

Whitehorse, Yukon**Monday, June 4, 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 recognition of Tourism Week**

Hon. Ms. Taylor: Mr. Speaker, on behalf of all Members of the Yukon Legislative Assembly, it is my honour to rise today to pay tribute to Tourism Week, which is being celebrated throughout Canada and here at home in the Yukon. Tourism Week in Canada, June 4 to 10, 2007, celebrates a \$67-billion industry in Canada and reminds all of us how tourism matters to our country's economic and social well-being. Coordinated by the Tourism Industry Association of Canada around the theme, "Tourism, Canada's passport to prosperity", Tourism Week provides a focal point for activities and events planned across the country for businesses and provincial, territorial and regional tourism industry associations and others.

Tourism is Yukon's largest private sector employer. In fact, more than 80 percent of Yukon jobs are related to tourism in some form, making tourism the largest employer in the non-government sector.

Tourism also continues to be Yukon's leading economic generator. It is, however, about much more than just dollars. It enriches our lives through its support of the many cultural institutions, heritage attractions and private tourism operations throughout our communities that are accessible to visitors year-round.

Visitor experiences are shaped not just by our beautiful, pristine landscapes and majestic vistas. It is the people on the front lines who truly make the difference -- those retail clerks, museum staff, interpretive guides, park rangers and a host of others who provide product and services.

As Minister of Tourism and Culture, and certainly on behalf of all members of the Legislature, it is an honour to say thank you to the many individuals, businesses, organizations and associations that strive each day to provide our visitors a quality experience. Thank you for your hard work, continued commitment and belief in Yukon's personality that collectively creates a wonderful experience for all to discover and enjoy.

Tourism contributes significantly to Yukon's economy, its standard of living and quality of life for all Yukoners.

We encourage all Yukoners to celebrate Tourism Week.

I encourage all Yukoners to celebrate Tourism Week which takes place this week.

Thank you very much.

Speaker: Are there any further tributes?

Introduction of visitors.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Mr. Rouble: I would ask all members of the Assembly to join me in welcoming to our Assembly today Dr. Andy Greenshaw, the associate vice-president of research for the University of Alberta, Dr. Roger Cheng, chair of the Department of Civil Engineering in the engineering faculty of the University of Alberta, Mr. Curtis Prosko, of the Canadian Roadbuilders Association, Mr. Kirk Cameron, the managing director of the Yukon Cold Climate Innovation Centre, Dr. Terry Weninger, president of Yukon College and Josee Belisle, of the National Research Council. Welcome.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any further introductions of visitors?

Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Hon. Mr. Rouble: I have for tabling the annual report for Yukon College and the accompanying financial documents.

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

Reports of committees.

Petitions.

Are there bills to be introduced?

Notices of motion.

Statements by ministers.

This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD**Question re: Yukon College residence fees**

Mr. Fairclough: I would like to raise a serious question concerning the escalating cost involved with attending Yukon College.

A single parent with a child requires a two-bedroom family unit. The costs are expected to be adjusted from time to time to reflect the reality of inflation, and we understand that. Two years ago such a unit was \$640 a month. Last year the cost jumped to \$750 a month, an increase of 17 percent. That's a fairly steep jump. That same unit this fall will cost \$900 a month -- an outstanding 40 percent in just two years.

Is the minister aware of this dramatic cost increase for residence fees at Yukon College and does he think it's fair?

Hon. Mr. Rouble: The member opposite brings forward a very good issue, that being a commitment that people make when they decide to go on to further education and to take post-secondary course work. We have an excellent institution here in the territory, that being Yukon College, and I'm pleased to see that many Yukoners are taking advantage of that opportunity and are going to courses there.

One of the strong benefits that we have here in the territory is the ability for Yukon students to apply to the Yukon grant, which covers much, if not all, of their educational costs. Also, as we've just seen, the construction of the new residences up at

Yukon College will serve students there for many years to come.

Mr. Fairclough: He didn't answer the question, Mr. Speaker. I hope the minister follows this issue along very seriously.

One has to admire a person who wants to better their education and career options to become productive and useful members of society.

It's not easy having to parent, study and put food on the table by working one or two jobs maybe. It's not easy. So why are we encouraging these people to further their education and say thank you by hitting them with a ridiculous cost increase?

Is the minister prepared to admit that this is unacceptable and will he commit to addressing this matter before some students are forced out?

Hon. Mr. Rouble: Those Yukoners who are deciding to continue with their education and better themselves through education have my utmost respect. We have more than 1,000 Yukoners who are receiving financial assistance from the territorial government currently. In fact, the number I have is that about 1,064 Yukoners receive some form of financial assistance from the territorial government. The Yukon government is committed to helping students to continue their education. We are going to work with Yukon College to ensure that it is able to provide opportunities that will lead to meaningful lives and meaningful careers. We are also working with Yukon Housing Corporation and leveraging funds from our other partners to build beautiful facilities like the new Yukon College residences. These residences will provide housing for families coming in from the communities as well as provide others with a great place to live while they learn.

Mr. Fairclough: He didn't answer the question. That's two down, and he didn't commit to addressing this matter. That's the simplest thing the minister could have done.

If I were a student, I would take no comfort from those words from the minister.

When the old residence is full, students will have to take a unit in the new residence, and it only gets worse. The same two-bedroom unit in the new building is \$1,000 a month, compared to just \$460 two years ago. That's a 56-percent increase. There appears to be no explanation other than the fact that this government is making students pay for their inability to keep costs down on the athletes village. Now students have to pay for the Yukon Party's incompetence -- and they are paying, Mr. Speaker.

As one student, a single parent, said to me, it is simply unfair. Will the minister do the right thing and provide adequate funding to Yukon College so that struggling students are not faced with undue financial hardship?

Hon. Mr. Rouble: I'm afraid the member opposite might be getting confused with some of the different programs that have gone on and who is responsible for some of the work. Yes, when we did have the opportunity to host the Canada Winter Games, the Yukon government went to work with our federal colleagues and with our colleagues in Yukon Housing Corporation and built a lasting facility that will be a legacy for all Yukoners. It was a great investment; it was a much better

decision to invest that money in building a permanent structure rather than expensing it or renting it out just for the Canada Winter Games. The building was built and then it was given to Yukon College, so there will be more housing.

We have made commitments to Yukon College. Look at the recent Yukon Party investments in Yukon College and how the funding has been increased. Our work in helping students attain post-secondary education speaks for itself and we will continue to work with all Yukoners to provide them with access to continue their education.

Question re: Dawson City sewage disposal

Mr. Mitchell: I have a question concerning the Dawson City wastewater treatment facility. Our caucus has been approached by a company that had submitted a quote on that project. In the letter, Zenon Membrane Solutions raised several concerns. The comments are based on a copy of the Dawson City wastewater treatment report. I quote from the letter: "From our review of the report, there appear to be some misrepresentations we would like clarified."

The letter quotes from the report: "Complete estimates for the Zenon system were not developed. However, the equipment costs and other information provided by the suppliers indicate that both of those systems would have a capital cost in excess of \$10 million." Can the minister explain why this number was used, a number that, according to Zenon, is some 55 percent greater than the average sequencing batch reactor system estimates?

Hon. Mr. Hart: A substantial number of studies have been going on for the sewage treatment centre in Dawson City. Just to refresh the memory of the member opposite, the cost of the SBR system that was originally looked at under the court order was going to be in excess of \$17 million at that time, as well as the inordinate cost of operating that facility, which is going to be close to three-quarters of a million dollars. It's obvious why we've gone the other way.

Mr. Mitchell: Well, Mr. Speaker, Zenon also referred to operating costs. Again, I quote, "With respect to operating cost comparisons and Zenon, it is stated in the report, average annual life cycle cost estimates were not calculated in detail for the Zenon system, as there is no reason to expect costs to be lower and some reason to expect costs to be higher, due to material replacement costs. Zenon claims our budget prices was the third lowest of the equipment supplier quotes." Zenon claims their references were never checked.

Mr. Speaker, this is a concern. Those tendering expect a level playing field. The report said that Zenon provided two references for their system, as shown in Appendix B of the report. However, as the capital cost for the system was significantly higher than either the MBR or SBR system, the references were not contacted for their technological review.

Can the minister explain why this company's proposal was treated in this way?

Hon. Mr. Hart: An independent review of all of our studies was done by a firm in Calgary that did the assessments on all the projects that were provided with regard to the Dawson City sewage. For the member opposite, that study was done

and indicated that the government was heading in the right direction.

Mr. Mitchell: Mr. Speaker, Zenon is owned by General Electric, a benchmark name in the business world for many years. This is a solid, reputable company. It is represented in the Yukon by a Yukon-owned environmental consulting firm. Both companies deserve a better explanation.

Allow me to quote one more time, "In summary, the benefits of MBR technology -- membrane bioreactor -- are ignored and the technology is misrepresented in terms of overall capital cost, operating cost, non-price factors and reliability in the marketplace in this comparison. References were not contacted."

It is incumbent upon the minister to address these accusations of unfair treatment. Companies need to know they will be treated fairly. Yukoners need to know they are getting the true picture and value for their tax dollars.

Will the minister explain why this report appeared to be, in the eyes of Zenon, biased to the point of misrepresentation?

Hon. Mr. Hart: They didn't get the contract. It is that simple. We took representatives from a couple of our smaller municipalities to look at several facilities Outside, facilities that were operating, and they included the MBR system. For the member opposite to indicate that we did not verify the company's references is incorrect. We did go out and look at facilities that were outside and two or three of those facilities were MBR systems. Regarding the member opposite's issue, we looked at the facilities in Alberta and in British Columbia.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

Speaker: The Hon. Mr. Kenyon, on a point of order.

Hon. Mr. Kenyon: Mr. Speaker, perhaps the member opposite is unaware of the custom of this House to table documents read from extensively and, given the background, I would hope that he would table the entire document.

Speaker: Mr. Mitchell, on the point of order.

Mr. Mitchell: I've already tabled the entire document but I thank the minister for pointing that out.

Speaker's ruling

Speaker: Okay, we're done.

Question re: Alcohol and drug addictions

Mr. Edzerza: I have a question for the Minister of Health and Social Services.

Mr. Speaker, drug and alcohol addictions are very difficult to overcome. For the record, I can give personal testimony to this comment because I suffered many years with alcohol addiction. It breaks the spirit and minimizes the will to live. I lived this life so I understand the pain. However, I have been alcohol-free for over 24 years, so one can overcome these addictions if the appropriate help is available.

What is this minister doing to fix the system that is failing Yukon people who desperately need help to break the destructive cycle of alcohol and drug dependency?

Hon. Mr. Cathers: I thank the Member for McIntyre-Takhini for the question and for his personal perspective on the issue.

We recognize dealing with the challenges of alcohol or substance abuse addictions are very difficult for individuals and the importance of providing that support. That is why one of the first things that we did is revive the treatment centre that had been cancelled by a previous NDP government, reactivate the 28-day treatment program, and we have continued investment in that area as committed to in our election platform from last fall.

We will continue that investment, both as part of the substance abuse action plan and in areas dealing with treatment -- which is one of the priorities, I should point out, under the substance abuse action plan. We will be continuing to invest in this area and do what we can to further enhance the level of the Yukon's treatment programs.

Mr. Edzerza: The lack of treatment options has been brought to this minister's attention time and time again, yet nothing seems to change. The government offers nine 28-day treatment programs a year for a maximum of 12 clients each. Even with additional outpatient treatment, that barely scratches the surface. To make things even worse, alcohol and drug services is short staffed, with three in-patient counsellors doing the work of four, and four outpatient counsellors doing the work of five. The inevitable result is even longer waiting times for patients who need and want treatment. What is the minister doing to make sure ADS has the qualified staff it needs just to run the limited programming it now offers?

Hon. Mr. Cathers: In reference to the member's specific question about hiring at ADS, I would point out that the position is there. We have provided the resources for that position. It is not uncommon with positions -- and particularly in areas where high qualifications are required -- that sometimes we do have challenges in recruiting people for those positions. That is, of course, being dealt with. The member needs to recognize that and recognize that, when expanding treatment programs and addictions counselling, there can be challenges, particularly for specific skill sets, depending on which treatment options are chosen for accessing the trained personnel in those areas.

That is one area. I would again remind the member that, as he should be well aware, this government -- of which he was formerly a member when some of the decisions were made -- has invested further in alcohol and drug treatment services. We recognize the need to do more, and that is why it is a commitment under the substance abuse action plan that we launched. We have engaged in a partnership with public and non-governmental organizations, and we will continue investing in this area throughout this mandate.

Mr. Edzerza: For the record, if my recommendations were adhered to previously, I wouldn't be asking these questions here today.

I would like to ask the minister about one specific area where the need is not being met. I am talking about treatment for addicts with fetal alcohol spectrum disorder.

This government likes to boast about its five-point plan for FASD, yet the supervisor of alcohol and drug services says he has no idea how to meet the special treatment needs of this client group and, in his own words, we need more staff and a bigger building. Does the minister agree with the assessment and what is he doing about it?

Hon. Mr. Cathers: Certainly it will come as no surprise to the member opposite that he and I do not share the same perspective on this.

I would remind him that this government has significantly invested in areas further assisting those with FASD -- with the implementation of the five-step action plan, in working in partnership with organizations including Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Society Yukon, to which we have significantly increased the investment, and in other areas such as the Child Development Centre, working on early identification and assistance for children with FASD. FASSY works -- and we resource them -- in this area by providing greater assistance to those who have the problems.

We have stepped forward in this area. We recognize there is more work that needs to be done, but we have invested significantly beyond what previous governments have done. We are very proud of that and we are very proud of where we are going in this area.

Question re: Alcohol and drug addictions

Mr. Edzerza: I'd like to follow up with the same minister on the same topic. According to one of the minister's officials, the number of people in treatment for cocaine and crack cocaine addictions is now the same as the number of people being treated for alcohol addictions. In a newspaper article on Friday, the supervisor of alcohol and drug services said that the standard treatment for crack cocaine is a 60-day program, but -- and I'm quoting from the official here -- "we don't have the resources". One can only imagine that even more people will be seeking treatment when the Community Wellness Court starts hitting its stride.

When will the minister start providing the resources that are needed to meet the new reality of increased cocaine and crack addictions?

Hon. Mr. Cathers: I am wondering where the Member for McIntyre-Takhini was, if I may be somewhat flippant, when the substance abuse action plan was developed, when the *Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act* was implemented? Where was the member when investments were made in this area?

I would point out to the member that we have further stepped forward in this area. We will continue to do so. For the member to suggest that we are not adapting to these issues and further investing is quite simply incorrect. The member should recognize that the sources he is referencing also noted that these problems are emerging problems. The issue of drug use and how drugs are being used, both in the Yukon and nationally, has changed over time and we will adapt to assist in treatment in those areas.

The member needs to recognize that when a problem emerges or increases in a specific area, that has to be identified

and then we will develop the plan and resource the plan to address that area.

Mr. Edzerza: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to help the minister come out of his state of confusion. I am in exactly the same place I was when I was on that side of the House, asking the same questions. The bottom line is that the government's approach to alcohol and drug treatment falls way short of the mark. There is no medical detox facility. People have to wait for a bed in a 28-day treatment program when they need help right now. If they do make it in and they make it through the program, there is nothing for them afterwards to help them avoid falling back into the same old destructive pattern. There's no youth programming. There is no family programming. There is no programming facility for First Nations who need something different from the government's one-size-fits-all approach.

Since the minister refused to comment on treatment services when the newspaper asked him, will he tell this House how he plans to meet these very obvious needs?

Hon. Mr. Cathers: First of all, I would urge the Member for McIntyre-Takhini to take a look at what has been done in this area and to note that his new party, the NDP, is the party that went backwards on dealing with addictions, that shut down the Crossroads treatment centre. We revived it, and through the Sarah Steele Building, the 28-day program is a component of the services in these areas.

But I would again remind the member that we have already stepped forward significantly in this area. We have committed to doing more and we will do more in the area of treatment. For the member to suggest that we are not addressing this issue flies in the face of the facts, flies in the face of the substance abuse action plan and the significant investment that we have already made in improving the treatment services.

Mr. Edzerza: Mr. Speaker, the minister just can't close his eyes and make this problem disappear. Without a serious investment in new programs and services, the substance abuse action plan is just another meaningless document. Words are cheap, Mr. Speaker. It doesn't work if people can't get the programs they need at the time they are most vulnerable. It won't work if we keep expecting people to fit the programs instead of designing programs to fit the people who need them.

