

Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Thursday, March 17, 2011 — 1:00 p.m.

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

Prayers

DAILY ROUTINE

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

Tributes.

TRIBUTES

In recognition of Gloria Coxford

Hon. Mr. Rouble: I rise in this House today to offer congratulations to Gloria Coxford, principal of Grey Mountain Primary School and one of Canada's outstanding principals of 2011. Joining us today in the gallery is Ms. Coxford. Welcome.

This award recognizes excellence in leadership through a nomination to the Canadian Association of Principals and The Learning Partnership's Outstanding Principals Award.

Every year, the Outstanding Principals Award celebrates the unique and crucial contribution the principals of publicly funded schools across Canada make to their community by ensuring quality education for students.

As part of her award, Gloria had an opportunity to attend an executive leadership training program at the Joseph L. Rotman School of Management alongside 31 of her peers from across the nation. This is an unparalleled learning opportunity and one that can enrich the knowledge basis of the Department of Education as a whole by providing insights and ideas from across Canada.

Under Gloria's direction, Grey Mountain Primary has added a number of reading and literacy programs, additional art classes for students at a nearby studio, and many other initiatives.

Gloria joins the august company of other Outstanding Principal Award winners from the Yukon, including Thomas Jirousek, John Wright, Kerry Huff, Pat Berell, the late Brian Shanahan, Penny Prysnuick and Ted Hupe. We at the Department of Education know that our principals, teachers and school-based staff are the heart of our schools. Judging by the accomplishments of the principals I've just mentioned, and many of our outstanding teachers, our heart is beating strong.

Again, I'd like to offer my congratulations to Ms. Coxford on her award and thank her for her hard work and commitment to her students.

Applause

Speaker: Further tributes.

In recognition of Shawn Ryan and Jerry Asp

Hon. Mr. Rouble: As the minister responsible for managing Yukon's mineral resources, I am pleased to rise today to acknowledge two Yukoners who have been recognized with national awards for their hard work and exceptional con-

tributions to the mining industry and to their communities. At the recent Prospectors and Developers Association Conference last week in Toronto, Yukoners Shawn Ryan and Jerry Asp were given two of the association's most prestigious awards. Prospector Shawn Ryan won this year's Bill Dennis Award as prospector of the year for his gold discoveries in Yukon. Jerry Asp was this year's winner of the Skookum Jim Award for promoting mining's benefits to aboriginal communities in British Columbia.

We are always proud when Yukoners are awarded for their excellent work, and we are also grateful for the positive impact that these two individuals have had on the mining industry and the communities they are involved in. Shawn Ryan personifies Yukon's modern-day gold rush. He is a self-taught prospector who, with his wife and business partner Cathy Wood, spent many years prospecting grounds and testing soils in areas of Yukon with a determination that was bound to pay off eventually.

Ingenuity and determination were the main factors in Shawn's success. He studied techniques of previous prospectors and companies and found ways of improving sampling, data collection and interpretation that ultimately led to many significant discoveries in what is now known as the White Gold area.

Cathy has managed the business of Shawn's discoveries with skills to match any president, CEO or CFO, raised a family and kept Shawn's feet on the ground, which is no small feat indeed.

The Yukon government has been pleased to help Shawn with his efforts over the years. Working closely with Yukon government geologists, Shawn quickly recognized the maps, data and extensive knowledge that exists within the Yukon Geological Survey. Shawn has utilized these resources to advance his research and prospecting efforts.

Over the years, the Yukon government has supported Shawn with the Yukon's mining incentive program grants for exploration proposals generated by his relentless and methodical research. This investment has certainly paid off for Yukon.

Shawn's discoveries have led to worldwide interest in the White Gold area and in Yukon's mineral resources as a whole. We are proud that Shawn Ryan persevered in his Yukon prospecting. The territory has benefited greatly from his efforts and we look forward to what the future will bring.

Jerry Asp is one of western Canada's most prominent aboriginal leaders. He is committed to enhancing the quality of life for aboriginal people through the creation of new business opportunities and development of skills and capacity in the community. In addition to supporting aboriginal business development, Jerry has also applied his leadership skills to serve the public.

Jerry was also recognized for promoting mining benefits to aboriginal communities in British Columbia at last week's Prospectors and Developers Association conference in Toronto. A former Chief of the Tahltan Band Council, Jerry established the Tahltan Nation Development Corporation to provide construction and maintenance services to northern B.C. mines. The

company became the largest aboriginal-owned heavy construction company in western Canada.

Jerry renegotiated two mining impact and benefit agreements — the first for the Golden Bear mine that set the template for later Tahltan projects, and the second for the Eskay Creek mine.

Jerry is a founding member of the National Indian Businessman's Association and the Canadian Aboriginal Minerals Association, of which he serves as vice-president. He was also a major contributor to the award-winning mining information toolkit for aboriginal communities.

Jerry has shared his knowledge of mining issues, not only in his home community, but also with indigenous people around the world. The awards that Shawn Ryan and Jerry Asp have received from the Prospectors and Developers Association last week are a testament to the respect these two individuals have earned, not only from the industry but also from the people of the north.

I'm proud to rise today and recognize the exceptional contributions Shawn and Jerry have made to the mineral industry and the people it involves. I'd like to welcome them to the Legislative Assembly today. Welcome.

Mr. McRobb: I rise today on behalf of both opposition parties to congratulate the guy on our licence plate, Shawn Ryan, on receiving the 2011 Prospector of the Year award for Canada. The Bill Dennis Award for prospecting success is one of the top awards from the Prospectors and Developers Association of Canada, or PDAC. This highly coveted national award follows the award he received a year earlier at the Mineral Exploration Roundup in Vancouver as Prospector of the Year for British Columbia and the Yukon. Many of us were in attendance at that memorial event.

For the past 15 years, Shawn and his partner and wife, Cathy Wood, have dedicated much of their lives to locate the highly sought source of the alluvial gold that sparked the Klondike Gold Rush more than a century earlier. They persevered and succeeded through strong determination and sacrifice.

As partners in Ryanwood Exploration, their company has grown exponentially from its humble beginnings in their old tin shack to employing dozens of workers today.

Shawn knew that the \$20 million some ounces of placer gold mined in the Dawson area had to come from somewhere. He took on the challenge of finding that source through diligent geological detective work, armed with basic skills, tools and a hunch and hope there was something big waiting for his discovery. It was nothing less than the stereotypical dream of the Yukon.

With advice and assistance from the fine staff in the Yukon Geological Survey branch, Shawn, with the full support of his wife, Cathy, discovered many promising gold properties. Chief among them, and what would eventually become the hottest play in the country, was White Gold, at the confluence of the White River and Yukon River, south of Dawson City.

Ryan's efforts in prospecting successes have produced a substantial positive impact on exploration in the Yukon. In fact,

his White Gold discovery has sparked the biggest staking rush in Yukon history.

This has led to the investment of hundreds of millions of dollars into our economy and has highlighted the Yukon's mining potential on the international stage. Congratulations, Shawn. We wish you and your family the very best in the years ahead.

Mr. Elias: I rise today on behalf of the Official Opposition and the Third Party to pay tribute to Mr. Jerry Asp upon receiving the 2011 Canadian Prospectors and Developers Association Skookum Jim Award. As one of the discoverers of gold in the Klondike, this award commemorating Skookum Jim recognizes aboriginal achievement in the mineral industry.

Mr. Asp is being recognized for promoting mining benefits to aboriginal communities and Jerry and his beautiful wife Ida are in the gallery today.

His field experience in the mining industry began in 1965 when he started working on diamond drills. He then went on to work underground for six years in the Tantalus coal mine. During this stage in his career, he was president of the only all-native United Steelworkers local in North America. He is a staunch believer in the need for economic independence for all aboriginal people, and much of his working life has been dedicated toward assisting indigenous peoples all over the world in achieving this goal.

Some of Jerry's exceptional achievements include serving and leading his people as chief of the Tahltans for many years. He was responsible for establishing the Tahltan Nation Development Corporation, which provided construction and maintenance services to northern British Columbia mines.

The company, TNDC, just celebrated its 25th year of operation last August and continues to flourish as the largest aboriginal-owned and operated heavy construction company in western Canada. He was also instrumental in negotiating the first native-owned, independent power project contract with B.C. Hydro, a microhydro project that freed Dease Lake from dependency on diesel generators for power.

Jerry is a founding member of the National Indian Businessman's Association and is the vice-president of the Canadian Aboriginal Minerals Association. Jerry was also responsible for negotiating the first mining impact and benefits agreement in the Province of British Columbia. Mr. Asp is currently president of C3 Alliance Corp.

I am proud to say that I worked under Mr. Asp's tutelage during the production and development phases of the Golden Bear and Eskay Creek mines. It is important to note that I learned another skill from Mr. Asp, and it can only be described as extraordinary or exquisite or supernatural in nature. That is the ability to pull a salmon net from the Stikine River without tangling it up in the rocks.

Jerry was a major contributor to the award-winning mining information tool kit for aboriginal communities that has been utilized not only here at home in Canada, but by indigenous peoples in Peru, Chile, Ecuador, Guatemala, Argentina, Panama, the Philippines, Australia and the United States of America.

The tool kit won the departmental merit award for Natural Resources Canada in 2006 for the best aboriginal mine training document.

We thank you, Jerry, for your foresight and vision in recognizing the value of seeking out positive dialogue and fostering progressive and productive relations between governments, aboriginal peoples and the resource sector. Your years of community service and building lasting partnerships where they did not exist before has truly made its mark on the world. Those of us with Tahltan heritage are proud of the Tahltan nation, largely in part of the accomplishments of individuals such as yourself.

Mr. Asp's crowning achievement is his wonderful family. His gentle guidance, teachings and legacy will live on through his precious children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren. Congratulations once again, Jerry, for winning the 2011 Canadian Prospectors and Developers Association Skookum Jim Award. Thank you, sir.

Mr. Cathers: I rise today to join my colleagues in paying tribute to Shawn Ryan and Jerry Asp and welcome them both to the gallery today.

I'd like to congratulate them for their awards, but also thank them, as well as Cathy and Ida, for their contribution to the mineral industry and to the territory. A lot of Yukoners are working here today due to the success of the White Gold property alone and the staking rush it has sparked, and that contribution is not measured in mere millions of dollars but, rather, in hundreds of millions of dollars in exploration investment now, and interest in the territory.

I would like to again thank Shawn and Cathy and Jerry and Ida for their contributions to the Yukon and to our economy.

Applause

Speaker: Further tributes?
Introduction of visitors.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Mr. Rouble: Yukon is hosting a meeting of the presidents of colleges of Nunavut, Northwest Territories and Yukon. Joining Dr. Terry Weninger in our Assembly today, are Ms. Sarah Wright Cardinal and Mr. Daniel Vandermeulen. Please welcome them.

Applause

Hon. Mr. Rouble: Sarah Wright Cardinal returned to the Northwest Territories in 2003, after working in Central America and Asia for eight years. Sarah is currently the president of Aurora College, which serves the 33 communities of the Northwest Territories by way of three campuses, 23 community learning centres and a research institute.

Daniel Vandermeulen became president of Nunavut Arctic College in 2007.

He is a member to the senate of the University of Alberta, president emeritus of Northern Lake College, and past president of Alberta Vocational College.

Arctic College serves Nunavut across three time zones by offering a variety of programs at three campuses and 24 community learning centres. Together, the territories of the three northern colleges cover over one-third of the geographical area of Canada. The three northern college presidents meet several times a year to develop and coordinate programs and services to help bring a strong educational foundation for the north.

