centre that will be built.

As the minister responsible for the Department of Justice, I have given a great deal of thought to the nature of the new correctional centre. Guiding my reflections is, of course, the commitment my colleagues and I have made to Yukoners. We said that we would help Yukoners achieve a better quality of life by

building healthy, safe communities with skilled and adaptable people.

As a government, we committed to implement the corrections action plan. The corrections action plan includes measures to address the construction of a new correctional facility or facilities to replace the Whitehorse Correctional Centre. But I want to add that a new facility is only part of what we need to do to develop the best correctional system in Canada.

We also committed to implement the Yukon substance abuse action plan, primarily by providing resources directly to NGOs on the front lines in delivering action items relating to four strategic directions: harm reduction action items, prevention and education action items, treatment action items, and enforcement action items. We also committed to practising good governance with strong fiscal management and a climate of cooperation, collaboration and partnership.

As I have said previously, when I was preparing for this portfolio I read a great deal about the impact of substance abuse on Yukon communities. I feel comfortable in saying that it is, in my mind, the single largest contributor to criminal activity in the Yukon. To reduce criminal activity, we must address substance abuse.

Mr. Speaker, as it has been observed by many people, including those who work at the current facility, those who are sentenced to the current facility and those who have toured the current facility, the current building is basically a bunch of dorms surrounding a library.

Simply housing people for a few days or months is not going to deal with their substance abuse issues. We have to do treatment and programming.

I have been learning a great deal about how correctional facilities are built -- keeping everyone safe: the community, the victims, the staff who work with these offenders and the offenders themselves. Keeping everyone safe is our highest priority, but how do we do that? It seems to me that there are two major factors. The first is the building and the second is the programming, but these two items are intertwined. It used to be that the emphasis when building a facility to house inmates was on building bigger, thicker, higher walls to isolate prisoners from guards. We didn't call these buildings correctional centres; they were jails or gaols. This philosophy was the one behind the construction of the current Whitehorse Correctional Centre. But all this approach did was to isolate the inmates from the people who could help them. We need a better way; one that incorporates programming.

I would like to take a few minutes to explain. When I imagine tomorrow, I see a place where offenders get the help that they need in a facility that is designed with programming and treatment in mind.

During our first mandate, we conducted thorough meaningful consultations that resulted in the substance abuse action plan and the correctional redevelopment strategic plan. What we are doing this mandate is a result of that consultation. The Yukon requires a modern correctional centre that will allow corrections professionals to carry out their responsibilities in a positive environment that will support the provision of programs to offenders. This government realizes the importance

that the centre will play in ensuring safety and security for all Yukoners.

Mr. Speaker, this government was not content to build a warehouse. We were not content to build a facility that was proposed by the Liberal government. That is why this government undertook an extensive consultation on corrections, because we know that the building is only part of our story. To make meaningful change in offenders' lives and provide security for Yukoners, we need to change the correctional system as a whole. That is why we were not content to simply build a new correctional centre to warehouse offenders. Our commitment is to redevelop the correctional system. This is what the consultation on corrections told us. Simply replacing the existing facility without changing the way we do business will not result in meaningful, long-term change. If we want to make a difference in the lives of offenders, if we want to help victims overcome the effects of crime, and if we want to make a community safer for all Yukoners, we need to create a client-focused culture of corrections in the territory. A new building is part of changing the culture of corrections, but it is only part of the story.

Our government's philosophy on correctional reform is summed up best in the correctional redevelopment strategic plan. In order to achieve a vision of becoming the best correctional system in Canada, the Department of Justice is committed to working collaboratively with First Nations and other service providers to achieve the following goals: one, to substantially improve the quality of correctional programs offered to victims, offenders and community members; and two, to fundamentally change the operation of the correctional system so that the Department of Justice, First Nations and other service providers are better positioned to participate in the delivery of high-quality correctional programs.

The department's correctional redevelopment strategic plan challenges the Yukon to develop the best correctional system in Canada. This is an ambitious goal but one that is well within the reach of all agencies involved in delivering correctional programs. The implementation of this strategic plan is the first step toward becoming the best. Improving the quality of correctional programs offered to victims, offenders and the community and fundamentally changing the way the correctional services are delivered will have a meaningful impact on the quality of life in Yukon.

Some of the expected outcomes include more effective correctional services for victims and offenders. Correctional programs offered to offenders will more effectively address those factors that lead to their criminal behaviour. First Nation offenders will be provided culturally appropriate correctional programs. Female offenders will be provided correctional programs that are designed specifically to address the factors that lead to their criminal behaviour. Correctional programs will specifically address the needs of offenders with FASD, mental health issues and drug and alcohol addictions.

A broader range of victims will receive more timely access to victim services, including increased follow-up and support as they work through the court process. Increasing the safety and security of Yukoners will instil greater confidence in the

ability of the correctional system to reduce offending among the offender population. Yukoners will acquire the skills, knowledge and ability to effectively respond to crime and conflict in their communities.

Yukoners' perceptions of safety and security will increase, increasing the quality of partnership among the Department of Justice, First Nations and other service providers. Stronger partnerships and collaborative working relationships will be developed between the Department of Justice and First Nations. The Department of Justice will work more collaboratively with other Yukon government departments and with non-governmental organizations, creating an environment that encourages staff and volunteer development, creating a greater sense of job satisfaction and providing more opportunities for professional development for those who work in the correctional system. Building a new correctional centre will provide corrections' professionalism with a modern environment in which to effectively deliver corrections' programs.

We are aware of the central role that the new correctional centre will play in delivering high-quality correctional programming, and programming is where I think we need to focus our energies. Our building is a tool to help us deliver programming.

The cornerstone of effective correctional programming is a rational evidence-based correctional program model. As part of its correctional redevelopment strategic plan, our department is committed to developing a correctional program delivery model that is client-focused and incorporates Yukon First Nation cultures. The correctional program delivery model will provide the structure within which the Department of Justice working in collaboration with First Nations and other service providers is able to deliver a continuum of programs that target the specific needs of Yukon offenders. Whether these programs are delivered in Whitehorse Correctional Centre, in transition places or in the community by department employees, volunteers, First Nations or NGOs, the model will ensure that the correctional program reflects the diverse needs of offenders, in particular the needs of First Nation offenders, women and offenders with FASD, mental health issues or addictions. The model will provide a coherent rationale for why programs are delivered to victims, offenders and others. It will provide an evidence-based approach for determining the types of correctional programs that will be delivered in the Yukon, so that scarce resources can be directed to areas that are most likely to have the greatest benefit for victims and offenders by specifically focusing on their needs.

The model will also address how programs are delivered, who should deliver them, the role of First Nations, volunteers and others in the community.

It will also address the type of training that is required to deliver programs and the attitudes, values and beliefs that are required to support the delivery of effective correctional programming. The model will specify the outcomes that programs are expected to achieve so that programs can be evaluated on a regular basis. The model will be used to assess the utility of the programs that are currently offered by the department as well

as for a guide for determining whether or not to introduce a new program.

The Yukon requires a modern correctional centre that will allow corrections professionals to carry out their responsibilities in a positive environment that will support the provision of programs to offenders.

Most Whitehorse Correctional Centre inmates presently come from Whitehorse. Some 70 to 80 percent of Whitehorse Correctional Centre inmates report First Nation ancestry. Some correctional clients were likely drawn from the rural areas of Yukon to Whitehorse for employment, education, social, health and justice services and subsequently became ensconced in an urban lifestyle.

The incidence of mental disorder among corrections clients is three times the non-correctional population. Between 80 and 90 percent are substance users. Over half use both alcohol and drugs. The remand count, which is generally considered a secure population group, is now a significantly greater population in daily count than sentenced offenders. Sixty-five percent are in remanded, compared to 35 sentenced. The security profile of sentenced prisoners is relatively constant. About one in 11 offenders are maximum security, about eight in 10 offenders are medium security, about one in nine are minimum security, and two percent are in protective custody. Women make up eight to 10 percent of the inmate population.

Count trends suggest a need for 72 sleeping rooms, exclusive of special purpose rooms like mental health, protective custody, et cetera. However, these trends could change, so therefore the new facility should be flexible enough to accommodate growth in the inmate population into the future -- for example, through double occupancy.

The new correctional centre is a key priority of the corrections consultation report that was prepared following an extensive consultation with Yukon's general public and First Nations. This centre will be client-focused with a healing- and accountability-based approach. Continuing participation of First Nations is an integral part of a new approach to client-focused correctional programs and services.

The correctional system must provide a clear role for First Nations. First Nation offenders are overrepresented in the correctional system. They are also most likely to become victims of crime. The correctional system, therefore, must develop its client-focused orientation toward victims, specifically as this relates to providing services to First Nation victims. The correctional system will work in partnership with First Nation communities and others.

The facility must have the ability to separate remand and sentenced offenders. The design should provide for future expansion.

Long-term operating costs will be developed to assist with evaluating the options. A secure mental health ward operated in conjunction with the Department of Health and Social Services may be developed.

There are additional pressures influencing the development and design of a new correctional facility.

In summary, a number of factors were considered essential in the design of a new facility. The new facility must accom-

modate both remand and sentenced male and female offenders. The new facility must accommodate varied risk levels and needs. It must have multi-level security. It must provide additional space for special use accommodation, such as medical, mental health, segregation, special handling and FASD.

The new facility must focus on healing and accountability. The new facility must reflect Yukon First Nations' culture and values. The new facility must enhance the community's capacity to partner in non-residential programming and services. The new facility must provide programs and services supported by a system-wide case management practice that is focused on clients.