As the alcohol and drug services official said on Friday, people come out of treatment and end up going back into the same hell they are trying to leave. Instead of paying lip service to the problem, when will this minister demonstrate the political will to do things differently and back up that commitment with the resources that are needed to make a radical change?

Hon. Mr. Cathers: I would remind the Member for McIntyre-Takhini that the \$2 million allocated under the substance abuse action plan fund was a significant investment. The government has carried that forward in ongoing funding in many areas. We have invested and we will continue to invest.

For the member to suggest that we have not already done a significant amount in this area quite simply ignores the facts, ignores the substance abuse action plan, and ignores other complementary areas such as the *Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act* that deal with the sources of these prob-

lems -- the drug houses that in many ways are the root cause and supplier of these addictions.

For the member to suggest we aren't addressing this issue quite simply ignores what has been done to date. I would urge the member to take a look through copies of some previous budgets, flip through newspaper articles and old notes he might have around to remind himself that we have already stepped forward and have committed to continuing to address this issue -- and we will do so.

Question re: Cellphone service

Mr. McRobb: In December 2005, the Government of Yukon announced it had signed an agreement with Latitude Wireless to expand cellular telephone service to several Yukon communities. A number of communities were left out of the minister's big announcement and are still without adequate cell coverage. The minister himself admitted that residents living near Lake Laberge, Marsh Lake and the Ibex Valley are not covered in this arrangement.

Why did this Yukon Party government decide to exclude these communities in the agreement it signed a year and a half ago?

Hon. Mr. Lang: We entered into a contract with Latitude Wireless to supply cellphone service to 90 percent of the population of the Yukon. That was done through putting cellphone service in 17 communities. We've done that; we've just completed that part of the contract.

Mr. McRobb: This government signed the contract. The minister has to answer why hundreds of Yukoners are not benefiting from this service. This is what the government promised on the day the deal was announced: "the deal will greatly benefit all citizens throughout the territory".

The minister has already admitted that at least three residential areas of the Yukon are not covered at all. Ibex Valley, Lake Laberge and Marsh Lake were all left out. Obviously the original announcement was misleading.

The minister has two questions to answer now: why were these communities left out, and what is the minister's plan to fix this mistake and include people in those communities?

Hon. Mr. Lang: The member opposite is misrepresenting the facts.

Speaker's statement

Speaker: Order please. Order. The honourable minister is not allowed to say that another member is misrepresenting anything. You have different views of the facts, but all honourable members are stating what they firmly believe. So, please, do not do that. You have the floor.

Hon. Mr. Lang: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The member opposite is wrong. We entered into a contract for a 90-percent footprint on cellphone services. We've done that. We've just completed the 17th community. Latitude Wireless will move ahead and make some business decisions in the future. I'm sure this government will be involved in some part of those decisions, but to stand up here and tell us that we didn't do our job, when 90 percent of Yukon's population have cellphones -- 12 months ago, that wasn't a fact. The fact today is, we've done

our job -- 90 percent of Yukoners do have cellphone access and there are other parts of the Yukon that need the service. Latitude Wireless will be looking at that.

Mr. McRobb: The Yukon Party made a commitment to "greatly benefit all citizens throughout the territory". It hasn't honoured that commitment. Even this minister has admitted that he should get back to work with a private sector partner and determine what can be done to expand this coverage as originally promised.

Let's examine another aspect of this agreement -- the seven-year subsidy to Latitude Wireless referred to by the minister the other day. In this fiscal year, that subsidy amounts to \$800,000. Last year it was \$200,000. When the Yukon Party announced this project, there was no mention of a subsidy.

What is the total amount of the subsidy over the life of the contract, and why was this information not made public when this deal was signed?

Hon. Mr. Lang: The member has taken something out of context. The fact was that we as a government entered into an agreement with a private company to supply cellphone service to 90 percent of the territory, population-wise. We've done that. As the member pointed out, we've made a financial commitment. We certainly have, and that is on the public record. We will be working with the corporation in the future, but today, we've done our job. We committed to 12 months and 17 communities being on-line with cellphone services. We as a government made a financial commitment to do that. Latitude Wireless will have to go ahead and we will work with that corporation for all Yukoners. At the end of the day -- hopefully, somewhere down the road -- all Yukoners will have access to cellphones. As modern technology improves, I imagine that will happen, but this government went to work; this government filled a need; this government made a financial commitment, and we will go forward with that commitment.

Question re: Construction budgets

Mr. McRobb: Earlier this year, the Auditor General released a report that was very critical of the Yukon Party government's mismanagement of taxpayers' money. The report examined a random sample of 10 projects all under the watchful eye of this government. The auditors revealed the overexpenditure of more than \$8 million of taxpayers' money on those projects alone.

Last week, we heard about the Watson Lake multi-level care facility that has doubled from the original cost estimate of about \$5 million to nearly \$10 million. Another project that flew out of control under this government is the Old Crow airport replacement. The original target cost, according to the Auditor General's report, was \$2,046,000. What was its end cost under this group of good fiscal managers? \$3.1 million -- a 50-percent increase in the cost of this project.

Can the minister explain why the costs on this project were allowed to balloon out of control?

Hon. Mr. Lang: In replying to the member opposite, we were the government that brought the Auditor General in to do a review of the department. As a government, we certainly are going to work with that auditor's report to improve the management of the Department of Highways and Public

Works. That's why the Auditor General was brought in. That's why we as a government are going to go forward with that report and improve the department.

This government brought the Auditor General in to do a review and the Auditor General will be doing more reviews of the internal operations of the government. This is good news for government. This is how we are going to manage the taxpayers' dollars in the Department of Highways and Public Works. I look forward to the improvements that are going to happen in the future.

Mr. McRobb: Let's look at what the Auditor General had to say in her report: "Management Board approved a revised target total cost of \$3.1 million. The board expressed concerns that the cost estimates were inaccurate." Management Board is comprised of the Premier and other ministers. They made these decisions.

So, Mr. Speaker, the board thought the cost estimates were inaccurate. What did it do? Did it send the information back to get proper confirmation on the numbers? No, it just threw money at the project anyway. In its ultimate wisdom, the Yukon Party knew the numbers were wrong but approved them anyway. This is why projects under this government go over budget. No one is minding the store.

Why did the minister allow this project to go ahead if Management Board thought that the numbers were inaccurate?

Hon. Mr. Lang: Again, Mr. Speaker, the member is wrong. Management Board does approve finances in the government and, on different projects, we've had overages. But we as a government were concerned. We brought in the Auditor General to do an independent review of the department. We did that, Mr. Speaker. The members of the opposition didn't do that. We did that as a government.

The Auditor General is a good tool for government to use in an independent fashion to get to the facts. The Department of Highways and Public Works has had an Auditor General review. Now we as a government are committed to go to work with that department and improve it. It's not the end of the world, Mr. Speaker. It's the way we as a government see ourselves managing the taxpayers' money.

The Auditor General is a fresh set of eyes on an internal issue of the government. The Department of Highways and Public Works is only one of the departments that are going to get an audit. The Canada Winter Games is going to have an audit. All of these things are how this government will manage the taxpayers' money. We will go forward and work with the department to improve it.

Mr. McRobb: Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General demonstrated quite clearly in her recent report that the Yukon Party government has done a poor job of managing projects. No one has been minding the grocery store, and this has resulted in more than \$8 million spent needlessly on cost overruns. This is just the latest example. According to the Auditor General, the government thought that some of the numbers it used to make its decision with respect to the Old Crow airport were inaccurate. When presented with these inaccurate numbers, what did the Yukon Party do? Did it try to substantiate the numbers? No,

it just went ahead and approved the project anyway -- so much for good fiscal management.

Why did the minister allow this project to go ahead if Management Board thought the numbers were inaccurate?

Hon. Mr. Fentie: Mr. Speaker, now that the Member for Kluane has brought in Management Board, let's point out a few facts. In the first instance, the Auditor General never once mentioned in her report a Yukon Party government. Second, what this member is suggesting is that estimators in the department don't know what they're doing, engineers don't know what they're doing, officials don't know what they're doing -- this is what the Member for Kluane and the Official Opposition are suggesting. Now, let's look at more facts.

This government not only did an internal audit on Highways and Public Works, we also had a report done on our estimating, and then we brought in the Auditor General to give us a complete accounting of the department. And by the way, the department operated as it had under previous governments during our first mandate. That's obviously changing these days, but we don't attack officials, we go to work on solutions. We're not remaining part of the problem, as the Official Opposition is, we are solution makers. We're here to help the department improve in all areas.

Furthermore, when it comes to Old Crow, the tender came in higher than the estimate. The member doesn't even know the difference between an estimate and a budget and a tender. So the member's case has no water.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

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

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

Motion agreed to

Speaker leaves the Chair

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Chair: Order please. Committee of the Whole will now come to order. The matter before the Committee is Bill No. 6, *First Appropriation Act, 2007-08*, Department of Environment, Vote 52.

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 Environment**

Chair: The matter before the Committee is Bill No. 6, *First Appropriation Act, 2007-08*, Department of Environment, Vote 52. We will proceed with general debate.

Hon. Mr. Fentie: I am very pleased to rise today to apprise all members of the exciting and challenging programs and initiatives that the Department of Environment will carry out this year through its proposed operations and capital budget. Whether it be in climate change initiatives, new fish and wildlife management undertakings, increasing our awareness, appreciation and use of Yukon parks, or helping Yukoners understand how they can reduce and prevent human wildlife conflicts, the department plays an important role in the lives of Yukoners everywhere.

The department hosted a very successful, first ever Environmental Forum in which many people representing many interests met and exchanged ideas on how we can expand our efforts to get more information about the status of this territory's fish and wildlife populations and their habitat.

Traditionally, the Department of Environment has focused its efforts on surveying and collecting information regarding the species and populations that support harvesting activities such as trapping, hunting and fishing.

Increasingly, the department is being asked to respond to a much broader range of questions for which it has never previously collected information. For example, land claims driven processes such as the *Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Act*, land use planning, special management area planning and forest management planning are all creating a significant new demand for information on ecosystems, water resources, cumulative impacts and conservation of critical habitat. All this data collection requires that we have a robust system of specialists and technologies that allow for the storage and exchange of environmental information.

Sound, timely information that is responsive to management issues helps us all ensure that we can achieve environmental and community sustainability while making wise use of our resources.

Mr. Chair, I will speak to some of these initiatives and what we have achieved in a moment. But I'd like to begin with climate change.

When our government was re-elected last fall, we campaigned on a platform that included protecting Yukon's pristine environment, preserving our wildlife, and studying and mitigating the impacts of climate change. It is, however, the challenges and opportunities arriving from climate change that have moved to the forefront, as the Yukon government continues its efforts to responsibly manage our air, land, water, and wildlife resources.

From a global perspective, Yukon generates very little in the way of greenhouse gas emissions, yet the impacts of global warming on our territory can be tremendous and potentially very expensive -- such as the major beetle infestations of merchantable timber, increased wildfire suppression costs, highways, buildings and other infrastructure costs due to melting

permafrost -- and compromised subsistence hunting and fishing. In terms of our natural environment and resources, this can also include changes in habitat, wildlife and bird populations, freshwater systems and, of course, land stability. Clearly, rapid climate change in the north is destined to have a major impact on the way we live and, more specifically, will bring profound changes to traditional ways of life. Accordingly, addressing these potential effects on the daily lives of Yukoners has become a major focus of our government's environmental agenda.

This led to the introduction last year of the Yukon climate change strategy, which has the four goals of enhancing public awareness, reducing greenhouse gas emissions, building environmental, social and economic systems to adapt to changes and take advantage of climate change opportunities, and establishing Yukon as a northern and world leader in climate change research.

To this end, we are working to establish Yukon College as a climate change research centre of excellence for the north to address sustainability in a rapidly changing climate through innovation, adaptation and mitigation measures.

I am very pleased to say that Yukon College and the University of Alberta have recently entered into an agreement on cold climate research. For us, that is a major step forward in addressing this particular area for Yukon.

We also have a climate change action plan. The development of the climate change action plan will be the main instrument to implement the Government of Yukon climate change strategy. The development of the action plan is currently underway and is anticipated to be completed in 2008.

The action plan will outline specific actions and initiatives that government will undertake in response to climate change and will benefit from broad public consultation to ensure that it is relevant to Yukoners. The budget will be used toward a variety of activities in support of this initiative, including consultation, workshop development and hosting workshops, and development and distribution of materials.

Another initiative we are pleased about is called "Celebrating Yukon Parks". This program will expand in 2007-08 with this new budget. The initiative started in 2006 to raise the public profile and awareness of Yukon territorial parks for residents and visitors alike. The initiative will expand the public outreach component of the program, by partnering with Yukon Tourism in visitor information centres across the Yukon and in Whitehorse in the delivery of interpretive programs, information presented by uniformed, seasonal parks branch staff.

Other program materials will be produced to promote public understanding and appreciation for parks and protected areas such as posters, slideshow and DVD presentations and a series of campfire interpretive talks. This program is being coordinated with Yukon Tourism, the Larger than Life initiative, which is a major marketing tool for Yukon Tourism.

We've also implemented a Yukon park officer enforcement program. This program will provide park officer enforcement services in Yukon government campgrounds and recreation sites during the annual operating season from May to September. We're very serious about our celebrating parks initiative and want to ensure that visitors and Yukoners alike have a

positive experience when they visit campgrounds or parks here in the Yukon.

The program builds on the success and progress made over the last three years when a park officer enforcement pilot project was implemented in 2004. The program provides officer presence and visibility primarily at high-use campgrounds and recreation sites and at other locations during special event and long weekends and, to a structured degree, at remote locations in the Yukon.

The park officer program will help ensure our campgrounds are family-oriented places that are secure and enjoyable, rather than a place to party, create problems and get into some mischief. Officers will enforce campground regulations when required in order to control and discourage inappropriate behaviour.

This project fulfills the government's 2006 platform commitment to expand the park officer program to promote security in Yukon campgrounds.

We are also going to undertake a number of areas of consultation. One area is on finalizing the revised *Parks Act* regulations. In order to update the regulations under the *Parks and Land Certainty Act* and to allow our Yukon parks branch to provide residents and visitors with pleasant camping experiences, Yukoners will be asked to comment on draft *Parks Act* regulations in 2007.

The *Parks Act* regulations will outline activities that should or should not occur within a park, campground or recreation site. We will create regulations that can maintain high-quality wilderness standards for the outdoor recreation and campground experiences that all users seek and expect. The regulations replace outdated regulations that apply only to campgrounds.

Further, we're starting management planning for First Nations on new territorial parks. Affected First Nations will be approached to start management planning processes for new territorial parks created under recently settled land claims: the Agay Mene, located in the Snafu and Tarfu lakes area, and, of course, Kusawa Lake.

The Yukon public will be asked to participate in the planning process, which should start in 2007-08.

But we're also doing some upgrades in repairs and improvements, Mr. Chair. The construction phase of the planned Tombstone Territorial Park visitor reception centre project has been moved to Highways and Public Works. Environment continues to be involved in the fabrication and installation of new exhibits, displays and furnishings. These exhibits are the key means to interpret the natural and cultural history of the park.

The cycle of rehabilitation and restoration is necessary to ensure that campgrounds remain attractive and keep pace with the expectations of today's travellers. The projects to be undertaken in 2007-08 reflect the recommendations in the approved June 2002 resource requirements for Yukon campgrounds and recreation sites summary. Three campgrounds are scheduled for rehabilitation during the operating season. These are Marsh Lake, Tombstone Park and Fox Lake. The balance of investment in this area is budgeted for the operation of the parks workshop to construct replacement facilities. This includes

such work as improvements to roads, loops, tables, outhouses and kitchen shelters, clearing underbrush, painting, seeding, reposting signage and boat ramp realignment, minor and emergency repairs to campground and day use facilities, removing dead and dying trees and broken facilities, and continuing to construct new facilities. This project provides for the continued employment of two full-time workshop employees and also benefits seasonal auxiliary campground staff from facility construction and installation. An approved operation and maintenance program supports this project. The incremental operation and maintenance impact of this project is minimal and will be covered within existing budgets or existing budget envelopes.

Mr. Chair, a very important new initiative for our department, the Department of Environment, is resource management inventories. We're investing significant monies toward that, some \$1.285 million in this budget. I think the rationale is clear. Sound decisions on land use planning and development require up-to-date information on fish and wildlife populations and the availability of suitable habitat. The fish and wildlife branch is expanding its inventory surveys to go beyond simply looking at accessible populations of big game animals that are hunted. New funding will allow for new areas and new species to be assessed.