Hon. Mr. Edzerza: I would like to ask the House to help me welcome today, Bonnie Dalziel to the gallery, who is a constituent, an elder and a long-time family friend. Welcome, Bonnie.

I would also like to, once again, welcome my nephew, Jerry Asp, and his wife, Ida. Welcome.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

Any reports of committees?

Any petitions?

Any bills to be introduced?

Any notices of motion?

NOTICES OF MOTION

Mr. Mitchell: Mr. Speaker, I give notice today of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to work cooperatively with the board of governors and president of Yukon College to investigate the feasibility of establishing a comprehensive dental therapy school at Yukon College to encourage aspiring dental professionals to study and work in Yukon.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to reverse the decision it made to cut funding to rural dental programs after March 31, 2011, and to ensure that all Yukon communities are provided with adequate dental care.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to ensure that the chronic conditions support program receives funding on a permanent basis, recognizing that:

(1) the program is now funded through the territorial health access fund that is scheduled to end on March 31, 2012;

(2) the program is the only one of its kind in Yukon;

(3) similar programs across Canada receive funding on a permanent basis;

(4) the diabetes component of the program alone services as many as 1,200 clients each year;

(5) community nurses consider this program to be highly successful;

(6) the program has evolved since 2004 to address diabetes (including education and prevention), chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, hypertension, high cholesterol and depression;

(7) the program works out of a doctor's clinic and has access to a highly skilled team.

Mr. Cardiff: I give notice of the following motion:

THAT it is the opinion of this House that, as the largest financial contributor to Yukon College, the Government of Yukon must:

(1) evaluate the impact of increased tuition fees on lower and middle-income Yukoners, which are to rise 20 percent for the next academic year;

(2) discuss with Yukon College a process on how it consults with students and faculty on tuition fee increases; and

(3) explore options regarding the Yukon grant and bursaries that would allow for adult learners who didn't attend a Yukon high school to attain financial support for post-secondary education.

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

THAT this House urges the Select Committee on Whistle-blower Protection to complete its work and submit a final report to the Legislative Assembly.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Yukon government to develop whistle-blower protection legislation based upon the work of the Select Committee on Whistle-blower Protection once that committee has completed its work and submitted a final report to the Legislative Assembly, and to introduce such legislation to the Legislative Assembly as soon as practical thereafter.

Finally, I give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Official Opposition House Leader to learn from the error he made with Bill No. 112, *Disclosure Protection Act*, and in the future avoid calling proposed legislation for debate when even the member who sponsored it has admitted it is not ready and still needs public consultation.

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: Business nominee program

Mr. McRobb: I have more questions for the Minister of Economic Development on his political interference into the Yukon business nominee program. This program was set up with several checks and balances in place to ensure fairness and compliance with the rules. Yukoners now know the minister was dealing directly with applicants and offering his specific help.

Several weeks ago we asked for information on this program during the annual briefing on the department. That information still has not been provided. We did obtain, through access to information, an e-mail document that demonstrates that checks and balances were ignored by this minister. This document from the minister himself proves he was interfering in the approval process.

So why did the minister choose to politically interfere in the approval process?

Hon. Mr. Kenyon: The member opposite knows very well that there is no interference on this side in these matters. The individual mentioned in the e-mail in fact did not, has not, and, I understand, might likely not in the future apply for the program. It has been carefully explained to the member opposite about how the system works. It works very well. It works independently through the department, quite unlike what the Liberals have said over and over in this House — that they would interfere with boards and committees and such at every opportunity they could. Yukon Party doesn't do that, but the Liberals have made it very clear that they would.

Mr. McRobb: First of all, what we just heard from the minister about our preferences and positions with respect to interference is totally incorrect. Now, this program was set up with several checks and balances to ensure applicants are assessed independently without favouritism or political influence. The document mentioned earlier proves the minister told a potential applicant that he would easily qualify. Apparently there is no need to go through the proper channels. It turns out all an applicant needs to do is send an e-mail to this minister. He has apparently taken on responsibility for deciding who should qualify. The minister went on to invite the individual to contact him if he could be of any specific help.

For the record, can the minister tell us how many times he has interfered in this program?

Hon. Mr. Kenyon: For the member opposite and for the record, zero. It is a process that is completely independent of political direction, as opposed to, on February 4, 2000, when the minutes of the Yukon Housing Corporation Board of Directors inform that they had received direction from the Liberal Cabinet "to involve the corporation in trade and export opportunities". The member opposite is quite aware of the fact that, on many occasions, the very short-lived Liberal government — the shortest lived majority government in the history of the Commonwealth of Nations, and that's a record that is quite impressive — was very clear at every point that they would interfere. We don't do that.

In this particular case, the letter refers to someone who is not, and never has been, an applicant.

Mr. McRobb: This minister continues to give the same old, tired responses — deny, deflect and attack the messenger. Yesterday the minister even attacked the credibility of a reporter who did a story on his interference. It's time for this minister to stand up and take responsibility, be accountable for his own actions, instead of attacking others.

But what does he do? He accuses others of political interference. Shame, Mr. Speaker. Does he not recall when he was forced to publicly apologize to staff in the Advanced Education branch for his political interference in the western vet situation?

This government has issued nine nomination certificates under this program to people wanting to immigrate and set up a business in the Yukon. Just how many of those nine cases did the minister involve himself in?

Hon. Mr. Kenyon: Mr. Speaker, yes, we should go back and look at some of the things that have happened in the past. For instance, on December 12, 2007, I received a letter

from the Leader of the Liberal Party, which asked me, and I quote: "I am asking you to intervene on someone's behalf." We don't do that.

We could also go back, Mr. Speaker, to *Hansard*, November 7, 2001, during that short-lived Liberal government. The Member for Klwane made an interesting statement, and I quote from *Hansard*: "...when you vote Liberal, you're prepared to throw your values out the window; you're prepared to forget everything you have heard, and hang on for the ride and expect darn near anything they'll throw at you, because the decisions will be made in the backroom with their backroom friends."

Mr. Speaker, this is a member who wants to drive the bus? He doesn't even know where it's parked.

Question re: Dental services in rural communities

Mr. Mitchell: The Member for Lake Laberge likes to remind us about all the things that he did while he was Health minister. Well, let's talk about something that he failed to do. In 2007, the current Environment minister raised concerns that communities weren't receiving adequate dental care. The Member for Lake Laberge, the Health minister at that time, assured him that the government was working to find a solution. Since then, little has been done to resolve this. Yesterday we learned that funding for dentists in communities is now being vastly reduced by this government. Since the Member for Klondike has dubbed himself a champion of rural health care, and as the Premier himself stated last week this member, quote: "speaks as a member of Cabinet and member of Management Board", the Member for Klondike should have the authority to respond to this question.

Why does this government think that providing dentists to rural Yukoners is a luxury it can afford to cut?

Hon. Mr. Hart: The Yukon government is continuing to fund the itinerant dental program that ensures dental health services to all rural Yukoners. Four dentists from outside the Yukon receive travel and accommodation funding. Each provides 20 days of service per year to rural Yukon communities. These dentists provide services to all communities but Watson Lake, which is serviced by a Whitehorse dentist.

We are using dentists from outside the territory because Yukon dentists have expressed no interest in travelling to rural communities other than the one who visits Watson Lake.

Mr. Mitchell: Well, so much for the eager advocacy of the Member for Klondike on these issues. Now, one local dentist who has been providing his services to Watson Lake for 30 years said this about this Yukon Party government, quote: "they were cutting all support, and they only gave me two weeks' notice." To add insult to injury, the dentist was then asked to continue to provide his services in a volunteer capacity. Rural Yukoners need and deserve these dental services, but under this government, these services are being cut. \$50 million spent on new hospitals won't replace the services that these Yukoners need. The Yukon Party's idea of a long-term plan for rural health care is to ask professionals to provide services on a volunteer basis. Is this how this government is planning to run all community health services once the federal health care funding dries up?

Hon. Mr. Hart: The dentists are assigned to a community and travel there twice a year, as I indicated previously, spending 10 days in each visit, for a total of 20 days working through dental clinics that Health and Social Services maintains in each community through the Yukon children's dental program.

The Yukon government provides space in which dentists operate and cover their travel and accommodation costs. Dental fees are paid by the patients. It should also be noted that Indian and Northern Affairs Canada opened its own dental program here in Whitehorse to provide services to First Nation residents.

The itinerant dental program costs the Yukon government approximately \$80,000 per year. The services to the Watson Lake patients are provided by the Whitehorse dentist, who rents his own space in that community. We have been assisting, and will continue to assist subsidizing his work in that community. A dentist visits that community twice a year for five days each visit. We pay his expenses to travel to and from the community.

Mr. Mitchell: Somebody ought to try telling the dentist, because apparently that's not what he thinks is happening. As the populations of Dawson City and Watson Lake have increased, health services provided to these areas by this Yukon Party government have steadily decreased. Last month, the Health minister tried to cut mental health services in Yukon communities, until the public outcry forced him to reverse this decision and extend these services for another year.

Now we see this government doesn't have enough funding for community dentists. Health care workers are telling us buildings don't provide health care, people do. Several dentists interviewed in a news article noted that, quote: "there has been a shift over the last few years to reduce services."

Why doesn't this government think that health services like adequate dental care for rural Yukoners is a priority?

Hon. Mr. Fentie: The Liberal leader is talking about reducing services to rural Yukon in communities like Watson Lake and we know what that means — the Liberals do not support the provision of health care facilities in the community of Watson Lake or in the case of Dawson City. So let me just reflect a little bit with the Liberal leader on the realities of how the Yukon Party government has delivered health care. Under the Liberals this would not have happened, but in the last six months, since September 2010 until February 2011, the Watson Lake hospital has had 73 in-patient admissions, 333 in-patient days in total; average length of stay in the hospital, 4.5 days and in addition, 1,501 outpatient visits — that includes emergency, X-ray and laboratory services. This is the Yukon Party delivery of health care in Watson Lake and rural Yukon. The Liberals — these people would have had to travel somewhere else.

Question re: Palliative care program

Ms. Hanson: The Thomson Centre was originally meant for continuing care and palliative care and was designed with those services in mind. Successive ministers of Health and Social Services have promised this. In December 2009, the present minister reiterated that he would soon be opening it for

20 beds of continuing care, and he said that there would be “further rooms for palliative care”.

This promise has been carried along with promises of opening the centre first in September 2010, then February 2011. Now it's May of this year, we hope. But this recent announcement comes with the news that there will not be any palliative care beds when it is opened. When can Yukoners anticipate that the promised palliative care beds will be ready?

Hon. Mr. Hart: As was stated here in the House previously many times, we've had some delays with regard to construction in the Thomson Centre. However, that is moving along. We do anticipate that we will be able to put our first patient into that facility sometime around mid-May of this year. It will take approximately 30 days to ensure that sufficient staff are on hand and that they are accustomed to the area and acclimatized to the Thomson Centre. Once the new patients come in, we'll be phasing them in on a one-at-a-time basis. We do have a waiting list to take care of those individuals in the continuing care. We are very happy to provide that service in the very near future.

Ms. Hanson: Yes, I've heard before from the minister opposite about the continuing care initiative here for May, but what I'm focusing on today is palliative care. My predecessor, the MLA for Whitehorse Centre, courageously talked about death and dying in this House. He said that death gives our life meaning, and that we should remember that death takes the body but not the spirit. He recognized that our society has a lot of denial about death, that much less value is placed on how people die rather than on birthing. Palliative care is about living our last days with medical, practical, emotional and spiritual supports. It can give everyone involved in death a deeper understanding of life. Palliative beds are also used for temporary respite care, to relieve families who are caring for a dying relative at home.