I see my time is running out. I have much more I could say about the new Whitehorse Correctional Centre, but I'll leave that for another time.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Ms. Taylor: Mr. Speaker, I just ask my colleagues, all members in this House, to join me in welcoming a constituent of mine, Mr. Michael Kearney. Thank you.

Applause

Mr. Edzerza: I'll start out by saying that the government probably has to debate this issue to force themselves and convince themselves to do what is right, and that is to play the left wing once in awhile. I know that deep in their hearts they are not totally right wing. I think that is a good thing.

First Nations have been asking for this approach to justice for over 50 years. In fact, First Nations used to govern themselves in this fashion at one time. They believed in restitution versus punishment. However, through assimilation and alienation of First Nation lands in Canada, the European style of justice, based on punishment, was forced on the First Nations, thus destroying what they had of their own and their own way of achieving justice.

I would like to clarify and put into perspective why it is important to include First Nations in the decision-making process. I've heard comments from the other side all week long about how they want to devolve nothing down to the First Nations and some comments about how I as a member was only talking for First Nations and all those ridiculous kinds of comments. But, at the end of the day, I'd like to shed some light on why it is important to involve First Nations in a lot of these decisions.

The Premier mentioned earlier on that he would not devolve or share any jurisdiction of government with self-governing First Nations, so why is the government now saying they are prepared to share the responsibility of looking after justice with First Nations? Why are you going to the First Nations now and saying you want them to be involved? I think it's wrong to be able to pick and choose how you want to include people in the decision-making processes. As a First Nation person myself, perhaps I can shed some light on why it's important for the government to reconsider some of the comments made and to really look and sincerely share the responsibilities with First Nation people.

First, the Yukon government does not know what will work for First Nations without their input -- in Justice, Education, child welfare or addictions treatment. They don't have the answers or else they would have done it many years ago. This is not a problem that appeared yesterday; this is a problem that has been here since the gold rush. If they had the answers, I'm sure they would have done it.

I would like to say the government only has the power and money to control, and that's wrong. The government must involve the First Nations simply because they are alienating First Nation jurisdiction so they need their input. The government has to realize that First Nations were the first peoples here in this territory. They are the newcomers to this territory, and it's totally wrong to move into a jurisdiction like the Yukon and totally take over.

Why should First Nations be involved? Because we have the highest percentage of people in the correctional facility; we have the highest number of children on welfare; we have the highest number of people in need of treatment because of the mission schools that were run in this territory, from one end to the other; we have the highest number of children in care.

Yes, the First Nations need to be involved; there's no way around it.

If the case is going to be that there is absolutely no sharing of jurisdiction with self-governing First Nations in this territory by the government, it will continue doing what has happened for the last hundred years -- destroy the First Nation people. It's plain and simple -- keep on destroying them. Sooner or later -- and it sounds like it's starting to happen now right across Canada where governments are starting to say, you know, maybe the First Nation people did have some valuable process that we need to look at.

Circle sentencing -- I've heard retired judges praise that process. It's because it's humane -- that's why. It's a humane process, one that looks after and tries to improve the spiritual well-being of people. It will make the person feel like he/she belongs and isn't someone who is just on the face of this earth for a short period of time and has to suffer from birth until they pass on to the spirit world. A lot of valuable traditional knowledge, values and beliefs can be used within the system. That's what First Nations are asking for input for -- to try to implement some of their traditional knowledge, values and beliefs into the whole system. And rightfully so -- they do make up a fairly large portion of the population of this Yukon Territory.

Mr. Speaker, I think the First Nations are being thrown around like a political football, and I think it's time to stop. As a First Nation person, I feel somewhat bullied. I guess there are lots of words to describe how a person would feel when he or she is being totally dominated by a bigger, stronger government. It's kind of like a David and Goliath approach here to the population in this territory, and I think it's something that not only this government but also citizens right across the territory have to acknowledge.

Why was self-government even negotiated if there was no good intent behind it? Those are some of the questions we need to ask.

I think it's unfortunate that First Nation governments have to try to match a big government like the Yukon territorial government that has \$800 million to spend in one budget, when in fact a First Nation may have \$60 million.

I think it's time for everybody to realize that the First Nations in this territory do contribute a lot to this territory. Mines like Whitehorse Copper have opened and closed, come and gone; Faro -- come and gone; Keno -- come and gone and come back. They contributed to this territory, Mr. Speaker, but the First Nations have never left, and they've always contributed large amounts of money to this territory -- millions and millions of dollars to this territory -- but aren't being recognized for that.

So I think when we talk about First Nations, we have to really start being considerate about what we say and how we approach our beliefs and try to inflict them on another race of people like the First Nations here in this territory.

I was involved an awful lot with justice reform, because I believe in it. I don't believe in warehousing anybody. I've been here for over 40 years, and I've been saying it for 40 years in different capacities. I've been saying it to different governments -- not only the one of today, but every government that has been here -- the NDP, the Liberals, the Yukon Party. We've said it to all of them: we need to take a different approach to justice.

We were ridiculed and mocked and everything because of circle sentencing, only because people didn't understand what it represented or what the process was.

Quite frankly, I think it's a very effective justice tool that could be used in this territory.

Something I'd like to touch on a bit is a simple, very basic fact of life and that is that some people involved in criminal activities will not accept treatment. Treatment is something that cannot be forced down anyone's throat. They have to buy into it. Whether we like it or not, we need secure custody -- that's a given. I don't think that a justice facility can be replaced with a healing treatment centre, because they are two very different things. Treatment can be a part of the justice system, but it can't take the lead role. The Department of Health and Social Services has that responsibility. It has the responsibility of providing treatment centres, and rightfully so. The government sells the alcohol and makes the profit from the sale of alcohol. It's only logical that they have to take some responsibility in being able to deal with the people that are affected by what they're providing.

I think that, over the years, the Liberal government had good intentions but didn't capitalize upon them. The Yukon Party government is going on five years now and, quite frankly, I was really hoping there would have been dirt moved this spring to see the construction phase starting, and not a motion brought to the floor to still try to encourage the government to do something after they have been here for five years and had the opportunity to move this.

I know through Cabinet confidentiality I can't say a lot of the things I'd like to say about how things move, but today I still think there's a lot to the correctional facility. It's not only about the inmates; it's about the staff who work there. It's criti-

cal for the staff. It is even more important to look after the staff than it is to look after the inmates. The staff is made up of people who are going there every day to do a job and earn a living, and they're there because they believe in that line of work; otherwise I don't think they would be there.

A lot of the staff have gone through many years of educating themselves and getting degrees in law and justice and whatever so they can work in this facility. I can't express enough how demoralizing it is for staff to go into a rundown facility like what they're working in now.

As far as mental, spiritual and emotional well-being of a person, those things have to be looked after. I can't imagine what it would be like tomorrow if all the staff said, "We refuse to work in this place; we're going to look for work in Alberta or B.C." It's not a likely thing but it's not something that's totally impossible either.

After awhile, a person has to make the decision: do you belong where you are, or should you move on? Do you agree with what's going on or do you disagree? Are you willing to live and work in something you don't believe in?

I think the staff up there really believes this building is outdated and is worn out. The patching can't go on any more. The promise of a new facility has raised the expectations of a lot of very well-qualified and educated people, only to be prolonged and prolonged.

If a motion is all it takes to make this government move, perhaps we should have had it four years ago. It may have already been just about completed.

I will support this motion, because the healing process is a process that can -- I won't say it "will", for sure, but there is a possibility that some people may do very well in treatment and never go back into the justice system.

I know, as a caregiver for young offenders, I've seen some changes in the young people, just by my wife and I counselling them and showing them that they have a sense of belonging and that when society is willing to write them off, some people aren't. Some of them have changed. I have seen them change over fairly well. I've seen a lot of adults who were constantly in the justice system take a 180-degree turn in the other direction, so I know the possibility is there.

I think the government has to be very careful about how they approach this. There are probably about five First Nations in the territory that already have infrastructure in place but don't have the operation and maintenance dollars to operate it. They're in the wilderness setting. I think it would be very beneficial for the government to immediately start having discussions with these First Nations before they decide again that they're going to be ignored and they'll eventually have to find a way to do this on their own. Again, at this point in time, it is a YTG responsibility. Like they said, it's their jurisdiction. One may want to be very careful about how forceful one is in exercising that. One may just end up with the total, 100-percent responsibility. That's another possibility.

Another possibility for First Nations is to totally walk away from everything and say, "Fine. If you want to do this on your own, go ahead." That could be a very, very real option for First Nations.

All I've heard from First Nation people since getting involved with territorial politics in the last four and a half years is that we want to be heard. We want to be heard. We want to know that we have a sense of belonging in this territory and that we don't always have to fight for everything we want to do. It's kind of sad, but true.

I'll end by saying that a lot of the First Nations feel that they're foreigners in their own country, and it's because they're being excluded from a lot of things they could be involved in.

Hon. Mr. Lang: I appreciate the comments from the Member for McIntyre-Takhini on this very important subject.

Of course, I stand up on the government side supporting this motion. I think the motion is very important and very timely because, as we in the House all know -- of course, the Member for McIntyre-Takhini led the government side of the debate for four years and worked internally in the government and set out the patterns we're following now. I have to compliment the member. The Member for McIntyre-Takhini did a fine job for four years, leading the reforms that we're continuing and, of course, part of that is the new correctional facility that we're moving ahead with.

Of course, the comments from the members of the opposition on what to build or where to build it -- those questions are always good questions. When we were voted in four and a half years ago, the government of the day had decided to build another structure that was a duplicate of what we already had, but just larger. It had very little facilities for actual programming or for training.

When we looked at the facts that were presented to us, we could see that the facility wasn't doing the job for the inmates. We wondered what we could do to address the return of prisoners or individuals, the number of individuals who were incarcerated and had medical problems and all sorts of issues.

