

**Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Wednesday, May 13, 2009 — 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.

Are there any tributes?

TRIBUTES

In recognition of National Road Safety Week

Hon. Mr. Lang: On behalf of the House, I rise today to acknowledge National Road Safety Week. During May 12 to 18, Canadians are reminded of the need to be safer when they are on the road. We are also committed to Canada's Road Safety Vision 2010, to make Canada's roads the safest in the world.

In the past, the Victoria Day long weekend has seen increases in the number and severity of crashes on our highways, as millions of Canadians take to the roads for the beginning of the summer season. This is why National Road Safety Week highlights the importance of driving safely at a time when the long Victoria Day weekend and warmer weather means more traffic on our roads.

Summer is a time when Yukoners take the opportunity to drive longer distances to their favourite camping spot, to take longer trips on their motorcycles, to ride their bicycles, or simply take walks as much as possible. This means that various types of road users must learn to share the roads, to be alert, to be responsible, and to take precautions at all times.

Summer is also the beginning of another tourist season, increasing traffic as many tourists drive into and through our territory. There are also more events and celebrations. We must all plan our trips ahead of time, so that incidents due to impaired driving, fatigue, or careless behaviour can be avoided, so celebrations do not become catastrophes.

Most of our work on bridge and highway construction and rehabilitation occur during the summer months. It is important that drivers obey flag person instructions, observe road warning signs, and respect speed limits. Yukoners and travellers can visit 511yukon.ca or dial 511 to prepare for their trip in advance.

The RCMP states that in Yukon there have been 61 deaths and 1,513 non-fatal injuries sustained over the last eight years related to vehicle collisions. These tragic incidents cause anguish and grief for everyone involved in these accidents, affecting our communities, friends, and families.

To avoid these unnecessary accidents, it is crucial to emphasize that we all have a role to play. Drivers must remember to buckle up their seat belt and their child car seat correctly, respect speed limits and adjust their driving to the road conditions, be responsible by not being distracted, driving while feel-

ing tired or impaired by substances such as alcohol and drugs, and to drive defensively while watching out for other road users.

Failing to use seat belts, speeding, impaired driving, and careless driving behaviours are the main causes of injuries and deaths on our roads and highways. Pedestrians, motorcyclists, and cyclists also have to make sure that they obey the rules of the road, wear bright or reflective clothing, wear safety gear and be vigilant at the intersections and crosswalks. It is important to us to work collaboratively with other agencies to increase safety for all road users.

During the month of May, Highways and Public Works' transportation and service branch, with the support of our child-restraint safety inspectors, continues to increase awareness and provide education to Yukon residents on child car seat safety. Each child whose car seat is inspected by a child restraint system inspector is eligible to receive one of four educational savings bonds worth \$500 each.

The carrier compliance section for Highways and Public Works will be conducting commercial vehicle inspections during this time to help ensure the safety of commercial vehicles.

Also, over the course of this week and the May long weekend, the RCMP and the Whitehorse Bylaw Service officers will be conducting random check stops in Whitehorse and communities throughout the Yukon.

We also continue to work with schools to educate Yukon's young drivers and to promote responsibility, safety, and no drinking and driving in an effort to increase youths' awareness and understanding of the consequences that carelessness and dangerous driving behaviours may have.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, we need everyone's attention, commitment and involvement to make our roads the safest in the world. We must follow the safety rules of the road and encourage community members, neighbours and our families to do the same. Enjoy your summer, be responsible and drive safely. Remember, road safety is not merely the result of chance — it is everybody's responsibility and it starts with you. Do your part to save lives this season.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

In recognition of Yukon Francophone Day

Hon. Mr. Hart: I'm very proud to stand today to pay tribute to May 15, the Yukon Francophone Day.

En tant que ministre responsable de la Direction des services en français, je prends la parole pour souligner le 15 mai 2009, Journée de la francophonie yukonnaise et rendre hommage aux Francophones du Yukon.

La langue française est enracinée au Yukon depuis plus de 150 ans. Elle fait partie de l'identité yukonnaise.

Demain le vendredi 15 mai, nous célébrerons la contribution des francophones à travers les années à la construction du Yukon d'aujourd'hui.

Le Yukon compte une école française, une garderie française et un journal francophone. La communauté francophone fournit des services aux entrepreneurs, aux immigrants, aux apprenants adultes, aux jeunes et aux femmes. Elle fait activement la promotion des arts et de la culture.

Le programme d'immersion française est de plus en plus populaire, pour les grands et les petits.

Les francophones participent activement aux activités de l'ensemble de la population yukonnaise et ont établi de nombreux partenariats.

En résultat, il n'est pas rare d'entendre parler français partout dans le territoire.

Nous sommes fiers de voir que la communauté franco-yukonnaise est reconnue comme l'une des plus dynamiques au Canada. Sa présence enrichit notre vie de tous les jours.

Monsieur le Président, j'invite tous les membres de l'Assemblée législative à se joindre à moi pour rendre cet hommage aujourd'hui. J'invite toute la population à participer aux célébrations du 15 mai, Journée de la francophonie yukonnaise.

Merci beaucoup, Monsieur le Président.

Mr. Mitchell: Monsieur le Président, je prends la parole aujourd'hui pour le parti Libéral pour rendre hommage à la communauté franco-yukonnaise. Le quinzième mai marque la Journée de la francophonie yukonnaise.

I rise today on behalf of the Official Opposition in celebration of "La Journée de la francophonie yukonnaise," Yukon Francophone Day, on May 15.

Les franco-yukonnais sont des francophones qui résident au Yukon. Les francophones sont au Yukon depuis plus de 150 ans et font partie intégrale de notre passé, présent et du futur.

Franco-Yukonnais are francophone and/or French Canadian residents of Yukon. Francophones have been in the Yukon for more than 150 years and are an integral part of our past, present and future.

Canada is a multicultural nation and a bilingual country, with two official languages, English and French. In 1988, the Yukon Legislative Assembly passed the Yukon *Languages Act*, stipulating that people have the right to receive services from the government head or central offices in English or in French. The Yukon government established the Bureau of French Language Services to assist government departments and corporations in providing services in French.

Le gouvernement du Yukon a créé le bureau des services en français afin de faciliter la prestation des services gouvernementaux en français.

Yukon has approximately 1,200 francophones and about 3,500 to 4,000 citizens who speak French as a second language, mostly better than I.

L'Association franco-yukonnaise, or L'AFY, as it is affectionately known, is a non-profit organization that has been involved for over 25 years improving the quality of life for the Yukon francophone community. L'AFY undertakes activities in education, economic development, culture, communications, promotion of French language services and politics. They ensure the long-term viability of the Yukon francophone community by creating increased opportunities to live, work, play, communicate, study and access services in Yukon in the French language, which are all necessary for a vibrant francophone community to reach its full potential.

Les francophones du Yukon viennent de toutes les régions du pays et l'AFY agit comme une porte d'entrée pour l'ensemble de la communauté francophone et donne aux francophones un sentiment d'identité et d'appartenance.

French-speaking people have been exploring and settling in the Yukon and contributing to its development long before the Gold Rush of 1898.

Francophones in the Yukon come from all regions in the country and L'AFY has created a gateway, bringing together the entire Yukon francophone community and giving francophones a sense of identity and belonging.

Nous avons une école francophone, l'École Émilie Tremblay, une école d'immersion, l'école élémentaire de Whitehorse, une garderie, la garderie du petit cheval blanc, ainsi que Les EssentiElles est un organisme à but non lucratif qui représente les intérêts des femmes francophones du Yukon.

The francophone community has had its own newspaper, *L'Aurore Boreale*, since 1983. We have a francophone school – l'École Émilie Tremblay, the French immersion school – École Élémentaire de Whitehorse, and the French Daycare Centre – La Garderie du petit cheval blanc. There is also the Les Essentielles, a non-profit organization which advocates in the interest of Yukon francophone women.

Francophones have enriched the fabric of the Yukon. They have become an integral part of Yukon society and have made important contributions through their culture, music, artistry and language. We ask all Yukoners to join with the francophonie yukonnaise in celebration of their special day.

J'invite tous les Yukonnais à se joindre à nous afin de célébrer la Journée de la francophone yukonnaise.

Merci, Monsieur le Président. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Cardiff: I rise on behalf of the NDP caucus to pay tribute to la Journée de la francophonie yukonnaise. There is no doubt that the francophone community continues to enrich Yukon society, as it has for over 150 years, and we are grateful for the opportunity to celebrate its accomplishments.

Canada has two official languages, which allows for the full participation of all individuals in the social, political and economic life of our society.

Having two official languages sets the stage for respect, inclusion and cooperation. Multiculturalism strengthens our nation, builds cross-cultural understanding and reduces racism. Even so, here in the Yukon we still hear of the need for francophones to advocate in their daily lives for important justice, education and health services to be delivered in their mother tongue.

It makes sense for Crossroad Yukon immigration services to be housed in l'Association franco-yukonnaise. Francophones living outside of Quebec may have a lot of empathy for the immigrant experience of being a minority in a dominant culture. Crossroad Yukon provides programs and services to help immigrants settle in the territory and get involved in Yukon life. There they offer orientation, translation, interpretation, language training, social integration, counselling, employment-related services and referrals to community resources.

Many English-speaking parents of young children are grateful to be able to send their children to French immersion classes. Many of us adults regret not being able to speak French and it seems harder and harder for us to learn. In honour of La Journée de la francophonie yukonnaise, we salute the positive contributions of people in Yukon's French community and we wish them every success in their determination to continue offering the best French language education possible.

In recognition of Johnny Smith

Mr. Edzerza: On behalf of the House, it is an honour and a privilege for me to pay tribute to a past chief and a respected elder from the Kwanlin Dun First Nation.

Johnny Smith was born at the Marsh Lake dam to Chief Billy Smith and Kittie Smith on April 1, 1922. Johnny lived in various areas as a child: Liard, Teslin, Marsh Lake, Robinson and Whitehorse. He received his education traditionally as they travelled to their various camps hunting, fishing and working on the trapline. Although Johnny never attended school, he is considered a very wise, visionary leader and elder who contributed his wisdom toward leading his people.

He is fluent in Tlingit; speaks Southern Tutchone and even understands and speaks some Tahltan. Johnny is also a musician who plays guitar and sings gospel music, but he has never forgotten his traditional drum and songs. He was a teacher of traditional songs and dance to those who were willing to learn. Johnny was elected Chief of the Whitehorse Indian Band, which is now known as the Kwanlin Dun First Nation, in 1969 to 1973.

He was reelected as chief, which he held from 1981 to 1988. Chief Smith had many accomplishments; however, a couple stand out significantly.

In 1969, under Chief Johnny Smith, his administration faced many difficult decisions. The people living in the old village in the Marwell area complained of poor housing conditions and overcrowding, the lack of safe water supply, the smell of raw sewage that drained behind the old village and the smell of the exhausts from the White Pass trucks that ran all night in the winter months. A relocation committee was established to review various options for establishing a new village. At that time, the site that would be most favoured appeared to be located along Wickstrom Road adjacent to the river across from the downtown area. However, the Kwanlin Dun people agreed to move to a new subdivision already developed at McIntyre. It was during his third term as chief that the relocation of the village was finalized. Thanks to Johnny, the Kwanlin Dun people now have a modern subdivision in which they live.

Another significant event Johnny was party to was when a team of Yukon chiefs went to Ottawa in 1973. The purpose was to present a document, *Together Today for Our Children Tomorrow* to the Prime Minister of Canada. I heard that he had given a very strong message to the Prime Minister about First Nation people having ownership of lands in the Yukon Territory. Thus, the land claims process was given a boost, and today the majority of First Nations in the Yukon have land claims agreements in place, which includes the Kwanlin Dun First Nation.

Johnny has served his people well. And on a more personal note, Johnny taught me about traditional law, values and beliefs. He also talked to me about the importance of having a constitution and self-government, and I thank him for all of the sharing of his knowledge.

Mr. Speaker, Johnny has been married to his wife, Annie, for 67 years. They have 10 children — nine girls and one boy. They have 22 grandchildren, 37 great-grandchildren and one great-great-grandchild.

I ask all Members of the Legislative Assembly to help me welcome my constituents, Johnny Smith and his wife, Annie, of 67 years, and members of their family to the gallery. Welcome and thank you for coming.

Applause

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

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Mr. Rouble: I'd ask all members of the Assembly to join me in welcoming the grade 4 and 5 class from Takhini Elementary and their teacher, Ms. deWit — welcome.

Applause

Mr. Inverarity: I would like to ask the House to welcome some students from F.H. Collins and Porter Creek secondary schools, along with their parents, teachers and some concerned constituents, who are here today to observe democracy in action.

Applause

Hon. Mr. Kenyon: I'd like the House to help me recognize two constituents: Monica Kulych of beautiful Porter Creek North, and Councillor Doug Graham of the City of Whitehorse — welcome.

Applause

Hon. Mr. Cathers: I'd ask the House to join me in welcoming a constituent of mine to the gallery, Mr. Harry Kulych.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any further introductions of visitors?

Returns or documents for tabling.

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Hon. Mr. Hart: I have for tabling today the Yukon Health and Social Services Council annual reports.

Hon. Ms. Horne: I have for tabling the crime prevention and victims' services trust fund annual report, 2006-07.

Hon. Ms. Taylor: I have for tabling the annual report for the Yukon Arts Centre as well as the annual report for the Yukon Geographical Place Names Board.

Mr. McRobb: I have for tabling a document dated today addressed to the minister responsible for Yukon Housing Corporation.

Mr. Cardiff: I have for tabling a written question regarding young worker protection in the workplace.

Speaker: Are there any further documents for tabling?
Are there any reports of committees?
Are there any petitions?

PETITIONS

Petition No. 7

Mr. Inverarity: I have for presentation today a petition to the Yukon Legislative Assembly. This petition of the undersigned shows that the Province of British Columbia, whose curriculum we have followed, changed their graduation requirements in 2004. At that time, the Education Ministry of British Columbia retained five mandatory exams, and all other exams were made optional.

The Yukon government chose to continue with the former policy —

Speaker's statement

Speaker: The honourable member is to present the petition, not present the argument, please. Thank you.

Mr. Inverarity: Therefore, the undersigned request that the Minister of Education change departmental policy to coincide with the B.C. curriculum and the 2004 graduate program. All exams will be optional, with the exception of the five mandatory graduation exams. This must be in place for the 2008-09 school year.

Mr. Speaker, the petition is signed by about 424 signatories, some of whom are in the gallery today.

Speaker: Are there any further petitions?
Are there any bills to be introduced?
Are there any notices of motion?