Palliative care is now being provided when necessary in the hospital, which is many times more expensive than a dedicated palliative care facility. Why is the minister continuing to use the more expensive acute care beds when a palliative care approach is less expensive and more effective?

Hon. Mr. Hart: Our top use of the Thomson Centre right now is to provide Yukon citizens who require long-term, high-level care. These individuals are also utilizing valuable hospital space, and we require assistance to provide these individuals with long-term care.

They have, again, a large impact on the health care system and we must provide them with the service. It is also deemed the highest priority to provide those services to them. Health and Social Services does, however, provide a continuum of palliative care services. People who are in continuing care facilities who require palliative care receive it there, and they are able to receive respite care in our long-term facilities. We do have spaces allocated for palliative care clients. Those who are in their own home and can be maintained there do so with the support of the Yukon home care program and the palliative care team. Palliative care is also provided, as the member indicated, at the Whitehorse and Watson Lake hospitals.

Ms. Hanson: I would remind the House that it has been a commitment by this Yukon Party since 2006 that palliative care would be a priority, and the issue of decisions about the Thomson Centre and palliative care are a good example of a lack of planning in health care and elsewhere by this government.

Every year about 200 people die in the Yukon. Some of our friends and relatives are dying without support and care in their last days. Yet this government doesn't appear to accept the vital area of palliative care for those who cannot be in a hospital situation or cannot die at home — it is very important to be dealt with.

The NDP has attempted to have the government face the fact that we cannot continue with the same old ad hoc approaches to services. We've been fortunate in receiving creative ideas and reports from the Auditor General, from health care professionals and from the Yukon public on how they view health care planning and spending. Instead of determining which actions in those reports will be this government's approach to health care, it chooses to turn its back on that good work. Does the minister have the political will to use the palliative care question as a good example —

Speaker: Thank you. Minister responsible, please.

Hon. Mr. Hart: I just indicated that palliative care is provided in the home by our palliative care team. This program was something that was developed under the THAF programming and was done to ensure that we could provide this additional service because it was previously not provided. In addition, it has been determined that, based on the value of this program and services provided by this program, we, the Yukon government, are looking at ensuring that this palliative care team carries on in the future and we will be carrying on with the funding of that palliative care team throughout, regardless of whether the funding comes from the federal government or not.

Question re: Mineral staking within municipal boundaries

Mr. Cardiff: I have a question of the Minister of Community Services. In the past year, the New Democratic Party has drawn the government's attention to potential for conflicts resulting from mining activity within municipal boundaries.

Recently we again raised this issue with respect to mineral exploration drilling planned for the Spruce Hill area of Whitehorse. The City of Whitehorse says that this kind of activity will not be allowed in this area as the land is zoned as a park under the official community plan and city bylaws prohibit drilling in parks. However, the company has said that it has hired a drilling company and this work is supposed to start this month.

What support will the government give the municipality of Whitehorse in its efforts to prevent mineral exploration drilling in a municipal park?

Hon. Mr. Rouble: Mr. Speaker, we have heard a lot of speculation going on in this Assembly; however, the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources has not received, as of yet, any application for a mining land use plan or any type of

approvals. We have discussed on the floor of this Assembly, numerous times, the constraints put on these types of activities by both the *Placer Mining Act* and the *Quartz Mining Act*. We have also discussed a number of times the thresholds for activities that require assessment under the Yukon environmental socio-economic assessment process. As well, we have talked about how municipal bylaws come into play, and the zoning.

It's a bit of a challenge to go on on this topic, because we really are talking about a speculative issue at this time, but I can assure members opposite and the Yukon public that there are appropriate processes, assessments and regulations in place to govern this type of activity.

Mr. Cardiff: I asked the Minister of Community Services what he's going to do to support the City of Whitehorse. The company has made the announcement on their website that they're going to do a drill program and have hired somebody to do it. Residents of Spruce Hill and nearby Golden Horn subdivision are confused and they're concerned. Their property values and quality of life could be negatively impacted if this exploration proceeds. They want to know if the territorial government will stand up for them if the company decides to challenge the city bylaw in the courts. The Minister of Community Services has said in the past that people who feel abandoned or ignored by the territorial government are free to go to court.

Is this what he's telling the people of Spruce Hill and Golden Horn, who do not want to see mining activities in their backyards? That they can go to court?

Hon. Mr. Rouble: I see there continues to be a significant amount of speculation on this issue. I'll remind members opposite that we have not received an application for any type of mining land use permit for this area, and we do have appropriate thresholds for assessment.

That's the whole YESAA process. There are bylaws within the City of Whitehorse that govern activities within the City of Whitehorse. We've heard a number of times that the New Democratic Party is pro-mining, that they believe in mining. But it seems that, while they might believe in mining, they don't believe in helicopters, they don't believe in following the due process around it and they don't believe in working with temporary foreign workers on these issues. They believe in it, but they just don't believe in how to get there.

Mr. Cardiff: Well, the Minister of Community Services failed to answer the question again. I wonder how the Minister of Community Services or, for that matter, the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources, would feel if one day on one morning, they saw a mineral exploration company clearing trees and setting up drill rigs on or near their properties.

We believe in mining, but we don't believe in mining or exploration that violates the rights or other individuals. Under the *Quartz Mining Act*, mining companies can do substantial exploration without applying for a YESAA permit. Class 1 activities allows for a wide range of work from the construction of structures to helicopter pads and even the use of up to 1,000 kilograms of explosives in a month. These kinds of activities should not be allowed in or near residential areas.

Will the Government of Yukon stand up for the rights of private property owners and introduce legislation that will prevent mineral exploration activities in residential areas?

Hon. Mr. Rouble: I'll remind members opposite that the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources has not received any application in order to permit any of these activities. There are thresholds that have to be met and in order to conduct activities throughout the Yukon, whether they fall under the Yukon environmental assessment process or whether they require other permits. I mean, the NDP has stated before that they believe this to be an undeveloped, unregulated and irresponsible industry. That clearly is not the case. We clearly have strong regulations in place. There is legislation on our books and we will continue to work with industry, to work with Yukoners to assure that we have responsible industrial growth in the territory, that we create and foster an environment that encourages economic development in the territory, one that continues to ensure that Yukon is an attractive place to live, an attractive place to raise a family, an attractive place to see a future and a great place to live all the way around.

Question re: Advertising by government

Mr. Elias: There has been a lot of talk about the massive advertising budget the federal Conservatives have given themselves. Here's a government tarnished by its constant partisan activities. Here's a government facing an imminent election. Here's a government that is spending \$26 million of taxpayers' dollars on advertising, trying to regain the public's favour. It's not hard to see why Yukoners have noticed a striking resemblance when this Yukon Party government has been buying up a lot of ad space lately too.

How much Yukon taxpayers' money is being spent on partisan advertising, leading up to the next territorial election?

Hon. Mr. Fentie: What the government does, as all governments do — and the members opposite, should they ever seek again and achieve getting the office, will do — is make sure the public is informed. One mechanism of informing the public, of course, is through advertisements. It's always an important factor that we present to our public — information by whatever means possible — and this is one of them, debate in this House — so we inform our public and they understand what is really going on in the territory.

Unfortunately, we've also had to use mechanisms outside of this House for that purpose, because we can't seem to get the opposition to debate realistic, relevant issues. They tend to want to debate the way they pontificate their opinion, and that's not what we're here for.

We are here to represent the public interest and this is one mechanism to ensure that the public interest is being met and the public understands that.

Mr. Elias: If the Premier really wanted to inform the public, the ads would have said: two deficits in a row, thanks Yukon Party. All one has to do is read the newspapers, watch the television and listen to the radio to realize that this Yukon Party has begun its election campaign with taxpayers' dollars. The Yukon public is paying the price for this government's election campaign. Every part of this ad blitz is a personal ad for the Yukon Party, and Yukoners have taken notice. If the

Premier really wanted to communicate with the public, he would not have cancelled the community budget consultation tour. They had a plan, a very partisan plan.

When is the Yukon Party government going to pay back taxpayers every penny for this partisan ad blitz?

Hon. Mr. Fentie: In the first place, these aren't personal ads at all. They are, by way of departments and government agencies, presenting to the public information so that our public is informed. Maybe, when it comes to paying back the taxpayers, we could consider the opposition in this matter, given the fact that they committed to the public some weeks ago that they would be using this sitting to lay out their plan to present to Yukoners where they would take Yukoners into the future, and obviously that hasn't happened.

So maybe we should consider some payback to the Yukon taxpayer. That is what appears to be a bit of a misrepresentation.

Question re: Business nominee program

Mr. McRobb: I'd like to return to the matter of the Minister of Economic Development's interference in the Yukon business nominee program. The minister seems to be having trouble understanding where the line is when it comes to his level of involvement in this program. Yesterday, the minister admitted he interfered, yet then said he did nothing wrong. When the minister received an inquiry about the program, he should have simply turned it over to the department for them to deal with. Instead, he offered his opinion that the applicant would easily qualify. Those were his words. He also offered to provide specific help with the application. Why didn't the minister simply stay out of it, as he's supposed to do?

Hon. Mr. Kenyon: It's an interesting tactic — the Member for Kluane likes to say that things happened when, in fact, they didn't — such as saying that I admitted that I interfered. I certainly did not. If the member opposite would actually read the document he had, it gave a website, which provides the information needed.

I know the member opposite knows how to use a computer — God knows he has Googled enough public employees and put enough accusations here on the floor about government employees as a result of his Googling. Perhaps he should actually look at the government website and begin to understand what the program is and how it operates.

We're happy to explain that to him at any time but, of course, that is dependent upon him understanding it.

Mr. McRobb: Again it's evident the Yukon Party's response to public accountability is to deny, deflect and attack. It is increasingly obvious this minister has no idea where the line is. He interfered politically in the application process for the Yukon business nominee program, yet stands up in this House and claims he did the right thing — unbelievable.

Instead of being open and accountable and admitting what he did was wrong, the minister has chosen to once again attack the messenger and the media for raising the issue. So why does the minister think it's acceptable to tell officials in his department which applicants to the program would easily qualify?

Hon. Mr. Kenyon: For the member opposite, who seems to like these little alliterations, I go back to *Hansard*

during the second reading in the 30th Legislature and I quote: "Shelve, postpone, delay — that's the Liberal way."

Obviously, when the member opposite was ousted from the NDP caucus — and I do compliment the NDP caucus on that decision — there was reasonable reason for that because he also said during the Orders of the Day in the 30th Legislature and again I quote, referring to the Liberals: "...they raise expectations of Yukoners that there will be better decorum in this Legislature, but they're the worst offenders."

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Hon. Mr. Kenyon: The nattering by the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin off microphone right now is a good example of that. This is —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Hon. Mr. Kenyon: And he's again nattering away. What a marvelous example of decorum in this House. I do wish that he, or the leader of the party, would get their members under control in terms of decorum. They're all in it together and if the Leader of the Official Opposition, the Leader of the Liberal Party, can't control his own members — good Lord. Can you imagine him in charge?

Speaker's statement

Speaker: Before the honourable member asks this final supplementary, honourable members, the nature of a contentious debate is fair and fine.

However, individual members must refrain from accusing each other; attack the parties and policies, but not the individuals.

Member for Kluane, you have the floor.