Last month, department employees radio-collared a sampling of both elk and bison to assist with further monitoring and inventory work. This augments inventories of both species that were conducted in 2006. We also allocated just over \$200,000 to population and stratification surveys of moose in Burwash, Liard east, Mayo, and Magundy and Little Salmon rivers.

For the first time, Government of Yukon teamed up with the British Columbia government to conduct a transboundary mountain goat population survey. This cooperative effort yielded not only a look at the entire range of the goat population -- in this case, for the first time ever -- but it was far more cost-effective to share resources with British Columbia. We are very pleased to announce that \$200,000 of the new money for inventory and survey work will be allocated to salaries to those who have the credentials and expertise to undertake this very important work for the Yukon and the Yukon government.

It is vital that these inventory and survey plans be augmented with the human resources to carry them out. This coming year, we want to do more than simply count wildlife. We want to incorporate the data gathered in meaningful input toward the processes of land use planning and habitat and harvest management.

Delegates to the first-ever Environmental Forum will help us to set a course for inventory work in the upcoming season. The forum engaged stakeholders representing government, conservation, environmental and First Nation interests. We will be utilizing their input from the forum to prioritize our inventory and monitoring work.

Now, an area of major emphasis for the department and the government is the Porcupine caribou herd, the harvest management strategy initiative and effecting updated data collection for the herd.

The department will be working with our partners -- the Porcupine Caribou Management Board, affected First Nations and the governments of Northwest Territories and Canada -- to develop an interjurisdictional harvest management plan to address the conservation needs of the herd.

Also, wildlife key area database collection is an ongoing initiative that provides data on raptors. Regarding the key nest-site database, the digital maps have been checked to ensure accurate nest locations and, indeed, information about the observations has been entered into the database.

We have identified new key areas in the Peel River watershed planning region and completed surveys therein. The data from these surveys is now being assessed, and we anticipate identifying new sheep and moose winter range areas and improving our knowledge of the Hart River caribou herd winter range. Na Cho Nyak Dun, the Tr'ondek Hwech'in and the Tetlit Gwich'in staff are assisting with these surveys.

Development of wildlife/human conflict and public information and education materials are very important for the government. We will proceed with an investment in that area. The goal is to lead to positive change, improve public safety and reduce instances of pet loss and property damage and ultimately reduce the unfortunate destruction of wildlife that is highly valued by Yukoners.

We are also increasing the capacity of conservation officers to deliver hunter education and training in Yukon communities. We feel this is an important initiative.

Overall, the department has undertaken a significant workload this fiscal year of 2007-08, but we are very confident that, along with the team that we have in the department -- the expertise that we have out in the field and all the dedication and commitment every member of the Department of Environment brings to the job -- we will be quite successful as we continue with the initiatives here in the territory for this fiscal year of 2007-08.

I commend this budget for the department to this House, because it is a change in our priorities as far as investing in areas of the department that needed attention. For example, when it comes to inventory gathering and modernizing our database, these discussions started over a year ago with knowledgeable people within the department. From those discussions and through their input, we were able to put together an investment this year, and an ongoing investment in out years, to continue to undertake what is very important work for the department, for the government and for the Yukon.

I thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Elias: I'd like to take this opportunity to thank the senior staff for their budget briefing on April 30, 2007. They were very open and forthcoming with a lot of information that we asked for in the budget briefing. We talked about issues concerning wildlife in general, fisheries and trapping, climate change, resource management inventories and the Porcupine caribou herd, et cetera. Thank you to the senior staff for that.

I'd like to take this opportunity -- because I have had the personal opportunity to work with the excellent staff in the Department of Environment throughout the years and I'm very well aware and know first-hand the good work that they pro-

duce -- to thank them for their commitment in fulfilling the department's objectives.

I do have some questions and I guess I'll start with the \$1.285 million for resource management inventories. Could the minister shed some light on which regions in the Yukon can expect funding for what and when?

The second part of the question is in terms of priorities. Does the minister have any cost-sharing policies with the affected First Nations in those regions where he plans on spending the monies for resource management inventories?

Hon. Mr. Fentie: I thank the member for those questions. First, to the latter part of his question -- the Yukon government absorbs or takes on the cost of this work. There is some cost-sharing that goes on -- for example, there is some cost-sharing with the Porcupine Caribou Management Board and the N.W.T. and Canada. In the majority of cases, we, the Yukon government, accept this area of obligation and provide the necessary investment.

The planned inventory gathering and modernizing of our database is quite extensive and it goes through a number of areas. I'll list them for the member opposite. There's an elk survey in the greater Whitehorse area, and as part of this there are caribou rut counts -- Clear Creek, Ethel Lake, Tatchun, Hart River, Logan Mountains, Ibex, Carcross, Aishihik, Kluane and Chisana -- a Fortymile caribou distribution survey -- Aishihik-Kluane caribou herd census, a Carcross/Ibex caribou herd census, and ongoing work with the Porcupine caribou body condition monitoring, ground base moose surveys, using, of course, knowledge of hunters, trappers, outfitters, miners, loggers and prospectors, and this will happen in Mayo, Selkirk, Carmacks and southeast Yukon -- and moose survey in the Carmacks west area.

Other areas include a moose survey in the Carmacks west area and the Dawson goldfields, a moose composition survey in Nisutlin River, a moose survey in Dezadeash-Aishihik as well as Red Mountain, a moose habitat suitability study in the Dawson area, a sheep composition survey in the Aishihik area, a sheep survey in Ruby Range and the Pelly Mountains, a goat survey on the Tungsten Road, grizzly bear census in the Kluane region, Old Crow freshwater fish survey, fish inventory in Peel-Werneck region, Braeburn whitefish status survey, a small mesh sampling of several lakes throughout Yukon, an Aishihik index survey, in support of Yukon Electrical's water licence application, creel census in Marsh Lake and Lake Laberge.

Species at risk and biodiversity: bats, small animals, bird banding, support for ongoing inventory of songbirds, bison census, Dawson land use planning, inventory support for data gathering and ground truth verification. I want to stress and point out to the member that we are seeking the assistance and the input of many First Nations, other stakeholders, conservationists, as I pointed out, to prioritize each segment of this initiative, which would not only be in 2007-08 but would be an ongoing initiative throughout the course of this government's mandate.

Mr. Elias: I thank the minister for his answers to the question. Switching gears to climate change, I recognize there

is \$145,000 in new funding for a climate change action plan. Is this a public stakeholder consultation? My other question with regard to climate change: I would suspect the Department of Environment somehow coordinates the government's climate change initiatives throughout the entire government. Can Yukoners expect some sort of progress report on the climate change initiatives that YTG conducts throughout the various departments? I think we'll leave it with those two questions.

Hon. Mr. Fentie: Mr. Chair, the investment in this area is related to the development of the climate change action plan. So much of what we will expend in this budget will be in consultation and workshops and developing elements of the plan as we go forward. We've already framed the strategy itself. We've set out the goals and are now proceeding with next steps in implementing our strategy for climate change. Yes, the Department of Environment is a lead and coordinating body, but there are a number of areas and departments that are involved in climate change, and I think it's important we understand where they are -- not just the Department of Environment.

For example, the Executive Council Office has a resident scientist who is involved with the International Polar Year initiative. Tourism and Culture is doing some monitoring of shoreline erosion of historic settlement areas on Herschel Island, which includes relocating buildings for preservation. It's monitoring ground slumping in the area of gravesites on Herschel Island, the melting of alpine ice patches -- and we're all familiar with that particular initiative in regard to recovering prehistoric artifacts -- and monitoring a landslide in Tombstone Territorial Park and its potential impact on a historic site, and sharing results of other reconstruction areas in Hudson Bay Company journals, which were housed from 1840 to 1852.

The Department of Education, through Yukon College and the climate change centre of excellence and our recent agreement with the University of Alberta, which will be contributing to cold climate research -- we're very excited about that initiative.

Energy, Mines and Resources is also involved as a department, and the list goes on -- Highways and Public Works, Yukon Housing Corporation, Yukon Energy Corporation and its efforts to reduce our emissions and dependency on diesel, increase our production of electricity from hydro and implement conservation measures through the Energy Solutions Centre. Yukon Housing Corporation is also very much involved in conservation by raising awareness and implementing wise practices for use of energy in our homes and buildings -- and the list goes on and on.

I would just close by saying it is the government's view that, overall, the Department of Environment is taking a lead role in helping to coordinate the many departments, agencies and corporations involved in climate change here in the Yukon.

Mr. Elias: What has been the total amount of money invested in the Yukon Wildlife Preserve since YTG purchased it?

Hon. Mr. Fentie: It's built into the ongoing O&M budget. I believe the purchase was \$1.2 million, if memory serves me correctly, but the cost of operating the Wildlife Pre-

serve is just built into the overall operation and maintenance budget.

I was remiss in one area of the member's question on progress reports. We expect that by early this winter -- or sometime in the winter -- we will be able to go forward with our first progress report on the climate change action plan.

Mr. Elias: The minister, in his speech, mentioned the first-ever Environmental Forum. I was just wondering what recommendations came out of that forum. Was there anything that gave the department any direction, or were there any recommendations to move forward in terms of priorities or anything like that? What was the goal of the forum? Was there anything that gave some sort of direction to the minister, or recommendations of any sort?

Hon. Mr. Fentie: First, the goal of the forum, given it was the first ever, was to establish a venue where Yukoners could come together, whether they be experts in the field of environmental management, and so on, First Nations contributing traditional knowledge, conservationists and other stakeholders. They all gathered to discuss and network around the many-faceted components of environmental management here in the Yukon.

Of course, the express purpose is to help us -- the government and the Department of Environment -- to better manage our ecosystems, our wildlife and fish habitats and all these things. This will be an ongoing initiative as far as the department ever contributing responsibility to the management of our environment overall.

As I pointed out in my speech, we are taking on initiatives such as the Environmental Forum, because the department now is charged with a much broader scope of responsibility, considering land claims, habitat protection areas, the establishment of parks, increased access and demand for resources -- the list is quite a long one, where the department must contribute. Much of what we're doing, whether it be our investment in modernizing our database, holding environmental forums, developing climate change strategies, going forward with the implementation action plan -- all these things contribute to the department's ability to meet the scope of work and responsibility it now has in today's Yukon considering we've placed, as a government, much more emphasis on the department. The rationale for that is so we are better able to manage, conserve and preserve our environment, its wildlife and habitat.

Mr. Elias: I'll switch over to the topic of the Porcupine caribou herd. With regard to tabling of any letters or correspondence to the governors of Alaska or any other United States politicians that state the minister's position, basically, against oil and gas drilling in ANWR -- if he has those can he table those?

I brought this up in the Legislature a couple of times now -- many Yukoners and many of my constituents are wondering when enough is going to be enough. When is the amount of time -- what we don't know with regard to the herd -- enough? The best-case scenario is that in a couple of weeks we get a very good count -- that the caribou congregate, there is no fog, there is no smoke, all the technicians are working properly and we get a count.

What is the minister's plan for a count that is substantially below 100,000 animals? Will he use his powers under the *Porcupine Caribou Management Agreement*, under the *Wildlife Act*, under the *Umbrella Final Agreement*? Is he prepared to do that? What is his low-water mark in terms of conservation should those counts come in or, worst-case scenario, we don't get a count this year? What is his plan? Those are my two questions with regard to the Porcupine caribou herd.

Hon. Mr. Fentie: On the latter part of the question, we are going to do a count -- I would call it an extensive count -- this summer on the Porcupine caribou herd. We are also proceeding with the Management Board on a harvest management strategy that will include the Northwest Territories and all affected First Nations. I hope that answers the member's question.

As far as ANWR, the Yukon government has consistently promoted the protection of the critical habitat of the Porcupine caribou herd. We also take the position that the 1987 agreement between Washington and Ottawa is in force and effect and speaks to the conservation and protection of the herd itself. We have encouraged both federal governments to live up to the terms of that agreement. On many occasions I personally bring this matter up with governors in Alaska and, indeed, the President of the United States.

As far as tabling correspondence, I can look into the matter. Lots of correspondence goes out of the Premier's office, but I think the member should be able to accept the word of a colleague in this House, considering the tremendous amount of attention we pay to this matter and the ongoing assistance we provide, by request, to the Vuntut Gwitchin government.

Mr. Elias: With regard to the Porcupine caribou harvest strategy, just from experience, that will take some time. It might take years and that's the concern. What conservation measures will be taken, depending on the count that happens this summer?

Is it on the minister's radar screen to use his powers under the various pieces of legislation I quoted earlier, because the harvest management strategy will take some time? The tools are there for the minister to use, and constituents and Yukoners want to know when enough is enough -- when will we do something under the minister's authority?

I'll ask two questions. Can he bring some clarity to that question and, with regard to the state of the environment report, can the minister tell this House when that report will be tabled? It's overdue by a couple of years and is required by law. Many Yukoners want to see it and become informed. It's legislation that's important to Yukoners. They want to know what the state of their environment is so they can be informed and be engaged in the discussion. Many Yukoners consider this to be important so I bring it up here again.

When will the state of the environment report be tabled in this Legislature? It has been a lot of years now and there has been plenty of time to make sure all the information in it is accurate.

Hon. Mr. Fentie: The member has brought up what the government would do for conservation of the Porcupine caribou herd, and I'm assuming the member means all wildlife

of value here in the Yukon. We've already demonstrated where we have full authority, such as with the Hart River caribou herd and the cessation of hunting, but there are also issues of subsistence obligation and subsistence hunting that we must work with. As we continue to modernize the data and learn more, we will continue to work with our partners on this matter. Of course, the harvest management strategy is one example of that. We don't dictate; we are obligated to be receptive to those traditional and cultural needs and subsistence hunting.

As far as the state of the environment report, there is not much point in tabling a report until it is complete and correct because we don't want misinformed Yukoners; we want informed Yukoners. Frankly, the member has stated here that many, many Yukoners want to see this report. Well, I am the Minister of Environment and to this day, to the best of my knowledge, our department door hasn't been beaten down by people demanding copies of the report.

Frankly, the last time a report was produced, there were some significant errors in it. It certainly wouldn't have helped to inform Yukoners on the state of their environment.

Let me help the member opposite. First and foremost, we have a land claim process in the Yukon which has contributed and will continue to contribute to Yukon's environment. That also commits the government to address special management areas, harvest planning areas and the establishment of more territorial parks. Recent examples are in the member's riding -- 8,000 square kilometres of Old Crow Flats, most of which is now under permanent protection.

All that has led to Yukon being second only to British Columbia in the country when it comes to land base under protection or conservation. We just talked about some major new initiatives the department is undertaking. There is a greater emphasis placed on the department. There is an increased availability of resources for the department. Quite frankly, I can sum it all up: Yukon's state of the environment is a very positive one.

Mr. Elias: Mr. Chair, I'd be willing to submit that something that's required by law shouldn't have to take many, many Yukoners knocking on the minister's door to try to get it done -- something that's required by law. I believe Yukoners expect it just to be produced.

Let's go to a specific question about bison. Realizing that it takes, on average, a couple of years for regulations to take effect and that it is difficult to be reactive to managing the target numbers for the bison herd, one question is: has the minister considered the recommendations from the Fish and Wildlife Management Board and renewable resource councils to deal with the low harvest numbers with regard to bison, understanding that the issues include the north-south zones, the months available to hunt, and the system used to manage the hunt? One idea to get the number of moose in Faro -- the hunters are required to report within 36 hours whether they were successful or not. When they reach their target limits, they close down the hunt. That's my understanding of the Faro moose hunt.

Does the minister have any idea how he is going to manage the bison herd harvesting?

Hon. Mr. Fentie: We're doing that right now with the Fish and Wildlife Management Board. But I want to let the record show, Mr. Chair, that the Official Opposition, regardless of what's in a report, its status of completion and/or correctness, would table that report. That's not what the government will do. The government wants Yukoners informed with facts. So I just want to make sure that's on the record, because there's a distinct difference between the Official Opposition and the government side in how they view reports, whether there are legalities around it or not. The legalities serve no purpose if the report is incorrect, because then the report serves no purpose. So we'll take the time necessary to ensure that its completion and its content are correct and the report itself contributes to the Yukon in a positive way.

I have to repeat, Mr. Chair, that the state of Yukon environment is a very positive one. There's a limited footprint on Yukon's land base. We have a tremendous option and opportunity to do things right in the Yukon. That's why this government has placed a greater emphasis on the Department of Environment.