NOTICES OF MOTION

Mr. Fairclough: I give notice of the following motion:
THAT this House urges the Yukon government to upgrade the Silver Trail this road construction season to ensure it is in safe driving condition for all locals, tourists and businesses needing to utilize the road.

Mr. Cardiff: I give notice of the following motion:
THAT this House urges the Yukon government to increase the percentage of its total budget spent on education, in order to:

- (1) bring the proportion more in line with what most other Canadian jurisdictions allocate; and
- (2) implement the new initiatives aimed at closing the gap between First Nations and non-First Nations student outcomes, as identified in the education reform project and the Auditor General of Canada's report.

Speaker: Are there any further notices of motion?
Is there a statement by a minister?
This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Grade 12 provincial exams

Mr. Inverarity: Earlier today, I presented a petition calling on the government to change the policy that is in place with respect to grade 12 provincial exams. The petition is signed by 424 Yukoners, and I have the names of 39 other individuals from Dawson City, who have also lent their support for this change, and I will file those now.

In British Columbia, aside from the five mandatory provincial exams required for graduation, all other provincial exams are optional. This policy has been in effect for the past five years in British Columbia. In Yukon, however, students are required to write all B.C. provincial exams.

The minister's partners in education are here in the gallery today, and they are looking for an answer. Will the minister drop the requirement that students must write all grade 12 provincial exams? Yes or no?

Hon. Mr. Rouble: Yes, Mr. Speaker. Earlier this year, several parents and school councils raised concerns about Yukon students having to write mandatory British Columbia provincial exams, rather than following the 2004 B.C. policy of only having to write five B.C. provincial exams and making writing the other exams optional.

The purpose of making changes to the school system is to increase the knowledge, abilities and opportunities for our students. And, as teachers, parents and students have told me, we can't lower the educational standards just to have more graduates. We have a responsibility to maintain high standards and to provide support so that Yukon's students can reach them. Any changes to our testing policies must practise pedagogically sound approaches, maintain appropriate academic standards, provide an accurate assessment of the students' accomplishments of learning objectives, provide a fair approach for all students, provide for comparability of results, and eliminate any real or perceived disadvantages that Yukon students may face in being compared to other students from other jurisdictions.

In response to this, the Department of Education sought input from our partners in education, including school councils, teachers, parents and students. The consultation process ended Friday and earlier today the Department of Education announced that it will change the policy to match the B.C. policy and that the policy will be retroactive to the beginning of the year.

Mr. Inverarity: I am very pleased to hear that the minister has finally seen the light. It was very disappointing that it took five years for this government to listen to the concerns of students — students who are getting ready to write these exams. They, along with parents, want this change to be in place to ensure they only have to write five mandatory exams. I'm not sure, but perhaps the minister can clarify again the fact that these applications and these exams will not have to be

written in this current fiscal school year. Would the minister restate that for us, please?

Hon. Mr. Rouble: Earlier this year, in January, I received a letter from school councils requesting that this be looked at and clarified. I clarified the process and the policy at that time with the member opposite. The department also made a commitment to work with others to review this and they did that. The Department of Education consulted with the Association of School Councils, Boards and Committees; had a general meeting with the public with video conferencing to the communities; had discussions with the Secondary School Programming Advisory Committee, with the First Nation Education Advisory Committee, with First Nation education directors, with the Association of School Administrators, and with teachers, parents and students.

We included the views and concerns of all our partners in education in this process.

I do have to caution the member, there was not unanimous support to change this. There are many who feel that type of testing is appropriate but, as I outlined in the test we used to look at all these evaluation options, this was the fairest and best approach to take and yes, it will be retroactive to the beginning of this year.

That is going to have an impact on some students who will have to ensure what the criteria are of the programs they're looking into, because some still require people to write departmental exams. So there will be additional pressure on students and parents to look into the future —

Speaker: Thank you.

Mr. Inverarity: Mr. Speaker, now we're getting somewhere. I'm glad the minister is seeing the error of his ways. It's unfortunate that people with us here today had to table a petition in this House and spend time out of their busy day to come and listen to the government here.

Yukon students have been put at a disadvantage when applying for post-secondary education for a number of years because of this unfair policy. I am pleased that it has been changed. Will the minister assure the House that the Yukon schools will be informed of the immediate change and that the information will be conveyed to all post-secondary schools across the territory and across the country as well?

Hon. Mr. Rouble: Mr. Speaker, all Yukon schools have already been informed of this change. The consultation process on this, which ended last Friday, has resulted in a change being made today. As I will restate for the member opposite, I received it in January asking me to look into this issue.

The department has done that; they have gone to work with all the partners in education and thoroughly examined this issue — its impact on students, its impact on other post-secondary institutions — and has made a very fast response to this issue. I would especially like to thank the Department of Education and all our partners in education for their very quick input to this issue.

As you will see, we did not make a unilateral, top-down approach; instead, we involved all the people involved in education — our partners in education — in the process, and I'm pleased to provide a response to the issue today.

Question re: Francophone school board

Mr. Mitchell: We just paid tribute today to la Journée de la francophonie yukonnaise and, again for the Education minister, it seems to be very unfortunately ironic that the one independent school board that exists under the *Education Act* in Yukon — the francophone school board — has been so frustrated by the minister not providing them with the ability to act truly independently with full control over their budget and jurisdiction according to the *Education Act* that they've gone to court with the Government of Yukon.

Will the minister commit to trying to get together and mediate this, as opposed to ending up in court? Will the minister work with the school board to resolve these problems?

Hon. Mr. Rouble: We demonstrated earlier today the Department of Education's commitment and practice of working with our partners in education to reach important decisions that affect Yukon students. Mr. Speaker, the Department of Education will continue to work with the Commission scolaire francophone du Yukon, and we'll continue to work with l'École Émilie Tremblay to address their issues.

There has been a statement of claim filed by the school board. The government will honour the approach that the Commission scolaire francophone du Yukon has chosen to take. We will not interfere with the court process as the member opposite seems to infer.

Mr. Mitchell: Well, Mr. Speaker, there's no interference with the court process to try and head off a court process by getting together with the other party and mitigating it by mediation.

Now, last fall, the Commission scolaire francophone du Yukon took the extraordinary step of going to court in its battle with this government. They said, "This court action is the latest step in a long process of dealings. Several years of negotiations between the CSFY and the Yukon Department of Education have not lead to significant developments."

Will the minister commit to again negotiating rather than litigating with the Commission scolaire francophone du Yukon?

Hon. Mr. Rouble: Mr. Speaker, the government did not make this choice of action. The course of action was chosen by the Commission scolaire francophone du Yukon. We will honour their desire to see this issue addressed and brought to some note of finality through the court process.

Mr. Mitchell: I think it is quite clear that the francophone school board does not want to resolve it in court. They felt that they had no alternative but to go to court. It is always better to mediate and negotiate rather than to litigate. Again, rather than respecting their desire to go to court, would the minister take actions to respect their desire to be treated properly as an independent school board, get together with the board and negotiate an acceptable solution?

Hon. Mr. Rouble: This government has demonstrated yet again today its willingness and ability to work with all its partners in education in order to improve educational outcomes for Yukoners. The Commission scolaire francophone du Yukon has filed suit against the Government of Yukon. We will honour the process that they have initiated, and we expect to see

closure brought to this issue through the court process as the court action has been caused by the Commission scolaire francophone du Yukon. We will continue to work with the Commission scolaire francophone du Yukon. We will continue to support École Émilie Tremblay and encourage all to get involved in Yukon's education system in order to make positive outcomes for our students.

Question re: Mental health services

Mr. Cardiff: Mr. Speaker, mental health is a complex problem that requires a range of services. At one end of the scale are patients who need only counselling — leading a normal life, living without additional support, working and providing for their families. At the other end of the spectrum are patients who are sometimes a danger to themselves or others. There are a great number of affected adults and children in-between these two extremes, with everything from neurosis to depression to personality difficulties. There can be complications when medications are not taken or when crisis erupts. Sometimes mental illness is accompanied by addictions or FASD.

This minister has turned down programs that would help prevent many problems before they begin, such as long-term residential care. There are many problems in rural Yukon that are being ignored.

How does the minister provide services for all of the wide range of mental health problems in the Yukon?

Hon. Mr. Hart: The Department of Health and Social Services provides a wide variety of programs to assist all Yukoners who are affected with mental health disabilities, both in the rural areas as well as within Whitehorse. We provide social workers dedicated to assist individuals with either counselling and/or housing options when needed.

We provide monitoring, we provide help for issues in relationships, and we also provide assistance to them in dealing with landlords to ensure that appropriate housing is provided. We also support the individual when needed and where needed with mental health support workers and provide practical living assistance where and when required. Mr. Speaker, we have many programs for both youth and adults that provide assistance to Yukoners with mental health issues and we will continue to do so.

Mr. Cardiff: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The minister mentioned supportive housing the other day. He told us \$225,000 for support of housing and the minister knows that is not enough.

Now there's a lot of confusion about what kind of facility will be put in place for psychiatric patients who need hospitalization. We are told that the Whitehorse General Hospital is building a psychiatric ward with six beds. It will need round-the-clock mental health nurses, a social worker and probably another psychiatrist to work as well.

But the Yukon Medical Association president says it won't be a psychiatric ward, that it's just a secure medical unit. He called it a "band-aid approach to mental health services."

Now that the minister has been briefed by the Government House Leader, will the minister clarify what kind of facility we

can expect to see at the Whitehorse General Hospital and what human resources for the facility will be in place?

Hon. Mr. Hart: As was indicated previously with regard to the Yukon Hospital Corporation and the facility, we're providing services of six rooms for mental health patients. That facility is for interim, short-term requirements for mental health issues. We do not have forensic ability to test our patients here in the Yukon and they will continue to have to go Outside to receive that particular care.

In essence, the hospital will be able to provide assistance and provision for a section that's closed off and enable the staff to handle the patients and to keep them in a safe environment for both staff and themselves.

Mr. Cardiff: The messages are very confused around this serious matter. We understand that the jail will still be needed once the hospital has its ward — that's what it sounds like. There won't be any other place for psychiatric patients who are also inmates. They will be left in the jail, because security on the mental health ward won't be sufficient for that type of patient. The ward will also not be a place for chronic psychiatric care. It sounds like a lack of planning and more band-aids. It sounds like patients will continue to be sent Outside, away from familiar surroundings, family and friends, who are an important source of help for these patients. It sounds like more expensive health care.

Will the Minister of Health and Social Services clarify for Yukoners what his vision of mental health treatment under this government is now and will be in the future?

Hon. Mr. Hart: During the budget debate with regard to Health and Social Services, a substantial amount of information was provided to the members opposite with regard to mental health facilities and all the services provided by this government. A substantial amount of money has been put into Health and Social Services in this budget — well over \$20 million — to assist and provide services to all Yukoners, ensuring that they all have sufficient and adequate acute care and other facilities required to assist them in their daily living processes. We continue to provide that and will in the future.

Question re: Uranium mining

Mr. Edzerza: Let the record show that I do support mining; however, Canada produces approximately 23 percent of world uranium, and I have been contacted by several Yukon citizens and constituents recently to raise this issue again, because they are not satisfied with the responses so far of the Yukon Party government ministers.

In Canada, we have over one billion tonnes of radioactive tailings. It has been recorded that these mine tailings remain radioactive for thousands of years. Knowing this, is the Minister of Environment concerned that the Yukon allows for uranium exploration to take place?

Hon. Mr. Cathers: I have to again remind the Member for McIntyre-Takhini, with regard to any proposed uranium development — with any mining development — that the ability to conduct exploration under a claim is not the same as the ability to develop a mine. The regulatory process within Canada as a whole for moving forward with any uranium development includes the involvement of the federal regulator; it in-

cludes a substantial review. Any potential project would have significant review through the Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Board. The federal regulator has a strong mandate to protect public safety from just those things.

I would remind the member that this is a hypothetical question at this point in time.

Mr. Edzerza: It's this kind of response that Yukoners don't accept — sidestepping the question. The Serpent River system was contaminated with radium nearly 100 kilometres downstream from abandoned uranium mines and tailings at Elliot Lake in northern Ontario.

As uranium decays, it emits intense bursts of energy known as "atomic radiation". Its decay and products, which are both solid and gaseous, are also radioactive, and that will be with us forever.

Does the Minister of Environment approve of the possibility of such devastating contamination of our pristine Yukon Territory? Yes or no?

Hon. Mr. Cathers: Mr. Speaker, again, this government will take the appropriate action in all cases to protect the safety of our environment and health. It's a hypothetical question the member is bringing forward. I would remind the member that, as I stated earlier, uranium exploration has unique terms and conditions regarding uranium handling and site treatment. This includes regulation by the federal government under the *Nuclear Safety and Control Act* administered by the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission. We are dealing with a hypothetical question at this point in time, but I would remind the member opposite that if, at any point in the future, there were to be a proposal from anyone to develop a mineral claim for uranium, that would require a very extensive review through the Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Board process. It would involve the federal regulator. It would involve an extensive opportunity for the scientific information to be considered, the risks to be considered, as well as the benefits, and for substantial opportunity again for public input.

At this point in time, we are talking about a hypothetical question raised by the member. What I will reiterate to him is that this government and all officials within this government take very seriously the responsibility to protect the health and safety of Yukon citizens and to protect the Yukon environment.

Mr. Edzerza: Well, Mr. Speaker, Yukoners want a definite position from this government, not something that's wishy-washy. Bottom line — uranium mining is dangerous. Being allowed to explore for uranium implies at least the potential for approving a mine if a large quantity of uranium is located. In 1985, Nova Scotia imposed a moratorium on uranium exploration. Labrador banned uranium mining and British Columbia recently put a ban on uranium exploration in that province.

Yukon citizens want to be heard. So, will the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources at least consider putting in place a 10-year moratorium with no uranium exploration to take place in the Yukon, which will allow for the public consultation to take place? Will he do that?

Hon. Mr. Fentie: You know, Mr. Speaker, the government side has become very concerned with the Member for McIntyre-Takhini referring to what is a duly sanctioned process, the *Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Act* that is spawned out of the land claims in this territory and was given rise under the *Umbrella Final Agreement* — the product of 30 years of negotiation, and is all about Yukon's involvement in any type of development of this nature — as "wishy-washy." That is absolutely out of context. If the member suggests that this government supports the devastation of our environment, of habitat, and other factors, Mr. Speaker —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

Speaker: On a point of order, the Member for McIntyre-Takhini.

Mr. Edzerza: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, I would take exception to the Premier saying that I am criticizing a land claims agreement. I believe I referred to the way the government is addressing the issue.

Speaker's ruling

Speaker: From the Chair's perspective, there is no point of order. It is simply a dispute among members.

Hon. Premier, you've got about 25 seconds left.