Mr. McRobb: My colleagues and I are calling on the minister simply to answer these questions. Now I am sure Yukoners are very interested in their Premier's response to this situation. This is another clear case of the Minister of Economic Development politically interfering, yet the Premier has nothing to say about it. We know the Premier had to intervene when this same minister crossed the line, such as when he ordered the Minister of Economic Development, who accused officials of having a political agenda, to apologize to those officials in the Department of Education. In fact, his apology said he admitted to having broken with accepted protocol and convention in the criticism and was absolutely wrong in attaching motive and blame to the department and its employees.

Once again this minister has put officials in a difficult position —

Speaker: Thank you. You're done.

Hon. Mr. Kenyon: Again, if the member opposite would actually read the letter, it was in response to a lawyer asking for information, giving him the information, and copying the deputy minister and the director of the relevant department.

This is what we do. Any minister has to respond that way. Again, going back earlier when the Leader of the Liberal Party wrote a letter that asked me, as minister responsible for housing, to directly intervene with the board of directors. We don't do that. The member opposite continues to leave not a stump

unturned and sweeps Antarctica for anything he can find. Mr. Speaker, even the catering truck is false.

Speaker: The time for Question Period how now elapsed. We'll proceed to Orders of the Day.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

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

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

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. 24, *First Appropriation Act, 2011-12*. We will begin general debate on the Department of Environment, Vote 52.

Do members wish a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

Chair: Order please.

Bill No. 24: *First Appropriation Act, 2011-12* — continued

Chair: The matter before the Committee is Bill No. 24, *First Appropriation Act, 2011-12*. We will now proceed with general debate in Vote 52, Department of Environment.

Department of Environment

Hon. Mr. Edzerza: It's an honour and a privilege, I would say, to be able to debate the Environment budget today. I'd like to acknowledge and thank all the staff in the Department of Environment, as it is a very important department within government and I would say probably within the global — as a whole. I know there is an awful lot of work that has been done in the department over the past nine years that I'm aware of.

Environment is something that is more or less a responsibility of every citizen within the territory and beyond.

I like to share a lot of my traditional knowledge with members of the department and with citizens of the territory, as traditional knowledge does play an important part in looking after the environment. In some cases, there tends to be cultural clashes here and there with traditional knowledge versus the conventional methods of doing things.

When I say Mother Earth is a provider, I also want to state very clearly that it is also the responsibility of anyone who uses Mother Earth to respect Mother Earth and to also repair dam-

ages that may be done while taking advantage of what Mother Earth provides. I know there has been a lot of criticism around areas of mining and logging, for example, but it's also a known fact that humans on this planet have become conditioned to a lot of luxuries that are provided by Mother Earth.

One would have to ask which individual is willing to give up those luxuries in order to stop the progress of mining, logging or whatever. I would tend to believe that probably no one and, if anyone, there would probably be very few, who would say they are no longer going to take a plane to go to Vancouver — they're going to walk, for example. I think very few would say they are no longer going to drive a vehicle because they can't tolerate the minerals being taken out of the ground or the gas and oil produced that provides the means of being able to operate these luxuries.

I think, quite frankly, the day has sort of come to an end and that people in the Yukon probably have to think twice about saying there is going to be no development in my backyard per se. I know there are some criticisms from some of the opposition members about individuals coming to the Yukon, for example, for employment. Well, I myself, for one, have had to move south in the past to seek employment. I did find employment for several years, but I came back to the Yukon when things picked up a little.

I believe that now, with all of the action that's happening in the territory, it's kind of rewarding to be able to return the favour to some of those from the south who are seeking employment. With the amount of mining activity that is going on, I'm quite certain — in fact, I'm only 100-percent certain that the Yukon does not have the capacity to provide all of the expertise that's needed to run a mine. It's rather nice to be able to be in a position today where the Yukon can contribute to other citizens across Canada who are seeking employment to provide for their families. So, it's a positive thing. It's not something to look at from a negative perspective.

I would like to move on now to talk about some of the progress within the Environment department because, again, we've heard some criticisms from the opposition that there's not much happening in Environment and hasn't been over the past nine years of Yukon Party government.

On that basis, I will put on the record a few accomplishments the Yukon Party has had over the years. For example, 70 percent of the overall budget this year is dedicated to environmental sustainability — over \$2 million for fish, wildlife and plan inventories and biodiversity work. We budgeted \$2.2 million for remediating contaminated sites owned by the Yukon government. The major undertaking this year is for the north Klondike River highway maintenance camp at kilometre 65.1 of the Dempster Highway.

\$1.9 million is for the animal research and rehabilitation centre at the Yukon Wildlife Preserve — again, a very important attraction for outsiders to come to the Yukon and enjoy.

The Climate Change Secretariat is currently working on 33 actions identified in the *Climate Change Action Plan*. Yukon has over 12 percent of land protected, second only to British Columbia. There's an investment of more than \$500,000 annu-

ally in recycling and waste-reduction efforts in all Yukon communities.

We are spending \$233,000 for erosion mitigation and bank stabilization at Swan Haven over the next two years. Once this project is completed, it will enhance the viewing and safety for the public and staff at Swan Haven. We have allocated \$252,000 for the coming year to establish a new conservation officer services office in Carmacks.

The Marwell tar pit remediation project is estimated to cost \$6.8 million. Canada will fund \$4.76 million; the remaining 30 percent of the cost will be funded primarily through the territorial northern strategy trust fund. The project is expected to be completed in 10 years. I mentioned earlier that 12 percent of our land is protected, second only to B.C.

Since Yukon Party has been in office and since 2002, our government has added a large number of protected areas. These include the Tombstone Territorial Park established in 2004; Old Crow Flats east and west Special Management Area, established in 2006; the Lhutsaw Wetland Habitat Protection Area, established in 2007; Fishing Branch Wilderness Reserve established in 2003; Nordenskiöld Wetland Habitat Protection Area established in 2010; the Asi Keyi Natural Environment Park identified in 2003; Fishing Branch Ecological Preserve, established in 2003; the Kusawa Natural Environment Park, identified in 2005; the Pickhandle Lake Habitat Protection Area, identified in 2003; Tagish River Habitat Protection Area, identified in 2005; the Agay Mene Natural Environment Park, identified in 2005; and Lewes Marsh Habitat Protection Area, identified in 2005. As one can see, a lot of protected areas have been established within the Yukon since this government took office.

I would also like to now go to some dialogue on the Yukon government's action on climate change because this has also been brought up several times, and we do have an awful lot of action happening within this area.

For example, I'll talk about some of the things that are ongoing and some of the things that are completed. We have conducted treatment to reduce forest fuel loads and protect communities. This is ongoing — \$254,000, conducted over the last two winters, to treat a total of 86 hectares around communities in southwest Yukon. Forestry worked collaboratively with Champagne and Aishihik First Nations to ensure \$350,000 for the northern strategy trust fund and \$150,000 for Energy, Mines and Resources to continue treatment over the next three years. The Yukon government's internal operations: cap greenhouse gas emissions in 2010, reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 20 percent by 2015, and become carbon-neutral by 2020. Again, this is ongoing — on track to report energy and fuel use and calculate cap for Yukon government's emission for 2010.

Also, a report on Yukon government operations through the climate registry: we will have the first annual report in mid-2011; joined the climate registry as a reporting member; held a training course on how to report emissions; and worked closely with departments to ensure all required data is collected. Develop a carbon offset policy for internal operations — again, this ongoing — and is included in the long-term workplan in order to meet the commitment to be carbon-neutral by 2020.

The government also funded new residential construction to meet greenhouse energy efficiency standards — again, this is ongoing. Mortgage loans through the owner-build or home ownership program require residential construction to meet the GreenHome standards — Energy Guide 80; all new construction being undertaken by Yukon Housing Corporation directly is built to the new SuperGreen standard, Energy Guide 85.

The government-funded commercial and institutional construction and renovations will meet or exceed the LEED-certified standards for energy efficiency. Again, this is ongoing. There are energy audits to determine baseline data for current energy use, in order to identify next steps to improve energy efficiency.

Also, improving energy efficiency to reduce the greenhouse gas emissions of the government's light-vehicle fleet again is ongoing — fleet replacement with higher fuel efficiency vehicles, including the recent purchase of 25 compact SUVs with a higher miles-per-gallon or L-100 kilometre rating than the vehicles being replaced.

We also have an environment stewardship initiative for the Department of Education and Yukon schools — again, this is ongoing. A consultant has completed a review of best practices, current ES practices in Yukon schools and recommendations for education. An environmental stewardship coordinator is in place.

We're also to establish green action committees in all departments. Again, this is ongoing. The GACs are to be established in Environment, Executive Council Office, Tourism and Culture, Energy, Mines and Resources, Highways and Public Works, Education, Justice and WBC. We're also to conduct an energy analysis of all Yukon government buildings and complete energy savings retrofits. Again, that's ongoing.

In the workplan for 2010-11, there is \$300,000 in the budget for energy management, including lighting and retrofit pilot projects. We also have developed best management practices for industry to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Again, this is ongoing. Research and background information gathering is underway. Work will begin on new best practices for 2011 for oil and gas.

We're also to undertake an extensive study of the transportation sector and recommend options to reduce emissions. Again, this is ongoing. Available transportation information and data has been examined, which promoted an initial focus on Yukon government travel to ESC work. Transportation is an important consideration in setting a Yukon-wide emission target and will be examined during the process.

We also are to develop incentives for fuel-efficient transportation. Again, this is ongoing. This includes working with Norcan to encourage fuel efficiency by promoting efficient driving practices among commercial-class drivers; federal registry action on fuel economy standards will assist in emissions reduction in the long term.

I can go on at much greater length about all of the things that are happening within Environment. I know a lot of the action plans have already been completed. But I will sort of close off today with the Yukon government action on climate change and a status update.

Total projects included in *Climate Change Action Plan* were 33; projects completed are five. Projects expected to be completed by March 31, 2011 — 6; ongoing projects — 22; the number of climate change actions tracked which are not specifically listed on the climate change action plan are 10; projects completed for an ongoing project — 6. Like I said earlier, I can go on at much greater length. I have much more information with regard to progress within the Environment department over the last nine years. But I will close here and accept questions from the opposition.

Mr. Elias: It's a pleasure again to rise in the House to debate the Department of Environment. I thank the minister for his opening remarks. I'm going to get right to it here, because we only have a few days left in this sitting and we have a number of departments to get into. I see a need for a Yukon Territory water strategy. I know we've talked about this in the House before. I'm just worried about what I'm not seeing, I guess. Is some public consultation going on — interjurisdictional public discussion with regard to the territory's water strategy?

There are a number of jurisdictions across our country — I'll use Manitoba as an example — that have a provincial-wide water strategy. It's under the stewardship of the Minister of Environment in that province.

I do see a need for it in our territory. How I view a water management strategy being developed — it's not going to be done quickly, and it is not going to be cheap because there are so many aspects within our territory about looking after our water and being good stewards of our water from now to 100 years from now. Right from — you know, the four hydrological zones that we have in our territory — the Arctic zone: the northern zone, north interior, south interior, and the glacial. We all know about Canada's Water Week that we are celebrating this week in our country and in our territory, right from the glaciers that feed spawning salmon grounds to potable surface drinking water to potable ground drinking water to eco-system health to a lot of the protected area wetlands health throughout our territory that the minister alluded to — and that we are all very well aware of and proud of in our territory — to all of the wildlife and fish that use these special places in our territory.

I think there is a need for us to develop this comprehensive territorial water strategy so that future generations can have a template to deal with issues that come up, whether it be mining, development of any sort in our territory, an increase of human population, or the disappearance of fish habitat. So, to me, this is a significant endeavour.