Along with the Minister of Justice at the time, the Member for McIntyre-Takhini, we as a government decided to take the lead on the issue and look into this a little deeper. We as a government decided four and one-half years ago that we didn't want another storage area for individuals. We wanted to look at the success rate and how we could improve on the success rate for the inmates and how we could introduce programming and other issues into the establishment.

To give credit where credit is due, the minister of the day, the Member for McIntyre-Takhini, worked tirelessly to expand our programming and to expand the opportunities for inmates in our correctional system.

The motion is about building an establishment and building a correctional philosophy that can address some of these issues. The issues are bigger than a building and, of course, the issues are about the mosaic of the population in the territory.

The correctional institute has to be user-friendly. In other words, it has to be a building that is easy for staff, safe for staff and durable. We can't look at a building for the short term; we have to look at a building that will do what has to be done in the facility for 25 or 30 years.

That's why we took the time to put together the group on justice reform and go out into the community and do a thor-

ough overview of what Yukoners feel is necessary for our justice system to succeed. With the leadership of the Member for McIntyre-Takhini, that's exactly what we did. Those people are bringing back recommendations to the new Minister of Justice and she's acting on those.

As far as the concern from members opposite about location, locations were looked at extensively and the decision was made to put the new establishment on the existing property. That was a decision not of the government, but a recommendation of the justice committee. Now we move ahead and look at the options put before the committee on what kind of a structure we're looking at. We're looking forward to those recommendations coming forward very soon. At that point we can then act on those recommendations.

We're doing exactly what the members opposite have been talking about for years, except we're doing it on the back of consultation, sober second thought and with members of the community making these recommendations so we can look back and say, "Yes, we did consult; we did take recommendations, and extensive work has been done."

As far as the situation now with the building, nobody in the community will deny the fact the correctional institution is time-expired. It has been time-expired for a period of time. As good government and with the concerns of the inmates and the workforce that's there, we have to maintain a certain standard and it has to be a safety standard. We've done that.

Certainly, our population in the jail system has grown. If you look at statistics and the difference between male and female prisoners, it has grown. We have a different facility today than we had 20 years ago. As the mosaic of our community changes, the facility changes.

With programming and with an investment in a safe, user-friendly establishment with room for programming, room for education and all the things that go hand in hand now with the modern facility, we can move forward with the building of the building and hopefully look at an opening date of 2011 or 2012. Our government is trying to be aggressive about that. We're trying to move forward quickly, because we understand the limitations of the building that exists now. But we will maintain the building as it is, and we won't stop spending money on the basis that we can't spend money any more on the correctional institute because, in fact, we're going to maintain a high standard of safety for all concerned, whether it's the inmates or the staff who work there on a daily basis.

Now, regarding the options out there, that was another thing that came out of the justice review -- options for individuals to take another route. The Member for McIntyre-Takhini talks about circle sentencing. That has been utilized in our communities, and I think very successfully in some places. I mean, we're not going to debate the merits of circle sentencing or other programs, but we are going to open the door for Yukon and for our justice system to have options. The option won't just be the correctional institute or the street. There are going to be other options so that we can go into healing and working with individuals to try to improve their state of health, either mental or physical, and also put programming in place to

make sure that, when they leave the system, they're better off than the day they went into the system.

I don't think we are any different from a lot of areas in Canada. The justice system in Canada has to change. You only have to look at the statistics in America. America has more prisoners behind bars than I think any country in the western world. They obviously put a lot of pressure on the system and think that jail is the answer. If you were to look at the statistics on crime in America today -- I don't think by putting these individuals into the system, that it's really corrected. I might be wrong on that, Mr. Speaker, but I read newspapers, watch TV and I see these things going on in that society. I ask, "Is that justice system working? Is going to prison a deterrent? Is the threat of a sentence going to be a deterrent for these individuals?" I feel in our small community here in the Yukon that we can look at a justice system and a correctional institution -- as the member says -- we are always going to need a correctional establishment. It's not going to go away. There is a large percentage of the population in the correctional system that know that the answer isn't prison or confinement -- the answer is medical, spiritual, physical and mental. That can be addressed in a different way in a different establishment. I agree with the Member for McIntyre-Takhini; the option is there to work with First Nations on some of these investments they have on the ground, to expand and work with us on justice -- that's exactly what our government set out to do four years ago. We wanted to involve First Nations and the community to address these issues that we thought were bigger than a jail -- a box.

I think we're almost there, Mr. Speaker. With this motion, we're looking at a philosophy of justice for the people in our society who need a correctional institution to deter them, and we are opening the doors of opportunity for people we incarcerate to become part of our community and to heal and to do it in surroundings that don't involve the security that we need in a correctional institution.

And those facilities are there. In many of our First Nation communities -- our traditional territories -- we have investments on the ground, as the Member for McIntyre-Takhini said, but they don't have the resources to put the team together nor the operation and maintenance funds to operate these establishments. So, for us to ignore the fact that this investment is there would be folly, Mr. Speaker.

At the end of the day, I really feel that this government has done the hard work of government, has really involved communities in the decision-making process on our justice system, and that we're opening the door to a different level of critiquing our justice system. In other words, we are going to have a correctional institution -- that's a given. We are going to have a remand centre -- that's a given. But we might have a healthier option for people other than the correctional institution.

In other words, how are we going to cater to the group that we now have no options for? We either put the individual into the correctional institution or he goes out on the street? Those options are going to be open to the Justice department. We are going to have these options.

In answering the Member for McIntyre-Takhini, I think that we will have, in partnership with First Nations, options out

on the land. Those options will be given to individuals for a healing process so that when they come back they will have the tools to go on with their lives, and at the end of the day the corrections institution will not be a revolving door with individuals going in and coming out and not getting the help they need. They just have the safety of a correctional institution and, of course, society has the protection of that institution too.

In closing, I certainly agree with this motion. I appreciate all the other members and the discussions we have had about this issue. I think it is timely now that we move forward. We have made a commitment on where the correctional institution is going to go. We are waiting for an announcement from the justice committee on how they would like to see that institution -- what the makeup of that institution will be. That will be done very timely and then we'll move on with the programming to make not only the correctional institution successful in rehabilitation, but the option is there for the justice system to direct people through different, more successful ways of addressing the needs of not only the inmate, but also the general public.

The general public has to be confident to know that we as a government will keep them safe and that we will run a very secure correctional institution, and that we will have a remand centre and a correctional institution with the programming that is needed to work with the individuals who are in the process, and that they can go to bed at night knowing that they are safe and that these individuals who need incarceration are being incarcerated.

But the responsibility doesn't stop there. We all know that. Once they are incarcerated, how do we work with them to fill in their days? How do we educate them? How do we put programs together to make them healthier and better people? The other option that the Minister of Justice opened the door for is directing individuals to other forms of the justice system that in turn give them a life experience that will carry them well into the future -- and that they have the programming in place to make that successful.

So in closing, I would like to say that I am totally in support of this motion. This motion is to build a new correctional facility, incorporate a correctional philosophy and emphasize treatment and programming support for the offenders. It covers all the bases, Mr. Speaker. This government is doing a big part of that today, but there is part of this motion that has to be carried on. I am sure the responsibility of doing that is in the good hands of the Minister of Justice. I look forward to supporting her and the government in the future on this motion.

Hon. Mr. Hart: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to urge all members of this Assembly to support this motion. I think that for the benefit of the members opposite who have been focused in the years past on building a jail that is brick and mortar, I would like to provide a definition of what "correction" means. "Correction" is the act or the process of correcting to rehabilitate or to improve.

Mr. Speaker, our party will work and make decisions for Yukoners based on informed, inclusive and collaborative consultation. Though the corrections consultation process may not have happened fast enough for the members opposite, it took

only as long as needed to get the job done properly. The corrections consultation process was done in active partnership with the First Nation and other service providers to participate in the delivery of high-quality correctional programs to victims and offenders when they need them the most.

The intent of this motion is to incorporate a correctional philosophy that emphasizes treatment and programming as opposed to simply building a strong box to house the people who have broken the law. This government will build a modern correctional facility to sustainably improve the quality of correctional programs offered to victims, offenders and community members, to fundamentally change the operation of the correctional system so the Department of Justice, First Nations and other service providers are better positioned to participate in the delivery of high-quality correctional programs.

We will create a corrections system, not a box-them-up jail. This system will allow corrections professionals to carry out their responsibilities in a positive environment that will support the provision of programs to offenders. This correctional facility will contain those who have run afoul of the law in order to help address and change their negative behaviour through inmate healing and educational programming and accountability.

We will also have the programming ability to provide a continuum of programs and services to address other problems such as substance abuse, supported by a system-wide case management system that is focused on the clients. Offenders are often troubled people who need help. A correctional philosophy that can assess and address offenders' issues is the best way to treat and change the behaviour of offenders.

Though the members opposite may believe that Yukoners should be building a stockade to lock up offenders and expect that, when they come out, offenders will have learned their lesson -- bad offender -- this approach does little to change the offender's behaviour. In actual fact, this approach to jailing may even worsen the unlawful behaviour.

A correctional philosophy that emphasizes treatment and programming can address the needs of the offenders. I urge members to support this motion, which moves to improve sustainability and quality of the correctional programs and to fundamentally change the operation of the correctional system.

The new facility must enhance the community's capacity to partner in non-residential programming and services. The new facility must provide a continuum of programs and services supported by a system-wide case management practice that is focused on clients.

We are also factoring in a number of security considerations to ensure that this site is secure and that the safety of Yukoners will not be compromised. A network of interlocking and interfacing components will provide safety and security. A perimeter security fence will surround portions of the site, as required, to suit functional and security needs. The secure perimeter will include parts of the main building's secure areas.