Hon. Mr. Fentie: Mr. Speaker, it is absolutely unheard of that any government would promote such action in its environment. That's why there is the *Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Act*. That's why there is a federal regulator. That's why there is a very stringent process for any type of mine development. It could even include the Department of Fisheries and Oceans. We respect the member's concern about the matter, but I want to comfort the member that Yukon has many mechanisms in place to ensure that we address the situation properly.

Question re: *Education Act* amendments

Mr. Fairclough: I have mentioned several times in this House the many reports on education and how they strongly recommend a new model of governance. The actual structure is secondary to the fact that it must be a bottom-up model, not the present model where the minister controls all.

What better evidence does the minister need? He saw the people in the gallery there — the students, the parents, the teachers — today. This is what is needed in our education system — a bottom-up approach. The minister agreed with them and the petition, so let's continue this goodwill. Will the minister give a time when he will table an amended *Education Act* that reflects the people's wishes and desire to have a voice in their education system?

Hon. Mr. Rouble: I agree — what better evidence does the member opposite need for a process that started in February of going out and asking Yukoners how they felt about an issue, of consulting with school councils, with the Association of School Administrators, with the First Nation Education Advisory Committee, with First Nation education directors, with parents, with teachers and students and finding out how

they felt about an issue, getting that information in, and looking at the best pedagogical practices around that, looking at the implications on other jurisdictions — and then, within three months, making a decision and sharing that with all Yukoners.

The member opposite just provided an example that shows how our system is working and some of the strengths it does have. It's a system that can be responsive to the needs of individual schools and make changes quickly to address the needs of all students in all Yukon schools.

There are several different mechanisms that already exist in today's Yukon, including school councils, the Association of School Councils, Boards and Committees, the relationship between the government and First Nations, and other vehicles where we can discuss and go through these processes. I shouldn't leave out this Assembly itself, which approves the budget for Education — as we've spent the last day or so going over Education. We have an opportunity to go through the budget line by line and look at allocations.

Mr. Fairclough: What is the minister afraid of? Why didn't he answer the question about when he will table an amended *Education Act*? Why do parents have to take the time from their busy routines to get petitions signed, brought to this Legislature and presented? Why do they have to do that?

There needs to be a new system of governance, a system where all parents can have a forum and decision-making process where decisions impacting their children can be made. That has been the consensus in this territory now for a decade — for a decade, Mr. Speaker. This Yukon Party has a firm position that they do not want Yukoners to have a decision-making voice in the education of their children. Well, Mr. Speaker, this is a time to change it, right now, right today.

Will the minister give the green light to his officials to begin the process of developing the fundamental change in governance? Will he do that?

Hon. Mr. Rouble: I have to remind the Liberal education critic that it wasn't he who brought this issue to the attention of government. He didn't bring the issue of the B.C. exam process to the attention of government. He hasn't been raising it for the last four years, or six years, or even eight years. It was the member next to him who brought the issue forward.

Also, we have a process where we went to work; we said we'd consult with Yukoners. We did. We put forward our timeline and now he's saying I shouldn't acknowledge the hard work the people do with bringing in petitions. Unlike the member opposite, I appreciate when members come forward in this Assembly, when we have a gallery full of people. It shows that people are being involved.

We also have other processes that will involve Yukoners and include them in the decision-making of government. We see the wide variety of those vehicles that we have discussed and referred to on a daily basis in this Assembly. I wish the member opposite would recognize what's happening in today's Yukon and today's education system and reflect it in his questions.

Question re: Yukon Housing Corporation programs

Mr. McRobb: It would have been reasonable to expect sufficient results after asking six questions in this House on the

Yukon Housing Corporation home ownership program. Unfortunately, that's not the way it has turned out. It seems the quantity of questions are directly proportional to the length of time the minister speaks.

Yesterday the minister said, and I quote: "We are not in the mortgage business." Obviously, there's a great wall between the minister and his portfolio. I'll file now a page from the Housing Corporation's own budget that reveals several mortgage programs and objectives, including mortgage financing, home completion, owner-build and an extended mortgage guarantee to boot.

Will the minister apologize for his remarks again, or will he submit his resignation again? Which way will it be this time?

Hon. Mr. Kenyon: It's refreshing to hear the member opposite bringing everything back to personal comments, which I will try to ignore. Although he does have a lot of fun making Great Wall jokes, I give him perfect permission to continue to do that.

The Yukon Housing Corporation strives to improve the overall quality of housing in the Yukon within the funding available to the corporation. This year's budget is comparable to previous years, mains to mains — something the member opposite conveniently doesn't mention.

The maximum mortgage available is \$360,000, and we are helping Yukoners in the home ownership program. We're presently working with 32 home ownership clients in relation to their mortgage financing, and regarding land sales agreements, owners should discuss specific issues with the Yukon Housing Corporation, whom they will find to be very helpful.

Mr. McRobb: You know, Mr. Speaker, this is yet another case where this minister owes an apology, not only to this House, but to all those who are negatively impacted by his comments.

We know the minister has already received at least one correspondence from a concerned citizen who is distressed to hear the minister's denouncement of these Housing Corporation mortgage programs. The minister is now aware of at least one case where a person stands to lose a \$20,000 down payment on a new lot in the Whitehorse Copper subdivision. But that's not all, Mr. Speaker. This person stands to lose another \$20,000 already invested in property improvements. What does the minister intend to do to help Yukoners trapped in this bad situation simply because they believed this government would honour its word?

Hon. Mr. Kenyon: For the member opposite, who continues to be the harbinger of doom and gloom, if we actually look at the home ownership program within the budget — something that the members opposite seem to be not willing to get into and to debate in a timely fashion — in 2009-10, there is \$7,050,000 in the estimates, and in the past — in 2007-08, the actuals were \$6,767,000, for a five-percent increase. The member opposite kind of ignores that part. That breaks down into \$6 million for mortgages, \$50,000 for completion of a project that is in the works, and \$1 million in owner-build. We have a budget — even though the member opposite doesn't really seem to be too keen on debating it — we have a budget

to follow. The program is oversubscribed at the present time, but we will be reviewing that in the future in supplementaries and in future budgets.

Mr. McRobb: What point is there in debating this budget when the minister doesn't even know what is in it? He said there was no mortgage program. Now we are looking for some compassion from this minister. The government's failure to honour its word to provide adequate funds followed by its denouncements of the mortgage loan program —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

Speaker: Order please, on a point of order. Member for Porter Creek North, on a point of order.

Hon. Mr. Kenyon: Accusing a member of not honouring his word does seem to be contrary to Standing Orders.

Speaker's ruling

Speaker: Yes, you're right. Member for Kluane, don't do that.

Mr. McRobb: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll rephrase that to "government not honouring its word", followed by the minister's denouncement of the mortgage loan programs, which has created a lot of financial distress for people in our territory who believed this government would honour its word. Obviously, the minister still does not believe these impacts exist. He should read that correspondence again. It was tabled earlier today. It shows how some people will be out \$40,000.

This government needs to show compassion. It's sitting on a budget surplus of \$150 million. I sense a bailout coming from the Premier. When will the government do the right thing and honour its commitment to provide sufficient funding to these applicants?

Speaker: Thank you. He was about to run out of breath.

Hon. Mr. Kenyon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, it's always refreshing to hear the member opposite recover.

What the member opposite is getting confused about is the fact that the forecast from 2008-09 was \$12,748,000. If he looks at that forecast, which was put into a warrant and into, I believe, the supplementary budget — of course, the member opposite will vote against that — was primarily to help out with the Whitehorse Copper subdivision and the problems with the survey in there.

But when you look at it mains to mains, we're actually up five percent. Now, I do have two comments to make on that.

The Leader of the Liberal Party, I believe, on CHON yesterday, used the allegory of referring to the Premier as "King Midas."

I would remind the member opposite that King Midas turned everything to gold that he touched, so we take that as a high compliment.

But I do have some concerns with the Member for Kluane and the members of the Liberal Party continuing to ask for resignations. Mr. Speaker, even the pages are getting nervous.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

Speaker: On a point of order, Member for Kluane.

Mr. McRobb: Point of order, Mr. Speaker. I request unanimous consent to give the minister more time to respond to that question.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

MOTIONS OTHER THAN GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

Motion No. 799

Deputy Clerk: Motion No. 799, standing in the name of Mr. Nordick.

Speaker: It is moved by the Member for Klondike THAT the House, at its rising, do stand adjourned until Friday, June 12, 2009, when it shall hold a special sitting in Dawson City, Yukon, in the original chambers of the Legislature, to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the first wholly-elected Territorial Council of the Yukon Territory;

THAT the Speaker set the time at which the House shall meet on June 12 and give notice of that time to all Members;

THAT the Speaker cause an Order Paper for the special sitting on June 12 to be produced and distributed to all Members;

THAT this House shall meet prior to June 12 if it appears to the satisfaction of the Speaker, after consultation with the Premier, that the public interest requires that the House meet;

THAT the Speaker give notice that he is so satisfied, and thereupon the House shall meet at the time stated in such notice and shall transact its business as if it had been duly adjourned to that time; and

THAT, if the Speaker is unable to act owing to illness or other causes, the Deputy Speaker shall act in his stead for the purpose of this order.

Mr. Nordick: It gives me great pleasure to speak to this motion. It would also give me great pleasure to hold a special sitting in my community of Dawson City, the original capital of the Yukon. I will give a brief recap of the history of the Yukon, just so members are aware.

The Yukon was one of the first areas in Canada to be settled following the migration of ancestors of First Nation people across the Bering Strait —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Mr. Nordick: I see the members opposite aren't very excited about that. The Member for Vuntut Gwitchin isn't at all interested in the fact that First Nations were one of the first settlers in this territory. Mr. Speaker, I will continue on.

The Yukon was one of the first areas in Canada to be settled following the migration of ancestors of First Nation people across the Bering Strait land bridge from Asia to North America some 4,000 years ago. Language is essential to Yukon First

Nation heritage. I believe that is very important; that's why I'm bringing this forward.

Language is essential to Yukon First Nation heritage. The history and traditions of many Yukon First Nations have been passed down through generations orally by the teachings of elders. Some of the First Nation languages are the Gwich'in — the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin should know that — Hän, Kaska, Tagish, Upper Tanana, Northern and Southern Tutchone and Tlingit.

In 1825, John Franklin became the first European to reach Yukon, then part of Rupert's Land, when he followed the Arctic coastline in search of the Northwest Passage. By 1848, the Hudson's Bay Company had established four trading posts on a traditional First Nation trading route. In 1870, the Government of Canada acquired the territory from the Hudson's Bay Company, and the entire region became known as the North-West Territories. The boundaries of the Yukon were first drawn in 1895, when it became a district of the Northwest Territories.

Because of its remote location and severe climate, Yukon's population remained sparse until the discovery of gold. After gold was discovered at Rabbit Creek, later renamed Bonanza Creek, in 1896, the Klondike became one of the most populated regions in the northwestern part of the continent as thousands of hopeful gold seekers headed north. By 1898-99, Dawson City, the community in which I reside, at the junction of the Klondike and Yukon Rivers, was home to over 40,000 people.

This sudden increase in population during the Klondike Gold Rush prompted the federal government to exert stronger control in the Yukon.

It became a separate territory in 1898, with the passage of the *Yukon Act*. Dawson was chosen as the new territory's capital. In 1953, the capital was moved to Whitehorse, the territory's most populous city and the centre of its economic activity.

Between 1896 and 1903, more than \$95 million in gold was mined from the Klondike region. Dawson's population dropped to about 8,500 by 1911. There is still a strong mining industry in Dawson City and the Klondike. Also, the Klondike is a major tourist attraction. August 17, as members are aware, is Discovery Day, an annual holiday celebrating the anniversary of the initial discovery of gold at Bonanza Creek.

When Yukon became a separate territory, the *Yukon Act* of 1898 provided a Commissioner and a legislative council of six, all appointed by the Government of Canada. In subsequent years, elected officials were included on the council. The first wholly elected council was elected in Dawson City in 1909. For this, we need to celebrate 100 years of wholly elected representatives in this territory.

In 1979, an executive committee was established to assist the territorial Commissioner in the executive function, and elected members of the Executive Committee or Council have progressively assumed greater responsibilities.

With the formal introduction of party politics in 1978, the elected leader of the majority party in the Legislature became known as the Government Leader. When responsible government was established in 1979, the Commissioner no longer

participated in Executive Council. The Government Leader has the authority to determine the size and appointments of the Executive Council paralleling the function of premiers in provinces.

Presently, I am very proud to represent the Klondike on the 100th anniversary of wholly elected representatives in this great territory. I believe that it is important to acknowledge and celebrate the history and the value my community had in the past and still has for the future of Yukon and Canada.

I will close today by quoting a short *Whitehorse Star* newspaper article from July 1909. It read, "*Whitehorse Star*, July 1909. First all-elected Yukon territorial council. Yukon council territorial legislative body now in session."

The *Dawson Daily News* of the evening of July 15 contained the following: "Three o'clock this afternoon marked a time in history of the Yukon Territory. The first all-elective Yukon council assembled at that hour in Dawson with all members present.

"They are Charles Bossuyt and AWH Smith for North Dawson; James William Murphy and George Black for South Dawson; Maxime Landreville and Angus McLeod for Klondike; and Roderick Leander Ashbaugh and Frank McAlpine for Bonanza; Robert Lowe and Willard L. Phelps for Whitehorse.

"The councillors-elect from Whitehorse arrived this morning on the *Selkirk*. Mr. Lowe took quarters at the King Edward, and Mr. Phelps, who is accompanied by his wife, is at the Angelus.

"The members-elect appeared before Commissioner Henderson at noon today, and qualified as councillors by taking the oath of office.

"At the appointed hour this afternoon, the councillors filed into the council chamber and took their seats. Clement Bancroft Burns, territorial secretary, entered at the same time, and was seated at the secretary's desk. After all was quiet, Mr. Burns rose and said: 'Gentlemen of the Council: I have the honour to inform you that I am commanded by the commissioner to request that you do now proceed to the election of a speaker.'

"Maxime Landreville, member from Klondike, then rose and moved that Robert Lowe, member from Whitehorse and senior member of the council, be elected Speaker.

"The motion was duly seconded, and Mr. Lowe was elected and led to the seat. The selection of Mr. Lowe was agreed upon by the Liberal councillors today before the council opened.

"It is understood that Mr. Phelps will be the leader for the government, which duty will involve the presentation of bills favored by the government and the budget and such.

On accepting the seat, Mr. Lowe expressed his thanks to the council for the honor shown him. A short message was received from the Commissioner, stating that an ordinance for the revision of the statutes, and one or two other matters are to be introduced, and that the budget is being prepared.

"A telegram received here (in Whitehorse) later than the above told of the unanimous election of Mr. Phelps as leader of the party in the territorial assembly.