Mr. Fairclough: I do have a few questions in this department before we pass it on to the third party. I was interested in the Premier's comments about the first-ever Environmental Forum, but he failed to answer the question when asked about the recommendations.

Did any recommendations come out of this first-ever Environmental Forum?

Hon. Mr. Fentie: Keep up the good work.

Mr. Fairclough: Keep up the good work? It's unbelievable that a recommendation would come out like that. The Premier had better get serious.

Would he table the recommendations or any of the reports that came out of this Environmental Forum?

Hon. Mr. Fentie: We're talking about it right now in the budget, including modernizing our data. When we conduct initiatives and processes like an environmental forum, we expect Yukoners to be able to go to work in an environment and situation that will contribute to our ability as a government and as a department to manage our environment. Recommendations, as far as I'm concerned, are very important, but it's the ongoing process that is critical to all matters in this area. I think it's fair to say that as debate of this department continues, the member will find all kinds of recommendations. They're all in the budget -- the recommendations from Yukoners, from First Nations, through traditional knowledge. There's a huge investment in this department that reflects all those matters. The first-ever Environmental Forum was to bring people together: experts, stakeholders, First Nations and others to network and work with the government on something of great importance and that is Yukon's environment and its wildlife.

Mr. Fairclough: Is the minister saying that no recommendations came out of this Environmental Forum? Were there recommendations or not? If so, would he table them?

Hon. Mr. Fentie: There is no formal report from the forum. It was a place for Yukoners to come together. If the member has that much anxiety about what took place in the

forum, maybe the member should attend the next one, roll up his sleeves and go to work.

The point is that we presented Yukoners an opportunity to come together from all walks of life to work with the government as we go forward on managing our environment and we will continue to do that.

Mr. Fairclough: The minister is not very serious about this matter, and I think we just pointed out something pretty important here. He bragged about the Environmental Forum -- first one ever in the territory -- but it couldn't produce any recommendations for the minister or for the government on what direction to take.

Did the minister attend this forum or just make an appearance? I've talked to people who attended this forum. They took note. That is why we are asking the questions here. If it's major and the Premier wants to brag about it and bring it forward as the first-ever Yukon Environmental Forum, then I would expect that there would be some recommendations that fall out of this forum -- not just to bring people together. There has to be some report for the minister. I hope he does take this matter seriously and doesn't slough it off as, "Oh, we just brought these people together and did an update about what the department does" -- because I was told that was what the first day was all about. There were no recommendations.

I really believe that the public was misled by the announcement that this was to give the department and the minister some recommendations, some vision to go on. There was nothing -- no recommendations came forward. Unfortunately, I think the government dropped the ball on this one. It was the first-ever Environmental Forum and they couldn't get it together to get any recommendations from the public. Now the member opposite is extending an invitation -- I hope the general public will be invited to this type of forum the next time, because this was by invitation.

There's a lot of public money spent on this, and I have to ask the Premier again if the department or the minister will be getting any type of report from this first-ever Environmental Forum, and if he would share that with the general public.

Hon. Mr. Fentie: First, I must comment on the fact that it's very hard to be serious while debating with the Member for Mayo-Tatchun, for obvious reasons. The member asked if I had even attended the forum. It just so happens I attended the forum instead of going to the Cordilleran Roundup so, yes, I was there. There were some 175 delegates at the forum who entered into good discussions on all facets of our environment. These included 11 First Nations, eight renewable resource councils, seven non-governmental organizations, six boards and councils, three academic institutions, nine private consulting firms and three federal resource agencies. All this was put together for the mere cost of approximately \$27,000.

Once again the member thinks the only way this could be successful is if somebody chisels a recommendation onto a tablet or writes a report. Instead, we're taking action and it's all in the budget. We're modernizing our database, proceeding with climate change strategy and implementing a climate change action plan. We are working with other departments and agencies in all facets of environmental management, cele-

brating Yukon parks, working on more special management areas and harvest planning or protection areas. There are two more territorial parks, and I listed them in my opening remarks.

We're working with the Fish and Wildlife Management Board in areas of fish and wildlife management and with renewable resource councils in areas of wildlife management they contribute to.

The member is suggesting that the government has dropped the ball. Where is the member coming from, all things considered in this territory? We are second only to B.C. in land base under protection -- does that not register with the Member for Mayo-Tatchun? Some of the most efficient and accredited biologists and scientists are here in this territory, and they are much sought after by other jurisdictions.

If the member wants to criticize, the member had better think about whom he is criticizing, because the work that's being done is not being done by me.

As the minister, I promote what the Department of Environment and its very capable people do. So, the member's criticism is being directed at hard-working officials who, on a daily basis, are out there contributing to a very solid management of Yukon's environment. It includes ensuring that the national resources in the environment of the Yukon are managed and used in accordance with government policy. I will list how that is to be done: maintaining and enhancing the quality of the Yukon's environment for present and future generations through -- I hope the member understands this -- ecosystem-based management. Maybe the member will understand what that means. Conservation of resources and protection and maintenance of biodiversity -- that's why we are investing all this money in modernizing our database. It's so that we have a more complete biophysical inventory in this territory. Does the member understand that?

Initiating a process to update the Yukon conservation strategy, ensuring that Yukon people -- here's one for the member, as he criticises the forum and all those groups and people who attended and contributed; this is a department commitment through mandate -- ensuring that Yukon people have the opportunity to be involved in the development. I will repeat for the Member for Mayo-Tatchun -- ensuring that Yukon people have the opportunity to be involved in the development and review of departmental programs, policies, legislation and regulations through open and meaningful communication and participatory processes. Think of it, Mr. Chair: the first-ever Yukon Environmental Forum meeting that commitment managing natural resources in a manner that promotes integration with other sectors, including economic development so that optimum benefits can be derived for all Yukon people. Does that register with the Member for Mayo-Tatchun who, by the way, was the architect of the disaster known as the protected areas strategy? We all lived through the chaos that the member opposite led, as he led the Yukon into oblivion -- investment oblivion.

Participating in national and international measures designed to enhance environmental quality and encourage sustainable use of national resources -- does that help the member opposite?

Integrating, implementing and managing additional authorities and responsibilities in water resource and environmental management and, of course, undertaking resource management activities that meet the Government of Yukon's obligations.

Mr. Chair, what we're doing is tangible, actual delivery of programs and policies and initiatives that are contributing to protecting Yukon's environment, conserving our wildlife and modernizing our database so we can make informed decisions on management tools and initiatives required by the department.

What we're not doing is going through flawed processes like protected areas and other measures that contributed nothing to protecting and conserving Yukon's environment, its wildlife and, of course, its beauty and all that goes with it. The government stands on its record to date and on its ongoing record in ensuring that our management of the Yukon environment is in keeping with the desire of Yukoners. Therein is the rationale for holding the first-ever Yukon Environmental Forum.

Mr. Fairclough: Well, the minister likes to do what he is doing in this House, not that he's trying to help debate or anything. He just wants it to go downhill. Time after time, he does that.

Now, those hard-working department people he has talked about were the very people who worked on this protected areas strategy, the one the Premier endorsed and bragged about at the time. Well, what a flip-flop. We understand the strategy is dead under the Yukon Party. It is too bad. It will never come up in that manner again.

What the Premier is doing is relying on First Nations for special management areas, calling them parks and so on. He's relying on them. Thank God someone's doing the good work out there. It's not the Premier -- no political direction in this matter. The minister said there were about 175 people at this first-ever Environmental Forum. I would like to ask the minister: how many of those people were government staff?

Hon. Mr. Fentie: Well, the member brought up his famous plunge into oblivion, and that was the protected areas strategy. I would remind the member that the strategy was never implemented in the southeast Yukon. Who was the MLA at that time for the southeast Yukon? It was me. The strategy was never implemented in the southeast Yukon.

Now the member makes the point that, in protecting our environment, we are relying on First Nations. Does the member have that limited a commitment to what the treaties are saying? Does the member diminish the value of what's in the treaties? Special management areas and harvest protected areas are part of an agreement with the national government and First Nations and the public government here in the Yukon.

I know where this is going. The Member for Mayo-Tatchun will sit here for days talking about the Environmental Forum: the one he never attended; the one he says he has talked to people about. Well, obviously he didn't talk to many people, because he doesn't even have the right idea of what the forum was about and what took place.

If the member wants to challenge this government on our commitment to environmental sustainability, explain this: how is it then that 78 percent of O&M expenditure by program is invested in environmental sustainability? Maybe the Member for Mayo-Tatchun could answer that.

Mr. Fairclough: Well, guess what? The Premier is the Minister of Environment; they are the government and yet he couldn't answer that simple question. How come? He forgot it, maybe, because he was too fixated on trying to belittle people on this side of the House like he does day after day. Sort of like a schoolyard bully. I know you want to call point of order. Do it.

Chair's statement

Chair: This debate has deteriorated and become personal in manner. We are in general debate of the Department of Environment. I don't want to have to interrupt continually, so I would like the members to not personalize the debate.

Mr. Fairclough: I would call on you to listen to the Premier's remarks also.

Chair's statement

Chair: My ruling is not debatable. I would like the member to remember not to challenge the Chair's ruling. Mr. Fairclough, you have the floor.

Mr. Fairclough: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Premier didn't answer the question. 175 people attended and he didn't answer how many were staff. I guess he doesn't know. I'm going to have to leave that one alone because we aren't going to get anything out of the Premier at all -- no recommendations and nothing coming to the public by way of a report. There is nothing that he wants to share other than what he thought were recommendations that he has implemented into the department's finances. Much of what the Premier listed is ongoing and what this department does.

We asked the questions, Mr. Chair, because the Premier bragged about this Yukon Forum. You couldn't produce recommendations from it, or a report. That's why the questions were asked. Why did the Premier feel offended by that? Why did he have to go on the attack on members on this side of the House? He didn't have to do it, but that's the style of this Premier.

I'd like to ask a question about the elk survey and elk management. There are people who have elk -- Bill Drury, for example, with elk on his farm, on his agricultural lease, grazing lease. He was recently given an expansion and this expansion went into prime elk habitat. What was the department's position on that? Were they in favour of this expansion or not?

Hon. Mr. Fentie: First off, the issue here is trying to debate with the Member for Mayo-Tatchun correct content on any matter, and that is a bit of a challenge.

Second, I have no idea where the member is coming from -- when he talks about bragging about a forum. There's nothing to brag about -- it's called hard work, something the member opposite might not understand. It's hard work to which people commit themselves. What difference would it make who was there in attendance from government? Obviously those in at-

tendance are responsible and are required to be there. They make a contribution. So the member takes issue about whether or not government employees, who have the responsibility -- and by the way, get paid to do their job -- attend forums such as the Environmental Forum to carry out their duties and responsibilities. The Member for Mayo-Tatchun -- and obviously, the Official Opposition -- takes issue with that. We don't. In fact, we encourage those officials responsible in any area of delivering programs and services to Yukoners to seize the initiative and do the best job they can possibly do. I can assure the member opposite -- I can comfort him, quiet his fears -- that the Department of Environment is doing a tremendous job on behalf of all Yukoners.

The member has asked a specific question. I don't mention names of citizens who aren't in this House and able to defend themselves, but apparently somebody received some land somewhere. We all know the Official Opposition's opposition to Yukoners accessing land, unless it's lots in Whitehorse, given the fact they think that's a problem but, anywhere else, it appears the Official Opposition doesn't want anybody to access land of any kind.

Mr. Chair, I'm not sure where the member is coming from when he talks about someone getting some land and what it meant to habitat. In fact, the department is monitoring elk right now -- for obvious reasons. I'm sure the department does not lose any sleep at night over someone getting a tiny little piece of this massive land expanse in Yukon and putting it to good use by contributing to a quality of life for Yukoners. I'm sure the department -- or any department under this government's watch, for that matter -- would not take issue with that, provided it's done responsibly and in accordance with all mechanisms, statutes, regulation, policy and otherwise.

Mr. Fairclough: He didn't answer the question. Did the department agree with this expansion or not? It was in prime elk habitat and it has been well known by this department for years. Did the department agree to it or not and, if so, what actions did the department take to ensure the concerns they had with the elk range and their habitat were addressed?

Hon. Mr. Fentie: This may come as a great shock to the Member for Mayo-Tatchun, but there is a mechanism for all this in relation to the question the member is asking, and it's called YESAA. Projects go through a YESAA process and determinations are made. I would leave it there.

As far as we on the government side are concerned, we'll allow YESAA to conduct its processes and do its work.

Here's another issue. The Official Opposition, the Liberals in this House, have this propensity to pre-empt due process, whether it's in the courts or in matters such as these. They have this view that they are all wise and can pre-empt public processes.

I would encourage the members from the Official Opposition to recognize the error of their ways. We can't pre-empt processes. It's due process. Yukoners have a right to it, no matter what the issue may be, if it's required to go through a YESAA screening -- I gather in this case there was a requirement, and due process took place and all the relative departments, agencies, and others obviously participated and did their job.

Mr. Fairclough: This might be a surprise to the minister. It did go through the YESAB. YESAB disagreed with the expansion. The government allowed the land to disappear. I want to know from the department whether or not they agreed with it or not and what was said. I think it's important for the minister to answer the question.

Hon. Mr. Fentie: As I said, all related departments and agencies, if relevant, would have been involved in the YESAA process. Case closed.

Mr. Fairclough: Well, the minister is not paying attention to this matter. The YESAB disagreed. The Yukon Party government overruled. The minister overruled. That's the bottom line. We just heard the Premier say, you know, leave it to the public processes. Well, it happened and they didn't agree with this expansion.

Here is another one that comes out as a result of this now, because of this prime habitat disappearing for elk. It is government elk, wild elk. This particular person that I mentioned before is now asking the government, this department and this minister to set up a working group to find ways to keep elk off their agricultural land -- this very piece of land they just gave away; this prime elk habitat. Is this working group being set up through this department or through other departments of government? Yes or no?

Hon. Mr. Fentie: Is the Member for Mayo-Tatchun now attacking a citizen for conducting himself in the appropriate manner? Is that what the member is doing?

So, a Yukoner got a little tiny piece of land in this territory. Obviously the Liberals, the Official Opposition, really take issue with Yukoners accessing land. Furthermore, on balance, we want to ensure that Yukoners have access in a responsible way but, at the same time, that we are preserving and conserving our wildlife and our environment.

That's exactly what is taking place in today's Yukon. The member may not agree with it, but the member has been wrong on most occasions. All I can point out to the Member for Mayo-Tatchun is: keep up the good work, because more and more Yukoners are recognizing the futility of the Liberals in the Official Opposition in this House and their inability to grasp the realities of today's Yukon.

Mr. Fairclough: What a response from the minister, who is also the Premier. He is supposed to step it up a notch and show us how it's done here, but it's not happening. I think the Premier realizes that something didn't go right here. We're constantly reminded that we on this side of the House, the Official Opposition, don't like to see people get land -- that is wrong. That has nothing to do with this at all. Doesn't the Premier get it? It has nothing to do with getting a piece of land. It's about prime elk habitat. That's what we're talking about here, and the Premier ought not to skirt around this one. He has to keep focused on this.

I'm asking him about the working group. Now, the Premier was wrong when he said that we didn't let due process happen with YESAA. YESAB agreed that this should not disappear as prime elk habitat. A working group was formed, or was asked to be formed, to deal with this matter after government's decision to keep government elk out, find ways to do it.

I want the Premier to confirm whether or not this is actually happening. Is this working group formed to deal with the matter of government elk and keeping government elk out of this particular piece of land that was given away by government? Is that the case? Is that how we're going to end up dealing with things in the future? I want to know. Is this working group set up to deal with this matter?

Hon. Mr. Fentie: Mr. Chair, what the member should know, or at least should have an awareness of, is the fact that the human race is now on the planet and there are going to be conflicts between wildlife and humans where humans happen to reside. There are going to be conflicts.

Working groups will be a fact of life, have been, are now, and will continue to be, regardless of the issue. That is a mechanism to ensure that Yukoners get involved in decisions that impact them.

Furthermore, I have to point out again that the Official Opposition has demonstrated in this House as recently as last week how clearly they oppose access to land for Yukoners. We had to bring it up. The government side had to stand up and point out to the Member for Mayo-Tatchun, who expresses such conviction on land claims, and we asked the member: where is the conviction in his representation and responsibility to all Yukoners?