I'll give the minister an opportunity to elaborate on whether any public consultation has been done, what the process is for this strategy to be developed — because we have chapter 14, I believe, in the *Umbrella Final Agreement*, which is to deal with water. We have the Water Board, we have various governments — municipal, federal, First Nation and territorial — that have jurisdiction over water. It's a big task. I'll give the minister an opportunity to elaborate on what has been done. When is the public going to be formally engaged in this strategy? I think I'll leave it at that for now. I'll just await the minister's response on the process, the timeline and the costs of

developing a territorial water strategy for the citizens of our territory.

Hon. Mr. Edzerza: I thank the member for this opportunity to talk about a water strategy within the Yukon Territory. At the present time, the management framework — which is an internal process — has been approved. Environment Yukon, with support from Executive Council Office and the departments of Health and Social Services, Energy, Mines and Resources, Community Services, Highways and Public Works and Economic Development, is considering how to develop a water strategy for the Yukon at present. When a water strategy is developed, it will include not only Yukon government departments responsible for water management, but will seek input from other government agencies with water management responsibilities and the public. A Yukon water strategy can help confirm the Yukon government's key priorities for future water management and it will keep the Yukon government in step with its federal and provincial partners by demonstrating the priority it places on its waters and the actions it will take to ensure its wise management.

Mr. Elias: I'm going to be asking some specific questions for awhile here. I might as well start with bison, I guess. My understanding is the target population for the bison herd in our territory was to be 550. Over a couple of years now, we've been getting concerns from Yukoners with regard to that population and we're getting asked: is it out of control? Is the only tool that the minister is using to keep the bison population under control harvesting, hunting? Could he provide the House some information with regard to where the management of our bison herd is at, and what the population is now? And we'll go from there.

Hon. Mr. Edzerza: The estimated population of the bison to date is 1,150 animals. Environment Yukon has been using an adaptive management approach to managing bison harvest with an aim of reducing the size of the Aishihik herd. The harvest regime this season has been developed cooperatively with the local First Nations and renewable resource councils and is in response to requests by local residents and bison hunters. Environment Yukon forwarded a new bison management plan to the Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board in late 2010. The board will carry out public consultation on the plan later this year. At the present time, the focus has been mainly on local harvesting.

Mr. Elias: I did have some questions about the *Climate Change Action Plan*, but the minister did cover a lot of ground there with regard to the 33 targets or actions within the *Climate Change Action Plan*, so I'll leave those specific questions for another day.

I have another specific question. I realize there has been another community tour with regard to the wolf conservation plan and an update of that plan. I realize it's still underway but this is something that Yukoners have been talking about with regard to that new wolf conservation plan. Can the minister provide the House with some of the things he has been hearing so far? In talking with Yukoners, I've been hearing a vast array of ideas and issues out there with regard to the development of a new wolf conservation plan for the territory. I was going to

mention a specific meeting but I won't do that. Anyway, if the minister could give an update on what he has been hearing so far on the wolf conservation management plan, that would be good.

Hon. Mr. Edzerza: Similar to the member opposite's comment, we have been doing a full range of issues with regard to wolves. At the present time the Yukon government and the Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board have agreed to conduct a review of the 1992 wolf conservation and management plan. The review will assess what components of the plan have been achieved and the public's acceptability of a wolf management strategy. The review of the plan began last October and is expected to be completed by June 2011. To date, the schedule for the community consultations is as follows: Beaver Creek was on February 17; Burwash Landing was February 18; Teslin was February 22; Haines Junction was February 28; Watson Lake was March 2; Old Crow was March 8; Carmacks will be April 11; Pelly Crossing is April 12; Mayo is April 13; Faro is April 18; Ross River is April 18; Dawson is April 19; Tagish is April 27; Carcross is April 27; and Whitehorse is April 28.

So, as one can see, the extensive public consultation that's taking place is probably going to give the department and the Fish and Wildlife Management Board a pretty good feel for what a lot of the citizens in the territory have to say with regard to wolf conservation.

Mr. Elias: I guess I'll delve a little deeper into the wolf conservation management plan. I guess it's about process. Could the minister go over some detail of the process that the department is going through? Is this going to be a government-to-government, with the First Nations, consultation — with all the local renewable resource offices? Is the end goal some type of regulation change or to solve a problem?

I've been hearing things from all over the territory about putting bounties on wolves, to increasing trapping education, to — I forget the scientific name for the process, but it's an issue with regard to wolf populations, especially when they start coming into towns and consuming people's pets.

Could the minister elaborate on what his department's process is? Is there an objective? Is there going to be a regulation change? Is it going to be a submission to the Fish and Wildlife Management Board to do their process or is this a department process on its own?

Hon. Mr. Edzerza: A working group comprised of Yukon government and the Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board has developed a process for how renewable resources renewable resources councils, First Nations, stakeholders and the public can be engaged in the review of the plan.

The review of the plan will consider lessons learned from Yukon's wolf and ungulate management programs in the Finlayson, Aishihik, Southern Lakes and Chisana areas, along with other relevant information.

The board and the department will complete consultations, at which time the board will then make recommendations to the minister.

Mr. Elias: In the minister's opening remarks, he mentioned special management areas and other protected areas

around the territory. I am somewhat aware of the special management areas that have been finalized and some of the protected areas that are still outstanding, and the latter is what I am interested in.

Can the minister inform the House with regard to how many finalizations of special management areas, through the various First Nation final agreements, are still outstanding, and if there are any other land use plan protected areas that are still outstanding? It's basically about special management areas that are close to being finalized, whether it be with First Nation governments or the initiatives of the minister's department.

Hon. Mr. Edzerza: The ones that are still outstanding and presently being worked on are the Asi Keyi Natural Environment Park, the Kusawa Natural Environment Park, the Pickhandle Lake Habitat Protection Area, Tagish River Habitat Protection Area, the Agay Mene Natural Environment Park and the Lewes Marsh Habitat Protection Area. Again, all of these are actively in discussions at the present time.

Mr. Elias: Can the minister give an update on how the — I think the initial name of the small protected area within the *North Yukon Regional Land Use Plan* was the Whitefish Lakes. I'm not exactly sure what the name of it was in the plan. But it's in north Yukon. It's part of the approved *North Yukon Regional Land Use Plan*. I believe there was supposed to be some sort of designation, but that wasn't finalized yet. Can the minister give the House an update on that — whether it's a negotiation or however that goal in the plan is going to be achieved?

Hon. Mr. Edzerza: The Yukon government is reviewing boundary and designation options of a Summit Lake–Bell River protected area. One of the key recommendations of the *North Yukon Regional Land Use Plan* was protection of this area. Yukon government will work closely with First Nations to reach agreement on the final boundaries and designations.

The Yukon government completed the ecological, archeological and geological framework in the study area in the summer of 2010. This information will help determine the appropriate boundaries and designation for the protected area. Various departments within Environment, Tourism and Culture, Highways and Public Works and Energy, Mines and Resources are working together to develop a proposal for discussion with First Nations in 2011. First Nations involved include Vuntut Gwitchin and the Gwich'in Tribal Council.

Mr. Elias: I thank the minister for that response. Is the spruce bark beetle problem still considered an infestation by the minister's department?

Hon. Mr. Edzerza: Mr. Chair, this question falls more under Energy, Mines and Resources. The issue must be assessed in forest management, so I think the minister responsible for Energy, Mines and Resources would have a lot more information with regard to this issue.

Mr. Elias: I think the little buggers ate themselves out of house and home. I retract that if I'm not supposed to say "bugger".

It's my understanding that the minister's department submitted, I believe, 11 recommendations to the Fish and Wildlife Management Board last year so they could go through their public processes and come up with a recommendation. Can the

minister provide to the House what those department issues were that they submitted to the Fish and Wildlife Management Board? Why did they submit them, or what problem does the department hope to solve by going through this public process, the Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board?

Hon. Mr. Edzerza: The Yukon government is presently reviewing recommendations from the Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board that were subject to the board's public participation requirement set out in chapter 16 of the final agreements. All recommendations and decisions of the board are to be kept in confidence until the decision process under chapter 16 is complete or the time for the process has expired. At the present time, those recommendations are kept in confidence.

Mr. Elias: Where do I go from here? I mentioned this question in Question Period, when was it — yesterday? A couple of days ago maybe. It's about the Mackenzie Valley gas project. As we all know, the National Energy Board and the federal Conservative Cabinet have approved this project to go.

Now, the decision time is 2013 for the industry to actually make a decision. I know that the Yukon government was granted intervenor status and travelled to Yellowknife and submitted testimony to the National Energy Board in Yellowknife.

I guess some of the concerns that I have been hearing with regard to this megaproject, if it does go ahead, is that a major transportation route — this is just one aspect of it — is going to be the Dempster Highway. One example that was brought to my attention was that, when drilling in the oil and gas industry happens, they need a very strong chemical that is a lubricant for the drills. In the area that this individual was aware of, one of the tanker trucks carrying this chemical overturned in a river and it really devastated that fish population in that river.

That's just one aspect of getting prepared for this on the environmental front. The other one is the increased traffic on the Dempster Highway and all of the tourism impacts, the fish and wildlife impacts, cultural impacts and socioeconomic impacts. This is a huge megaproject.

From the environmental standpoint, what was the minister's submission to the National Energy Board on behalf of Yukoners?

Hon. Mr. Edzerza: The Department of Environment has no separate submission. Environment works through Energy, Mines and Resources on oil and gas issues and Energy, Mines and Resources represents all of Yukon. The Environment department will be part of enforcing environmental regulations and rules.

Mr. Elias: I guess I am going to have to say that I expected a better answer from the minister on that aspect, because these types of megaprojects have to be managed very carefully if we're to maximize the benefits and minimize the potential harmful effects of such a huge project for our territory.

We do have a lot of work to do. We do have a lot of departments to get into. I appreciate the minister's officials who are here today providing him with assistance and, again, I'm going to turn this over to the Third Party for their input into the debate. Again I thank everyone within the Department of Envi-

ronment for their hard work; it's always a pleasure to participate in the debate for the environment. I can't say enough because I know how much hard work it is to achieve the objectives and goals in each and every community in our territory, as well as the individual work goals of all the employees within departments. Again, I thank each and every one of the officials and thank the minister for his answers today. I think that's all I have until we go line by line.

Hon. Mr. Edzerza: Mr. Chair, I would just like to state for the record that all departments will work together to resolve these big issues. No one department can really expect to accomplish that on its own. It's a joint effort between several departments within government.

Ms. Hanson: Mr. Chair, I thank the minister for his opening comments. I recognize that, at the outset, he spoke about his responsibilities and our responsibilities for the care of Mother Earth. I remind him that he has a very special responsibility, having been vested with both the honour and responsibility of being the Minister of Environment. One of the objectives of his department is that he is charged with strengthening the Yukon government's vision to maintain and enhance the Yukon's natural environment for present and future generations.

Mr. Chair, from the Yukon NDP perspective, it is an honour to speak to Environment, and it's not "the environment or the economy" from our point of view.

I think we have to be ensuring that everything that we do in this territory does strengthen the Yukon government's vision to maintain and enhance our natural environment for present and future generations. I'll be approaching the questions I raise with the minister today from the perspective of both the objectives set out by the minister and his department, hopefully focusing on the objective data and comments that are contained in a number of documents provided by the department and this government.

So I'd like to focus, first of all, on the stated departmental objective of ensuring that all legislative and regulatory initiatives intended to safeguard Yukon's environment and natural resources remain relevant through the ongoing delivery of effective education, monitoring and enforcement programs.

Now, we have had an opportunity in previous conversations — the minister and I — to talk a little bit about some of the issues arising from the September 2010 government audit of the Department of Environment.