Building envelopes and the interior structure will be comprised of varied building materials and construction techniques to produce differing security levels appropriate to use by inmates and others. Staff will normally be in direct contact with

inmates and supervision will vary according to the inmate activity, inmate count and community participation in facility activities.

A variety of safety and security status factors, combined with various interior and exterior electronic surveillance and operating and monitoring systems, will report to a central station to control dynamic activity and overall safety and security. A secondary control station will be needed for backup and training.

Public and staff pedestrian traffic will normally use the same entrance. Prisoner escorts, emergency vehicles and material transport will preferably use the same secure vehicle entrance or sally port.

Visibility into sleeping rooms by staff must ensure both occupants are clearly visible when in bed or elsewhere. Window design in inmate-living areas must account for 24-hour summer sun by removing the potential for inmate-installed blinds. Visibility from staff stations to all supervised areas is critical.

The new facility will be a made-in-Yukon solution to suit the Yukon offender population. Several living units of different sizes are envisioned to accommodate the separate remand and sentenced population served by the facility.

Living units will normally be paired together to enhance efficient and effective staff supervision. Paired units are generally of the same design and capacity. Larger units, with up to 20 sleeping rooms, are envisioned. These would separate the majority of inmates into remand and sentenced and be adaptable for behaviour requirements and program access, as needed. Smaller units, with up to 10 sleeping rooms, may be required to accommodate protective custody remand or sentenced offenders, women, or others with special needs, such as FASD.

The unique needs of women offenders will be considered, and a living unit that also allows for programming will be incorporated. Each inmate will normally have an individual sleeping room; however, rooms will be built to accommodate double-bunking should the inmate population rise in the future.

Some sleeping rooms in each living unit will be suitable for wheelchair access. The security levels of the individual living units and the inmate rooms may vary by construction and/or level and style of staff supervision provided.

Video surveillance will be used in common areas of living units and hallways. Each living unit will be self-contained, including dining, personal hygiene, passive recreation and preparing snacks. Exterior access from the living unit to a shared exterior courtyard is desirable.

Mr. Speaker, a special purpose unit will also be part of the new design. Although still conceptual, the special purpose unit could be comprised of four clusters of four one-person cells. This unit is self-contained as its inmate residents do not interact with any of the other population in the facility. Its capacity is not considered part of the 72-room capacity of the facility. It will be used, as needed, by four distinct offender groups: males serving a disciplinary sentence requiring separation from the population; males who are mentally disordered, accused or found not criminally responsible for their actions; males who

are unable to live and function safely with others; and, finally, women who are similar to the above.

A clinical area is required for medical, dental, psychiatric and psychological services. To support the broader wellness objectives of the facility, we envision an area adjacent to the clinic where possibly programs to accommodate traditional medicine, alternative healing methods and workers could occur. Inmates with serious illness and injury will be taken to the community hospital and specialists. A nurse is expected to be on duty seven days per week for 10 hours daily. Doctors, dentists, psychologists and psychiatrists are contracted and visit on a schedule or as and when required. The clinical area should be adjacent to the inmate reception area, mental health unit and in the proximity to other living units. Pharmacy services will be contracted from a local supplier.

In the program area, Mr. Speaker, what separates our new facility from previous designs is the emphasis we are placing on programming. The corrections consultation told us that we need more than a new building to warehouse offenders. We need a new correctional system that will deliver client-focused offender programming that will help offenders change their lives. Many challenges and needs were identified throughout the consultation. The correction consultation, however, offered hope. There was a strong belief among participants that the correctional system can facilitate offender rehabilitation and healing and can help offenders rebuild identity and renew relationships with family and community. The correctional system can also help address the needs of victims through compassionate and timely services. In this way, the correctional system can play a key role in ensuring safe communities and increasing the quality of life of all Yukoners. The corrections consultation offered a vision of a correctional system that is substantially different from the current reality. It is a vision that reflects the Yukon's unique social context.

It is a vision of a correctional system that is client-focused and offers a continuum of correctional services in the community at the correctional facility and places of transition. It is also a vision in which the Department of Justice works in active partnership with the First Nations and other service providers to participate in the delivery of high-quality correctional programs to victims and offenders when they need them the most.

The corrections consultation recognized the commitment of the front-line workers and the volunteers in the First Nation and non-First Nation communities, non-governmental organizations and the Department of Justice who work with victims, offenders and their families and do so under trying conditions.

The corrections consultation also noted the willingness of all to do more to assist victims, offenders and their families in responding to crime, its causes and the conflict it creates. While strength is its asset, there is clearly work to be done. The Department of Justice must work in collaboration with First Nations and other service providers to create an environment that encourages the development and the implementation of effective correctional programs. Neither the physical infrastructure - in particular, Whitehorse Correctional Centre -- nor the administrative infrastructure encourages the development of empirical-based, effective correctional services that can be deliv-

ered to victims and offenders at a point in their lives when they can derive the maximum benefit from them.

The new correctional facility will reflect the spirit and the consultation on corrections. It will be a program-based facility that has offender rehabilitation in the forefront. A variety of interior and exterior areas will be provided to foster wellness through physical, spiritual, cultural and educational activities. These areas will particularly reflect and be amenable to the Yukon First Nation culture and values.

Several multi-purpose rooms for spiritual, group learning and craft activity will be available to promote cultural awareness and healing. Classrooms for basic education and core programs to enhance life skills -- both specialized and general -- office storage and workplaces will be required for staff, community agencies, contractors and volunteers.

A gymnasium, exercise or weight room, outdoor courtyards attached to the living units and outdoor program areas will be available to promote physical activity. Indoor and outdoor work and cultural areas will promote inmate accountability and life skills. The program areas should be readily available to inmate living units and also convenient and accessible for visiting community participants.

You can see, Mr. Speaker, that the work is well underway to build a new correctional facility. I'm pleased with the option that was recommended by the building advisory committee and would like to thank them for their work in coming to this recommendation. A new correctional centre will be a modern and secure facility that provides security and also offers offenders real opportunities to heal and take responsibility for their actions.

In closing, I emphasize the need for the correctional philosophy that emphasizes treatment and programming, and I urge all members of this House to support this motion so we can achieve a better quality of life for all Yukoners.

Speaker: If the Member for Klondike speaks he will close debate. Does any other member wish to be heard?

Mr. Nordick: "It's a horrendous waste of time talking about this motion", is what I heard from the Member for Porter Creek South. This motion is about correctional philosophy, not just a building. I fail to understand why the Official Opposition thinks a better correctional philosophy to improve the ability for Yukoners to become productive, law-abiding citizens is a horrendous waste of time.

I also feel there's a pattern here. On my last motion day, the Member for Kluane said there was a more efficient use for time, yet spoke for the entire time allotted. Today I brought forward a motion so the opposition could debate a correctional philosophy.

This was so they could have input into the outcome of this matter. This is a major initiative, but I guess that is not important to them.

Speaker: Are you prepared for the question?

Some Hon. Members: Division.

Division

Speaker: Division has been called.

Bells

Speaker: Mr. Clerk, please poll the House.

Hon. Mr. Fentie: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Cathers: Agree.

Hon. Ms. Taylor: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Kenyon: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Rouble: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Lang: Agree.

Hon. Ms. Horne: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Hart: Agree.

Mr. Nordick: Agree.

Mr. Cardiff: Agree.

Mr. Edzerza: Agree.

Clerk: Mr. Speaker, the results are 11 yea, nil nay.

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

Hon. Mr. Cathers: I move 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. The matter before the Committee is Bill No. 6, *First Appropriation Act, 2007-08, Vote 3, Education*. Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

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

Bill No. 6 -- First Appropriation Act, 2007-08 -- continued**Department of Education -- continued**

Chair: The matter before the Committee is Bill No. 6, *First Appropriation Act, 2007-08, Vote 3, Department of Education*. We will continue with general debate.

Hon. Mr. Rouble: Mr. Chair, it is once again my honour and pleasure to rise today in the Assembly to speak to the Department of Education's budget which, as we announced yesterday, is for a total of \$125,878,000.

Yesterday I think we got off to a very good discussion regarding the vision for education here in the territory, the strategic goals for the department, and I outlined many of the strategic objectives and the operational projects in our operation and maintenance budget and in our capital budget. I would now like to continue, if the members opposite have any questions.

Mr. Mitchell: The large portion of the debate having been carried by the Education critics, I just have a few questions for this minister on some specific areas of interest to my riding and to my constituents.

There has been a great deal of discussion over the last several years about the possibility of there being a need for a new school in Copper Ridge or somewhere to serve the growing population up there.

Over the last few years, going back to October 2005, before I was elected to this Assembly, this issue came up during a by-election and it was raised by a Yukon Party candidate at the time. However, it became more ambiguous once I arrived in the Legislative Assembly. I know some of the discussion occurred prior to my being elected. It was questions and answers by my former colleague, the former Member for Porter Creek South.

However, eventually, on November 8, 2005, in *Hansard*, the then Acting Minister of Education, the Tourism minister, stated, "As the Minister of Education stated yesterday, our government is committed to building a school in the Copper Ridge area. There is a demonstrated need in that particular area. There has been significant growth in our population over the last three years." She goes on to say, "As a result, the Elijah Smith Elementary School has reached its capacity, as we have heard that students who reside in that area have to be bused elsewhere. There is a proven, demonstrated need for this. As such, our government will be undertaking a planning exercise in the very near future."

Now, later on, further to that on April 11, 2006, there was some mention by the then Minister of Education of \$75,000 that would be in the budget to do with school planning for the Whitehorse area -- so a broader issue of planning. I know since then quite a lot of things have transpired and I participated at one public meeting where Holdfast Consultants -- the consultants that the department engaged -- made a presentation showing the populations of different area schools. I see that we've recently had the department's annual report for 2005-06 tabled, which is full of information. I would like to thank the minister and the officials for providing that information. It shows the various enrolments.