It is easy in opposition to criticize and take those kinds of positions, but I can tell the member opposite that it will come back to haunt the member because people out there are listening to this. They recognize the position that the Official Opposition has taken. It is not a good one. Once again, they have shown anxiousness to pre-empt due process.

In this case, I guess a Yukoner did get a little piece of land. We have elk in the territory, which we manage very effectively, and I'll leave that up to the department and their very credible and capable officials on the ground. We will continue to work with working groups in all areas of wildlife management and environmental protection. It could include various groups, depending on the issue. I would point out that elk were originally introduced in the Yukon in 1954. On balance, I think the government is proceeding in the appropriate manner, without question.

Mr. Fairclough: Then why couldn't the minister answer the question? How many times do I have to ask it? Can the minister answer the question and not get sidetracked? That happens often in this House.

We, on this side of the House, have no problem with Yukoners having access to land -- absolutely none. It is the government side that is having problems with it and that will be pointed out down the road, and the Premier ought to be very aware of that. We, the Official Opposition, have absolutely no problem with it. This question has nothing to do with access to land. I am asking the Premier to concentrate on it and not get sidetracked.

This has nothing to do with access to land, but actually, it's about prime elk habitat -- a piece of land that was given -- he said a Yukoner was given a small piece of land. Well, this Yukoner had a big piece of land and has got an extension to it, but the government side just overruled YESAB -- due public

process he calls it -- and made a decision to have prime elk habitat disappear.

Now, I'm going to ask the minister again -- now that this piece of elk habitat is gone into the private sector -- the elk are continuing to go there and it has become a problem for this landowner. I've never seen this before, but a working group has to be set up to find ways to keep the elk out. That's not right. The government didn't think at the time.

I want to ask the minister again about this special working group. Was it formed? It has not addressed anything else other than this. Has it been formed, and when will we see results of this working group that involves departmental people in trying to find ways to keep wild, government elk off their piece of land?

Hon. Mr. Fentie: As I said, there will always be working groups. When it comes to elk, by the way, the department's very capable people have discovered recently that we have ticks in the Yukon. So, I'm sure the department, with many others, are working diligently on that issue. As far as someone getting a piece of land and the impacts therein, we as a government take the position that mitigation is the process, not obstruction. The member's quite sensitive about this issue of availability and access to land for Yukoners. So let's look at the contrast: government side -- mitigation; Official Opposition -- the Liberals in this House -- obstruction.

Mr. Fairclough: Wrong, Mr. Chair. As much as the Premier wants to paint the picture for other people, it's going to be tough to get out of this one. We're talking about elk habitat, not a piece of land.

The minister, the Premier, couldn't even concentrate on that. I guess it's going to be a secret again -- one of those secret things the government does all the time. We on this side of the House do not have a problem with anyone, any Yukoners, accessing land. Follow due process is what we say. Consult where you have to consult -- that's what we're saying. The minister and the government side don't seem to like that word very much -- they probably hate it now that the court case has come down, Mr. Chair.

I may have a few more questions so I hope the minister is okay with that. Maybe we will get an answer out of this Yukon Party government and the minister.

There was a motion that was presented by my colleague from Vuntut Gwitchin about a trap exchange program. Now that the trapping season is over and people have brought all their traps back in, would this Yukon Party government consider a trap exchange program similar to one that took place in the past?

Hon. Mr. Fentie: Indeed, if the motion is on the Order Paper and the Official Opposition wishes to call the motion on private members' day for debate, we will engage in the debate and take it from there. We will see what this Assembly concludes and what the outcomes will be after the debate is finished. The fact that the members opposite want to address the issue -- we could quickly move to a vote should they call the motion whenever their next day is in the rotation.

Mr. Fairclough: We don't have the majority on this side of the House. I am sure the government side would amend

it. Motions are often brought to this floor to put government on notice, perhaps, if there is a question coming forward or what-not. We don't have to spend a whole day on a motion. The Premier, the minister, could answer the question. Is the department willing to look at a trap exchange program? Yes or no?

Hon. Mr. Fentie: Mr. Chair, the department is quite busy implementing all the areas of expenditure in this budget for the fiscal year 2007-08. If the member had thoroughly gone through his budget, he would probably find that there is no investment toward a trap exchange program. So I will repeat: if the Official Opposition wants to call the motion, if it's on the Order Paper for debate, let's go through due process. It is the democratic process that we conduct here in the Assembly. So call the motion, and we'll debate it and the Legislature will provide an outcome.

Mr. Fairclough: Well, the Premier wants to debate the budget. There are things that the government side is doing that are not in the budget already. We're going to have to see a supplementary budget come forward. The minister knows that.

Is there any interest -- let's put it this way -- on the government side, in this department, to have a trap exchange program? Any interest by the minister in trap exchange programs for the trappers?

Hon. Mr. Fentie: Mr. Chair, this department and this government are extremely interested in all areas of environmental management and sustainability. That's why we brought the budget forward that we have. It contributes to those very elements that are critical to Yukon's environment and, indeed, the view and the opinion of Yukoners of how we want to ensure that we sustain and protect what is so important to us now and long into the future.

Mr. Fairclough: Well, no commitment is what I'm hearing from the minister -- none; \$85 million sitting in the bank, but nothing to get this industry up and going. If I went back and looked at the objectives in this department, it says that, exactly. The Premier couldn't commit to it and instead he wants a motion to be brought forward so that discussions could take place all afternoon, and then the Yukon Party side amend it to their own liking. That's the unfortunate part. It's unfortunate that we have to go there. We know the government side is constantly announcing new things that are not reflected in this budget, even though they said we started late because we wanted to be really sure that we put together a really good budget that reflects the public's needs and wants.

We're going to see a fall supplementary budget come forward.

I would like to ask about a moose count. It is done in different regions around the territory. There is a request for a moose count in the Haines Junction area, but the government is asking for First Nations to fund this. Is this indeed correct?

Hon. Mr. Fentie: The member is talking about a trap exchange program where the government is focused on trapper education, the soft fur program in conjunction with Economic Development. We work with industry on an ongoing and regular basis. The Yukon land base is blanketed with traplines, so I am not sure what the member is even talking about in relation to the government and the department's emphasis on trapping.

As far as a moose survey, we are conducting one, as I pointed out to the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin earlier, so I will repeat: a moose survey in the Dezadeash-Aishihik area -- and we are in discussions with the Champagne and Aishihik First Nations on other possible investments in surveys.

Mr. Fairclough: Can the minister elaborate on these other possible surveys? The department is asking the First Nation to come up with \$60,000 to do this. I want to know if the government side is interested in this survey and why they are requesting the funds from the First Nation.

Hon. Mr. Fentie: Once again, the Member for Mayo-Tatchun is suggesting something that I do not believe is correct. That is not unusual for the Official Opposition.

The Kluane sheep initiative generates resources. Half of those resources are dedicated to an investment, the nature of which we are in discussion with the First Nation now. We are not asking the First Nation for money to do anything. We are discussing with the First Nation where they would like to see the investment of half of the Kluane sheep resources.

Mr. Fairclough: The minister is not clear with that answer either. He was not right in saying that they followed due process when it came to things like YESAA and so on, and recommendations that were made were overruled by this Yukon Party government.

I can't get any answers or commitments; trappers have come forward and asked these questions about the trap exchange program, like in the past, but there has been no commitment from this government -- nothing. They're not willing to do the hard work by talking with trappers, I suppose. Maybe the minister can spend his summer months doing that.

I would like to ask about wolf control. I understand the methods being used. I would like to know what has been happening with wolf control over this past year and into the winter months. What will take place and is government going to continue on with this?

Hon. Mr. Fentie: I hope the member isn't confusing government making decisions with overruling due process. By the way, there's a major responsibility for governments to make decisions, not dither and delay. It's all about decisions, so when you consider that for the moment -- and I want to delve into this a little bit, because it speaks volumes about the different approach the two sides of the House have here.

Decision making is very important; expeditious decisions, decisions that have a positive impact on the quality of life for Yukoners, for example; so let's look at the difference.

Under past Liberal and NDP governments, decision making was not all that present. What transpired? An exodus of Yukon's population, unemployment rates in the 13 percent plus area; overdraft charges to deliver programs and services and pay wages, because the bank was empty; investment in the private sector gone, completely dried up; mining exploration a mere \$5 million back then; and a very disgruntled population.

Then in 2002, a government was elected to office that set about making decisions, and stuck by those decisions.

That's another problem the members opposite have: the way they deviate and are deflected from a course of action that

is all about leadership. Our government came into office with a vision and a plan, and provided leadership and made decisions.

Let's compare where we are at today with the aforementioned list of very negative problems that the Yukon was facing. Today, we have one of the lowest unemployment rates in Canada. Today, we have a growing population. Today, we are experiencing an increase of investment in such areas as mining from \$5 million to a projected \$100 million or \$200 million this year. We have money in the bank. We have increased the stimulus in the territory between \$200 million and \$300 million. We have gotten tough on crime by making decisions with the street crime unit and, of course, safer communities legislation.

We have increased our investment in education, whether it be through schools, the college, curriculum, or educational reform. We have taken on the challenge of the review of the *Children's Act*. In doing so, we are going to improve our ability to deal with children in care by changing the legal mechanism that dictates how it's done. We have joined forces with First Nations in joint investment planning for the northern strategy, for the targeted investment program, for the northern housing trust -- the list goes on and on and on. It's the difference between a government that makes decisions versus a government that deviates and is deflected, issue by issue.

That's essentially what we are debating here, this obvious flaw of the members opposite of allowing themselves to be deflected and to deviate from clear vision and strong leadership. That's what it takes. It's not always perfect and we are not going to please everybody, but the one thing we'll do is the hard work, make the decision and stick to it.

On all counts, we will stand by our record and the fact that we'll continue on a course that Yukoners elected us to continue on with. The member opposite is not going to agree no matter what I say. The pat response normally is that the government side has not answered the question. Well, in most cases, it's the members opposite who don't like the answer.

So as we continue this exercise of stickhandling in a phone booth, I'll do my best to provide the member pertinent information, something that is constructive and relative to the direction the Yukon is going in. I'm not going to engage in areas that aren't relevant or indeed correct to what is transpiring in the Yukon and what it is government must live up to.

Mr. Fairclough: What has all that got to do with wolf control? That's the question I asked. It was a simple question. I think the Premier could have answered it, but if he's feeling bad he has to pat himself on the back. If he's feeling bad in this House or if something is getting to him, he has to pat himself on the back. It happened over and over and over again in this House. Well, the Premier could pat himself on the back if he wants. It doesn't change their decision making. They are the government. They make decisions. We're in opposition -- we're not making decisions on behalf of government -- so we question government decisions.

Here's one the Premier forgets to mention in his remarks about accomplishments and so on, and it's in regard to consultation -- a feared word by the Yukon Party government. He's going to get all riled up if I ask a question about consultation.

He's going to point to members on this side of the House, to the third party, and say to go back 10 years and so on. That's what happens with this Premier. Consultation -- no, it's not right.

Here's a really simple question, then, for the Premier. He has to be able to answer this one. Justice Veale's court ruling in regard to consultation and accommodation -- how is this court ruling, in the Premier's mind and in the department's mind, going to change the way in which this department conducts its public business?

Hon. Mr. Fentie: The Member for Mayo-Tatchun was a former minister of the Department of Environment. He asked a question about the wolf kill. The member knows full well that the government works with the Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board on this particular area. Of course the member would know that. The member also knows that, on a regular basis, recommendations come forward from the Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board. It is the government's obligation to work with that board -- it's mandated and the member knows why it's mandated and from where.

Also, if the member were interested, instead of having this much generalized discussion with limited value for Yukon, the member would also have looked into the budget to see that we have increased the resources for human and wildlife conflict. That's in the budget. We certainly could have got down to some constructive debate. Now the member wants to once again demonstrate the Official Opposition's propensity to pre-empt due process -- in this case, the member is trying to make much out of a court ruling. Now, frankly, the government side views it as a positive. It is how the process is supposed to work -- and as I said earlier on many occasions in the last number of days -- we'll do a thorough analysis of the judge's ruling, the decision brought down by the court, and decide from there. For us, it's a process that we will go through; consultation in this territory is going on on a daily basis. I am quite amused by the Member for Mayo-Tatchun's view that someone should be fearful of consultation. That's quite amusing that the member would come up with something like that.

The member has just been kibitzing away there and basically accused the government of being afraid of consultation. How does the member explain the Yukon Forum? How does the member explain the *Co-operation in Governance Act*? These are all new and innovative steps through consultation. How does the member explain the correctional reform process and what was developed in that? This was all done through consultation with First Nations, even at a higher standard. Instead of engaging with First Nations, we, in asking them their opinion, set up processes where they were joint partners in these matters.

How does the member explain -- if we are afraid of consultation -- that right now as we speak, First Nations and the territorial public government are informing the drafting of the amendments to the *Children's Act*? How does the member explain the joint investment plans -- the joint investment plans for the northern strategy?

I see both members, the Member for Porter Creek South and Member for Mayo-Tatchun, giggling away there -- a clear demonstration of their view of Yukon's environment and con-

sultation and court rulings and many other matters. They think it is a big joke. That's probably why they are on that side of the House. They do think these things are a joke, and they conduct themselves in that manner.

When it comes to consultation there are further examples: the northern strategy is a joint process; the target investment program is a joint process.

How does the member explain that through consultation, the government expended \$32.5 million toward affordable housing for First Nations in a direct allocation to First Nations? That was done with consultation.

How does the member explain -- one of the things we were talking about earlier is the first-ever Environmental Forum and the First Nations involvement there. There were 11 First Nations -- I would consider that engagement a form of consultation.

How does the member explain the work that we do with the Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board? Consultation. The work we do with renewable resources councils -- consultation. The work that we do in each and every community with First Nations -- consultations.

How does the member explain the management plan and setting the boundaries for Fishing Branch? It was through consultation -- that word that seems to really challenge the Official Opposition.

How does the member explain the establishment of the boundaries for Tombstone Park and, indeed, moving ahead with the management plan and now the construction of a facility in Tombstone in consultation with the First Nation?

How does the member explain the community tours where we meet individually with First Nation governments? I would call that consultation. Obviously we are not very afraid of it. We do it every day.

How does the member explain the partnership in a new daycare centre in Dawson City with the Tr'ondek Hwech'in? That was done through consultation.

That was done through consultation, Mr. Chair. The list goes on and on and on.

The land claims process was a major consultation conducted in this territory for some 30 years. We continue to consult as we are required to.

Finally, with respect to a court decision, due process is unfolding. This is how the system is supposed to work. Once a thorough analysis of the ruling has been done, the government will decide what to do next. The key is that we won't pre-empt due process. We won't preclude justice, as the members opposite have demonstrated on many occasions. We will make a decision.

Mr. Fairclough: Maybe the Premier doesn't know this, but this is a ruling. Due process did take place in court. It was taken to court because the First Nation felt this government did not consult properly and did not accommodate. That's what happened. The government side has over 30 lawyers. Certainly, someone should be able to explain this very simple ruling -- as I can read it anyway -- from Justice Veale.

All I asked was how this department was going to change the way they do things down the road because of this ruling.

We on this side of the House do not take this ruling as a joke; it's very serious. We've been asking questions in the House about it. The Premier cannot even sit down with the lawyers and advisors and go through this. He cannot even answer questions in the House on this ruling, yet. It is a ruling and it is there until such time that it gets knocked down either through the Court of Appeal or the Supreme Court of Canada. That's what it is. The Premier is not showing the interest that I expected he would on this matter. It's very serious, and I expect the Premier would have paid full attention to it and had a briefing the very next day after this ruling came down, and he didn't. They are still going through it to determine what they are going to do. The only determination that the government side has to make is whether or not they go to the Court of Appeal. That decision has to be made within 30 days.

But the ruling is the ruling, and it cannot be ignored. It's a major ruling on a modern treaty -- major ruling. I've never heard the government side say it; it's just weasel words to try to find a way around it. "We're going to examine it," is what the member opposite said. I'd encourage the member to read it. Read the ruling. It's not hard to read. It's not hard to see who was involved in other cases that were mentioned in the ruling. I encourage the minister to do that -- read it, understand it, get some briefing from the department people. It would be the best thing he's done in a long time: to fully understand this. I'm going to pass this questioning over to the third party.

Hon. Mr. Fentie: Mr. Chair, here is the problem, and if we look in *Hansard*, we will find that when the member opened up with his statement, he was chastising the government -- me, I guess, in this case -- for not having an understanding of a court ruling because it's a very simple ruling. About 14 heartbeats later, we're now talking about a major ruling. Therein lies the problem here, Mr. Chair, and the level of debate.