"A Note on the Previous Council.

“Previously the Council was composed of eleven men; five elected by the people of the north, five appointed by the federal government, with the Commissioner making up the eleventh.

“Until this point the council had been convened by the Commissioner annually, sitting for a week to ten days; now there were to be twice-yearly sessions.

“Regardless of the fact that the Council was now wholly elected, the Yukon did not have responsible government.

“The Commissioner was not responsible to the Council, they could draft all legislation, but the Commissioner held the power of approval or referral of this legislation to the Governor in Council.

“Still, a wholly elected council was seen by the people of the north as a great step forward. Now, at last, the council members at least drafting the legislation truly represented the population.”

Mr. Speaker, I spoke very briefly on this motion. I know the members opposite are a little upset that I took a little bit of time to relive some of the history in the territory but — I see members shaking their heads no — well, there were a few, but we have to know what has taken place in the past. This territory has grown dramatically since the Gold Rush of 1898 and I appreciate unanimous consent to hold this special sitting in Dawson City on June 12, which will recognize that it was a hundred years ago that the first wholly elected government representatives were elected in this territory.

Mr. Mitchell: I thank the Member for Klondike for his motion. Of course the Official Opposition will be supporting this motion and I’m pretty certain the Member for Klondike will receive the unanimous support that he’s seeking.

The sitting in Dawson City will commemorate a very special event in our history: the 100th anniversary of the first wholly elected territorial council of the Yukon Territory, the forerunner of the current Legislative Assembly. Of course, as you know, Mr. Speaker, the history of the Yukon goes back long before then, perhaps as long as 30,000 years. Until 1839, the entire population of the Yukon was made up of First Nation people.

The arrival of European newcomers, about 150 years ago, imposed dramatic changes on the land and its people in a relatively short period of time. First came European explorers, and then the fur traders arrived and began setting up trading posts. They were followed by Catholic and Protestant missionaries.

At the peak of the Klondike Gold Rush in 1898, the Parliament of Canada passed the *Yukon Territory Act*, 1898, and established Yukon as a separate geographical and political entity within the Canadian federation. This act established a Yukon government, made up of a Commissioner and a Territorial Council of four, all appointed by the Government of Canada.

By 1909, the Territorial Council was an entirely elected body of 10. One hundred years later, we are now a body of 18, soon to be 19. We in the Official Opposition, the Liberal caucus, are looking forward to marking this historic anniversary later this summer — or this spring, technically — in Dawson.

Mr. Cardiff: I’ll be brief. On behalf of the NDP caucus, we will support this motion and we look forward, as well, to being in Dawson City to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the first wholly elected territorial council of the Yukon Territory. Much has been said about the history of the Yukon and the evolution of democratic government here in the Yukon. I think that it’s fitting to go back to Dawson to where the first wholly elected territorial council sat to celebrate that fact and to celebrate the fact that we are governed democratically here in the Yukon. So we will support the motion.

Mr. Edzerza: I thank the Member for Klondike for bringing this motion forward. However, contrary to what the Member for Klondike put on record about First Nations immigrating across the Bering Strait, it’s a very controversial issue with regard to First Nations. They do not believe this theory and a large number actually take offence to this being mentioned as factual. I thought I would like to put that on record.

Over the years, I know First Nations have witnessed many changes to the environment and to the country in which they resided for thousands of years.

We strongly believe we also had our own forms of government, but with the changes that came, it’s good to note that we do have some First Nations present in the Legislative Assembly today. I do look forward to going to Dawson; in fact, I’ve already booked my room.

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

Mr. Nordick: I’m just going to end today by thanking all members for unanimously supporting this motion. I look forward to members opposite booking more rooms, not just for this special sitting in my community, but throughout the summer. So thank you.

Speaker: Are you prepared for the question?

Some Hon. Members: Division.

Division

Speaker: Division has been called.

Bells

Speaker: Madam Deputy Clerk, please poll the House.

Hon. Mr. Fentie: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Cathers: Agree.

Hon. Ms. Taylor: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Kenyon: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Rouble: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Lang: Agree.

Hon. Ms. Horne: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Hart: Agree.

Mr. Nordick: Agree.

Mr. Mitchell: Agree.

Mr. McRobb: Agree.

Mr. Elias: Agree.

Mr. Fairclough: Agree.

Mr. Inverarity: Agree.

Mr. Cardiff: Agree.

Mr. Edzerza: Agree.

Deputy Clerk: Mr. Speaker, the results are 16 yeas, nil nays.

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

Motion No. 799 agreed to

Unanimous consent re not calling Motion No. 800 for debate

Hon. Mr. Cathers: Mr. Speaker, in consultation with and with the approval of the Member for Klondike, I request unanimous consent of the House not to call Motion No. 800, standing in the name of the Member for Klondike today.

Speaker: Is there unanimous consent not to call Motion No. 800, standing in the name of the Member for Klondike for debate today?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Speaker: There is unanimous consent.

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

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

Motion agreed to

Speaker leaves the Chair

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Chair (Mr. Nordick): Order please. Committee of the Whole will now come to order. The matter before the Committee is Bill No. 65, *Act to Amend the Yukon Advisory Council on Women's Issues Act*.

Do members wish a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

Chair: I will now call Committee of the Whole to order.

Bill No. 65 — Act to Amend the Yukon Advisory Council on Women's Issues Act

Chair: The matter before Committee is Bill No. 65, *Act to Amend the Yukon Advisory Council on Women's Issues Act*. Ms. Horne?

Hon. Ms. Horne: Before moving into clause-by-clause review of this bill, I would like to take a few minutes to address questions raised by members opposite after second reading.

With regard to the use of the words "at pleasure" in the proposed changes, this language is also used in the existing legislation, and is not a change. "At pleasure" simply means

that members are appointed by Cabinet for a specified term and are not necessarily reappointed.

What is new is that the proposed section 6(1) indicates that no member's term may exceed three years. While three years is the maximum time period of each term, some members could also be appointed for shorter terms. This will stagger the eight YACWI members' terms so that they don't all expire at the same time. Section 6(1) of this bill will not permit any member to be appointed for more than three years at a time.

Mr. Chair, YACWI has eight members so that it can be fully representative of Yukon women. However, there are times when some members cannot attend a meeting, or there are vacancies on the council. Rather than having language in the legislation that prohibits YACWI's ability to serve its important role due to vacancies, the proposed section 6(2) permits YACWI to continue to do so. I also want to point out that this language already exists in the YACWI act — under current section 6(3).

The act does not provide a threshold or establish how many members must be appointed in order for YACWI to perform its role. But section 7(3) of the legislation does provide YACWI with the authority to make rules governing its own proceedings.

I can confirm that YACWI has addressed quorum in its rules and determined that quorum is 50 percent plus one, or a majority of council members. YACWI also recognizes that the chair of the council must be able to respond to issues that arise between council meetings. If an issue has not been discussed by council, and no previous policy has been established, the chair must try to consult with at least two members, one of whom must be a rural member. The chair is accountable to all council members.

Another member questioned if the proposed amendments will result in members sitting on YACWI for very long periods of time, such as 16 years. Appointments to YACWI are at the discretion of Cabinet. When considering any appointment, including a reappointment, the overall composition of the council is always considered. A balance of experienced and new members will always be preferred. Vacancies on any board or council are problematic and this is exactly why these amendments are necessary. They will provide greater ability for appointment flexibility to ensure YACWI can continue its work.

Chair: Is there any further debate?

Mr. Elias: It is a pleasure to rise to discuss Bill No. 65. With regard to the Liberal caucus, we are in support of this. It is a relatively small amendment to promote the continuity of board members, so of course we will support this amendment and thank you very much to YACWI for your good work. We will be supporting this bill.

Chair: Is there any further general debate?

Seeing none, we will proceed clause by clause in Bill No. 65.

On Clause 1

Clause 1 agreed to

On Clause 2

Clause 2 agreed to

On Title

Title agreed to

Hon. Ms. Horne: I move that Bill No. 65, *Act to Amend the Yukon Advisory Council on Women's Issues Act*, be reported without amendment.

Chair: It has been moved by Ms. Horne that Bill No 65, *Act to Amend the Yukon Advisory Council on Women's Issues Act*, be reported without amendment.

Motion agreed to

Bill No. 64 — Act to Amend the Legislative Assembly Retirement Allowances Act, 2007

Chair: Committee of the Whole will now proceed with Bill No. 64.

Hon. Mr. Fentie: As was noted during second reading, the *Legislative Assembly Retirement Allowances Act, 2007* sets out a plan for the provision of benefits to members and former members of the Legislative Assembly and their surviving spouses, children and beneficiaries.

The current act makes limited provision for the division of benefits and the breakdown of the marriage or other conjugal relationships of a member or former member. Under the current act, if a written separation agreement or a court order assigns all or a portion of the benefit to a spouse, the spouse either receives the equivalent of the benefit as a lump sum or the spouse may transfer the equivalent of the benefit to another registered plan. The splitting of a pension between spouses is not currently permitted.

The splitting of a pension between spouses is not currently permitted. These amendments will allow the spouse to choose to instead receive the benefit as a periodic allowance under the plan. The amendments have the effect of allowing the spouse to be a participant in the plan for this purpose.

The Members' Services Board, which is the body responsible under the act for the administration of the plan, approved these policy changes in November of 2008. The act also has some amendments that are simple housekeeping changes to the legislation.

With those comments, I'll pass things over to the members opposite.

Mr. Mitchell: I thank the Premier for his introductory remarks and explanation, and I thank the officials who worked on drafting this act. I'll be brief. As we said at second reading, we will be supporting this act. Again, I'll repeat that this act really speaks to fairness and dignity. It's only right that former spouses of members or former members receive whatever monies they may be entitled to by their agreements without having any unnecessary delays or confusion about those amounts and without having to be dependent on the member or former member to provide the funds.

I do want to note that one former member met privately, I think, with all the caucuses, to make the case for this legislation, and he made the point that, in his mind — he referred to "we", because he said it was "my wife and I" — "we" — who served in the Assembly, and he wanted to make sure that she was treated fairly. So again, I thank the officials for resolving these issues, and we will be supporting it.

Hon. Mr. Fentie: I thank the members opposite for their comments and the Members' Services Board for their attention to this matter. I would request unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole that Bill No. 64, its clauses and title, be deemed read and agreed to.

Unanimous consent re deeming all clauses and title of Bill No. 64 read and agreed to

Chair: Mr. Fentie has requested the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all clauses and the title of Bill No. 64, *Act to Amend the Legislative Assembly Retirement Allowances Act, 2007*, read and agreed to. Is there unanimous consent?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Chair: There is unanimous consent.

Clauses 1 to 16 agreed to

On Title

Title agreed to

Hon. Mr. Fentie: Mr. Chair, I move that Bill No. 64, entitled *Act to Amend the Legislative Assembly Retirement Allowances Act, 2007*, be reported without amendment.

Chair: It has been moved by Mr. Fentie that Bill No. 64, entitled *Act to Amend the Legislative Assembly Retirement Allowances Act, 2007*, be reported without amendment.

Motion agreed to

Chair: Committee of the Whole will now continue with Bill No. 15, *First Appropriation Act, 2009-10*, Department of Education.

Do members wish a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Chair: Committee of the Whole will recess for 10 minutes.

Recess

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

Bill No. 15 — First Appropriation Act, 2009-10 — continued

Department of Education — continued

Chair: The matter before the Committee is Bill No. 15, entitled *First Appropriation Act, 2009-10*, Department of Education.

Mr. Cardiff: I'd like to pick up where we left off yesterday. I brought to the minister's attention the fact that the Department of Education budget, as a percentage or as a proportion of the whole budget of the Yukon, falls behind. I have provided him that information. I also asked him a question about how thrilled he is to be — and what a great feeling it is to be — opening schools and suggested that he might want to think about opening one in the near future in Burwash Landing.

Where we left off was talking about the minister's penchant for partnerships. Partnerships are a good thing, and there are a lot of references to partnerships. In fact the *Education Act* is entitled — the original document, at any rate — was titled "Partners in Education". The document, the act, provided a

vision for education into the future, and part of that vision was the sharing of responsibilities and the sharing of decision-making, the sharing of making decisions about resources that are put into the education system in communities. So it allowed for school committees, it allowed for school councils, and it allowed for school boards.

Where I left off yesterday was the fact that currently there is one school board. There are a number of First Nations that have been looking at a drawdown of responsibilities in the field of education. There are others that are talking about maybe using the school board model as a way to achieve more responsibility in the area of education.

Part of that comes through frustration, I guess, on the part of First Nations to be able to resolve matters with the Yukon government. The Yukon government is a partner at the table when it comes to discussing the drawdown of responsibilities under section 17 of the final agreements. But First Nations have been frustrated when they've tried to participate in those negotiations.

One of the areas that I see that could be one avenue for the minister to explore more sharing of responsibility and more sharing of power is in the area of school boards. School boards allow for more control, I guess, at a local level and more decision-making. I can give the minister some examples, if he'd like, of those responsibilities. The responsibilities of the board are that they shall select principals and teachers for hiring; that they do review and modify the school plan; that they do provide educational programs, including locally developed courses for students; and they do receive, by grant or contribution, such funds as are approved by the minister, and they have control over those funds to provide for the needs of their community.

I can see the minister is frustrated by this line of questioning, but the object is to grant communities more autonomy. Where the minister is going is through committees that provide advice, but the minister doesn't necessarily always listen to the advice, and that's just the nature of the system that we're in, I guess. Communities want to be more in control of their destinies, and that's what self-government is all about — to be more in control of your destiny and the things that affect your community.

We have different mixes in different communities. One fix for one community isn't necessarily going to be the solution in another community, and I'll admit that. But I think what we need to do is to be bold and to take steps that allow for communities and First Nations to have more control and authority over the provision of education for their children. As I said yesterday about school councils, some of the people who have been on school councils before have talked about their frustration, about the fact that they felt they lacked the authority, and that they didn't feel their input was necessarily valued and listened to.

The minister is making more sticky notes. I hope he's got room on his desk for them all.

If the minister would like to answer the question that I've posed — and I understand his frustration that he wants to answer the question. We will have a discussion today about

school boards and about the need to provide more resources for the Department of Education.

Hon. Mr. Rouble: Yes, I look forward to the debate today on the Department of Education's budget. That is, I believe, the matter before Committee as it sits right now.

The member in his question today and yesterday raised a number of different issues. Yes, I have written down some notes. I will try to address the many issues that have come forward.

It has been a fairly wide-ranging introductory question, looking at the issues of governance of the construction of schools, of financing and some of the other statistics related to education. I'll try to address all of them. I'm sure there are some specific questions that the member has, and sometimes it's easier to debate with members in here when we do stick to one theme, rather than having a whole shopping list of issues.