I understand from the back-and-forth discussion at that public meeting and information from community meetings held since then that a lot of options are being looked at. I want to assure the minister I'm not standing here today to say, "When are you going to build the school?" I understand there are a lot of options.

I'm still asked the question by many constituents when I visit with them about what is happening and what the resolution of this will be. There was this consultation document that went out. I have spoken to the minister about this outside the Legislative Assembly to make sure he understood that some of my constituents didn't receive that document. Our family received it on a Friday and it had a deadline for submission on the Monday after the weekend. I had several constituents complain to me about that.

I know the on-line consultation was later extended, but someone would have had to make the effort to go to the on-line site and type in that long string of characters to find that out. A

lot of people, when they got it on Friday night or Saturday morning when they picked up their mail, said, "Well, I'm too late."

The first question I would ask the minister is this: does the minister feel that consultation process was adequate and representative of eliciting a good cross-section of members of the public? I know there are people who live in the affected areas who never did get the document and other people who live in other areas of Whitehorse, but not in Copper Ridge, Granger, Hillcrest or McIntyre, the affected regions, who did get the document, so I'm not sure who was being sampled.

The minister is making notes. That's one thing I'd like to ask the minister. I have a couple of questions about this. They're all on one topic and I would just as soon address them that way rather than back and forth and up and down.

The second thing is, if the option being looked at is the busing of students to other area schools -- the consultants pointed out we have capacity elsewhere. Apparently the F.H. Collins study is labelled "draft" and the minister indicated a reluctance to table draft documents.

I want to know what the status of the study is on the Copper Ridge school or the need for a school -- I'm not sure what the title would be because I haven't seen the document -- and when we can expect to see that document so I can answer the questions my constituents are asking me about whether there might be a new school and, if so, what grades and location and, if not, how the catchment area might be changed to accommodate students.

The issue I'm hearing is two-fold: parents are very supportive of the existing school and the excellent cross-cultural experience students enjoy there. They don't want to do anything to the detriment of that school and, having volunteered there over a nine-year period up until a year ago, I'm supportive of the school. I know what a great job that school does.

Secondly, I'd like to ask: if there is going to be increased busing, do we know if that is the next 110 homes that will be built over the next year or year and a half, or will some of the existing areas -- such as perhaps Lobird or Hillcrest -- be looked at to go to a different school, because those parents want to know that as well?

Hon. Mr. Rouble: I'd like to thank the Leader of the Official Opposition for his comments today. It is good to see him engaging in debate. I appreciate him bringing forward the issues that are important to all his constituents. Indeed, education is one of those issues that is very important to all Yukoners, regardless of what riding we live in.

He has brought forward the issue of schools in the territory and I'm proud to say that the Yukon Party has a very good track record recently of building schools and responding to needs in the community. We only have to look at the new school that is being constructed right now in Carmacks. That is evidence that we have gone in and recognized a need, worked with a community and have committed the funds and resources and gone to work on it.

As we have said many, many times in this Assembly, once we identify that there is a need for something, we will address it. The member opposite has brought forward the issue of the

need for a school in the area. I believe there was a motion by the Liberal Party last fall to build an elementary school there. I know the other members -- certainly the Member for Whitehorse West, when she has been in discussions with her caucus and Cabinet colleagues, has strongly voiced the concerns of her constituents about the community and about the importance of a school in a community. We have to remember that education isn't always a "number and hard facts" type of issue.

Education is something that touches each and every one of us. It touches our children and our community. We very much have to take into consideration the community impact of a school. It has been said many times that if you want to build a community, build a church and build a school. These days it might be changed to put in a coffee shop and build a school. But one way of defining a community is certainly by the creation of a school in that area.

The member is correct that, immediately upon taking office, I was involved with working with the Department of Education to engage a contractor to take a look at the needs in the Copper Ridge area and the future of F.H. Collins, to take a look at the Porter Creek area and the impacts on that area in terms of growth and development, and the impacts it would have on the education system and infrastructure in that neighbourhood.

We put together a very good process that involved our different partners in education, the different stakeholders and orders of government, such as contacting the First Nations, working with the City of Whitehorse, working with the territorial government statistics and planning people and, as well, working with the school councils in the areas affected, and even in the area of Copper Ridge we put together a Copper Ridge advisory group. This group was asked to look at the process for taking a look at the needs in the community and looking at ways of engaging residents in the process. There was significant consultation and a questionnaire developed and mailed out. There were questionnaires available on-line. There were ads in the newspapers and on the radio encouraging people to visit a Web site or attend a public meeting. There were public meetings held that were widely publicized throughout the territory. There were letters sent home with students in the affected area to engage people in the process.

Now, when I get the final report, I will have many of the pieces of information available to answer the member opposite's question. When we do get it, we will know the number of respondents -- that type of information. I've had some discussions with the consultants, and they tell me that the response rate, both to the paper survey and on-line survey, was very great. They have made public comments that stated the return rate. I don't have that information at hand, but they announced that at the public meetings.

They also made a strong point of saying that it wasn't a scientific survey. It was a survey that people had to choose to respond to. It wasn't a random sampling; it wasn't using a strong scientific methodology; there were no special characteristics about it to ensure that people were always being forthcoming with the information.

When it comes to a school and engaging the community, we would hope that people would be participating with the best

possible information, especially when they're choosing to share their information and it's relating to the future of education in their community and, really, for the whole territory.

There was a Copper Ridge school advisory group. I believe they will be the ones that will be making the final recommendations. Again, I've not received the final recommendations. I've not received the final report. Again, I do have to differentiate between "draft" and "final". It's not my practice to make decisions based on draft information. The whole point of draft information is that it's identified as being a work in progress; we need to conclude the work.

So when I do receive the final report, I will be in a better position to answer many of the questions of the members opposite. It's premature, at this point, to say what changes will result or even to look into some of the issues being brought forward now, because I simply don't have the final report yet.

When we do get it, we will respond. The government has a history of responding to identified needs. We will certainly take into consideration the member opposite's comments -- and indeed the constituents' comments -- about how good a school we have in that neighbourhood right now and how people do appreciate the mix of students. It's important to see that we have a successful example of First Nations, non-First Nations, people of different religions and people of different languages going to the same school. It is working very well. So my hat is off to the principal of that school, to the volunteers who work there, to the teachers and the administration and to the First Nation. I know the chief there has made representations regarding home tutoring and we will work with the First Nation, with the school and with the community to address the concerns there.

Some Hon. Members: (Inaudible)

Hon. Mr. Rouble: I think there are some other comments coming forward but I didn't quite catch them. I'll turn the floor back over to the members now and maybe they can go into other questions. I trust that satisfied the member's question.

Mr. Mitchell: I appreciate the remarks, but I think we will need to dig a little deeper into that. First of all, I want to say the minister made comments about concerns on behalf of my constituents, and although that's what I'm focusing on today, I want to be very clear that I have a very deep interest in education. As I'm sure the minister knows, my wife has been an educator for some 35 or 36 years. Believe me, education is a daily topic in our household, and because my wife has been an educator for so many years, we have a great many friends who are teachers and educators -- many who are educators in Yukon. I think that the teaching professionals we have in Yukon -- and I mean the teachers, the educational assistants and educational psychologists, and all the people who work in administration in our schools -- are second to none. I've seen the dedication that they bring into the school. I know the kind of work that goes on in the evenings and on the weekends in professional development. I'm very proud of our educators. We are very fortunate to have the kind of professional teaching staff and support staff that we do have in Yukon.

To get back again, I would like to hear some numbers or some dates on the study. I just want to put some more figures out there because we know that, previously, we did table in this

Legislature -- we ATTIP'd a document that indicated that, at least at that time, the government and the department felt that there was a need for a new school and there was an actual proposed budget. I know that the justification for it was the department said there was a demonstrated need for a new school.

I recognize that times change and information changes, and maybe that is not still the case. Nevertheless, I want to point out, because the government often quotes their platform -- this government will quote its platform to support the spending decisions it is making -- and from their platform under "a better quality of life, educating today for jobs tomorrow", it says specifically, "construct a new school in the Copper Ridge area."

I bring this up because it was first raised by a Yukon Party candidate in a by-election. It was then a promise made by an acting minister, who happens to be the Member for Whitehorse West who, in representing many of these constituents, has a keen interest that there should be a new school. Then, as recently as October of 2006, there was "construct a new school in the Copper Ridge area" -- and it doesn't say whether that school should be an elementary school, secondary school, primary school, K through 12, but there is a commitment to construct a school. Presumably, after four years in government, this government still felt that there was a reason to build a school.

I just want to put some numbers out for the minister and for the record.

Between last fall and this spring, there were 109 lots that came on the market in Copper Ridge. I believe that they have all been purchased. There were six that weren't in the draw. Starting with last fall and through the spring, there were 109 lots, and I think we can presume that within the next two years, because that is a requirement of purchasing these lots, we will see 109 houses.

At Mount Sima, I believe that there are 35 lots that will be coming on the market over the next couple of years. I think the first six have been made available, and there are more to come. There will be approximately, I believe, 110 lots in the Whitehorse Copper area. Mount Sima and Whitehorse Copper had been considered within this catchment area, but obviously they might be looked at as attending Golden Horn. We are just looking at the total number of houses that will appear over the next few years in the region. There are 24 lots at Fox Haven. That is 278 building lots.