So let me repeat: we'll take the time necessary and available to fully assess the court's ruling -- the government side understanding that this is an important ruling and that looking into it in all its facets is critical. It is an obligation of government to ensure that we do that.

Once done, then we'll proceed with whatever next steps are required or necessary. That's how the government views this. In the meantime, we'll continue with the business of government. We're the public government. On balance, we have to address issues that we're obligated to address through the treaties and in other matters and, at the same time, we must ensure that we advance the public interest overall in this territory. That's exactly what the government is undertaking in this matter and every other matter that we must address.

One thing we won't do, though, is pre-empt or preclude due process, especially in justice. We all recall the debate in this House awhile ago, when those on the opposite side were clamouring to remove somebody from this House and had basically convicted this particular individual.

Strangely enough, through due process and justice unfolding, the individual -- although gone from this House -- now has a new trial. I bring that up to demonstrate to the Member for Mayo-Tatchun that the members of the Official Opposition

should not be so hasty when it comes to dealing with justice. The wheels of justice turn at their own momentum and those revolutions are critical to how a democratic society functions.

Chair's statement

Chair: Order please. I'd like to remind all members to focus their debate back to the Department of Environment. This debate has become general in matter with respect to all departments of the government, not the general debate on the Department of Environment.

Mr. Fairclough: I know the Premier gets sidetracked very easily on this matter. I can understand why.

To me, the ruling from Justice Veale is simple but it has major implications. Just because it's simple doesn't mean it's small and doesn't mean anything. It's major and I don't know why the Premier got sidetracked from that.

That would be my recommendation to the Premier -- read it first and get an update from the Department of Justice. I encourage all members on that side of the House to read it if they haven't done so already.

Mr. Edzerza: I would like to start by recognizing all the work that the staff in the Department of Environment does with regard to preparing a budget to deal with the environment. Now that the conservative government has basically gone green, I'd like to see a lot more money in there to deal with environmental issues.

I listened to this debate go on for some time about the state of the environment. I need to have some clarification in this area with regard to some of the comments the minister made.

First, I would like to say that I don't believe anyone on this side of the House really criticizes staff. Maybe it is quite to the contrary because the only one I heard make any comments about an incomplete and incorrect report was the minister. Does the minister believe this report is really inaccurate and incorrect?

Hon. Mr. Fentie: The minister does not create the report; the report is created. The department does its work by assessing thoroughly the report for its content and its correctness. Once complete, the state of the environment report becomes a public document. If the member would look into the budget, he would see an investment of about \$5,000 toward that work.

I'm not sure where the member is coming from, other than the fact that maybe he misunderstands what the government is saying. There is no point tabling any report if it's not correct and doesn't provide the most up-to-date information to the Yukon public. That's the objective here so the public is informed. To suggest that the state of environment report is the only vehicle to demonstrate the state of Yukon's environment is totally incorrect. In fact, there are so many other mechanisms, programs and initiatives going on that all demonstrate the state of Yukon's environment but, more importantly, the sustainability of Yukon's environment.

Mr. Edzerza: It could be that I misinterpreted what the government was saying. However, I just wanted to make it clear that this side of the House, and definitely the third party,

is by no means ever saying the staff are incapable of doing their jobs.

I am going to ask the minister one simple question with regard to the state of the environment. It almost appears it is being treated as something that is maybe a secondary kind of tool to use for determining what state the environment is in. Does the minister believe this report is very valuable and does he agree that it should be completed and put forward as soon as possible?

Hon. Mr. Fentie: First, it is only as valuable as any report is only valuable if its content is correct and is contributing overall to the Yukon's development and information provided to Yukoners in general. To suggest that we diminish any value in this report is interesting given the fact that every year there is an investment being made toward this report, including contracts out there for consulting and printing. In fact, it creates about 11 person-weeks of private sector involvement. It would be incorrect to suggest that there is no value in the report.

It would be correct, however, to observe that along with a state of the environment report, there is a significant budget being made available that contributes to environmental sustainability overall through O&M and capital expenditures. I think it's important to recognize that, far beyond one report, just look through the budget in all the undertakings of the department toward maintaining environmental sustainability here. I pointed out earlier in debate that, in our contribution in O&M alone, 78 percent of the total budget is directed toward environmental sustainability. That's fundamentally a clear demonstration of the state of Yukon's environment relative to the emphasis placed on it by government and the department.

Every year an investment is made for the state of the environment report. In the past, there have been some very glaring errors in the report. One of them had Yukon's greenhouse gas emissions -- probably in multiples of 10 -- higher than we actually emit. That is a significant error that shouldn't go out to the public because we emit very little, but the impacts are severe. That is an example of why we do our work, and once it is completed and printed and ready for public review and consumption it will be tabled and put into the public domain.

Mr. Edzerza: Maybe that is exactly what I'm trying to determine here -- that if investments are being made and taxpayers' dollars are being spent on recording and doing some kind of reporting on the state of the environment, there would be a report available today.

One of the issues with the report and what I'd like to sort of explore a little bit -- because maybe I do have a lack of knowledge about what's all involved in the state of the environment report -- but I would certainly hope that, in such a document, we would be talking about contamination of the Yukon River for 50 years plus. What state is the Yukon River in, right from Whitehorse down past Dawson? It appears to me that, over the years, a lot of contaminants were put into that river. I remember many years back, First Nations people saying they found toilet tissue in the gills of fish, for example. I know at one time it was recommended that the First Nations stop eating all the parts of fish that were in Lake Laberge.

When I ask this question about the state of the environment report, that's just an example of one issue of what I would hope to see, that there's something in the report to assure and comfort a lot of the citizens in this territory that everything that swims and lives in that river is safe for consumption. I have never heard of any reports that may have been done on the beaver, for example, on the salmon or on the fish that don't go out to the ocean, so that's why I was asking about the state of the environment report.

Now I would just like to ask the minister if in fact such a report would identify anything with regard to this issue.

Hon. Mr. Fentie: Short answer: no. In fact, the kind of detail the member is talking about, the member would never find in that particular report. Where the member would find it is in the ongoing reporting to the public as the department continues to go through research and monitoring of our fish and wildlife and their habitats.

So the Yukon River study was completed some time ago. For example, there's all kinds of access to the department's information, but certainly you would not find that kind of information in the state of the environment report, Mr. Chair. There are many other areas of detailed information available, some of them right here in this budget, others through the department, and the member only has to write a brief request to the department, if the member is concerned, or others the member may represent or who have come forward to him with concerns could write to the department, and I'm sure the department would provide all information that would alleviate those concerns, given all the work they've done to date in monitoring these particular areas of fish, wildlife and habitat.

Mr. Edzerza: It is good to know that there is an avenue for citizens to get that information, and I am sure those listening today probably would take that route.

I'd like to just ask the minister, while I'm on the Yukon River, if anyone is monitoring the river during the tourist season with regard to ensuring that there isn't garbage dumped all along the banks. I know of several individuals who have used the river consistently for many, many years, and have said to me that a lot of the campsites that they had for generations are all being taken over by tourists. There are no outhouses along the river, so it's actually getting to the state where, whenever you pull off the river at a half-decent place, there is always toilet paper all over, hanging in the bush there. I know there was some talk in the past about having some individuals police the river just a little bit to ensure that environmental standards are kept within acceptable conditions. Is there anyone really monitoring this river?

Hon. Mr. Fentie: I share the concern of the Member for McIntyre-Takhini in this area because that's what we don't want happening to our pristine wilderness. But at the same time, there is a great deal of interest in that pristine wilderness and environment that individuals internationally want to come here and experience. So we have to find that balance.

Right now, there is conservation officer monitoring that takes place but so, too, do First Nations report back on conditions they may experience out there in their travels. There are such things as the Thirty Mile section of the Yukon River,

which received a designation as a Canadian heritage river in January 1991. Of course, this was by ministerial approval of a management plan by DIAND, the Ta'an Kwach'an Council and the then Yukon Department of Renewable Resources -- now the Department of Environment. That's one example of what we're doing.

A holding tank toilet system was implemented to improve the environmental health and sanitation at campsites. Wastes are transported to Whitehorse for disposal, and the campsites along this section of the river are maintained and monitored by the Ta'an Kwach'an Council through a contract let to the Mundeessa Development Corporation. So there is an involvement of First Nations in this overall policing or monitoring. I think it's fair to say that use along the Yukon River continues to increase and it's a very popular excursion for commercial operators.

The 10-year monitoring report identified something that the member might find very important here; that is the need for additional outhouses to be located at informal campsites -- not just formal campsites but informal areas where people may stop and camp for the evening. Also -- this is along the river -- the report recommended that one of the outhouses be moved from lower Laberge to an island downstream. All this was done, by the way, in 2003. We will continue to monitor and to the extent possible ensure we are not impacting overall the Yukon's pristine environment in a negative manner that is unacceptable to Yukoners. As I stated, the interest in this environment and what it means to the world at large is ever increasing.

We will continue to be vigilant but, at the same time, I think there is something of great value that we can offer the world. It's a two-edged sword.

We want to make that offer so that those out there beyond Yukon's borders can experience what we have, but at the same time we have to protect and conserve that thing of great value, which is our pristine environment.

Mr. Edzerza: It's good to hear the government and minister are concerned about the pristine wilderness, because I believe there was a lot of pristine wilderness down south, too, that is no longer there. Once it's gone, you'll never recover it, so it is good to be proactive and ensure it doesn't get to a state where the government or others will not be able to clean it up. Good examples of that are some of the mine sites that are left today and that destroyed many miles of creek, lots of pristine wilderness -- they'll never be cleaned up. I doubt if I'll ever see it in my lifetime. You just have to look at some of the waste deposits. I think one can determine for oneself that it will almost be an impossible task to clean it up, and the environment will stay that way forever.

When we have easy access, such as a river, I hope all efforts will be made to ensure it doesn't get to a point where government or the citizens of this territory won't ever be able to address the cleanup.

That sort of leads me to my next question. What is the government doing about contaminated sites in northern Yukon, and what is the policy on waste reduction and assistance for groups dealing with waste reduction?

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

Recess

Chair: Order please. Committee of the Whole will now come to order. The matter before the Committee is Bill No. 6, *First Appropriation Act, 2007-08*, Department of Environment.

Hon. Mr. Fentie: Mr. Chair, just before the break, the Member for McIntyre-Takhini was delving into an issue that is hugely challenging for us in the north, and specifically to Yukon. There is a tremendous linkage here to devolution and what was agreed to. So first and foremost, I want to begin with what we are responsible to do as a government. That responsibility is dictated by the Auditor General and all public service accounting guidelines, and we must book what is deemed and defined to be Yukon's environmental liabilities, and we'll see in ongoing budgets, as we continue to develop, what those costs are. We'll continue to book that amount in our budgets.

Second, under devolution, a couple of agreements or arrangements were the outcome. The member talked specifically about mine sites. Well, the major mine sites that are contaminating the Yukon land base are known as type 2 mine sites, and they remain a responsibility of the federal government, the national government.

We are in the process right now, by agreement through devolution, of developing what will be an overall plan -- this may be better addressed in Energy, Mines and Resources -- for maintenance and reclamation on type 2 mine sites.

Going forward, other areas of contamination may very well be worked on by the Yukon government. I bring up an example of where we are with the Marwell tar pit here in the Whitehorse vicinity and the work we are doing there. There will be an investment in this budget toward the Marwell tar pit through the northern strategy. Of course, in any new development that takes place, we have a mine reclamation plan in effect. This would be also better addressed by Energy, Mines and Resources.

We have had some recent successes. If you look to Brewery Creek and what transpired there, it is a good example of a corporate citizen who lived up to its obligation -- not only once it ceased operations, but it went ahead with the remediation plan that was in effect.

Of course mining, which could be a huge contributor to contaminants, must demonstrate fiscal responsibility in this area up front and ensure that the available resources for a pre-determined remediation can be conducted, and the bottom line or the fundamental issue is always user-pay, proponent-pay. It is not the taxpayers' responsibility, although I would share and agree with the member opposite that in the past taxpayers have been stuck, as type 2 mine sites demonstrate, with these types of cleanups. I want to be clear here that those kinds of contaminations in Yukon remain a federal responsibility.

Mr. Edzerza: I understand they are a federal responsibility. However, I believe that the Yukon government also has

an obligation to put pressure on the federal government to ensure that work is being done.

Along this same line of questioning, I would like to ask the minister whose responsibility it is to clean up the military sites that were left here over the years. Is that also a federal responsibility?

Hon. Mr. Fentie: In putting pressure on the federal government, we have to live by an agreement, which is the devolution transfer agreement and the processes established there, which include old military sites -- and there are probably some that we don't even know about yet, but that's for a later discussion. In some cases, they would indeed be a federal responsibility, but there's an element, where there is a part of the devolution transfer agreement which, outside of type 2 mine sites, represents the other contaminated sites and what must transpire there. Most of that would be in Energy, Mines and Resources, I believe. That department will be coming up for debate, but we have to follow the tenets of the devolution transfer agreement, for better or for worse.

For better or for worse, always the objective is to address type 2 mine sites and other areas of contamination, to the extent possible, which includes any responsibility or liability that the Yukon government has directly. And the fundamental bottom line, as I said, is, "User or proponent pays."

Mr. Edzerza: Well, these may well be Energy, Mines and Resources questions, and maybe I'll save some of those for Energy, Mines and Resources. I have some more along that line, but I'll present them to a different minister.

However, there is one question I have to ask the minister about. How is the fish farming industry monitored for water contamination? Or, is there something in place to ensure that there is a safety process in there?

Hon. Mr. Fentie: The mechanism would be through the process of obtaining a water licence, where all of that is dealt with, including whatever enforcement, monitoring and other conditions would be placed on any particular enterprise vis-à-vis the water licence itself.

Mr. Edzerza: I'd just like to maybe ask a question to do with alternative energy.

I would like to know if the government is promoting alternative energy forms such as windmills and organic fuels and, if so, to what extent?

Hon. Mr. Fentie: It's an area on which we in the north must remain diligent.. Most of this is housed within the Energy Solutions Centre. We continue to spin windmills with limited success in power production. What the government is doing, which is new, is putting a greater emphasis on hydro and reducing our dependency on diesel and investments like the third wheel at Aishihik. As the Yukon Utilities Board pointed out recently in its decision concerning the increase in customer access and demand, and so on, the need for the third wheel, as we envisioned, has to be accelerated in its construction and implementation.

So, always alternative energy sources are of great importance. But a lot of that is done through the Energy Solutions Centre, which is overseen by the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources.

Mr. Edzerza: I have one question for the minister with regard to the Cold Climate Innovation Cluster at the Yukon College. Would it be possible to get a copy of the memorandum of understanding that was signed today?

Hon. Mr. Fentie: The agreement is between the University of Alberta and Yukon College. Yukon College is a corporation, administered and run by a board and the Yukon College president. I can undertake to ask the Minister of Education if he will make a copy of the MOU available but, in all likelihood -- and I provide this as a cautionary note, because I can only ask at this point -- we'd have to access this from Yukon College.

We'll check into it. We're very excited about it, however, because it's a huge step forward in cold climate research. Having the accreditation that comes with the University of Alberta and all therein, Yukon College is taking a major step forward in delivering on cold climate research. I think some doors will open for the Yukon College now -- for example, in dealings with the National Research Council. We now have a more effective way of building what we seek here in the Yukon for cold climate research and adaptation measures, especially around construction and dealing with the global phenomenon of climate change.

Mr. Edzerza: I'd like to ask about three more questions, and one has to do with water. On page 9-17 on the water inspection, it states in the budget that water inspections are down. Could the minister explain this? What has been done about the water problems in Carmacks and Haines Junction, specifically Canyon City?

Hon. Mr. Fentie: Mr. Chair, we are trying to find the reference page for the member opposite.

I can't speak to why water inspections are down. Water inspections are done all the time, not just by the Department of Environment, of course. Water sampling goes through Public Health, which is the enforcement oversight agency. The member asked specific questions about communities. There is going to be an ongoing initiative here and in every jurisdiction in Canada, to be able to meet what is coming. That will be new standards set by the federal government when it comes to dealing with potable water. I think the impetus for a lot of that is what took place in Walkerton -- a terrible tragedy. It became very apparent in all areas of the country that we are going to have to continue to improve our ability to provide potable water to citizens.