It has been my observation in here that when I'm provided with: "Please comment on these 20 things," if I provide comments on 19 of them, I'm then told, "You didn't answer the question."

So I'll try to start at the beginning. The member has found a statistic related to education and has claimed that it demonstrates that this government isn't as committed to education as in other jurisdictions. I would vehemently disagree with the member opposite on that assertion. I do not agree with that statement at all.

Mr. Chair, one of the most telling indicators that I have for our system is that the total budget for the Department of Education this year is over \$128 million.

Mr. Chair, that's \$128 million for the 5,000 students we have in the public school system and for the folks we have in the advanced education and labour market initiatives and other areas the government is responsible for. That's \$128 million for 5,000 students in our public school system. We have, by far, the lowest student/teacher ratio in Canada. We have the third-highest paid teachers in Canada and, when we look at the per capita funding for public schools, we have per capita funding of about \$17,000 per student. In other parts of Canada, that's closer to \$11,000 per student. These are significant factors that demonstrate the Government of Yukon's commitment to education.

We see the number of students in our public school system declining and, at the same time, we see the number of teachers and education assistants increasing. We see other jurisdictions in Canada laying off teachers, and we are certainly not looking at making those kinds of cuts or changes here in the Yukon.

The member yesterday provided me with this summary of looking at shares of consolidated provincial, territorial and local government spending allocated to elementary and secondary education. The member opposite is saying post secondary? No, it's shares of consolidated provincial, territorial and local government spending allocated to elementary, secondary education in 2006-07. This is produced by the CTF Economic and Member Services Note, September 2007, page 4. On page 5 it includes the measures of educational need, financial ability, spending and effort for elementary and secondary education, selected years, estimates for selected years, continued.

Now, this is the member opposite providing me with the information where it puts in, under the category of “relative effort to support of education”, total expenditures per FTE student in public elementary and secondary schools. The Canadian average is \$9,040. In Yukon, it’s \$15,837. Mr. Chair, that’s greater than 50 percent more than the average that’s being spent in the rest of Canada.

The total expenditures per FTE student in public elementary and secondary schools as a share of GDP per capita? Well, Mr. Chair, this statistic indicates that the average in Canada is 21.7 percent; in Yukon, it’s 34.3 — again a 50-percent increase over the expenditures in other jurisdictions.

Now let’s take a look at the next one, the total expenditures in public elementary and secondary schools per capita. So I would expect that this is taking all the expenditures that are spent on education and dividing it by the total population. Well, in the rest of Canada, it’s \$1,392, but Yukon spends more than double that — \$2,702 per person.

As I said, Mr. Chair, \$128 million spent on education, including post-secondary, for — 37,000 people in the territory, on the outside?

If the member wants to take a look at another statistic, he can look at the total amount of expenditure on education as a percentage of GDP. That’s another indicator that’s used in other jurisdictions and internationally. The average in Canada in different jurisdictions on education spending as a percentage of GDP is 6.4 percent. In Yukon, which is a growing GDP, which experienced the second-largest growth in GDP in all of Canada where this year it was up five percent — we spent over 10.4 percent of GDP on education. These are clear indicators of the government’s commitment to education.

Yes, we recognize that there are certainly other cost drivers in other budget departments. There are jails to build, hospitals to build and other significant capital projects. We have an awful lot of highway space in our territory. We are a territory that’s bigger than P.E.I., so we can expect that when we do spend money to build a hospital, it will skew those results. We see the money in the budget — \$400,000 this year — to start on the F.H. Collins replacement. We know that when that capital project goes through in the next two and three years, it will have a huge amount of capital associated with it and will again skew the statistics.

We’re a small jurisdiction and when we do build a school, it doesn’t happen every year — and I wouldn’t expect a school to be needed to be built every year. Schools should have a significant lifetime to them. Schools should not be disposable buildings that get rebuilt every 10 years. That doesn’t make any kind of conservative financial sense.

We do recognize that there are going to be cost-drivers in other departments that require expenditures. Yes, if we make an expenditure to look at increasing our capacity for hydroelectric energy production, because that increases the overall budget, it will have an impact on the piece of the pie or the share that’s allocated toward education.

But putting together a territorial budget is more than creating a pie chart and saying, we’re going to put this much for each year, and it’s never going to change, regardless of the

needs in other areas, and it’s never going to change if our revenues come in. The Government of Yukon has significant agreements with the federal government where we’ve received funding and have a responsibility to fulfill certain projects for that.

There are significant commitments for existing surplus to fund projects that we are committed to doing. That’s the way budgeting works. We take a look at what are the needs of the day, what are the issues that we can accomplish, what are we going to do in the median term? Putting together a territorial budget is more than creating a pie chart and having it apply to each and every situation. A considerable amount of work goes into it — more than just doing that year after year. If that were the case, Mr. Chair, all we would do is come in here and have a meeting with the Finance minister and ask, “Do you agree that it should be 12 percent for this department or 12.2 percent?” Then, we’d be gone. No, we don’t. We take a look at all the individual projects. We take a look at the needs we have in our communities, and we have a look at the programs that we’re going to put in place. We put forward a budget, and we go through it line by line to discuss the allocation.

Now, Mr. Chair, would I like to see more money in the Education budget? Of course, I would. Do I work with all of my colleagues to allocate additional resources for education? Of course I do.

Every minister in government looks at addressing the needs that he or she has in his or her department. That’s our responsibility. And then collectively we make decisions and present the budget, and that is tabled here in the Assembly and we go through it line by line and explain each and every expenditure to members opposite, should they wish to hear about it.

The member opposite also talked about this government building one school. Well, the member opposite also has to remember the creation of the Individual Learning Centre, which I believe has over 100 students attending it right now. That’s an initiative I support and endorse, and one that we’re looking at expanding into other communities so that we can apply that type of model to help other learners. The member opposite hasn’t looked at the School of Visual Arts that was created in Dawson City. Albeit, that’s a post-secondary institution, but that is just further demonstration of this government’s commitment to education, to post-secondary education, to arts and culture and to the expansion and diversification of our economy. So those are additional steps that are going on.

The member opposite discussed the situation with the Kluane Lake School, and talked about building a school in Burwash Landing.

Now I do have to remind the member opposite that school buses are a reality not only here in the Yukon, but also across Canada. We do have a school that is a very good institution. I have visited it numerous times and talked to the teacher and both of the students who attend the school. I have talked to the students — the child in grade 1 and the child in grade 4 — and they are very happy with the school. They have recently even sent me some correspondence talking about the repairs that were made there and how happy they are.

Now, yes, we do have some other kindergarten students who also attend the school, but I'm sure the member opposite knows in his own riding of Mount Lorne of school bus stops that pick up more kids than the entire enrollment at this one school. The Member for Vuntut Gwitchin says the enrollment will go up if you have a new school. Well, yes, I'm sure we could make that argument in every constituency in every riding in the territory. We do have a situation where we have thousands of students each day riding school buses and thousands of students —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Hon. Mr. Rouble: I'm sorry? If the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin would like to talk to me further about having a full-size, 54-passenger school bus for his community, I would encourage him to rise later in debate and we can discuss that.

We do recognize that we have needs throughout the territory and that we have to utilize our resources efficiently and effectively. That's part of managing the entire education system. This government is working with the Kluane First Nation. I would encourage the member opposite to discuss the issue of the elders and youth centre with the minister responsible for Community Services. That's where this project lies. I'm sure he can find out more information about that.

The member opposite talked about the issue of school boards. Yes, Mr. Chair, under our current act, should the community wish to see a school board in place, there is a process to do that.

The government would certainly honour the process. It's in the act, it's a system that we are prepared to address. It was anticipated when the act was first tabled that we would see school committees start up and become school councils and then, eventually, once they did a full weighting of the pros and cons of the issue, looking at the movement on to become a school board. And if and when that does occur, the Government of Yukon Department of Education certainly will go to work with the school board.

Now, I do appreciate that the member has raised that certain members of school councils in the past have become frustrated with the school council and I can appreciate that. I've heard those same concerns. I also appreciate the powers and responsibilities and duties that are ascribed to our school councils, and they're identified in the *Education Act*. I believe that we, in the Department of Education, have a responsibility to work with the school councils to provide them with training, capacity, information and assistance, so they can fully and completely carry out their duties as a school council and become involved in their school.

Now, it is very interesting to note too that different school councils approach their roles differently. There are some that become very actively involved. I have had some that have come in and made PowerPoint presentations and put ideas together and want to be very involved. Other school councils, unfortunately, I have never heard from. In their community, they use the school council to perform what they want to do, which isn't better or worse, it's just different. So we continue to work with all of them.

We've all heard the adage of the squeaky wheel gets the grease, but I believe, as Minister of Education, that I have a responsibility to respond to the needs of the communities and to provide equitable resources and not just to respond to a squeaky wheel-type of issue. Rather, I have to dig in deeper to identify the issues and concerns throughout our different schools and to provide an allocation of resources fairly to all communities, and that's what we will continue to do.

Now, Mr. Chair, there are some school councils that do want to get very involved, and we certainly appreciate that, and other places where we do have to go to work. The Member for Vuntut Gwitchin will recognize that a year ago, when we had an opportunity to find a principal, we did have to go and create a new school council to get members from the community to be involved in that process. So we will certainly try to breathe more life into the *Education Act*, and to recognize the role and responsibility of school councils, to honour their input and their commitment and the dedication of the people who sit on those committees, and work with them to help them influence the changes that they want to see in their school.

Mr. Cardiff: Mr. Chair, I'm not sure where to start. Maybe we'll start where I started yesterday, which was the Burwash school, and the project that's in Community Services.

The minister likes to talk about partnerships — the Department of Education striking a partnership with the First Nation and the Department of Community Services to see the facility deliver, in Burwash, education for the children who live in Burwash.

That would make sense to me. That's what I have heard to be the request from the community. It seems like a pretty simple solution, and if the minister wanted to create a partnership there, I am sure that the Minister of Community Services and the First Nation would be more than willing to take the minister up on that.

I appreciate the minister's analysis of the documents that I provided, and I could see that. The minister likes to roll in the \$120 million. Almost \$30 million of that is for post-secondary education — advanced education at Yukon College. I understand that that is not the way that budgets are created. It's on page 7-4 of the main budget. It shows almost \$19 million for Yukon College and \$8.5 million for advanced education.

What I'm looking at is compared to other jurisdictions. I recognize here in the Yukon, the need for transportation infrastructure, power generation infrastructure, provision of health care services and the other pressures that are put on the budget. But there are just as many pressures put on the Education budget with the education reform project and the New Horizons implementation — so to speak — of some of the recommendations of the education reform project. There are some new initiatives; they require resources.

There are capacity issues. I heard yesterday morning about capacity issues within the education system, within communities, and within First Nation governments. We need to be more supportive of our communities to ensure that they can fully participate in some of these processes and on some of these committees that the minister likes to talk about as partnerships.

That's why I'm suggesting that we may want to look at putting more resources in some of these areas.

We're winding down to the end of the sitting here, and there is a lot of pressure, I suppose, to get through some of these departments, so I'd like to ask the minister some other questions in some other areas.

We talked earlier in motion debate about one of the projects. I was interesting in seeing whether or not the government would also be willing to expand the Whole Child project to other schools or to rural Yukon. I'm wondering whether or not the minister would consider doing that.

Hon. Mr. Rouble: The member opposite, in addition to asking the question about the Whole Child project, also talked about increasing capacity. We're certainly working on that in the Department of Education. The member has heard me talk about the leadership development programs, the other professional development programs; he's heard me talk about the master of education and the YNTEP program for teacher training; we're also working with our partner, the Council of Yukon First Nations, and the self-governing First Nation specific education directors, and working with them through the First Nation Education Advisory Committee to build capacity in those areas.

This year we'll provide \$1.77 million in funding to support the First Nations programs and partnerships unit of the Department of Education. This unit works in partnership with the Yukon First Nation curriculum working group. This year we're continuing funding to the First Nation elders in the school program for \$50,000; and to develop and expand First Nation curriculum and resources, including First Voices, we have committed \$401,000 this year.

Additionally, there are other steps, such as the creation of the First Nations programs and partnerships handbook that we're taking to increase capacity and increase the knowledge in all these areas. So these are concrete steps that we are taking on a regular basis.

The department, through the First Nations programs and partnerships unit, is addressing these issues on a daily basis, and when we meet with our FNEAC, First Nation Education Advisory Committee, on a regular basis, we continue to address those.

As well, we're working very strongly, as I'm sure the member heard yesterday, with the Council of Yukon First Nations. The member, I believe, was informed yesterday that the Council of Yukon First Nations is doing some restructuring, so in part we are working with them and their schedule so that they can address some of their internal concerns while we work together to make the process better for all Yukoners.

We're continuing to work with school councils, with additional information for them. There was another school council territory-wide meeting that was just held a month ago. As well, we had an update on the New Horizons program two months ago to bring people together to inform them of different initiatives that are going on, and to inform them of ways that they can be involved in this process. We are trying to be as engaging as we can to provide additional information where people want it, and also to honour their input.

The Department of Education has just gone through a process now where, last January, it was the F.H. Collins School Council that sent me a letter requesting that we look at the B.C. provincial exam policy. We responded to them. They raised the issue that it was a complex issue that had both pros and cons to it; that they wanted to see a clear statement of the policy, and they also wanted to see a more engaging process to take a look at whether the policy should or should not be changed.

We immediately went to work on that. That was a letter that we received in January and, by February, we had started a process to meet with the Association of School Councils, Board and Committees, all of our partners in education — or as many as we could — as well as the public, utilizing technology to open the input from across the territory so that we could take a look at policy.

We were able to provide information to people, so that they could give us their thoughts and opinions. We received that and we've changed the policy. I think that speaks volumes about how responsive and how engaging the Department of Education is.

Now, we were criticized by some, including the Liberal Party, of not just making the decision unilaterally at the beginning. I believe the Liberal Party even put forward a motion saying to just make all the exams optional, but we went to work with our partners. We engaged with them, provided information, heard both sides of the argument, established a set of criteria to look at how to evaluate the different solutions and found one that's going to work the best for Yukoners. That speaks volumes about how this government is engaging with all Yukoners and involving them in decision-making. Really, that's what governance is — providing information to the people who are affected, listening to their input and having it affect the decision.

Now we have a process where we, as the Legislative Assembly responsible for the budget for the entire population of the Yukon, are going through it line by line, in order to address the concerns.