In addition over the last couple of years there has been the large development of Falcon Ridge, which is in the Logan catchment area and where Elijah Smith Elementary School is located. There are several dozen houses that have gone in there. In addition, there is a plebiscite before the City of Whitehorse citizens for the end of this month that would include, as one of the two items, an area between Arkell and McIntyre that was previously withheld from development, because it was possibly going to be selected in land claims, but wasn't. It is perhaps going to go to development, depending on the outcome of that plebiscite. Beyond the 278 lots, we are probably looking at more than 100 between that area in Arkell and what has been done and is being done in Logan and Fox Haven.

In addition, there are some 80 houses potentially going into the revised plan for Takhini North. That affects the current overflow school from this area, which is Takhini Elementary School.

There are a lot of new residents coming into the area. I know that the minister and his colleagues may stand up and say that they have done a great job, look how things are growing and it's because of our wise economic stewardship. I just would hope that we can talk about the realities, regardless of why they're happening.

There are a lot of people in this area. We know that, down the line, there will be the lower bench. Currently, according to the document that was brought forward by the department, it said, "Elijah Smith Elementary, K through 7, 2005-06 - 298". That's the government's document. And I know that it has been a little lower than that and it has gone over 300, depending on the day you take the snapshot.

"Takhini Elementary, K through 7 - 163; Golden Horn Elementary - 185; Selkirk Elementary - 247" -- I know there's capacity in each of those other three schools. But if you look at what will probably be some 400 homes, even if it's only one and a quarter children per home, or whatever the current average is, it's a significant number of children.

In the past, using that sort of rear-view mirror of what the enrolment was last year and what the statistics are that are being projected, we have ended up, at different times, with portable units at Grey Mountain Primary -- portable units that are still there. The portable units at Elijah Smith Elementary were then replaced with a permanent addition during the time I served on school council there. We've had portable units at Porter Creek Secondary. I mean, there is a tendency to wait until the penultimate moment, and then we end up with these portable units.

So I'm asking the minister to look forward and accept the fact that, if mining is on the upturn and we have more young people moving here to take those kinds of jobs, and if we have more young people working in these big box stores that are getting built, we're likely going to see -- despite what the past enrolment figures might project and even nationwide trends -- young families tend to have young children.

So, again, I know that the member opposite said it would be premature to talk about the study while it's still a draft. And I'm not asking him to engage in premature enunciation, but nevertheless, when does the minister expect to be able to release that study?

As far as the paper study, I can agree with the minister that there were no controls over it. There was an ability for individuals to submit the form 10 or 15 or 20 times if they wanted to advocate for a particular result. That concerns me because Holdfast Consultants say it wasn't a scientific study, it was simply an inquiry, a sampling, but the decisions are going to be made based on that.

The second thing I want to ask: how was this Copper Ridge advisory group selected? Was it people who came forward and volunteered? Was there an attempt to get a balance from McIntyre, Granger, Lobird, Hillcrest, Copper Ridge, all the areas that are in the current catchment area?

Hon. Mr. Rouble: I'd just like to also share my comments about the professional, dedicated folks that we have in the Department of Education throughout the territory. Teachers, educators, administrators -- everyone involved in education does so because it is a calling. Teachers are those types of people who identify themselves often as a teacher first and some other characteristic much further on down the road. There is certainly a passion involved in it. It is a commitment, it is a calling, it is a lifestyle, and I would like to applaud and thank all our teachers and our educators.

I appreciate the member opposite's background in education and the various discussions that he has had. I would add, though, that it is very unfortunate that he chose not to provide that kind of perspective yesterday when we had an opportunity to discuss a vision of education. I think it would have been very helpful to have heard his perspective and to have heard the position of the Official Opposition as to what they really feel is the vision for education in the territory.

Mr. Chair, the matter at hand here is indeed the Copper Ridge area and how to respond to the growing community. There certainly has been a growing community and as the member has just put on the record, there is the potential for much more building, more families coming into the community, more school-age children coming into the community. I know the Department of Education -- and when working with our consultant on this -- is certainly looking at a couple of different factors. One is the current enrolment -- the current number of school-age children in the area -- and the schools that those children go to. Many of those children go to the school in the immediate area; others go to the French language school, the French immersion school, the Catholic schools -- or schools throughout the Whitehorse area.

Growth in the community will be a very important thing to look at. It will also be important to look at the makeup of the housing going in there. We all can appreciate that there are different demographics in the different neighbourhoods. When we look at new development up in the Copper Ridge area, it does cater to folks who are typically downsizing. We have to look at whether there will be other single-family homes going in, or multi-unit dwellings. So a part of this exercise is to look at the current number, the immediately known growth, and then some of the other future developments. I know the consultants have been working with the Bureau of Statistics to look at projections, growth rates, population trends, demographic trends and at what the City of Whitehorse has on its planning horizon in the area.

When will the community achieve that critical mass that the member opposite was just talking about?

It's important to look at the school we have there now and the positive aspects it has in its community. I don't think people want to detract from that. We have to look at the impacts on other schools when we take a look at this. This study, when completed, will be looking at the actual number of students living in the area, the schools they go to, the future birth rates, the future growth rates, the changing demographics, the planning for the community, as well as the likelihood of where those new kids would go to school. Would it be to a French

language school or would it be to a Catholic school? These are all the characteristics that they will be looking at and that we will be taking into consideration.

In addition to the comments put forward by people who participated in public meetings, who participated in the surveys and who participated in contacting other members of the advisory group, this was a very inclusive process. There were extensive public meetings going on and many opportunities for people to participate and put forward their thoughts, ideas and concerns. Again, once we have the information, we will be able to take a look at that and use it as a tool as we go forward to make decisions about when the school will be constructed.

Mr. Mitchell: Well, this is all very nice, but I am not getting answers to specific questions. I will try again.

First of all, I think that the minister makes reference to houses that are primarily for downsizing. He may be referring to the Falcon Ridge development. I am not sure. In any case, those Falcon Ridge homes all have at least two bedrooms. There may be people downsizing and moving into them, but there are also young families -- and I have met many of them -- who are also moving in. There is certainly room to accommodate at least one child, if not two, in the other bedroom, so it's not only downsizing.

As far as the rest of the area, I know that when I go out on the street in the evening -- either walking around, walking my dog or riding a bicycle -- I see an awful lot of people pushing strollers, so there are a lot of infants and young children in the remainder of Copper Ridge, and you see them everywhere.

I would say, having looked at the track record -- and the minister has made reference to one school in Carmacks, which we might note is going to be at least a year after the former projection and it certainly isn't within budget -- the track record of this government is that these capital projects don't happen all that quickly. We can't suddenly discover a need and expect to have a school the following year.

But if the minister looks back at what I've asked, I haven't said, "You must build a school at this point." I've said, "You've done a consultation. The consultants made it quite clear that there were other options being looked at, including catchment areas."

Now, if there is another option, people are asking me when we will know. One thing I have heard clearly is that an awful lot of parents don't want to be putting their five-, six- and seven-year-old kids on buses. They'd like their kids to go to school near home, with the kids playing across the street, so they can come home after school and play with those same children.

Certainly I recognize that there are many families who will choose to put their children in the Catholic school system and many families will have their children attend École Émilie Tremblay, the French first language school, which is quite close to many of these families, but some have to be bused there, obviously. And there are families who will choose to put their children into the excellent educational opportunities at École Primaire Whitehorse, the French immersion school. And that's all so, but that's not going to be 100 percent of the people, clearly.

So, again, I want to know when the minister expects the draft report to be a final report. Can the minister give us a timetable for when there will be a public meeting where they will say, "Here are the results of the report"? And more important, can the minister give us a timetable for when the minister can say, "Here's the decision we've made. Here are the new catchment areas that are going to accommodate the children, and we don't need to build a school."? Or, "Here's the school we do need to build."

It's either/or. Either there has to be a decision made about busing people to other schools, or there has to be a decision made about a school. There has to be some decision made and that's what people want to hear.

I'd also like, while I am on my feet, to respond to the minister's comments about how he appreciates that I am engaging in debate and the importance of education and he wishes that perhaps I or my colleague had done so yesterday. Yesterday the minister brought forward an interesting idea. He wanted to have a back-and-forth philosophical debate on the goals of education. The problem I have with that is that we too had a platform, and as the members opposite love to point out -- they say that was a consultation and they won. So the platform that becomes government policy is, I feel, unfortunately so, but nevertheless it is not our platform. It's "Imagine tomorrow" -- the minister's platform. Since it is the minister's platform, it is not at issue here what our vision is.

The minister thinks it is humorous. But as far as the vision that the minister put forward yesterday, it was a motherhood vision. We could engage in a debate on his vision, but I don't have a problem with the vision he put forward. The problem I have is that we are here to discuss Vote 3, Education, and, as the minister has mentioned, it is just under \$126 million -- \$125,878,000. I expect that with that amount of money and the vision that the minister put forward yesterday, the good officials in the department could craft 10 alternative budgets, all of which would reflect that vision. We could accept that vision and could come in with a budget that would have new schools being built and would be supportive of that vision. We could come in with a budget that would have class sizes being reduced, and we'd be supportive of it -- that would have class sizes being increased, but we could still justify it.

The vision statement that the minister put forward was a catch-all that wouldn't define the budget. We are here to discuss the budget that has been tabled and specifically Vote 3, the close to \$126-million budget that this minister has crafted.

That is why I believe that the members thought it made no sense whatsoever to use our time in a back-and-forth debate about philosophies of education; rather, it's our opportunity. We don't get much of an opportunity in Question Period -- we ask questions but we very rarely get answers. It becomes the non-answers of Question Period. What we mostly hear is that, when the former Liberal government was there and previous NDP governments were there, they didn't do this and the present government did. That doesn't answer specific questions.