It also is quite glaring in other parts of the country, especially with First Nation reservations and the situation that we are in there. Right now in the Yukon, there are examples of investment happening in communities. Pelly, for example, and other communities are going through the infrastructure programming, are investing in water projects. We will have to continue to do our work. The role the government plays and the role the public plays and the need and demand for infrastructure is something that will be an ongoing challenge for this government and many governments into the future.

Mr. Edzerza: I would like to ask a question with regard to wildlife. Could the minister tell us how the systematic

counting of certain animals contributes to conservation? Is the policy one of doing a census of animals that are hunted only?

Hon. Mr. Fentie: The government has recognized something here. That is why in this budget there is a significant increase in investment for data gathering, especially with wildlife, so that we can update and modernize our database.

It is much broader, not just specifically counting numbers that come in from hunting. It is a much broader initiative and approach because we want to improve and enhance our overall biophysical database and biophysical mapping. It is very important for the department to be able to manage fish and wildlife habitat ecosystems and our pristine environment.

It is very important that we modernize our database and have a much better means with that information in our management tools, or development of management tools. We are even getting into rare and endangered plants and other smaller animals that normally have not been monitored before. Things like marmots and bats will be included.

This is an extensive work, as I said in my opening comments, it's not just going to be in this budget, but will be ongoing through the course of this mandate.

Mr. Edzerza: With regard to wildlife, I understand that certain citizens are across this world are amused by the darndest things, so I have to ask this question, to put it on record so that in the future if this ever develops, I know that I raised a red flag about it. Are there any plans to establish panned hunting in this territory?

Hon. Mr. Fentie: No.

Mr. Edzerza: This will be the last question from me. Before I read this question, I want to put on the record a little saying I have here, which is a Cree Indian prophesy. "Only after the last tree has been cut down, only after the last river has been poisoned, only after the last fish has been caught, only then will you find that money cannot be eaten."

I think that is pretty important, and I would encourage people right across this country to decipher that and try to understand what is being said by that, because it probably is one little poem that could prevent the destruction of this country.

My final question is: with resource development being supported so strongly by this government, what are the plans to provide for identification and designation of protected areas and conservation lands in advance of, or concurrent with, development?

Hon. Mr. Fentie: The foundation and the basis for dealing with the member's question is, of course, the treaties here through land use planning, special management areas, and habitat protection areas. But so, too, is the initiative to modernize our database and create second-to-none biophysical mapping and database that can be made available, so that when resource development is a question, the Department of Environment will have the tools available to contribute to addressing issues, whether it be mitigation or establishing areas of critical habitat that have to be addressed.

A recent example of that happening is Old Crow Flats, with 8,000 square kilometres of land base under protection, most of which is now permanent protection.

Another example of how this can work is the issue of land disposition in north Yukon, where the majority of the Turner wetlands were removed from land dispositions and I believe a couple of areas of river valley were off limit.

So there are processes out there that we follow on a regular basis to ensure that we can address this. And now we're adding to it a major initiative, starting with this budget, as I said, to modernize the available data that the Department of Environment has available to it so it can develop more modern and improved tools to manage our environment.

Chair: Is there any further general debate?

Seeing none, we'll proceed with line-by-line in the Department of Environment.

On Operation and Maintenance Expenditures

On General Management

On Deputy Minister's Office

Mr. Fairclough: A breakdown of that line, please.

Hon. Mr. Fentie: This particular area of general management is the deputy minister's office. Surprisingly, we pay our deputy ministers a salary. Of course, there are other expenses that go along with the operations of the deputy minister's office, which is administrative support, such as a secretary.

Deputy Minister's Office in the amount of \$285,000 agreed to

General Management in the amount of \$285,000 agreed to

Mr. Fairclough: Mr. Chair, you went from \$285,000 to the next line. Which was the next one that was read? I am not clear on that.

Chair: I read the total for total for general management under activities in the amount of \$285,000.

Mr. Fairclough: Well, Mr. Chair, I think you are speeding up a bit in your job. Why would you not read the other two lines? We are going line by line.

Chair: In proceeding line by line, I started off with activities, deputy minister's office, in the amount of \$285,000. That was cleared. Then I read total general management for \$285,000, which is carried down from the other one, which was cleared. I will be proceeding with O&M expenditures, under activities and assistant deputy minister's office for \$800,000. Is there any debate?

On Corporate Services

On Assistant Deputy Minister's Office

Mr. Fairclough: Mr. Chair, maybe we're not on the right page. What about corporate services, which is after general management? Why did we not go over that line?

Hon. Mr. Fentie: If I may help with some clarity, what we're doing is breaking down corporate services and it begins with the assistant deputy minister's office. The total for corporate services in the budget is \$5.177 million, broken down beginning with the assistant deputy minister's office.

Assistant Deputy Minister's Office in the amount of \$800,000 agreed to

On Communications

Mr. Fairclough: Could we get a breakdown on that line, please?

Hon. Mr. Fentie: This is the expenditure that provides for the communication of the department's programs and activities to the general public and relevant stakeholders. There's a net increase of \$55,000 primarily due to the effect of vacancies in 2006-07 -- just another demonstration of an example of this government's transparency and willingness to engage its public.

*Communications in the amount of \$157,000 agreed to
On Financial Services*

Mr. Fairclough: Line item breakdown, please.

Hon. Mr. Fentie: This is another example of sound fiscal management undertaken by this government. It provides the management, coordination and monitoring of the financial operations of the Department of Environment and all that goes with it. There's a decrease of \$79,000 and that's due to the effect of additional staff required in 2006-07 to accommodate temporary assignments in various special projects.

*Financial Services in the amount of \$327,000 agreed to
On Information Management and Technology*

Mr. Fairclough: Break down the line.

Hon. Mr. Fentie: Actually, Mr. Chair, it's easier to break down the total -- I won't get into that. It provides the integrated operation of the department's data processing and management functions with its computer and Web-related services.

By the way, Mr. Chair, contrary to the belief of the Official Opposition, this is another example -- some \$835,000 worth of examples -- of how we, in a transparent, open and accountable manner, engage with the public.

Mr. Fairclough: The minister wasn't clear with those numbers. I didn't see a breakdown of the \$835,000 allotted to them -- could he do that?

Hon. Mr. Fentie: At the risk of being repetitive, it provides the integrated operation of the department's data processing in all its facets and management functions with its computer and Web-related services.

That said, I would submit that it is a form of managing our information through technology. When you have such things as a Web site accessed by the public, it's critical, and that's what the \$835,000 investment is. It's a nominal increase of two percent from our forecast of 2006-07.

Information Management and Technology in the amount of \$835,000 agreed to

On Client Services

Mr. Fairclough: I ask the minister again to provide a breakdown of that line item.

Hon. Mr. Fentie: It provides the management coordination monitoring services to internal and external customers, including inventory control, purchasing of supplies and equipment, expediting, library services, records management, access to information services and publications.

*Client Services in the amount of \$870,000 agreed to
On Policy and Planning*

Mr. Fairclough: I ask the minister to explain this one and the breakdown of the \$633,000.

Hon. Mr. Fentie: \$633,000 is being dedicated out of a total corporate services budget of \$5,177,000 toward policy and planning. What that says is that the department does a lot of

policy work and does a lot of planning around policy work, so it provides for the management, review and development of strategic and resource planning processes and policies, which could vary depending on what particular initiative the department is dealing with at the time. It's a general investment for policy and planning.

*Policy and Planning in the amount of \$633,000 agreed to
On Claims Implementation and Aboriginal Affairs*

Mr. Fairclough: Please give us an explanation of this line item.

Hon. Mr. Fentie: This investment provides for the coordination and representation of departmental interests and support of the final agreements, negotiation implementation and intergovernmental agreements with First Nations -- again, another example of an area where in all likelihood a great deal of consultation with First Nations takes place. In this instance, it is a specific area within the Department of Environment that receives an investment. It also shows that we have a four-percent increase, so we are increasing our work with First Nations in the areas of the final agreements, the implementation and intergovernmental agreements with all concerned.

Claims Implementation and Aboriginal Affairs in the amount of \$353,000 agreed to

On Inuvialuit Final Agreement (IFA)

Mr. Fairclough: I would like the Premier to explain this line item also -- why there is a decrease.

Hon. Mr. Fentie: The decrease is due to decreased funding from IFA for 2007-08. This is a recoverable item, and it is part of our obligation under the *Inuvialuit Final Agreement*. With the decreased funding from the *Inuvialuit Final Agreement* for 2007-08, we account for it in this budget with a minimum minus-four percent in total expenditure.

Inuvialuit Final Agreement (IFA) in the amount of \$928,000 agreed to

On Human Resources

Mr. Fairclough: We would like a breakdown on this one, Mr. Chair.

Hon. Mr. Fentie: It provides human resource services in the areas of pay and benefits, staffing classification, labour relations and training.

Human Resources in the amount of \$274,000 agreed to

*Corporate Services in the amount of \$5,177,000 agreed to
On Environmental Sustainability*

On Assistant Deputy Minister's Office

Mr. Fairclough: I would ask for this one to be explained.

Hon. Mr. Fentie: Well, it probably provides the same function as the other ADM expenditure because we do have offices for our assistant deputy ministers. In this case, it provides for the operations of the environmental sustainability assistant deputy minister's office, which includes fish and wildlife, parks, conservation officer services, and environmental programs.

Mr. Fairclough: The Premier did explain that line item. There is an increase. Can he give us a breakdown of this \$402,000?

Hon. Mr. Fentie: More than anything, it's an accounting measure that relates to what we call "miscellaneous partnerships" and it is funding for that. The effect of full utilization of the miscellaneous partnerships budget that explains that increase -- as I understand it, in not all cases we use this. There is no need to. But it's in the budget as an accounting measure.

Mr. Fairclough: Perhaps the minister could clarify this a bit more. What is the miscellaneous partnership? We are seeing an increase of over 100 percent in this line item. I think we need an explanation of that.

Hon. Mr. Fentie: Let me use an example: should a university want to come to the Yukon and provide resources and funding to undertake certain work here, that's what this would be used for. So, it's a project, but not always does a university or another agency come to the Yukon to undertake the kind of work that would be defined under this partnership. That's the mechanism.

Mr. Fairclough: I am still unclear on this. This is on the operation and maintenance side of this budget. If there are one-time projects or whatnot from the government side, it usually shows up in capital. Are we to expect this line item to be this high and that the miscellaneous partnership will be included in this line item from here on? Or is this a one-time thing?

Hon. Mr. Fentie: This is a recoverable item. It's money that comes from elsewhere to the government.

But I think the member is missing something here. Out of the total of \$402,000, a huge portion of that goes directly to the ADM's office, and that relates to environmental sustainability when it comes to fish and wildlife, parks, conservation officer services and environmental programs.

Another part of that is this miscellaneous partnership. So, once again, if a university wants to come up and do some research -- let's say some research in a fish and wildlife context -- then we would, if it all makes sense to Yukon, engage with that university and they would provide the investment necessary to proceed with a program or an initiative that they want to undertake here.

Mr. Fairclough: What initiatives does this minister see with this extra amount of money? I mean, it's almost as if the minister is saying, "We have booked this amount of money, just in case." I just want to know what projects we have lined up. It has to be there for a reason.

Hon. Mr. Fentie: Well, it's no different from booking an allowance for a bad debt. It's no different from booking an amount -- a projected amount -- when it comes to the venture loan guarantee program. You project an amount -- it's an accounting measure -- and you put it in. When you do your final year-end adjustments -- by the way, in accordance with public service accounting guidelines and the oversight of the Auditor General -- you put in your final numbers.

So it's a number booked. It's a projected number, similar to the venture loan guarantee amount, and we'll see at year-end what transpires. But it's there as an accounting measure because, from time to time, we are the recipient of money that flows from -- let's use the University of Alberta. The university would come here and undertake an initiative that would incur

costs to the department or require work from the department -- they pay us for it. So it's a recoverable. I'm not sure what the member is trying to determine here. It's a simple accounting measure.

I haven't got an example off the top of my head of where it has been used, but it has been used in the past. But it's dependent on any interest out there from universities and other agencies that might want to undertake a project in Yukon.

Mr. Fairclough: Why is it in this line item? Why doesn't it have its own line item, if that is the case? What the minister said is unclear, other than the fact that we have double the amount of money that's in this line item. It's for "just in case", but that doesn't make sense. Why wasn't it put in its own separate line item? It gets washed away, and it looks like this increase is double what it was in the previous year, and we really don't have a project in place for it yet. It is just in case. It doesn't make sense.

Hon. Mr. Fentie: I know it doesn't make sense to the Member for Mayo-Tatchun. His question as to why it is here is similar to the questions of why is the sky blue or why is water wet. It's administered by the ADM's office and is an accounting measure. If the member has an issue with that, he should take it up with the Public Sector Accounting Board.

Mr. Fairclough: The Premier is the minister. The minister is in charge of this department. He must know why the increase is there to which projects it is tagged. It is not a rainy-day fund. It is not in there for reasons that the Premier doesn't know about. He knows. He has to know it. He has done a very poor job of explaining this line item -- very poor. It is unfortunate, but I think the Premier thinks all he needs to give is a broad explanation and nothing more. It is public money and a line item in this department. Unfortunately, we can't get a good explanation from the Premier, other than it is a rainy-day fund just in case. It is the only explanation the Premier has.

Hon. Mr. Fentie: I can't leave this one alone. First of all, we have explained to the Member for Mayo-Tatchun that this is an accounting measure. Miscellaneous partnerships are being administered in the environmental sustainability area of the department through the assistant deputy minister's office. The amount of money is booked to miscellaneous partnerships, but it's not our money. It would be money forthcoming from a university or some other agency that would come to the Yukon and undertake an initiative.

You know, the member seems to be fixated on this for all the wrong reasons. What part of accounting is the member missing? It's a simple accounting measure and it's put in this line because it makes sense, and that's where it's going to stay.

Mr. Fairclough: I agree with the Premier, the minister, that this is where it's going to stay; no one is going to change it. Even if members of his team want to change it, it is not going to change. Still, the Premier, the minister, has done a very poor job in explaining this one.

*Assistant Deputy Minister's Office in the amount of \$402,000 agreed to
On Fish and Wildlife*

Mr. Fairclough: I would like the minister to provide a breakdown of this dollar amount.

Hon. Mr. Fentie: Well, it begins with what is obvious, a 16-percent increase in the area of fish and wildlife in the department. It includes a number of areas overall, including the management of the territory's fish and wildlife population and resource management inventories. It's comprised of the directorate, species management, fisheries management, regional and harvest section, habitat and planning section, biodiversity, viewing, and NatureServe, Yukon section. The overall expenditure relates to that particular area under all those branches within the Department of Environment.

Mr. Fairclough: Can the minister provide a breakdown of this dollar amount? He explained where it is going but not any dollar amount attached to it. I want the breakdown of the dollar amount for each of those areas he just mentioned.

Hon. Mr. Fentie: Well, there is regular pay, overtime, shift premium permanent, other pay permanent, regular pay casual, shift premium casual, vacation pay casual, Yukon bonus, fringe benefits, severance pay, community allowance, internal recoveries, internal recoveries other, employee travel in Yukon, travel outside Yukon, honoraria, contract services construction, contract services repairs and maintenance. It even breaks down to rental expense, supplies, postage and freight, advertising, program materials, petroleum oil and lubricants, fuel oil, electricity, communications, non-consumable assets, other, computer workstations, training costs, memberships, insurance, printing and utilities.

I hope that helps clear up for the member where the investment goes.

Mr. Fairclough: By far, it doesn't. What we're asking for is a breakdown of the dollar amount, not an explanation about how much it costs for a stamp and the postage in the department. We don't want to know that. We want to know the breakdown. The minister has it right in front of him -- the \$6,336,000. Break it down in dollar amounts, please.

Hon. Mr. Fentie: I'm going to waste the time of this Legislature or the department's time with such frivolous requests. This amount is allocated to all the aforementioned areas of expenditure and, frankly, for me or the department to go through this and get down to the dollars and cents that go into each area, like the cost of stamps for postage, is a waste of my time and this House's time.

Mr. Fairclough: If that was the case, why did the minister read that out? We're asking for the breakdown, which is exactly what the minister is asking us to do -- to go line by line. Give us a breakdown of the dollar amount. I know there is a big list there. Other ministers were able to do it in this House so I'm sure that this minister can do it. He has a piece of paper in front of him.

Hon. Mr. Fentie: It includes probably 35 areas divided into \$6,336,000. It is as minuscule as \$24,900, \$5,700, \$3,000, \$700, \$4,900, \$3,000 -- is the member serious? It includes all the areas I mentioned and I read them into the record. The member knows that. This is where \$6.336 million goes.