The member also talked about the whole child program. This is a very interesting, neat and worthwhile program. It is very engaging for the community. It involves different people from the community working and using the school and all of its resources. Really, I would encourage all school councils or all people in the community who are interested in seeing this program expand to come forward, either at a school council meeting — that's probably the best vehicle to use for expanding some of these programs. We can put them in touch with people who have more information about the whole child program and what it does and its benefits, and we can do what we can to help support its growth in other Yukon communities. It does rely very heavily on volunteers as well. But, frankly, that's part of being involved in the community — getting involved with young people and bringing the whole community together.

A school is a great place to use as a focal point for bringing people together, whether it's to have a community dinner — for example, when the schools have their bison feasts. I'm not sure if the member opposite has had an opportunity to go to one of the schools during the bison feast, but we have many

different schools throughout the territory that do go on the bison hunts and then bring the meat back to the school, and then they have a feast for their community.

It's a great opportunity not only for on-the-land experiential learning, but also a great opportunity to develop additional skills in our students and to reinforce with them the need to share and give back to your community. It also serves the purpose of bringing the whole community into the school, so they can actually see what's going in and be part of the school and its environment.

I celebrate what Whitehorse Elementary and Elijah Smith schools and school councils do with their programs. If other schools are interested, we'll certainly help to facilitate that process. They have other ideas for other programs.

I appreciate the Whole Child project is one type of program that's offered, but if there are others that people want to look at, that's the reason why we created the innovators in education fund, so that school councils can say, "Hey, we have an idea we'd like to look at. Can we get some funds to take a look at it?"

That's why we've allocated resources in the budget — to provide those resources to school councils to build the capacity so that they can take a look at those neat ideas. I trust that that answers the member's questions. If I didn't quite answer them fully, I'm sure he'll let me know.

Mr. Cardiff: Mr. Chair, I'd like to ask the minister another question about programming, and hopefully we can try to move through this a little bit faster. The minister mentioned earlier, and I thank him for providing the information about the Individual Learning Centre and looking at expanding that model into other communities. I think that's a positive step forward, and I think that communities will be interested in doing that — some communities will, at any rate. One of the program objectives in public schools talks about providing tools and resources to support curriculum delivery, including environmental, experiential and cultural programs, and as well it talks about providing for the development of locally and culturally relevant courses of study. So, the question is basically whether or not the department is looking at — with school councils and communities — expanding experiential programs into rural Yukon.

Without trying to get into too philosophical a discussion here about this, part of the idea from my perspective is that it's not so much about teaching children specific things. It's about encouraging them to learn how to learn. Experiential learning is one of the tools that we can use to do that, especially if it's done in a culturally relevant way that is locally based. I think there is a lot of value in that. I think there is a desire to do that. I'm going to leave it there. I have another question about experiential programming, but I'll leave it for my next question.

Hon. Mr. Rouble: Yes, I agree with the member opposite. Yukon's *Education Act* says that, in part, the purpose of the education system is "to work in co-operation with parents to develop the whole child including the intellectual, physical, social, emotional, cultural, and aesthetic potential of all students to the extent of their abilities so that they may become

productive, responsible, and self-reliant members of society." We certainly have a responsibility to do that.

There is a focus, especially in the early years, on building the literacy and numeracy skills. We do spend a lot of time teaching children how to read. There is a lot of time spent teaching students to learn to read, so that later on in their scholastic career, they can read to learn.

We do recognize that there are different learning styles, different learning techniques, and different styles of teaching that relate to this. We appreciate that different children learn in different ways. Some are auditory, some are physical, some are experiential, and some are kinesthetic learners. There is a whole art and science of the pedagogy of teaching children. Students do respond to different learning techniques and teaching techniques.

We appreciate that experiential education of teaching children by doing and involving and engaging them is an important and valid style of educating. Experiential learning isn't just something that happens in specific experiential programs. It just doesn't have to be in an ACES program or a MAD program. But the experiential style of teaching can be done in the classroom. I agree with the member opposite. It does teach people to learn how to learn, and to explore on their own and to find out different information. We see that in the different programs and projects students do. For example, I'm not sure if the member opposite had a chance to see the projects at the Heritage Fair that was held recently, but our different schools have a heritage fair within their own school and then there is a larger one held here in Whitehorse. The Minister of Tourism and Culture and I were at it a week ago, I believe. It's a case where students identify a topic that is important to them — something that has to do with heritage, culture or history — and they go and write a project about that. They then find ways of communicating that information to other people.

We have other experiential education programs. I mentioned the bison hunt earlier, and that's an excellent example of an experiential program. Another one that I can think of off the top of my head is the bridge building competition that is done in association with the innovators in the schools program from Yukon College and the Association of Professional Engineers here in the territory, where students build bridges out of Pop-sicle sticks.

Through that process — that experimental process — they learn about compression, tension and other aspects in engineering, and they learn about some construction methods. But, even more than that, they learn about teamwork — working in a group — and that sharing is so important. They also then write a report about their bridge, which demonstrates their comprehension skills and their literacy skills.

It's something that encourages them to explore, to experiment and to be creative in their thinking. Really, those are some of the skills that we want to develop. Yes, in our education system it is very important to have a mastery of certain subjects. We do expect students to have a mastery and knowledge about certain things, but even more than that, we expect our students to gain competencies in critical thinking, in comprehension, in communication, in independent work and team-

work, and in other facets of how they will interact with others. Yes, they can learn a lot of that through projects in the classroom. They can learn that with sports in the gym or on the sports field. They can learn that in their arts classes or they can learn that outside of the classroom. I have said it before: learning occurs between the ears, even if you are not sitting in your chair.

Last spring, I had the opportunity to go to Elijah Smith Elementary School and I met with some of the students there. They had done experiential programs just by taking a walk in the bush around the school. Again, it was a way of engaging the students in the classroom in experiential learning. So we're trying to support that in our schools by providing professional development for teachers, so that they can learn about these different teaching styles. As well, through providing resources in order to assist schools with funding some of these programs, all schools receive experiential funding each year.

In this year's budget, there is \$385,000 available for schools and I encourage all of them to take advantage of these resources and to use them to support initiatives in their schools, because it's a pretty neat way of learning. It's that sneaky way of learning where sometimes the students haven't realized how much they've learned. I think the member opposite realizes this, because he and I were at the recent Skills Canada competition. We're engaging with other partners in education. We're working very closely with Skills Canada Yukon and all the other partners that they bring to the table to engage students, to provide them with other areas they're interested in learning about.

The member opposite knows full well, because he has gone and talked to all the students and helped them with their welding projects. He has been involved with the Young Women Exploring Trades, which is another excellent initiative in the area of experiential education. We're certainly doing a lot with these types of programs and allocating resources.

I believe in experiential learning. When I had experiences as a teacher in a past career, I found them to be a very beneficial tool to use. I remember as a student I certainly appreciated learning by doing, rather than learning by reading another book. That isn't to say that literacy and learning how to gain and comprehend information from a book isn't important, because we all know we practice that every day, even by reading the budget book. But we do gain a lot from having discussions about it and by doing it and by visiting with other people, which is what experiential education is all about.

I hope that has answered the member opposite's question.

Mr. Cardiff: I have \$385,000 for experiential initiatives in all schools. I'm going to pose the question a little differently. There are experiential programs at several schools, specifically at Wood Street Centre school. There's the music, art and drama program, there's ACES, there's OPES, there are some other experiential programs.

I'm going to roll another question into this. There's an experiential program — and the minister and I both attended the start-up of that program — at l'École Émilie Tremblay. It's my understanding that that experiential program was a pilot project, that it was a two-year pilot project, and that it will be un-

dergoing an evaluation, but there are no funds to continue that project, is my understanding.

The question that I'd like to ask the minister, though, is around how much it costs — in the budget, how much money is in this budget — for experiential programs like OPES, like MAD, like ACES. And the other thing I'd like to know is how many — I'd like to know some of the statistics on the experiential programs that are done at Wood Street. How many students apply? How many students are accepted and what percentage of those students come from rural Yukon?

The purpose of the question is exactly where I was trying to go with the question I asked previous to this — and got a list of experiential learning experiences that are available to students. When will experiential programming like MAD or ACES be expanded into the communities? Is there an opportunity for that to happen if it's desired by a community? There are a handful of questions and we've got seven minutes until the break.

Hon. Mr. Rouble: I appreciate the member opposite's question. I'll just go back to the Skills Canada event that the member opposite and I attended, where we did see booths put together by students from Watson Lake and from Ross River. I believe during that time the students from Ross River — please correct me if I'm wrong — were the winners of the video project for the Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board.

Those schools all came into Whitehorse, and there were other schools that did have students attend and we do have the Yukon skills clubs in — I believe — all Yukon communities. I applaud Skills Canada Yukon for all the tremendous work that they do. Also, I mentioned the heritage fair — there were students from schools across the territory who were attending that, or the bridge building competition, where there were students from across the territory attending that, where they did do experiential education-type programs in their classroom. They did practice experiential education techniques.

They might not have had an acronym to describe the course of studies that they were in, but they were using those techniques in the classroom. Really, what I am trying to communicate is that experiential education is a style of teaching that can be used in many different classrooms; that we don't just have to have a different course with a different acronym in order for experiential education to be used.

When we go into the Tantalus School, for example, and see students building projects in their shop class that relate to their cultural class, that's experiential education. Or, when we go to Carcross and see students working on the student radio station and reading off news that they've created, that's experiential education in action. Yes, we have some tremendous programs. I don't have all the statistics at my fingertips that the member is looking for about how many people apply on them or what the educational outcomes are for those who apply to them versus those who don't.

One of the criticisms of our education system is that we do not have all the tracking mechanisms in place to look at the impact of some of these things. We do have other programs that are going on, and we need to take a look at what impacts do they have in the whole scholastic career and the life oppor-

tunities the participants. I'm just thinking of things like Reading Recovery. What are the implications of having a student in grade 1 or grade 2 go through reading recovery and charting how that affects their scholastic career.

Those are some of the statistics and some of the evaluation of different programs the Department of Education is looking at doing — taking a look at all the programs we have in place. We have a tremendous number of programs and opportunities to engage students.

I've mentioned some of them today, but I know there are many, many others I haven't put on the floor of the Assembly. Yes, I agree, we need to ask, "Okay, did the investment in that particular program have the intended outcome?" Or do we need to make a different decision and decide to reprofile the resources elsewhere?

We always need to ensure that we're having efficiencies in our programming, that they're achieving the intended outcomes. If they're not, or if there's a better way to spend the resources, let's take a look at doing that too. That's a responsibility we have.

Will we look at expanding experiential education programs? Yes, we will.

The secondary school programming process, which I believe the member received a copy of, engaged with teachers, with administrators, with counsellors, with Yukon College, with the Commission scolaire francophone du Yukon, with the Catholic Education Association, with the Association of Yukon School Councils, Boards and Committees; with the Council of Yukon First Nations, with individual First Nation orders of government, with the business community, with community agencies, with Advanced Education, with post-secondary institutions like the college, and with the public schools' education personnel. And one of the areas they said was, yes, we need to look at that alternative path and look at the style of engaging students with experiential education.

Then how will we incorporate that into our classroom and programming and as part of our mainstream programs? We can include experiential education in a mathematics course. But that doesn't mean that we need to retitile the class as experiential mathematics. It just means that we need to practise different techniques.

We've received some input from our partners in education that they want to see more of this. I know our students do. So we're looking at making those changes in the classroom and system-wide and also working with the school community in their school growth plan, should the community say, "We really want to see more experiential education programs offered or we want to see more community-based programming." We will do what we can to work with those entities to ensure that those objectives are reflected. You can see that happening with the bicultural program in Kluane School in Haines Junction.

So I agree with the member opposite. We're taking steps to do this in all our classrooms. We're taking steps to work with all our other partners in education to ensure that this is a path that they want to see us go down, and that we're going down it appropriately.

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. 15, *First Appropriation Act, 2009-10*, Department of Education.

Mr. Cardiff: Thank you, Mr. Chair. As I said earlier today, we seem to be up against the wall as far as — or maybe more appropriately we're up against the guillotine on this one, because tomorrow everything is going to wrap up and we won't be able to ask any more questions. So I'm going to ask a couple more questions in this area and move on to some post-secondary questions. Then I'll hand it off to the Member for McIntyre-Takhini, because I know he has a few questions.

I would like to ask the minister some questions about the French school programming — I asked one of these questions earlier. In the statistics, it shows that grade 13 is available to French language immersion students and I'm just wondering what that grade 13 system year entails — whether it's the equivalent of first year of university. I know when I was much younger than I am now, I remember grade 13 being available and it was an alternative to first year university. I'm just wondering if that is the case in this instance, as well.

I would also like the minister to respond to the question I asked about the experiential program at l'École Émilie Tremblay and whether or not there was funding. It was my understanding that the experiential program, in the information I believe I received in the briefing, was a two-year pilot project and that the funding was over.

In the transfer payment, it actually shows, under special initiatives, a 32-percent decrease. I'm just wondering if the minister could elaborate on that.

Hon. Mr. Rouble: We're going to have to provide a bit of additional information to the member outside of the Assembly to respond to his question regarding grade 13. Yes, members are correct, it used to be there. Actually, I graduated from grade 13 through the Ontario school system, but it isn't a normal process that we have. I'm not sure if this relates to students who have previously graduated and have returned to re-take some of their courses in order to increase their marks or to continue in different areas — for example, if they needed an additional course to meet some of the criteria of the post-secondary institution that they were attending — but it isn't part of the normal process. So it is a bit of an anomaly that I will look into for the member and get back to him on.

The member is correct about Académie Parhémie. That was a pilot project that was started a couple of years ago with the Commission scolaire francophone du Yukon. There were funds received from Canadian Heritage, and additional funds that were provided from the territorial government, to try a new program at École Émilie Tremblay.

We did have a situation where the Commission scolaire francophone du Yukon came to Yukon and also to the federal government and said they had a concern about students leaving

in the high school years. So while they did offer high school courses, they were seeing a drop in students for a variety of different reasons.

At the time, they felt that providing an experiential education program or different delivery model, which is referred to as Académie Parhélie, would attract more students and, hopefully, bring back some students who had chosen to go to another high school to finish their high school courses.

This is a program that is going to be going through a bit of a review to determine if it's an effective one or not. Funds were received from Heritage Canada, but those funds from the federal government seem to — well, we've all heard this before about funds from the federal government. They start a program, but then don't always continue it.

Now, Mr. Chair, under the complementary section that we have with the bilateral agreement, in June 2007, Yukon obtained extra funds for two years as Canadian Heritage's commitment to francophone school boards secondary program, and the Yukon has committed additional funds for both years. Members will remember that the Government of Yukon receives additional resources from the federal government to cover the additional cost of providing French-first-language education. Under our current program, even though the federal funds have lapsed, Government of Yukon has committed to keeping one extra teacher in this program to ensure some consistency with it, so that it will be able to continue.