We do have the ability in Committee of the Whole to get answers to specific questions. So, I am going to ask the minister again: when does the minister expect to be able to table a

final version of the study? Are all the studies going to be available on June 15, the day after this sitting ends? Is everything a draft until June 15? Is the definition of a draft study any document that exists prior to June 15, 2007? When will we be able to see that? When will we be able to tell my constituents -- and the constituents of the minister's colleague in Whitehorse West and the constituents of the Member for McIntyre-Takhini, who also asked these questions -- what the resolution will be in terms of the increased number of students and the increased number of people who will otherwise be bused elsewhere? That is a specific question. Does the minister know a date by which he is asking the study to be finalized? When will we see the study?

Second, the minister didn't say how the committee that he mentioned was selected and whether or not it was representative of all the areas currently within the catchment area of the existing school. Finally, can the minister address the issue of the non-scientific nature of the study that is helping the minister reach his conclusion?

Hon. Mr. Rouble: No. From the various neighbourhoods, it is only an indicator, as are the other hard numbers.

Mr. Mitchell: I would ask for clarification but I appreciate how succinct the minister was. The no is in response to which? No, he doesn't know when he's going to table the study, or no, he's not going to table the study during this sitting, or no, he doesn't feel the sampling was representative?

Hon. Mr. Rouble: The member opposite asked the question: do I know when I will receive the final study? The answer is no.

Mr. Mitchell: Since there's a draft version of the study, there must have been a carload sale on "draft" stamps provided to this government. Since there's a draft version of the study available, has the minister provided direction to either Holdfast Consultants or the department on when he would like to see a final version of the study and, if so, what was that direction?

Hon. Mr. Rouble: The Department of Education is working with the consultant and the terms of reference to ensure the product that is finally received is compliant with the terms of reference originally drafted and the expectations of the study. I expect to receive it when they have collected the information that is needed for them to draw their conclusions. Do I expect it before the end of the year? Yes, of course I expect it before the end of the year. Can I give the member opposite a date as to when I will receive it on my desk? No, I can't do that.

Mr. Mitchell: Let's try this a different way. I've seen lots of contracts over the years issued by governments. They usually have a description of the work to be done, a price to be paid for the work to be done, and a date by which the work needs to be completed. Under law, I believe a contract needs some of these things to be in it, so were these three basic terms in the contract: what is to be done, how much is to be paid for what is to be done, who the participants are -- we know the contract is between the Department of Education and Holdfast Consultants -- and when the delivery is to be made?

Hon. Mr. Rouble: I can assure the member opposite that all the appropriate contracting regulations were followed.

It was done in accordance with how the territorial government does business. The contractor has been asked to look at and gather information and to make a thorough analysis. As the member has stated, it is really important to look at the number of students in the area now, the growth rate and the future projections.

Right now, Mr. Chair, we're even recognizing that Statistics Canada has made a significant undercount in the Yukon. We'll be looking at all the best information available and asking people to take a look at the different neighbourhoods that are expected to go in and what the demographics would be, what impacts that will have on the community and on the number of school-age children, and what impacts that will have on the type of school that is needed for the community.

The member has asked, "When are you going to make a decision?" He also said, "After you do consultations on it, after you get the final document." Well, after we get the final document, after we review it, make some analysis of it and start to go in some different directions, whatever they be -- I don't know; I haven't received the final document -- then, of course, we will have to involve the stakeholders and people who are affected. There will have to be budget allocations, plans designed and all manner of decisions made, but I can't comment on this until I get the final report, see what it says and see which direction it's going in. Once I get the final report, then I'll be able to answer some of the member opposite's questions.

Mr. Mitchell: Well, I find this rather extraordinary. I'm getting this picture of the Minister of Education arriving at 8:00 or perhaps 7:30 in the morning and looking at his in-basket and saying, "Oh, I wish, I hope" -- sort of like waiting for the *Wish Book* to arrive from Sears prior to Christmas -- "Will the report from Holdfast Consultants be in my in-basket today? Gosh, is today my lucky day?" I somehow doubt that that is the way government works.

So, I'll ask a different question. Are we still operating under the original contract with Holdfast Consultants or has the minister, after seeing an interim draft, not-quite-final-yet-to-be-edited-not-spell-checked report, issued a new contract to Holdfast Consultants or a contract extension to do additional work on this particular area of the school situation in the Copper Ridge area?

Hon. Mr. Rouble: Well, Mr. Chair, I think there is one of the fundamental differences between this government and the members in opposition. The members of the opposition want to be guided by a wish book. Well, we are not waiting for a wish book over here. We're waiting for some good solid numbers and some good solid indicators about community growth. We're waiting for some good solid feedback from consultation with Yukoners. We're waiting for some projections regarding the expected growth in the area. We're not going to base our decisions on wishes or what people put in their Christmas dreams. No, we're going to work with Yukoners to respond to their needs as we've done in every other community, as we're doing in this budget.

This budget includes additional monies to complete the construction of the Carmacks school. It includes monies in the budget to work with the First Nation programming and partner-

ship unit. It includes money for increases to all manner of areas that will affect Yukoners. We are not going to sit there and wait for a wish book to arrive. We are going to give the consultant the appropriate amount of time to do the work that has been asked for.

Mr. Mitchell: You know, that was an interesting non-answer from this member. He has now fallen into just issuing the rhetoric. He talks about us wanting to operate from a wish book. I would suggest that it's the minister's party that wants to operate from a wish book. They issued a wish book saying, "Imagine tomorrow." The wish book said it would construct a new school in the Copper Ridge area. Now, apparently, when you apply for that aspect of their wish book, you get a "back-ordered, out-of-stock" response. That's what happens when you deal with wishes.

Ours said to put people first. We weren't asking them to imagine it.

Nevertheless, I've asked a specific question. The minister didn't answer it. Is there a date by which Holdfast Consultants was to have a final report available for the minister? Does the minister expect me to believe that there is no date -- that he issued a contract and said, "Get it done when you can. 2007 would be nice; 2008 would be okay; 2009 we'd be kind of unhappy; 2007 in the spring would be really nice."

Is there a date in that contract by which they have to provide the final version? That's a simple question -- yes or no?

Hon. Mr. Rouble: When the contract was originally signed, it was expected that it would conclude by May 31.

Mr. Mitchell: Well, that only took a short while.

We're dealing with expectations and it sounds like delivery dates can change from time to time. Is it still expected that the final study will be provided by May 31?

Hon. Mr. Rouble: I don't know, Mr. Chair. I haven't received the final study yet. I'll get it when I get it. It has been asked for, and there's additional information -- information that was expected to be included in it and it has been asked for. There's a bit of give-and-take when we're working with consultants on some of these things.

You know, the price of the contract is not expected to increase. We're working with the consultants. We're working with the community. When I get the information, I'll be able to answer some of the member's questions. I won't be able to answer all of them, because he's asking me to look into a pretty big crystal ball and make decisions that are five and six steps down the road.

I won't be able to tell him how much the new school is going to cost to construct because there is an awful lot of work that has to be done between here and there.

Mr. Mitchell: I have not asked the minister to tell me how much a new school is going to cost. I haven't asked that once. What I have asked for are specific responses that have to do with the contract.

Now, the minister said that, when the contract was issued, it was expected that the delivery would be provided by May 31, or words to that effect. He used the word "expected". He said that it was expected that the final report would be delivered by May 31. I would ask the minister if the contract said that, for

this amount of money, we expect to receive a final report by May 31, or was there more specific wording to indicate that the delivery shall be, will be or must be May 31? If that is the case, has there now been an extension provided on that contract?

Hon. Mr. Rouble: A schedule was established. We have asked the contractor to do more work. We will get the report as soon as it is available, as soon as they have completed their work and as soon as the Department of Education is satisfied that it meets the terms of reference that were created for it.

Mr. Mitchell: That's half an answer. I think we were told that there was a date in the contract. What we didn't get is whether or not that date has been extended. I would ask the minister that again. In order to get the information that the minister has asked for, has there been a contract extension provided?

Secondly, I note that the minister made reference to how he doesn't know yet how much a new school will cost. He made several references to a new school. It was my understanding that there has been no decision made to build a new school. Is that still the case: that no decision has been made to build a new school and, if there is to be a new school, no decision has been made about what grades it would encompass?

Hon. Mr. Rouble: Mr. Chair, when the contract originally started, there were some weather delays that backed them up right from the get-go. Also an extra trip was added in. Additional meetings involving the community were set up, so they came back once more than they originally expected. There has been additional work added to this. I'll be able to answer the member opposite's question when I get the final report.

Mr. Mitchell: Well, I need to put out a newsletter, not on a date to be determined, but actually this spring, and I need to visit constituents this spring. Let me see if I can summarize this, because I want to make sure I don't misrepresent the minister's position to my constituents.

If I have this straight, there is going to be a report produced and there is now a draft report. There needs to be a final report. The Minister of Education has no idea when he may receive the final report. The minister does not know whether or not there will be a new school recommended. The minister does not know whether or not there will be changes required in the catchment area. The minister does not know how many students will need to be bused based on the new housing that is being built in the existing area.

Have I summarized the minister's position for him, because "he will know it when he knows it" is basically what he has said?

Hon. Mr. Rouble: Mr. Chair, I expect to get the report in the fairly near future. Can I give the member opposite an exact date of when it will cross my desk? Nope, unfortunately I cannot do that. I don't know; therefore, I will not commit to that date.

Also, the member opposite put forward some very -- well he is going down the road on many of these decisions. I will not know the recommendations until I receive the final report. When I receive it, which I expect will be in the fairly near future, I'll be able to answer the member opposite's questions --

hopefully in the degree of detail that he is expecting -- but I won't have the information until I get the final report.

Mr. Mitchell: I will ask one final question, Mr. Chair. I know there are other members who want to ask questions.