I'd like to look to those issues raised in the context of the 2011-12 budget and the intended actions of the Minister of Environment to address those that have not yet been addressed through his leadership as the minister.

The first recommendation from the audit was that the Department of Environment should ensure that it meets the legislated timelines for the Yukon conservation strategy and the Yukon state of the environment report. We've noted that section 48(1) of the *Environment Act* requires that the minister submit to the Legislative Assembly a Yukon state of the environment report within three years of the date of the previous report. I think it is now recognized that that hasn't been done. Let me put it this way: the time frames have not been met. We

do have a state of environment report — interim report, environmental indicators from 2007 — which was tabled on May 12, 2008. We would have expected, with the normal three-year cycle, that the last one would have been done sometime in 2010.

Could the minister inform us if we should expect to see the 2010 report in 2011?

Hon. Mr. Edzerza: In response to the member opposite, the 2008 Yukon state of environment full report is complete and will be tabled before the end of this sitting. Data in the report is drawn from several agencies and organizations. It often requires up to 24 months to complete and analyze their data before making it available for other users. This is why the current state of environment report is for 2008.

Ms. Hanson: Just to clarify — the minister is indicating the 2008 report will be tabled this spring?

Hon. Mr. Edzerza: That's correct, Mr. Chair.

Ms. Hanson: That is good to hear. I now understand the rationale for that. One of the things that is useful about this process, I think, I hope, is the rationale for why there is an apparent delay becomes more clear.

Recommendation 2 talked about the review. They reported that critical parts of the *Environment Act*, such as parts 5 and 6, were no longer being used by the government. There was a suggestion, and we have talked about this before and I'm coming back to it because, when I asked the minister about a review of the *Environment Act*, I got a response that in fact there had been a workplan developed by his department in March 2009. I asked him at the time for a copy of that. We have not received that.

I would like the minister to then set out for us, with a view to understanding what the intentions of the minister are. His officials are clearly diligent in preparing the workplan, which would outline the suggested steps for undergoing an official review and revision of the act. My understanding is that he has that. What is the trigger for the minister with respect to initiating the official process for updating and reviewing the *Environment Act*? When will he give the direction?

Hon. Mr. Edzerza: The department is aware of the need to update the *Environment Act*. In March 2009, the Department of Environment commissioned a third party evaluation of the act. The report looked specifically at the impact of legislative and administrative changes since 1992 and how these have affected the *Environment Act*. It is clear that the *Environment Act* requires updating to reflect the results of devolution, the passing of the *Yukon Environment and Socio-economic Assessment Act* and the many First Nation final agreements that have been agreed to since 1992. The department is developing a workplan outlining the suggested steps for undergoing an official review and revision of the act in the future.

Ms. Hanson: Another recommendation had to do with the issue of contaminated sites, and it says that the Department of Environment should review its policy for designated contaminated sites to ensure that it complies with the contaminated sites regulations and is meeting the fairness crite-

ria and the government's responsibilities with respect to prevention of environmental harm and freedom of information.

I think the minister would agree we have come a long way in terms of environmental consciousness compared to the past. We all know that various governments — federal and territorial — have made mistakes in the past. I think the minister alluded to this at the outset — that we've tended, at times, to treat the environment — the lakes and the land — like we own them and have used toxic solutions without knowing the end results. That's why it's important to know where these contaminated sites are.

Under section 114(2) of the *Environment Act*, the minister does have the power to designate a contaminated site. This audit report of September 2010 says that in 2008 — this is almost two and a quarter years ago — the department agreed that the concept of a public registry of contaminated sites should not be necessarily restricted to those sites that were formally designated by the minister, but that it was in the public interest to list additional sites that have substantial contamination. The status as of September 2010 was that the public register remains with only five original designated sites.

Now the audit goes on to say that the department has done a large amount of work on the records of contaminated sites to the point where the number of files for contaminated sites now totals around 500. The intention remains to identify from this large number those sites that warrant designation by the minister, or at least warrant disclosure in the public registry.

The question I have for the minister: does the minister have plans — and can he outline them — over the course of this next fiscal year to disclose more information to the public on contaminated sites via the public registry? I raise this because it is important for many purposes, not the least of which is for people planning activities throughout the Yukon.

Hon. Mr. Edzerza: The answer is yes. We are working on the designated sites. We will be releasing them throughout the time period ahead.

Ms. Hanson: Could I push for a little bit more precision from the minister here? What my question was — because we are focusing on fiscal year 2011-12 — is it the intention of the minister to see, since this data has been compiled over the last number of years, what proportion of this information with respect to the 500 sites would be made available in fiscal 2011-12?

Hon. Mr. Edzerza: This is an ongoing working process and we did work on the biggest site, which was the upper tank farm. The rest will follow, Mr. Chair.

Ms. Hanson: The rest will follow this year?

Hon. Mr. Edzerza: This is an ongoing work in progress and one can appreciate that 500 is an awful lot of sites. All I can report to the member opposite is that the department will consistently work on this issue and we'll report progress as it takes place.

Ms. Hanson: The audit also speaks to a number of areas around monitoring and the issues of permitting and enforcement in the resource-based sector. Energy, Mines and Resources, it says, should develop an inspection process — to which I know the minister will say that's their responsibility —

but the key thing the audit speaks to is that those inspection processes should meet the requirements of the *Environment Act*.

We have had previous conversations in this Chamber — the minister and I — with respect to how that is playing out and how it's working. I would like to just come back to this with the minister and ask him to update for the record the progress that's being made with respect to the memorandums of understanding that have been signed between Environment and Energy, Mines and Resources, transferring the duties of water inspections and monitoring to Energy, Mines and Resources. The example used with respect to memorandums of understanding — though I understand there may be other ones — but the one I am aware of is with Minto. When does the current memorandum of understanding expire? When will it be renewed? Has this transfer been evaluated and, based on that evaluation, is it working?

Essentially, when we ask if it's working, we mean: is the minister satisfied that his responsibilities and obligations as the Minister of Environment are being carried out by another minister?

Hon. Mr. Edzerza: Mr. Chair, the department is satisfied with the work that Energy, Mines and Resources is doing. The review process is ongoing, and we do have a joint training review and renewal process of the memorandum of understanding.

Ms. Hanson: I would like to ask the minister if the review and the evaluation of this provides him with the assurance that he, as the Minister of Environment, would want. Does he have copies of those evaluations available?

Hon. Mr. Edzerza: No, we don't. Not at this time, because it is, as I mentioned earlier, a work in progress.

Ms. Hanson: Does the minister intend to establish evaluation frameworks, so that he will know when it's completed and what is evaluated?

Hon. Mr. Edzerza: The department has a risk-management system in place and uses an evaluation framework for all of the major projects underway.

Ms. Hanson: An area — again going back to the minister's stated objectives for the department — is integrating, implementing and managing authorities and responsibility in water resources and environmental management. That is one of those areas with a continuing expansion of scope. As we look to the very near future with the expansion of activities throughout this territory, in every region of this territory, due to both mining exploration activity and actual mine development, can the minister outline for us what the anticipated staffing needs in Environment are in order to ensure the environment — the area he stewards on behalf of all Yukoners — is safeguarded as per his requirements under the act? For his mandate as Minister of Environment, as we move and develop our industrial side, have they done anticipated staffing requirements over the next three to five years?

Hon. Mr. Edzerza: The department is working with Energy, Mines and Resources and other affected departments on just how to meet the challenges that they are being faced with in the future.

Ms. Hanson: I think I'll move back to the audit because it doesn't sound like I'm going to get the kind of precision that I was looking for there.

The minister made reference in his opening remarks to work that the department is doing — and it sounds like it is good work — with respect to climate change and environmental standards. I'd like to come back to that if I could, because the audit said the Yukon government should take the necessary steps to more visibly or overtly demonstrate compliance with section 39 of the *Environment Act*. Section 39(1)(c) calls for standards for conservation of the environment and sustainable development to be incorporated in the Government of Yukon's purchasing policies.

It goes on to elaborate that they noted in their 2008 audit, they weren't able to find any specific reference to standards for conservation of the environment and sustainable development. But in the September 2010 audit, they also said they could not find any references or sections within the policies that we would consider being a clear demonstration of conformance with section 39(1). They said they were given numerous examples where the government has advanced the philosophy of green procurement, but they were not yet in a position to verify that this section of the act had been complied with.

It's one thing for us to talk about how it's nice to have a green view, a green thought, or a green philosophy, but if we are going to see serious action as a government and as a territory around greenhouse gas emissions and reductions and seriously addressing the issues of climate change, then we will need to find ways to ensure that there is compliance with the kinds of philosophical tones that we may express in this Legislature.

Other than talking about green policies, what is being done to ensure compliance with section 39(1)(c)? Can the minister outline what those measures are and how they are being implemented?

Again, in terms of a planning framework, do they know now what the status is and what their reduction targets or goals are? If we could — just for this fiscal year, that's fine. If we have a three- to five-year horizon, that would be great.

Hon. Mr. Edzerza: Mr. Chair, in May 2010, we did pass a green procurement policy. With regard to the line of questioning, I believe I already covered a majority of what's being asked, but I also stated that it'll be the middle of 2011 before we can actively come up with the emissions cap.

As well, the Yukon government joined the climate registry as a reporting member — one of more than 429 national and sub-national governments, agencies and private sector organizations in North America. We will be delivering annual reports of emissions from Yukon government operations and activities. The first report, covering 2010, will be available in late fall of this year. We will be delivering annual reports of emissions from Yukon government operations and activities. The secretariat is also continuing its work on a carbon offset policy for the Yukon that will focus on encouraging investment in Yukon-based initiatives and businesses.

Ms. Hanson: In the interest of moving on — I don't think that really addressed the issue of compliance and compli-

ance measures, but rather than dwell there, I'd like to move on to another of the stated objectives the minister has regarding developing or amending environmental legislation, regulations or policy to ensure sound natural resource conservation and management, while recognizing the dynamic nature of ecosystems, society and the economy.

I raise that because, when I was looking through the budget, there is only a small increase in policy and planning, and it strikes me that with the need for work on the *Environment Act*, I would be interested in hearing the minister's views on that. Equally important, in the Yukon state of the environment report, it was noted — this is called taking action in 2007 — at that time that: “The Yukon government is currently considering issues raised through the consultation processes regarding a proposed stand-alone Yukon *Species at Risk Act*. It is expected that the proposed legislation will be redrafted over the coming year” — I note, Mr. Chair, that this was 2007 — “with careful consideration given to the issues raised.”

Could the minister please confirm when we might see the Yukon species at risk act? Is that what the small increase in the budget for policy and planning for 2011-12 is intended for? If not, when will we see the species at risk legislation?

Hon. Mr. Edzerza: The Yukon government is committed to finalizing the Yukon species at risk act to maintain and enhance Yukon's natural environment for present and future generations. Environment Yukon is carefully considering all comments from two years of extensive consultation with aboriginal governments, wildlife management bodies and stakeholders. The final details of how the act will affect aboriginal treaty rights and concerns were addressed during working meetings with First Nations, Inuvialuit and renewable resource councils. Changes to the draft act resulting from those discussions will be concluded shortly.

Ms. Hanson: I would point out to the minister that, while he holds on to and does not move this agenda forward with respect to species at risk, every day there are new species at risk put further at risk, endangered or eliminated in this territory. I would ask the minister if he would give a bit more precision as to when we will see this important piece of legislation coming before this Chamber.

Hon. Mr. Edzerza: In the absence of a Yukon species at risk legislation act, the federal SAR act takes precedence, so there is in fact something in place at the present time. There are a very limited number of species at risk in Yukon compared to other jurisdictions.