If the member is challenged by that -- he was a minister for the Department of Environment and surely recognizes what this particular branch does within the department. The good news is that we've increased its investment by 16 percent because of all

the undertakings that it does in fisheries management, regional and harvest management, habitat planning, biodiversity -- like I read out into the record already -- all these areas.

All these areas, branches within the department, receive this total amount as broken down in all the areas I explained moments ago.

Mr. Fairclough: Can the minister give us a breakdown of the \$6,336,000 by dollar amount to each one? He said there are about 35. If he didn't go through the list and had concentrated on the question, we would be done this question by now. Every other minister provided that in this House when asked on a line item to break it down by dollar amount -- every other minister did. The information is right in front of the minister. Can he give us a dollar amount breakdown -- what amount is going where and whether it is \$4,000, \$3,000 or whatnot? He said there are about 35 items. It shouldn't take long to list them.

Hon. Mr. Fentie: We've provided all the information necessary to the Member for Mayo-Tatchun. This particular area has been fully addressed here this afternoon. If it is further information the member wants, it's simply not going to transpire here because the member has all the information. If this is some ploy to extend debate, so be it, but the government side is not going to engage.

Mr. Fairclough: We're not trying to extend debate on this. We are asking for the money breakdown. It is \$6 million. The Premier can't hide away this type of money -- have the dollar amount breakdowns. If the Premier can't do it, would he commit by a legislative return? I know the officials have it. All they need to do is photocopy it and send it over.

Hon. Mr. Fentie: The member has just stood on the floor and made the statement that we are hiding money. So, that said, there is an obvious approach by the Member for Mayo-Tatchun. No, I will not commit to a legislative return. I have provided the member with all the information pertinent to this line item in the budget.

Mr. Fairclough: The minister did not and he is wrong. He didn't provide the information we requested. Did he not hear the question? Did the minister not hear the question? We asked for a dollar breakdown of the \$6 million. Every other minister provided it but this one. Why can't the minister do it? Why is he dragging his feet on this one again? Why won't he do it? We want the breakdown. If he can't do it, ask the department to do it because they have the information. The minister is just playing silly games here. So, provide the information about the \$6,336,000 so we can get on with the next line item.

Hon. Mr. Fentie: The information has been provided. All pertinent information for this line item has been provided. If the member wants me to start dividing dollars and cents, surely he must recognize that if he has any valuable questions with merit, there is a way to do this. It is certainly not in this particular area.

This is for wages, postage and other areas of operational costs. I've never, in the many years I have been in here, experienced something like this, other than the question one time of a minister about how many grader bolts we had for grader blades in stock. That's an example of where this member is heading with this line item.

There is \$6,336,000 invested in the management of the territory's fish and wildlife population and resource management inventories. It is comprised of the directorate, species management, fisheries management, regional and harvest section, habitat and planning section, biodiversity viewing and NatureServe, Yukon section. It includes postage, transportation, wages, bonuses, other pay, travel, contract services, petroleum oil and lubricants, electricity, communications, non-consumables, other, computer workstations, training costs, memberships, insurance, printing and utilities.

Now, if that doesn't satisfy the member, for a total of \$6,336,000 in an \$862-million budget, I think what is going on here is very obvious and transparent.

Mr. Fairclough: By far that is not satisfying. The minister has to do his job. He has to do his job. He has not given us a breakdown. We don't want to know the small details about postage. The minister knows that. He was once on this side of the House and it was the Yukon Party that asked about grader blades and bolts. They were the ones wasting time.

Species at risk management -- the minister said species at risk management. What is the dollar amount earmarked for that?

Chair: Is there any further general debate on this line item?

Mr. Fairclough: Yes, Mr. Chair. I would like an answer from the minister. He gave a list. We would like to know what money is spent and where. Wildlife viewing is another that he mentioned in his list. What dollar amount is earmarked for wildlife viewing?

Hon. Mr. Fentie: It could have come out of the cost of a postage stamp. It could have come out of the cost of communication on a Web site. It could have come out of the cost of hammering a nail into a bench at a viewing site. All of these things are where this amount of money is expended. And that's the problem with what the member is asking.

It's pretty simple, Mr. Chair -- the information provided gives a thorough and detailed presentation of the line item for \$6,336,000, and every agency that receives monies in this particular area will go through the fiscal year and, if they have a cost for fuel oil, it will be paid at that time. If they have a cost for lubricants, it will be paid at that time. If there is a need to travel -- and, by the way, there is no pre-planned travel in this whole budget at this point in the fiscal year. Travel comes about during the fiscal year by necessity.

So I'm not sure what the member is asking, on one hand, is even relevant to what the member is trying to ascertain but, on the other hand, in many cases we'd simply be guessing. This is the total dollar value as committed; there's an increase; it covers all of the areas I mentioned; and I've explained how it breaks down, including severance pay, the Yukon bonus, auxiliary casual labour and permanent wages. All of that is in this particular line item.

If the member needs more information, the member might get lucky in the next election and get elected to the seat of government and become the minister himself.

Mr. Fairclough: We know we're getting to the minister when he has that approach in this House. It's yet another

new low we're experiencing, almost on an hourly basis here. There's no reason for the minister not to give that line breakdown: it's \$6 million. For his own colleagues' sake, they might be interested in knowing what the breakdown is too. Doesn't the minister know that? Every other minister provides that line item dollar amount breakdown. The minister has that information.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Mr. Fairclough: It's over \$6 million; the minister has that breakdown and he refuses to give it to members on this side of the House and his own colleagues -- and the Minister of Justice says we're not asking for it.

Isn't that interesting, Mr. Chair -- the Minister of Justice doesn't want to know what this line item is. She is turning a blind eye to this spending. The Premier says he is just guessing -- all he would be doing is guessing at what it would be. I guess we are not going to get any more answers from the member on this at all. We will move on and chalk it up to the fact that the minister doesn't want to do the hard work and provide that information to us.

*Fish and Wildlife in the amount of \$6,336,000 agreed to
On Parks*

Mr. Fairclough: The minister is fond of wanting to go into lines. I would like to have him up on his feet explaining this expenditure and providing a dollar amount breakdown to how it will be spent.

Hon. Mr. Fentie: Mr. Chair, \$2.866 million in parks provides for the management, development and maintenance of territorial park and campground operations, including the park officer enforcement program, interpretive programs, parks and SMA planning. Does the member want to know how much money we might spend by year-end March 31, 2008, on stamps? Or possibly the amount of fuel we might have to use? The cost of firewood? The overall issue of wages for park and officer enforcement program comes out of this, and other wages, as in the aforementioned line item. These are all part and parcel of necessities within this particular area of the department.

It breaks down in that manner and it would be relative to wages, fuel, stamps, postage, communications, travel, park enforcement -- we have an officer enforcement program out there that is new -- interpretive programs which, in conjunction with Department of Tourism and Culture, will be taking place. The total investment of \$2,866,000, which is an eight-percent increase, is directed to these areas.

Mr. Fairclough: Surprise, surprise, Mr. Chair. The minister didn't answer the question again. He is refusing to. He is just playing silly games here. Other ministers are able to do it. They are able to give the breakdown. Maybe they are interested in their departments and this minister is not.

There is no reason why the minister cannot say what in this line item went to the operation and maintenance of campgrounds, for example. There is no reason why the minister can't do that, but he refuses to do it because he doesn't show the interest in this department. When we ask questions in general debate, the minister says, "Let's go to the departments, let's go line by line and we'll give you information there." Then we

come to the line by lines, and guess what? We don't get any information -- none.

I'm embarrassed on the Premier's behalf, the minister's behalf, for him not being able to provide this information. It is all there. The minister has it.

I was wrong, Mr. Chair, because I thought the minister's colleagues would want to know what the breakdown was on this line item, but I was wrong. It is unfortunate. It is over \$2 million, close to \$3 million -- it's \$2.866 million. The Minister of Environment said, "Is it?" He forgot what it was.

Every time we have asked -- including the Premier who, when he was on this side of the House, asked for breakdowns of these line expenditures and got it. Why the sudden change? Why the sudden change? Either the direction is coming up politically to the department to not give any details on these line items -- there might be something there that they might ask questions about later on down the road.

I will give members an example: what about the \$800,000 a year subsidy we got from the members opposite for cell-phones?

Chair's statement

Chair: Order. I would like to remind everyone that we are on line-by-line for Environment, parks, for \$2,866,000. I would like members to focus debate on the parks line.

Mr. Fairclough: Thank you, Mr. Chair. That's a very good ruling for me and I am hoping that the minister will also take that ruling seriously and focus on this line item. It's a good ruling.

We would like some information on this line item. What is wrong with providing that information? What is wrong with that? Why is the government hiding this information from us? Why not earmark campgrounds, for example? Why not put the amount beside campgrounds, for example, and break down the \$2,866,000? Why would he not do that? This is the only minister who is refusing to do it. He's the Finance minister and he doesn't want us to see the small details.

Hon. Mr. Fentie: Well, the member's question can't be resolved in this particular area of the budget, because the member's question relates to capital. Therein lies the problem. We all know what this is about.

Now, once again, we went through the list of where the money for this particular line item goes. It includes regular pay, overtime, shift premium, permanent pay, other pay, regular pay, shift premium casual and vacation pay. By the way, there are a lot of blanks here.

By the way, Mr. Chair, the last time I looked, the Auditor General had inspected the Yukon government's books and given us a clean bill of health. Obviously, the member opposite must take issue with that.

There is advertising, for example, for parks. There is advertising and program materials for parks. Once again, there are possible expenditures for petroleum oil and lubricants, fuel oil and electricity and probably some expenditure for communications. The long and the short of it is that the whole amount, as projected, breaks down into those areas. The final numbers are not available until March 31, 2008, and then there is an

audited year-end done by the fall of 2008 by the Auditor General. Then the actual numbers will be forecast and booked.

It includes, in general terms, the particular areas within the department that relate to this, and it includes the new park officer program, interpretive programs, other expenditures in parks, and SMA planning as an obligation under the land claims. SMA planning, obviously, is relevant until much planning gets done. So, Mr. Chair, we all know what is at play here. I think we've provided a great deal of information for the Member for Mayo-Tatchun, but the member is probably not interested in the information; he has another interest.

Mr. Fairclough: Does the minister know what the O&M cost is for campgrounds in the territory? Well, according to him, he would be guessing at it. Unfortunately, we can't get the information out of the members opposite. Let's clear this line and go on to the next one.

Hon. Mr. Fentie: If the member was in the section of this budget for this department called "capital", we would probably be able to come up with a number of around \$310,000 that is allocated to campgrounds, but we are not in that section.

We're not in that section -- we're in O&M. That's the problem we're having with debate with the Member for Mayo-Tatchun. Detail is relevant to the beholder or the person who asks for the detail and, in many cases, what the member is asking for is simply not relevant to the line item or the budget at all. The members opposite don't understand that we will always be paying for electricity; we'll always be paying for advertising, communications, wages -- wages are very important -- we pay for those. There are going to be variables all through a fiscal year in all these areas. Fuel oil -- how do we determine, other than projection -- what the costs at the end of the fiscal year will be for fuel oil. It's dependent upon the need and the consumption of fuel oil.

I can see now the Leader of the Official Opposition counselling his colleague from Mayo-Tatchun. I would caution the Member for Mayo-Tatchun on accepting counsel from the Leader of the Official Opposition, who has demonstrated an inability to grasp budgeting as governments must do. It's very difficult to debate constructively with the members from the Official Opposition when they just don't want to recognize the system -- the budget format and the budgeting cycle and system we must adhere to in government -- versus their view and opinion of the budget overall.

This is an \$862-million budget. To date -- and I've been in a lot of debates on line-by-line items, and discussions of line-by-line items are meant to be relevant and constructive. When you consider that out of \$862 million -- and the amount of detail we've provided the Member of Mayo-Tatchun, for a total now of \$8 million, almost \$9 million, out of \$862 million, and the amount of detail we've provided in those two line items right here this afternoon, it leaves one to wonder what exactly the members want for information. Or do the members even know what information they seek and require?

This is a relatively simple expenditure, as projected. If the member looked at the budget document, he would see a column there marked out in bold ink, and it says "2007-08 Estimate" -- "estimate," Mr. Chair.

And prudent fiscal management would require that we do year-ends and get to the actuals -- the actual costs. Maybe that's the problem for the members opposite -- confusing "estimate" with "actual".

He is confusing consultation with what they have for an opinion of consultation.

The parks line item, I think, is quite explicit in what we have provided the member opposite and where the investment goes on estimate.

You know, the beauty of all this is when the Auditor General concludes her accounting of fiscal year 2007-08, the public accounts will be presented -- the report -- in all the detail of the expenditure of this and every expenditure across the corporate structure of government.

The government side places a lot more relevance in actual numbers because those are the important ones. We do our best to estimate and project, but actual numbers are the critical ones. I am surprised that the Leader of the Official Opposition, who is in business -- who is running the store if the member is going to make decisions on the basis that he is articulating there today? How does the member survive?

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

Chair: Mr. Fairclough, on a point of order.

Mr. Fairclough: I know, Mr. Chair, that the Premier is finding it tough to chew up time, but he has gone off base here. We are talking about this line item. He should focus his answers on the question on this line item.

Chair's ruling

Chair: We have gotten off topic, and I would like to remind all members to debate the line in front of us, which is for parks in the amount of \$2.866 million.

Hon. Mr. Fentie: Yes, and we are very pleased about this investment.

Our estimate shows almost \$3 million, an increase of eight percent. The actual for 2005-06, which is the only actual we have to date -- we don't even have the actuals for the fiscal year that has just concluded, 2006-07. The actual for 2005-06, as reported through public accounts tabled here in this House, is \$2,602,000. A nominal increase is toward the park officer enforcement program. In this area, we've all recently heard and experienced what transpired on the long weekend and how effective this program can be and will continue to be. That's why the investment in here encompasses that particular program, as well as interpretive programs. Our parks are important. We have commenced with what we call the initiative of celebrating Yukon parks.

The government -- at least our government -- doesn't spend a lot of time counting stamps and other matters. We are more focused on leadership: leading this territory forward positively and developing a better quality of life for Yukoners. In this line item, that's a contribution being made toward that very noble initiative. We will continue to do that.

As we go forward, we will find that if the Member for Mayo-Tatchun is going to accept answers of detail like we pro-

vide, we can get into a very constructive debate with the member opposite.

The special management area planning process is relevant to what planning will actually take place in a fiscal year. We're very conscious of that particular process because of the value that it will create for Yukoners in building that better quality of life.

The special management area planning recently -- there is a very good demonstration of it in last year, fiscal year 2006-07 -- where in this particular area we were able to establish the protection of the Old Crow Flats. We also, in the habitat protection area, established the Lhutsaw habitat protection area. These are examples, but they weren't done until far into the fiscal year.

The breakdown the member is asking for is twofold. First, there is the breakdown on the estimates, which is as I have provided. The detailed and actual breakdown will happen in the public accounts. I am sure that the member will be waiting with bated breath for this line item to show up in the public accounts with the dollar value that went into stamps, litres of fuel and the amount of kilowatts of electricity used and any severance pay that may have taken place during the course of the fiscal year. Of course, there were some advertisements that transpired during the course of the fiscal year. I can assure the Member for Mayo-Tatchun and his leader -- who has a totally different view of fiscal management, that very important element of governing -- of something.

I can assure them all from the opposition benches that he's not up on a point of order -- that the public accounts will provide them, in great detail, every item of expenditure that has transpired in the 2007-08 fiscal year.

Seeing the time, I move that we report progress.

Chair: Mr. Fentie has moved that we report progress.

Motion agreed to

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

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

Motion agreed to

Speaker resumes the Chair

Speaker: I will now call the House to order.

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

Chair's report

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

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

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Speaker: I declare the report carried.

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

The House adjourned at 5:32 p.m.

The following Sessional Paper was tabled June 4, 2007:

07-1-26

Yukon College 2005/2006 Annual Report and audited Financial Statements (dated October 27, 2006) prepared by the Office of the Auditor General of Canada (Rouble)

The following document was filed June 4, 2007:

07-1-19

Dawson City Wastewater Treatment Plant Report (dated July 12, 2002): letter (dated June 1, 2007) from Andrea Yust, Municipal Solutions Developer Western Canada, GE Water & Process Technologies to Mr. Mitchell, Leader of the Official Opposition re (Mitchell)