The minister hasn't defined what he means by "in the near future". I know we could spend four hours trying to discuss that, so I won't. I will ask the minister: if he receives the final report while this House is still sitting -- not a draft report, but the final report -- will the minister today commit to tabling that report immediately in this House, making it public, rather than waiting an indeterminate period of time to table it? Can the minister make that commitment? If it no longer has the "draft" stamp on it and it is the final report, will he make that report public immediately, so that the public can be informed as to the recommendations of the report?

Hon. Mr. Rouble: When the Department of Education receives the final report and they agree that it meets the conditions, criteria and expectations of the contract, we will look at what is the best way to release the information. We will look at perhaps working with the Copper Ridge advisory group, which is in part making those recommendations. It might even be appropriate for me to have a meeting with them to look at their recommendations. There are some options as to how to go forward with this. It is important to involve the community. It is also important to hold consultations and public meetings with people when they are available. I know that there are significant challenges in going out and doing information sessions with people regarding education and the school system during summer holidays. That is a big challenge.

When I get the final report, I expect to be able to answer many of the questions from the member opposite.

Mr. Elias: I have one question for the Minister of Education. I understand that the principal of the Chief Zzeh Gittlit School has recently resigned. It is my understanding that, at present, there is no fully functional school council in place. In fact, they have less than half the full complement. The selection of our principal is very important, as the minister well knows. The future of our school, our children and our community is, to a large degree, impacted by that decision. It is important that the community be properly represented and has a real voice in the selection of a successful candidate. The process must not become politicized, and the only way we can reasonably be assured of that is to have enough community representation to ensure that all people are being represented.

Can the minister explain what process will be followed to ensure adequate parent and community involvement in the hiring of the new school principal at the Chief Zzeh Gittlit School?

Hon. Mr. Rouble: As was discussed the other day, the *Education Act* provides a responsibility for school councils to be involved in the selection of a principal. That is in the legislation and is one of the key responsibilities of a school council. School councils have other responsibilities as well. They are to be involved with the creation of a school plan, to look at expenditures from school-based budgets and a variety of other details.

Mr. Chair, in a perfect world, we would have a full complement of people in the Old Crow area on the school council. That might be the easiest, most expedient route. So I would like to see the people of Old Crow participate in this process. I would like to see people in Old Crow participate on the school council.

I know this government, in discussions with the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation, has put on a guaranteed representative -- a position representing the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation on the school council. I would encourage the member opposite, if he knows people in his community -- be they parents or people involved in the community that have an interest in education -- to come forward to participate on school council.

Typically we go through an election process, which we did this past year. If there are vacancies, there are provisions for ministerial appointments to be made to the school councils. So if I can help the member opposite -- if I can provide him with some background information, or some of the pamphlets on the school councils, or the duties and responsibilities of school councils that he could then share with members in his community to encourage them to participate on the school council -- I will do that.

If we can't get a full complement or more people on the school council, then I would look forward to working with the member opposite and the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation government on other ways we can ensure that there is community involvement in the process.

Mr. Elias: I've heard from my constituents that time is of the essence here, and one of the key words is "functional". There is one elected member who is presently out of the community right now. The minister is correct about a VGFN guaranteed representative; however, I've been hearing from many of the parents that they want me to come to this House and ask the minister this: in the absence of a functioning school council, how is the minister, who is responsible for the *Education Act*, going to ensure a principal is hired in the event that that school council is unable to be fully functional? That's the question. Parents want to know how they can become involved. I have had a few parents who are willing to put their names forward. This is a procedural matter.

How is the minister going to rectify the situation, because time is of the essence?

Hon. Mr. Rouble: I am very sensitive to this issue because it is dealing with human resources; however, it is a matter of policy and how we involve the community. I know members opposite don't always appreciate when I ask for their input or involvement, but I'm going to try to break that barrier again.

Would the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin please provide me with some advice as to how he would like to see his constituents involved in this process?

Mr. Elias: It's a bit difficult for me to answer the minister's question when it's his responsibility. I would be more than willing to work with the Education minister over coffee and discuss the options to rectify the concerns coming from my constituents -- absolutely.

But again, this is the minister's responsibility -- and the parents in Old Crow. The hiring of the new principal is very

important. Again, in the absence of a functioning school council under the *Education Act*, parents want to know what the minister is prepared to do.

Hon. Mr. Rouble: I agree wholeheartedly with the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin that it is the minister's responsibility. It is my responsibility. I do, however, have some options in this. I could take the first five names out of the telephone book and invite those people to participate in the process, but I don't think that would be very effective. I could create a panel and say, "Can we take a student, an elder, a parent and someone from the First Nation government and put those four people on a panel?" Could I then go out to the community and say, "Is there a student who is willing to participate in this?" Or the member opposite and I could sit down and have a cup of coffee and work out a process that would reflect the input of the community.

The Department of Education wants to see the community involved in this. In the process that we are going through right now with the deputy minister selection, there is an involvement from a representative of post-secondary schools, public schools and the First Nation government. We are trying to work with as many stakeholders as we can to ensure that we have the appropriate people -- the best people for the job.

If the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin wants to sit down with me and talk about a process, I'm all ears. I don't want to come out and make a decision without having input from the member opposite. That's why I asked him to put forward his suggestions.

Mr. Cardiff: I'm going to follow up with a number of questions. I'm going to keep the flow going here and follow up in the same vein as the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin.

The role of school councils and school boards in education is very important in the territory. It allows for the participation and some decision-making to take place at the local and individual school level. As the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin pointed out, sometimes it's hard to fill those vacancies. Fortunately, I was looking at the numbers not that long ago. I don't have them in front of me, but I will be sure to review them. I know that we are getting close to the end of the day, and I will be sure to review them again. I went down my list of questions, but I want to continue in this vein.

I recall from looking at that list that some school councils are having a hard time filling those vacancies. I feel that it's very important.

The minister also mentioned that, in Old Crow, the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation has a guaranteed member on the school council there. I know that that's an issue in some communities. I believe that, in the *Education Act*, there is actually guaranteed representation for First Nations on school councils, if I am not mistaken. When I come back tomorrow and we continue in this department, I will bring that information with me.

What I would like to know is what the minister and department are doing to encourage and ensure that communities actually know about school councils and encourage them to participate? It is incumbent on the department and the minister, if they want that input, to encourage people to participate and run.

What is the department and what is the minister doing to encourage that?

Hon. Mr. Rouble: The Member for Mount Lorne is quite correct. The members of the school council do provide a very valuable and very important function in their school. I think one of the most important things we can do to attract people to our school councils is, number one, value their input. These people are concerned people in the community who come forward and give their time in an effort to make their school a better school. We value their input and I'd like to thank them for their input.

As for some of the mechanical steps of what we do, we work with the school principals to communicate to parents and others in the area that openings are going to be coming up. The principal goes out and makes people aware of this. The Department of Education advertises the available positions for the school council elections that are coming up. A brochure is created that is all about being on a school council -- the role and responsibilities.

We have a full-time person in the Department of Education -- as well as our principals and our teachers who work with the school councils -- who is dedicated to working with our school councils to work to increase the awareness of school councils, the duties of school councils, and to be a liaison to help the school councils do their work.

They also work with the Association of School Councils. They had a meeting this past spring. I know that the Member for Mount Lorne was there. That position provides some support for them.

The short version is that we value their work. We try to communicate the importance of school councils. We advertise when school councils come out and we have staff people dedicated to working with them.

Mr. Cardiff: I asked the minister some questions the other day about the francophone school board and their rights to be treated as a separate entity and not as an extension or agent of the department. In some respects, it doesn't seem like that. This is under section 129 of the *Education Act*, if the minister and his officials want to look it up.

I'm just wondering what incentives there are for a school council to actually become a school board, because it appears in this instance -- I'm not sure what extra powers there are -- and it doesn't appear that there are actually extra resources available if you become a school board, especially in this instance.

I know that there has been some talk in other communities of school councils becoming school boards because, if you look at the *Education Act*, it actually -- from what I recall -- does confer more power and more authority to a school board than it does to a school council.

I don't know if the minister could provide a quick answer to that before we finish up for the day. Hopefully, he can.

Hon. Mr. Rouble: The member is correct. We have a couple of different structures available under the *Education Act* to provide for parental and community input into the school. We have the provision for a school committee, of which we have only one in the territory. We also have school councils in

the majority of our schools. We also have the provision for school boards. They each have different levels of authority, responsibility and involvement.

The decision as to which level the community wants to participate in -- well, often that is very unique to the different communities. It depends upon the number of people in the community, or the capacity, or their desire to be involved.

We do have a couple of different communities that have looked at becoming a school board. In the majority of instances, they have decided not to do that. There are significant powers, responsibilities and opportunities for involvement for the school councils. I think a lot of people, when they become aware of their ability to be involved, and then when they practise that involvement, it offers the level of involvement that a lot of people want to see -- that when people practise what is available to them under the *Education Act* for the powers of a school council, again, it does offer the opportunity to be involved in school-based curriculum decisions.

It does offer the ability to be involved in significant staffing decisions. It does have the ability to be involved in setting the school's calendar so that the school can accommodate different dates or times of the year that are important to the community.

Mr. Chair, seeing the time, I would move that we report progress on Bill No. 6.

Chair: Mr. Rouble has moved that we report progress on Bill No. 6.

Motion agreed to

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

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

Motion agreed to

Speaker resumes the Chair

Speaker: I will now call the House to order.

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

Chair's report

Mr. Nordick: Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 6, entitled *First Appropriation Act, 2007-08*, and directed me to report progress.

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

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Speaker: I declare the report carried.

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

The House adjourned at 5:31 p.m.