Ms. Hanson: I just go back to the minister's role as steward of Mother Earth and would suggest that any species that is eliminated from this Mother Earth is one too many.

I would like to move on now to a couple of other related areas of questions for the minister, if I could. With increased electricity demands from residential and industrial consumers, we all know that Yukon Energy Corporation is in a fast-track mode as it searches for energy solutions. I would imagine this puts a lot of pressure on the Department of Environment. With hydroelectric projects and the need for water licences, the department must be involved in a big way. Can the minister tell us if the department has the capacity, in terms of staff numbers

and training, to inspect, monitor and provide input to hydroelectric projects or concepts being proposed by the Yukon Energy Corporation or the anticipated independent power producers policy?

Hon. Mr. Edzerza: At the present time, we have five assessment specialists and a team of biologists who work with other departments and Yukon Energy.

Ms. Hanson: I'm used to a situation where ministers will actually champion and advocate, if they think it's necessary, to ensure there are adequate or enhanced resources to achieve the mandate of their departments.

Given these additional pressures and looking down the road at new projects that are coming along — we've heard the issues of the Gladstone diversion concept, the Atlin project's concept. Does the minister feel confident that he has the adequate professional resources, or will he be seeking additional ones?

Hon. Mr. Edzerza: Yes, we are confident at present that we can meet the challenge. If things change in the future, we'll deal with those issues as they arise.

Ms. Hanson: Mr. Chair, in the minister's comments at the outset, he provided a comment with respect to developing new best practices related to the oil and gas industry.

I would appreciate if the minister could provide additional details there. What exactly are we talking about in terms of best practices? Is this in advance of the proposed amendments to the oil and gas legislation? How much is anticipated to be expended in the coming fiscal year on developing these new best practices? The question is really, what are they? Do they relate to any proposed amendments to the oil and gas legislation and how much would be expended in this coming fiscal year with respect to developing these new best practices for the oil and gas? I guess environmental issues related to that — maybe he could elaborate, explain exactly what was intended by that comment.

Hon. Mr. Edzerza: These are related to the industry's best practices, which are led by Energy, Mines and Resources, working with Environment and not part of legislation.

Ms. Hanson: I am a bit confused. The minister did speak to best practices for oil and gas, so I'm not sure why it would be deferred to the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources.

Hon. Mr. Edzerza: Energy, Mines and Resources manages gas and oil best practices.

Ms. Hanson: I don't want to get pedantic about this but when a minister says he is doing something with respect to an issue, curiosity is piqued. So my curiosity is piqued as to exactly what role — and I could see there could be quite a valid role for the Department of Environment because there are huge environment issues, especially when we start looking at shale gas or other untested initiatives — coal-bed methane, for example — that have not been used in the Yukon yet. That is why I was asking if the minister was intending to develop best practices in that area, which would be in fact related to the proposed amendments that were on the table over a year ago with respect to the *Oil and Gas Act*.

It would be a good thing, in my mind, if the minister was anticipating he would be looking at new environmental practices. Simply deferring it and saying it's Energy, Mines and Resources' responsibility when he raised it — I'm curious as to why. It's a simple question.

Hon. Mr. Edzerza: The member opposite can dig as deep as the member wants to, but I basically stated earlier, and I'll say it again, our biologists and experts are constantly working with Energy, Mines and Resources on these issues.

Ms. Hanson: Well, I am pleased to hear that there is this interdepartmental collaboration, as long as the minister remembers where his primary responsibility is, which is to the environment.

I would like to ask the minister a couple of questions if I could with respect to the *Climate Change Action Plan* that he had spoken to earlier. The plan speaks to the Yukon government being carbon-neutral by 2020.

The question I do have for the minister: does the minister know the amount of greenhouse gas emissions that Yukon government creates in its operations? Do we have baseline data by which we will be able to measure any progress and to achieve the objective by 2020?

Hon. Mr. Edzerza: I believe I already gave an answer to this question but I'll repeat it. We do have the baseline data for 2010 and will be reporting on it in 2011.

Ms. Hanson: There are some who believe, and I believe, that the only way to achieve carbon-neutrality is through some kind of offset plan. There have been some problems identified with offsets, but I would be interested in hearing from the minister what the principles are that will guide the Yukon's participation in establishing carbon-neutrality through offsets.

Hon. Mr. Edzerza: We are working on that process right now and we do not have the level of detail that the member opposite is requesting.

Ms. Hanson: I have two parts to a question with respect to that. When would we anticipate having that level of detail and, in developing that level of detail, is the inclusion of the idea of creating a fund here in the Yukon that could support carbon offsets?

Hon. Mr. Edzerza: That's an interesting idea coming from the member opposite, and we will take these into consideration as we move forward with this issue.

Ms. Hanson: Over the last number of weeks and months, there has been a lot of discussion about the issues of sustainable agriculture and sustainable economy in the Yukon. One of the largest contributors to greenhouse gas emissions in the Yukon, as we all know, is the transportation of food, fuel, building materials — basically everything that we use in this territory with few exceptions, unless it's country foods. We've said in this House that we only grow between one and two percent of the food we consume here. Going back to the question I asked the minister about the Yukon government's policy with respect to its own operations — and it is good to look at internal Yukon government operations. But if we're serious about climate change, and if this government is serious about climate change, we really do have to do look at the issues of transporta-

tion in the macro picture — transportation and its contribution to greenhouse gas emissions.

I'd like the minister to outline the Yukon government's plan with respect to transportation beyond the scope of its own fleets.

Hon. Mr. Edzerza: We will be including transportation as a key element in our Yukon-wide target, and we will have representatives from the transportation industry as part of our committee.

Ms. Hanson: I thank the minister for that answer, Mr. Chair.

I'd like to move on to another area. It's an area I raise with some caution. It is the issue of nuclear safety, which has been front and centre for people around the world. The reason I raise it with caution is because I want to be sure that we are not responding to this issue in an alarmist or fearful kind of way, but trying to make sure that as a territory — as citizens here and as people representing citizens in this Legislature — we give assurances that we have thought out and have thoughtful approaches to how we are both managing the information that can often have a negative connotation, and that we can demonstrate we have a thoughtful approach and the capacity to respond as an ever-evolving situation unfolds in Japan.

Thankfully, we have had the Yukon chief medical officer of health, as well as the minister responsible for emergency measures, setting out some basic assurances for us.

I think that's very important, because those kinds of calming measures are important.

At the same time, if you speak to people who lived in Europe during and after the Chernobyl disaster, there were actions that were taken by local and regional governments to not only provide assurance but to ensure that there were adequate monitoring and safety provisions in place.

I know from years past, when the minister was in opposition he was quite passionate about the issue of uranium and the impacts of radioactive materials. What I'm asking the minister is: does the department have the capacity to monitor radiation in the water and in the snowpack? Have officials been mobilized to do this?

It's one thing to ask about the snowpack and that, but it would be useful to know if you're starting from any baseline data. This is March 17 — as we all know, because we're all wearing our green — and that we would know in a month, six months from now — as I said earlier in terms of doing it from a cautious perspective — if we would have data that would inform actions that the government may need to take, and citizens may need to take.

Hon. Mr. Edzerza: At present we do monitor snow, but not for radiation. This is basically a task that is done by Environment Canada.

Ms. Hanson: Then I'd ask the minister if he could provide some assurance, as the Minister of Environment for the Yukon, on what protocols for exchange of information and for assuring us in this House, as well as the citizens of the Yukon, that information is made available to him and then transmitted — as well as the minister responsible for emergency measures — setting out some basic assurances for us.

Hon. Mr. Edzerza: We do have various agreements with Environment Canada. We are constantly working with them and I'm quite confident that if there were any type of an emergency, the Yukon government Environment department would probably be notified immediately.

Ms. Hanson: I would like to suggest that, at the outset, my question was to avoid an alarmist approach. What I'm suggesting to the minister is that it would be helpful that he took the initiative and he established what he needs as the Minister of Environment to provide us assurance and not wait to find out that it's not an alarming situation, but actually to provide assurance that this is how it is being monitored. Will the minister undertake to ensure he has the basic information to share with Yukoners as necessary? Not waiting until it's — I mean, I'm assuming this is not an issue, that it will not be necessary to raise any alarms. What I'm asking the minister is to simply set what, in terms of a good governance model, he will do as the minister to provide ongoing monitoring of what the federal government is doing as it relates to the Yukon.

Hon. Mr. Edzerza: Well, we will continue to work with our federal colleagues with regard to this issue.

Ms. Hanson: There are just a few more areas of questions that I would like to raise with the minister before we move to line by line.

Over the past couple of years, I guess, this government and, most recently, this minister in his role as the Minister of Environment — unlike his role when he was not in that position — has said that McIntyre Creek is a City of Whitehorse issue, not a Yukon government issue. But recently, the Yukon government did commit to spending, I think — I can't remember the budget — about \$500,000 for planning for the development of Porter Creek D.

Does the Minister of Environment have a role here in terms of the — again going back to the objectives of managing natural resources in a manner that promotes integration with other sectors, including Economic Development — and I would guess subdivision development is economic development — to ensure as the Minister of Environment that this ecologically sensitive — and as we all know very popular recreational area — that some of that planning money — has he advocated that some of that planning money would be used to make sure that the ecologically sensitive areas, recreation areas, will be protected?

Hon. Mr. Edzerza: No, we haven't participated with regard to the planning money, but we do participate with the YESAA process.

Ms. Hanson: That is sort of an oblique answer. I'd like to ask the minister with respect to the largest area of his budget, in what is called "environment sustainability" — 70 percent of the O&M budget, as he mentioned, is there.

Rather than him repeating the long list of various areas that have been supported through this, would the minister please identify the new initiatives for fiscal 2011-12 — only the new initiatives for 2011-12.

Hon. Mr. Edzerza: There are many topics that could be identified under this question. If the member opposite would like, we could probably compile a list and provide that to the

member opposite. Either that or I can start reading the whole book here because that's what it involves.

Ms. Hanson: Perhaps we're miscommunicating here. I was simply asking the minister to identify those that are not ongoing but are new initiatives. When I look at the list under "environmental sustainability", I see most of the projects and most of the funding appears to have been funding that has been provided year over year, either to associations — most of that flat-lined, I would point out; no increases in funding, which is another issue. What I was looking for is, rather than those that may, by the appearances here, be core funding or support for ongoing projects like the Whitehorse fish hatchery or the Yukon Trappers Association, are there new initiatives for fiscal 2011-12?

Hon. Mr. Edzerza: Well, I'm just going to give the member opposite an example of what the department is talking about here. For example, Environment Yukon inventory projects under caribou — we have the fall composition surveys, or rut counts, within the Aishihik and Kluane caribou herd, South Nahanni and Coal River caribou herds, Finlayson caribou herd, Ibex and Carcross caribou herds, with distribution telemetry surveys in the Hart River caribou herd, Chisana caribou herd census, Porcupine caribou herd inventory and monitoring.

We have the adult cow survival study, calving census, post-calving photo census support, fall composition survey, rut count, collar deployment and composition count, and body condition study. With fresh water fish, we have impact assessment studies on fish habitat, Peel watershed fish inventory, year 3 of three years deferred from last year, fish stock and habitat assessments. We have the wolf inventory and Southern Lakes grizzly bear project. We have the moose habitat sustainable pilot project, year 4 of four years, the Tatchun moose survey in partnership with Selkirk First Nation, Southern Lakes moose survey — Whitehorse south, and North M'Clintock — Whitehorse north moose survey. The list is quite extensive and this is only part of it. I can continue reading many more pages of the different processes that are happening within the department at this time. I'll stop there, but I do have several more pages that I can contribute.