We certainly appreciate the efforts that the Commission scolaire francophone du Yukon has undertaken to put in innovative programming in the school. We will certainly work with all partners, such as the school board or other school councils to address issues or ideas that they have, while at the same time ensuring that we provide a level of equity in education throughout our system.

Mr. Cardiff: I look forward to receiving that information from the Minister of Education.

I would like to move on to some questions about advanced education. The first one that comes to my mind is a question regarding scholarships. In the budget, the Canadian Millennium Scholarship and the Canadian Millennium Access Bursary have been discontinued. It talks about a transition grant under the Canada student loans program, but there's no increase in the Canada student loans information that's provided in the budget document.

I'm just wondering where that transition — it says, in 2009-10, the Canada Millennium Scholarships will be replaced by the transition grant under the Canada student loans program, but there's no increase shown in the value of Canada's student loans.

So I'm wondering where that transition grant is and if the minister can identify that.

Hon. Mr. Rouble: Mr. Chair, we just concluded a discussion about a program that originally had federal funds allocated toward it. I think we all know the situation. We've seen it several times before where the federal government has started a program and then made changes. Indeed, the situation the member is referring to is one of those areas that is under review and negotiation with the federal government regarding

Canadian — and by that I mean federal government — grants. This is an issue that the Council of Ministers of Education is working on with the federal government and also the Government of Yukon is working with the federal government on addressing this.

Also in this issue though, the member should be aware of the Yukon grant that is available for Yukon students and how this amount has grown in 2000-01. The per semester grant was \$1,240 and the 2009-10 grant amount — this is a non-repayable grant — is \$1,716, so that's a per semester grant for eligible Yukon students. That's a 35-percent increase to that and, as well, this government has indexed that fund so it will continue to grow as the cost of living increases.

It is very gratifying to be in a jurisdiction where we are able to provide this kind of post-secondary education assistance. Many jurisdictions in this time of economic uncertainty are making significant cuts and reductions in this amount. Members just need to look to our neighbours to the east, the Northwest Territories, and see some of the changes that they have recently made of eliminating some of the funding for post-secondary education and grants.

We have some significant contributions in our budget for Yukon College, in addition to some of these grant issues. We've seen the budget for Yukon College grow from less than \$14 million in 2001 to greater than \$20 million last year. This is certainly demonstrating our commitment to post-secondary education. Also, with the recent changes that were unanimously supported by this Assembly to the *Yukon College Act*, we will see the opportunity for Yukon College to grant degrees here in the territory. That's in addition to the partnership initiatives that they currently have.

So to answer the member opposite's question, the Canada student grants are something that are administered through Canada. We are in negotiations with them. This did start as a millennium project and were labelled as such. We realize that we are still working with the federal government to recoup the reductions that were made to federal education funding back in the 1990s. I don't think I need to bring up the Liberal education cuts any more than that, but we are still reeling from that, and we'll continue to work with the Council of Ministers of Education and our partners across the country, and the federal government, to have them address this appropriately.

Mr. Cardiff: I wish the minister and all the Ministers of Education across the country well in their negotiations with the federal government. I think one of the most pressing issues — and I can assure the minister that I've watched the Yukon College budget very closely for almost 20 years now. I've been involved in lobbying for increased funding for Yukon College for at least that long. So, yes, it's great to see Yukon College grow from where it was, when it was across the river, to where it is today and the services it provides for Yukoners in communities.

That brings me to one of the other questions. I guess one of the things that I learned during my time and my association with Yukon College, listening to what students had to say and travelling to some of the conferences and meeting students from across the country is that the number one issue — I be-

lieve that it's probably still the number one issue — for post-secondary students is student debt. The cost of attending post-secondary institutions requires a lot of things that get rolled into the costs of going to university or college and post-secondary education. There is housing, transportation, food, all the textbooks and the tuition. That's what I wanted to ask the minister about — we know all those costs are rising and Yukon College recently raised its tuition. Thankfully, they didn't raise it for those students who were looking at upgrading an adult basic education — developmental studies. But it was raised in other areas.

I'm just wondering what consideration the minister has given to some sort of bursaries or scholarships being made available to Yukon College students who need that assistance who don't qualify for other funding and are faced with these increased costs, including the recent tuition increases at Yukon College.

Hon. Mr. Rouble: Mr. Chair, I am very familiar with the challenges of being a student and financing one's post-secondary education pursuits from my personal perspective and from a family perspective, and also from my discussions with students across the territory.

We have made some significant proactive steps in this regard. I mentioned the increases to the Yukon grant and also the issue of indexing the student grant as being a proactive way of ensuring that those escalate as the costs go up. As well, we also have the student training allowance, which provides assistance to students.

There are programs in place, such as the student training employment program, to encourage employment opportunities that are related to education. Those are escalated based on the number of years the student has been attending post-secondary school.

Also on that issue, we have changed the STEP program to allow recent graduates to apply for STEP positions. This allows them to come back to Yukon, if they've been away, obtain summer employment and, while they have their feet on the ground here, it gives them an opportunity to seek full-time employment.

It is interesting to see the comparisons of post-secondary education. Members are aware that Yukon College tuitions are among the lowest in Canada. It was interesting to note — just looking at one of the schools at Yukon College — we took a look at the bachelor of social work program there, and members realize the degree is granted through the University of Regina. We were in touch with the University of Regina to find out what their tuition fees were. In order to complete the full bachelor of social work program from the University of Regina, the tuition costs and some of the ancillary costs were over \$40,000 for a four-year program. So, at the end of four years, a student attending the University of Regina would have paid over \$40,000 in tuition and ancillary costs. A student attending Yukon College, in comparison, would have spent a little bit less than \$16,000 for their tuition and ancillary costs. At the end of that time, they would have received a degree from the University of Regina, so we're in a situation where, if a student went to the University of Regina, it would have cost them over

\$40,000 but if they went to Yukon College, did the coursework at Yukon College, with all of the related benefits of being in very small classes, in having the student accommodation so close to the campus and all of the other benefits of life here in the Yukon, their tuition would have been \$25,000 less.

So I appreciate where the member is coming from but I also look at the comparison here between the different institutions and one can certainly see by this very graphic illustration of the government's commitment and support for post-secondary education where there is such a dramatic difference.

We do continue to support students in attending Outside institutions through the student grant process. I believe there are over 1,000 students receiving the student grant right now, and I believe they go to over 100 different post-secondary institutions across Canada and North America.

Would I like to see more students here in the Yukon? Of course I would. But I will also celebrate the fact that we have students attending so many different schools throughout North America. I think that is another great indicator of the success of Yukon's education system when we have that many people attending post-secondary institutions.

I should note that that figure doesn't include those Yukoners who are continuing their education but not receiving the student grant. So there is a bit of a challenge in finding out all of the statistics about post-secondary education participation. We do have the recent survey from Statistics Canada, which indicates that Yukoners have the highest rate of post-secondary participation of any jurisdiction of Canada.

That's a tremendous statistic that we should all be proud of. I think that speaks volumes to Yukoners' commitment to lifelong learning, to continuing their education, and to maximizing the use of some of our excellent facilities through Yukon College.

The member also asked about bursaries and scholarships. I would remind him of the scholarships through Health and Social Services and the health bursaries there, where they do provide specific financial assistance to individuals pursuing careers and education in the health sciences field.

So the Government of Yukon is very committed to providing assistance with post-secondary education. We recognize the importance that Yukon College plays, we recognize the role the board of governors plays, and respect their thoughts and opinions and positions on issues. We also realize what's happening on a national level, and we'll continue to work with the federal government. As the member opposite commented, it sometimes is a bit of a challenge. But I shouldn't knock them too hard. The federal government has announced a knowledge infrastructure fund of, I believe, \$2 billion for post-secondary education infrastructure across Canada.

The federal government has invited applications from different jurisdictions and different post-secondary institutions. Yukon College, with the support of the Government of Yukon, has made applications for funds from this. We're now waiting to see the results of the federal decisions on the allocations of these resources and are actively working with the federal government to make sure that Yukoners receive their fair share of this appropriation, because we can certainly put it to use with

infrastructure for Yukon College throughout the territory. We'll continue to work with the federal government on the knowledge infrastructure fund and also with Yukon College on meeting many of their needs. Additionally, members will recall that Yukon College also received additional resources from the northern research fund and that was recently announced.

There were funds identified for research facilities for Yukon College, also for Kluane and the community of Old Crow. There was a significant contribution from the federal government of, I believe, \$2.5 million for research facilities at the Ayamdigut Campus. That is in addition to the funding that was also provided earlier this year, the \$400,000 for the Climate Change Research Centre of Excellence, so construction on that facility is well underway right now, and we look forward to opening that in the near future.

I appreciate that the member asked me about what we are doing to provide some assistance to students, and I have also provided a bit more information about federal and territorial support for college infrastructure here in Whitehorse and throughout the territory.

Mr. Cardiff: I thank the minister for all that information. It was more than what I asked for, but as far as information goes, it wasn't the information I was looking for. I don't know if the minister totally understands the situation here. He was talking about knowledge infrastructure. I mean, it's great to provide infrastructure, but if students can't afford to go to school because of tuition rates and high costs, that infrastructure is going to languish and not get used. Where I was headed with the question was — not only are students challenged by tuition rates and the costs of post-secondary education, but First Nations are challenged with that, because a lot of First Nations fund their citizens to attend Yukon College.

We were talking earlier about capacity, and the capacity of First Nations to take on the challenges of self-government. This is just one more of those — I guess I would call them — challenges or roadblocks to building that capacity. First Nations have a set amount of money that is allocated through their budgeting process to fund students — their citizens — to attend Yukon College or to attend post-secondary education programs. Some of that money comes from the federal government, admittedly. If that amount has remained fixed, which I believe it has, then their challenge is that they can't fund as many students to attend Yukon College as they did in previous years. So that's where I was headed on that question. I wanted to see whether the minister had a plan to provide more assistance other than the Yukon grant or the other funding that's available to students who need the assistance and who don't qualify for some of that other funding.

The minister also mentioned the student training employment program and so I'd like to bring to the minister's attention on page 7-16 that there appears to be reductions. Now, it depends whether we're looking at — you can talk about mains to mains or you can talk about what I'm talking about, which is the actual number of summer career placements in 2007-08 to what is estimated for this coming year. There is a substantial decrease. It's on 7-16. It is likewise for the Yukon summer

career placement program as well as for the student training employment program.

There's another substantial decrease of 20 placements in STEP and about 15 in the Yukon summer career placement. It appears that what the minister was talking about — as far as opportunities for students to come back to gain employment and job experience — they are actually being reduced in this case.

That was the next question for the minister and I'd like to roll one more in for him as well, because we're definitely running short of time here.

I asked him this question in his capacity as the minister responsible for the Public Service Commission. It was suggested that I ask the question in the Department of Education and that is about the Yukon government apprentice program. The minister and I are both on the same page when it comes to skilled trades and the involvement of Skills Canada Yukon and Yukon Women Exploring Trades and Technology.

I think that we both recognize the importance, and we can see the statistics about how many apprentices there are in the system, but we're faced with skills shortages, and the government has the opportunity to train apprentices in a variety of trades, through the delivery of services in the Property Management Agency or in the central workshop in those trades, and yet we only have three apprentices that are supported, which is down from the 2007-08 actuals.

The other piece of this is that government needs to build capacity as well, because some of the employees who are working in those positions are coming to the end of their careers and will be retiring. We need to be bringing young folks up to fill those positions as well. I'm just wondering why it is that the government doesn't support more through that apprentice program.

Hon. Mr. Rouble: The member started off making comments regarding the knowledge infrastructure fund that is made available from the federal government. I'd just like to remind him that if either the federal government or the territorial government provides funding to Yukon College to cover some of their costs, including their capital investments, those are then costs that do not have to be covered by student tuition. These kinds of expansions in programming are certainly supported by the federal government and by the territorial government.

The member has had an opportunity to see the financial report from Yukon College. I believe that for this year the tuition received by the college accounts for two percent of their revenue and that there is a significant contribution from the taxpayer through the Government of Yukon to cover additional costs.

We certainly recognize that there is an overall community or social or government responsibility to fund post-secondary education, but there is also a benefit to the individual taking those courses and it is certainly a significant investment that an individual can make. In fact, I believe that education is one of the best investments that an individual can make.

I know a few years ago when looking at a program, there was a calculation of the tuition costs and its potential payment.

At the time, just as an example, I was looking at \$20,000 in tuition for a two-year program, but then looking at the increases that would have on my earning potential later in life — over a 30-year career, if there was a bit of an increase each year — that \$20,000 for the two years was quickly recouped, and the rate of return on that was much better than any investment than I could ever hope to be involved in.

So I certainly believe that an individual's investment in their education pays off tremendous dividends later in life, both dividends that are financial and in quality of life and satisfaction.

I did provide the comparison of doing a bachelor of social work degree from Yukon College, which would cost about \$16,000, and comparing that to the bachelor of social work from the University of Regina, which would cost over \$40,000. I'll remind the member opposite that those graduates receive an identical degree. The students attending Yukon College, who have paid \$25,000 less in tuition, also receive a degree from the University of Regina. That clearly demonstrates this government's commitment to supporting post-secondary education.

I believe all members recognize the role and responsibility that the Yukon College Board of Governors has in this regard. Providing the flexibility for the college to set their tuition amounts was one of the components of the *Yukon College Act* that we all agreed to unanimously, so we do have to respect the decisions by the Yukon College Board of Governors. We'll continue to support Yukon students through the Yukon grant, the student training program and also programs such as the student summer training and employment program.

There was an additional change to the STEP program. This was done in consultation with participants of the program and also with employers. It was a change to go from a program that was funded for 12 weeks to one that is funded for 16 weeks, I believe. This was more in line with the break that students had for summer. So it will have some ways of changing it through.

I will remind the member opposite that, in recent years, there has also been a significant labour shortage seen throughout the territory and that we did see fewer people who were available for summer employment in the territory. I know all employers were really scrambling to find people in the apprentice field. Those applying on the Yukon government apprenticeship program were also affected by that shortage of people and we were, in some instances, looking for people to fill positions; however, they had accepted other positions elsewhere. With the statistics, I understand that there was one participant who had left the position early, which showed a shortfall on there.

It's something that we very much support, not only through the Department of Education, but also through the Public Service Commission and also in our other departments; for example, Highways and Public Works in the transportation, maintenance and property management branches. They currently employ eight apprentices through their own funding. This includes an oil burner technician, five heavy equipment and truck and transport technicians — four in Whitehorse and one in Dawson City — one parts person and an automotive service technician. As well, as of December 31, 2008, ad-

vanced education branch had one heavy equipment and truck and transport technician apprentice employed in Dawson City under the Yukon government apprentice program.

This government has made significant efforts on working with apprentices. This has started from public schools, through advanced education, through, really, all aspects of government. We've seen a lot of support for organizations that the member opposite has mentioned, such as Skills Canada Yukon and Yukon Women in Trades and Technology, YWITT. We currently have 431 apprentices in the territory, which is the highest number of apprentices ever. Eighty-six of those individuals are of First Nation ancestry, and 45 of those are female. So we're seeing the results of these kinds of supports for these programs. We're seeing the number of apprentices continue to grow through the efforts of Highways and Public Works, Yukon Housing Corporation, and some of the other economic stimuli that the government is implementing. I look forward to hearing more about the projects that Highways and Public Works has before it as they enter into budget debate later this afternoon. We'll find out more about those initiatives that they're supporting, which, I'm sure, will result in more apprentices being employed, and also people seeing those positions out there being filled.

The member opposite might have received a flyer recently from the Yukon Mine Training Association. That is another organization that I should mention that is a cooperative agreement between several mining and industrial companies here in the territory and Yukon First Nations and the federal government, which has provided a significant amount of funding to the YMTA to encourage people to pursue careers related to industry and preparing them for mine training opportunities.

We are seeing the results of some of the changes that this government has made in the whole area of certainty for investment that has resulted in more mines opening up that are practicing environmentally responsible practices and techniques. They are looking at hiring local people. They are looking at encouraging training and post-secondary education, so that they can employ Yukoners for Yukon opportunities.

Last Friday I was at the graduation ceremony in Pelly Crossing and officials there from Minto Exploration were on hand to offer a financial contribution to each of the graduates. So they presented them with a gift for graduating from high school, and Minto Exploration and their partners in the mine production also made a commitment of a \$500 bursary for every student wanting to pursue post-secondary education. My hat goes off to those kinds of responsible corporate citizens coming forward and demonstrating their commitment to the community and to post-secondary education and really working to ensure that Yukoners are prepared to take advantage of Yukon opportunities.

So there is a lot of work that both the private and public sectors are doing in this area. There is work that the Department of Education is doing, work that the Public Service Commission is doing and work that individual departments are doing to provide opportunities for people and to help prepare them for the opportunities that are before all Yukoners.

Mr. Cardiff: There are many, many questions, and I thank the minister for his answer. I'd like to thank the officials for being here today and for the information they've been able to provide. I look forward to receiving further information. At this time I will leave it at that and I'll turn it over to the Member for McIntyre-Takhini.

Mr. Edzerza: I don't know if I learned anything listening to this debate over the last couple of days, but there didn't seem to be much progress really made with getting answers. It was more or less, in my opinion, just dialogue between a couple of people here. I'm not going to be asking too many questions because I don't feel like listening to any more of the same.

I will say though that I will make some general comments just to put something on record. The minister consistently referred to his \$128-million budget. Well, providing a process and facilities to teach our children is not about money and costs. Let me remind the minister the residential schools in the Yukon closed less than 30 years ago, so yes, you're darn right you're going to have a lot of expense in the education system, and the justice system, and the health programs, right across the board.

It's time that the government and everyone who works with children starts realizing that. It's not about money. It's about human development. It's about helping those who had to suffer a lot of the impacts that came to the Yukon, such as the Gold Rush of 1898, and the Alaska Highway, and those types of large initiatives that created severe social impacts on this territory. Because of those things, we are going to have to increase a lot of things in the education system.

I consistently hear the minister talking about student/teacher ratios. Well, I really don't care about the student/teacher ratio. I don't think it's even relevant when you have a huge number of children who are FASD/FAE. I don't think it's relevant when you have a large number of a race of people who were severely abused and never ever had any intervention. I don't think it's relevant one little bit.

I think what's more appropriate would be for the government to take note of some of the things that were identified by the Auditor General, and it didn't happen overnight, or it happened over many, many years. Again, I think it is because a lot of people over the years failed to acknowledge and recognize that the Yukon has a severe social problem right across the whole territory, not only one location — right across the territory.

We are going to continue to have that problem until we start looking at doing some things differently. Instead of following the same old status quo, get creative and start looking at ways to deal with some of these issues.

I know that under my watch as the minister I did get creative a little bit. The Individual Learning Centre came out of that. That was hard to get going, but it was done.

There are a lot of issues around young children that I believe are not being addressed to their fullest potential. I mentioned one of them the other day. I gave a friendly suggestion to the minister, but the end result was that we treat all students the same. What I got from the minister's answers is basically:

why should we do anything special for kids with FASD? That was the message I got — loud and clear. And I'm saying, yes, you have to do something different with kids with FASD and FAE. Otherwise, we are going to continue to have children going right through to grade 12 and being graduates who don't know how to read or write. If the minister doesn't know about these kinds of individuals, I can introduce him to some because I know some.

There are a lot of special needs children in the school system. And no, you can't drop the number of teachers you have. You have to increase it, in my opinion. I think there should be a lot more teachers in the school system to work with those who are having difficulty in the system, because I sincerely believe that when we don't look at other ways to work with the students, we do hold back some of the students. Just the disruptions in the classroom are enough to sort of hold back other students who could progress a lot quicker. I'm not stereotyping anybody; I'm not singling anybody out. All I'm doing is pointing out a fact that FASD/FAE children do have to be approached differently.

I mentioned to the minister — and I'm going to suggest it again — that in the Scott Robertson School in Edmonton, Alberta they have special classrooms for children with FASD. I asked the minister last week if he would just explore this school or some of the schools in Alberta just to take note of what they are doing with FASD. I don't believe for one minute that the Yukon is a leader in this field, which I've heard repeated over and over here — they're not. They're not the leaders in Justice, either, with FASD. I believe if you searched the Internet, you would find that Alaska is far advanced over the Yukon. They actually have conferences in Alaska that produce results and mean something.

So, I believe we're going to continue to have difficulties getting graduates until we start looking at what's really happening in the classrooms. This starts at a very young age. I know a lot about this, because I have had foster kids in my home who were in elementary school, where I had to go and sit there all day in order for them to go to school. And I did that, because I wanted to see these kids succeed. That wasn't in my contract, my government contract, as a caregiver for special needs kids. My contract never said I had to go and sit at the school, but I did because I wanted to see them succeed. And I have had foster children who were FASD children.

Believe me, I spent a lot of hours at the school with the principals and teachers, consistently, every day. I don't think there was a day that went by that I probably wasn't at the school for one reason or another. Again, it was always to try to work with the educators to give ideas. I believe totally in discipline rather than punishment. I don't know if the elementary schools do it any more. I don't believe we have any time-out rooms any more. I know it used to be something that was used quite regularly, but I haven't heard of them and I don't believe we have any more in the territory, but if we do I would sure like to know about it. I believe they should be done away with totally.

I know that we can probably talk about this issue for a lot longer than the time I am going to be allotted here, but I wanted

to get that point across mainly to not look at the dollar figure or the student/teacher ratio. Yes, they are all needed. It's no wonder that when there were fewer students, we never dropped the amount of teachers, because there was a need for every one of them and probably more. So I'm glad that there were no educators laid off in the system. They all need to stay. If we really want to address the issue of graduation, we have to start at the elementary school. I would also, at some point in time, like to see professional mental health counsellors in every school.

I was asked one time why First Nation people don't graduate or why there's such a low number of First Nation graduates. I said well, to start with, I would beg to differ, that if there was probably one First Nation that didn't have some form of abuse in their life, I would be very surprised. When we start reaching high school age, all it takes is for a teacher to use a tone of voice on us that would make us bolt.

Quite often, you don't come back. When you're in grade 9 or grade 10, and maybe even in grade 7 or grade 8, and somebody addresses you in an aggressive manner, it can be very common for a person to bolt and never come back, because a lot of the things that go on even in their own homes have to do with aggression and strict authority. So there are a lot of things that can be looked at in education.

I know we had a protocol agreement between Education, Health and Social Services, and Justice. Sometimes, it's really relevant to look at how Health and Social Services can get involved with educational problems or issues that are in the classroom, and one of them being providing mental health counsellors for children.

I remember one time going to a school, when I was taking my foster kid to school at Takhini Elementary School, and there was a young boy kicking and fighting with a teacher there. I intervened and talked to the boy. They let me have the child for a bit, and I talked to him, only to find out that he had had no breakfast.

He was practically booted off the porch when he left home and he was supposed to be happy when he got to school. Well, children are no different from adults in one sense or another. They carry that anger and they project it on to somebody else. Adults do the same thing. So there is a lot to being able to understand some of the things that have to take place within the school system. It's not something that's going to be fixed overnight — I know that. But I also know that if one waits forever, nothing will be done.

I'd like to talk a little bit about the Burwash school because I think everything I've said to date is relevant to not having a school in Burwash. Even when I became a politician, I found it quite unbelievable that there is no school in Burwash and that there was a makeshift school in a construction camp versus the original town. I couldn't understand why all the essential services were put in a government camp versus a town that had been in place for many years.

Again, it's a predominantly First Nation community. There's a lot of discussion around why there's no school in Burwash, and some feel it has to do with being First Nation. I would like to think that's not the reason. I would like to think that the government would, in fact, do what they can to assist

the people in Burwash with a school, because it just so happens that there was one going in there. I'll send a copy of the blueprint over to the minister, in case he has never seen it before. This school was approved, it was in the budget, it was a line item, and it cost less — at the time, it was only about \$800,000, in place, ready to operate. Now, when we talk about money, \$800,000 is not a lot of money for a school. It's actually quite cheap.

I know there was argument around the fact that there are no kids in Burwash Landing. Well, they couldn't get some very qualified staff in Burwash Landing, either, because there was no school. I know the First Nation has a really hard time to recruit staff. They had a young couple starting there when I was the Minister of Education who would really have benefited the First Nation through their university qualifications and their expertise. They accepted the job until they found out that there was no school in Burwash Landing and then they didn't take the job.

So, again, here's a First Nation community that has produced many professional people. In fact, I know of at least three educators, people with their teaching degree, who came out of Burwash, and there are also people in the law field who come from Burwash.

So there are a lot of reasons why we should be supporting this school in Burwash. I know one elder up there told me one time that it is a crying town, that it's crying. I said, "What do you mean, crying?" He said, "Well, there are no children here. It reminds us of the days of the mission schools when somebody came with the bus and took all our children from the community. Everybody in town was crying and that is the way it is today."

It doesn't have to be that way. There can be a school put there, I would say probably for next fall, very easily, but if there is no political will, there never will be a school there. That is basically what it comes down to, just the political will. The minister could do it very easily for next fall. I believe it would really help to improve the First Nation relationships for the Yukon Party government, which is at a very, very low point right at this time.

I did ask the minister a question already with regard to if he would go to Alberta and check on the school system there, where they support FASD children. I'll wait for a response to that.

Hon. Mr. Rouble: I've always appreciated the comments from the Member for McIntyre-Takhini, whom I've known for a number of years now and worked with. I certainly appreciate the perspective that he brought to the table. It's clear that his dedication and commitment to children — we've seen it in his raising his own family and also the relationship he has had with many, many foster children over the years. I applaud that commitment and dedication.

I really appreciate his dedication — and he discussed it today — about going to the school and sitting with a student and staying there all day to assist with the student's learning situation in the classroom. I appreciate his perspectives on that and his perspectives on people affected by fetal alcohol spectrum disorder.

I know I've been personally involved with several not-for-profit organizations in the territory, such as Yukon Special Olympics, and have worked with many individuals who are affected by FASD, and I appreciate the challenges that they face. I also certainly appreciate the challenges that teachers in our schools and classrooms face. The member opposite and I have discussed some of the issues that lead up to this and, yes, we recognize that there are forces external to the school system that certainly affect children.

I want to let the member know that since he has left government, the relationship between Justice, Health and Social Services and Education continues to grow and continues to become stronger, both at a senior level, with the deputies of Health and Social Services, Justice and Education meeting regularly, but also on a departmental level, working to address issues of a common-client nature.

I appreciate the comments he has put forward about exploring other avenues for people with FASD. We do have an inclusive education system in the territory. We see people with special needs in our schools.

I think that's a good thing. We've seen growth in the programs to provide assistants, whether those be educational assistants or some of the other special needs support people — the physiotherapists, the psychologists, the speech and language pathologists — the list goes on. We'll continue to do more; we'll continue to build on the work that the member did when he was the Minister of Education. I appreciate the comments that he has provided; I will certainly take them under advisement and encourage the department to look at different avenues for addressing some of the different situations he has raised with us today.

Mr. Edzerza: I thank the minister for that response. I know you'll never regret it if you venture outside the box a little bit and be creative.

I only have a couple more questions. One has to do with a possible satellite college within Kwanlin Dun House of Learning.

I don't know if there is any discussion going on at the present time with regard to this issue but I know for some years the Kwanlin Dun First Nation has operated a developmental studies class in this House of Learning. I think it has been a very positive initiative and I believe that it has created the opportunity for a lot of students to go back to school and continue with upgrading, which they probably would not have done if they had to go to the college.

I know that there may be some concerns around having a satellite college right in Whitehorse but I think it would be well worth the time to explore that and support it if it ever comes up because I know that finances are a real burden on a lot of students, not only First Nations but right across the country.

Chair: Order please. Seeing the time, the Chair will rise and report progress.

Speaker resumes the Chair

Speaker: I will now call the House to order.

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

Chair's report

Mr. Nordick: Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 65, entitled *Act to Amend the Yukon Advisory Council on Women's Issues Act*, and directed me to report it without amendment.

It has also considered Bill No. 64, *Act to Amend the Legislative Assembly Retirement Allowances Act, 2007*, and directed me to report it without amendment.

Also, Mr. Speaker, Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 15, *First Appropriation Act, 2009-10*, and directed me to report progress on it.

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., this House now stands adjourned until 1:00 p.m. tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 5:32 p.m.

The following Sessional Papers were tabled May 13, 2009:

09-1-117

Crime Prevention and Victim Services Trust Fund 2006/2007 Annual Report (Horne)

09-1-118

Yukon Arts Centre 2007/2008 Annual Report (Taylor)

The following documents were filed May 13, 2009:

09-1-99

Yukon Health and Social Services Council 2003/2004 Annual Report (Hart)

09-1-100

Yukon Health and Social Services Council 2004/2005 Annual Report (Hart)

09-1-101

Yukon Health and Social Services Council 2005/2006 Annual Report (Hart)

09-1-102

Yukon Health and Social Services Council 2006/2007 Annual Report (Hart)

09-1-103

Yukon Geographical Place Names Board 2007/2008 Annual Report (Taylor)

09-1-104

Additional names regarding Petition No. 7: Department of Education's policy re exams: (Inverarity)