Ms. Hanson: What the minister is outlining is the scope of the department's activities, which is substantial, and I think that we all appreciate that. What I was simply asking — and you mention that you've got year 4 of four or year 3 of three. Those are ongoing projects. What I was hoping to hear from the minister was — perhaps we'll try it another way. What percentage of the environmental sustainability budget is for one-time projects for this fiscal year 2011-12?

Hon. Mr. Edzerza: We really don't calculate things in this fashion, and most of these projects are new projects.

Ms. Hanson: Under environmental sustainability, there is mention here about a project for fish habitat — Liard and Mayo. My question: was the fish habitat study related to studies for Mayo B?

Hon. Mr. Edzerza: Yes.

Ms. Hanson: Is that study available publicly?

Hon. Mr. Edzerza: This will be made public once the work is completed by the Yukon Energy Corporation.

Ms. Hanson: Just to clarify with the minister, once the work of Yukon Energy Corporation is completed or once the work of the Department of Environment is completed doing this study?

Hon. Mr. Edzerza: Once our work is completed, Mr. Chair.

Ms. Hanson: It feels like a game. It would be simpler if he just said, “and that work will be completed by...” Could the minister complete the sentence? By when will the work be completed?

Hon. Mr. Edzerza: That’s still a work in progress and there is not really an exact, total, definite, completion date.

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. 24, *First Appropriation Act, 2011-12*. We will now resume general debate of Vote 52, Department of Environment.

Ms. Hanson: I would just like to thank the Minister of Environment for his responses to the queries that I raised this afternoon and to thank him and all the officials throughout the Department of Environment for their perseverance and dedication to what is fundamentally one of the most important areas. It’s not just a department designation, but the environment underlies a healthy economy and underlies the health of this territory, so I thank the minister. I believe my colleague from Vuntut Gwitchin has a few additional questions.

Mr. Elias: I just have another question that has been in the media lately and it’s about an imminent — I don’t know if it’s in the courts now already or not, but in the Northwest Territories there seem to be some outfitters who are taking that government to court with regard to its scientific data collection and the way it is reporting the population numbers of caribou.

Why this concerns me is because, here in the Yukon, I know that we have partnerships with Alaska and other agencies in compiling the best known scientific data that we report to the public — or the government reports to the public — on the population of, let’s say, the Porcupine caribou herd. I know that there are satellite collars; there are VHF collars that have been studied on the Porcupine caribou herd for years. It is one of the most studied herds, and composition counts are also taken. There is traditional knowledge. There are Yukoners’ eyes and ears out on the land. There are hunting check stations — and the list goes on.

I’ll give the minister the opportunity to maybe clarify for our jurisdiction how we come up with these population estimates for the Porcupine caribou herd and the tools that are used to come to those population estimates.

I think it’s important for our public to understand that there’s a lot more behind these population estimates for the Porcupine caribou herd than meets the eye, I guess. I’ll ask the minister if he can provide that data to the House.

I know that the biologists and the technicians and the partnerships with our Alaskan neighbours — over the last nine

years, it has been incredibly difficult to come up with a number where we can have a certain amount of confidence on each side of the spectrum. So, if the minister can provide the House with a bit of insight on that data, that would be great.

Hon. Mr. Edzerza: I’d like to take this opportunity to thank all the stakeholders who have been so involved with trying to get as accurate a count as possible with regard to the Porcupine caribou herd.

It is a very complex and very time-consuming process to be able to try to count in the neighbourhood of anywhere from 150,000 to 200,000 animals that are constantly moving. They are not standing still so that a person can just sort of count them out. We’re not walking them through a cattle fence where we can use a clicker every time they walk by. Any means that is used — this is not taken lightly by the Yukon government or the Alaskans.

Just for a bit of background that we can put on record here: in 1989, the Porcupine caribou herd’s population was estimated at 178,000. In 2010, it was projected to be between 90,000 and 100,000. The last successful census of the Porcupine caribou herd was in 2001. That year’s census depending on favourable weather and the herd aggregating. Over all, research and management of the herd is guided by the Porcupine caribou harvest management plan. The Porcupine caribou technical committee that coordinates research on the herd is comprised of biologists from Alaska, Yukon and the Northwest Territories. In 2009-10, the technical committee completed calving surveys, located collared caribou, purchased radio collars, collected body-condition samples, conducted composition counts in October 2009 and March 2010, and contributed to the satellite collar program. Many of these activities feed into a computer model that estimates the herd size. The photo census result will help to improve the model so that it can be more effective in predicting herd size in years when there is no census.

Having said that, and the estimation of being approximately 169,000 caribou in the herd, one would have to not doubt that all the extensive work that has gone in to counting these animals was done in vain. I think it was a very organized, very structured process and the Yukon government does have full confidence that the count is accurate. Everybody is entitled to their own opinions and whatever they have to say from the Northwest Territories, I believe that’s their opinion on things. However, we don’t go on assumptions of any kind.

We like to be proactive rather than reactive to any situation with regard to the Porcupine caribou herd. I believe that the government has really demonstrated that by taking precautionary steps earlier on when the count wasn’t confirmed. Even to date, we believe in the Yukon government that we still have to be very conservative and we can’t assume now that we can have open season. I think we still have to be very, very thoughtful in managing this herd.

I would like to also take the opportunity at this time to thank the members opposite for the very constructive debate. I find it very much more interesting to have constructive debate as opposed to one where there are a lot searches for faults in each other.

Mr. Elias: I thank the minister for that, and I share his confidence in the work that has been done for decades with the Porcupine caribou herd. “Constructive” is our middle name in debate in this Legislative Assembly. I thank the Minister of Environment for recognizing that here, on this side of the House — especially with the Yukon Liberals — that constructive debate is a part of our nature and has been for a long, long time in this House. I guess I don’t really have much more to say.

Again, I thank the minister for his remarks today. I do agree that this was a constructive debate today on the Department of Environment, and I look forward to going line by line. Thank you.

Chair: Any further general debate? Seeing none, we’ll proceed line by line in Vote 52, the Department of Environment.

On Operation and Maintenance Expenditures

On General Management

On Deputy Minister’s Office

Deputy Minister’s Office in the amount of \$377,000 agreed to

to

General Management in the amount of \$377,000 agreed to

to

On Corporate Services

On Assistant Deputy Minister’s Office

Assistant Deputy Minister’s Office in the amount of \$875,000 agreed to

On Communications

Mr. Elias: Can I get a breakdown of that line item, please?

Hon. Mr. Edzerza: This provides for the communication of the department’s programs and activities to the general public and relevant stakeholders. An increase of \$81,000 is due to the addition of the web coordinator position and collective agreement increases.

Chair: Any further debate?

Communications in the amount of \$266,000 agreed to

On Financial Services

Financial Services in the amount of \$412,000 agreed to

On Information and Management and Technology

Information and Management and Technology in the amount of \$1,041,000 agreed to

On Client Services

Client Services in the amount of \$1,057,000 agreed to

On Policy and Planning

Ms. Hanson: Can we get a breakdown of that, please?

Hon. Mr. Edzerza: This provides for the management review and development of strategic and resource planning processes and policies. A net increase of \$66,000 is due primarily to manager and Yukon government employee union payroll adjustments, offset by a \$29,000 revote for ecological land classifications included in the 2010-11 forecast.

Policy and Planning in the amount of \$1,011,000 agreed to

On Claims Implementation and Aboriginal Affairs

Claims Implementation and Aboriginal Affairs in the amount of \$370,000 agreed to

On Inuvialuit Final Agreement (IFA)

Inuvialuit Final Agreement (IFA) in the amount of \$1,017,000 agreed to

On Human Resources

Human Resources in the amount of \$372,000 agreed to

On Climate Change Secretariat

Mr. Elias: Can I get a breakdown from the minister on this line item, please?

Hon. Mr. Edzerza: This provides for the effective implementation of the *Climate Change Action Plan* and leadership on the Yukon government’s response to climate change. A net decrease of \$493,000 is primarily due to the inclusion of \$450,000 in recoverable climate change projects in the 2010-11 forecast and a decrease of \$100,000 in funding for the Northern Climate ExChange community adaptation project.

This is offset by increased personnel costs due to managerial and collective agreement increases.

Mr. Elias: I believe the minister mentioned earlier that the Climate Change Secretariat is taking the lead on responding to the 33 and some odd targets within the *Climate Change Action Plan*. Are they going to be producing a report for the Yukon public with regard to how the Yukon government is doing with regard to reaching those targets within the *Climate Change Action Plan*?

Hon. Mr. Edzerza: I believe I stated earlier that, yes, we will be, later on in the fall.

Chair: Any further debate?

Climate Change Secretariat in the amount of \$908,000 agreed to

Corporate Services in the amount of \$7,329,000 agreed to
On Environmental Sustainability

On Assistant Deputy Minister’s Office

Assistant Deputy Minister’s Office in the amount of \$421,000 agreed to

On Animal Health

Ms. Hanson: Could I just get a breakdown of that, please?

Hon. Mr. Edzerza: This is to protect human health, wildlife and domestic animals through interdepartmental coordination and integration of the Yukon comprehensive animal health program. There is no change.

Animal Health in the amount of \$444,000 agreed to

On Fish and Wildlife

Mr. Elias: Can I get a breakdown of this line item, please?

Hon. Mr. Edzerza: This provides for the management of Yukon fish and wildlife population and resource management inventories. It is comprised of the directorate, special management, fisheries management, regional and harvest section, habitat and planning section and biodiversity, wildlife viewing and NatureServe Yukon section.

A net decrease of \$468,000 is primarily due to \$96,000 on the winter tick control program completion; one-time funding for 2010-11 for \$138,000 IPY Arctic vegetation classification project revote; \$180,000 habitat management project; \$37,000

fish habitat placer mining study; \$30,000 aquatic invasion species project; Beaver River bison, western toad, woodland caribou; \$14,000 habitat identification; \$28,000 wood bison conservation; \$20,000 peregrine falcon nesting climate change one-time funding at 2010-11 for third parties; \$4,000 trappers education workshops; \$40,000 for Carmacks moose survey; \$10,000 Finlayson caribou count; and \$54,000 for Nahanni caribou surveys.

These reductions are offset by an increase in personnel for managerial and collective agreement increases and \$56,000 in recoverables funding from year 2 of a fish habitat placer mining research project.

Fish and Wildlife in the amount of \$6,935,000 agreed to

On Parks

Parks in the amount of \$3,600,000 agreed to

On Environmental Programs

Environmental Programs in the amount of \$1,886,000 agreed to

On Water Resources

Water Resources in the amount of \$2,106,000 agreed to

On Conservation Officer Services

Mr. Elias: Can I get a breakdown of this line item, please?

Hon. Mr. Edzerza: This provides for conservation officer services throughout the territory, management and development of compliance programs and enforcement legislation, and delivery of public education and youth conservation programs. A net increase of \$190,000 is primarily due to increased funding of \$252,000 for a Carmacks new district office and the collective agreement increases. These increases are offset by the inclusion of \$97,000 for trapline administration in the 2010-11 forecast.

Conservation Officer Services in the amount of \$4,060,000 agreed to

Environmental Sustainability in the amount of \$19,452,000 agreed to

On Environmental Liabilities and Remediation

On Environmental Liabilities

Mr. Elias: Last year it was forecast for this line item to have \$5.1 million attached to it. Why is this year only \$1?

Hon. Mr. Edzerza: This \$1 issue is put in here just to flag and note that there is ongoing work to be done here.

Mr. Elias: What environmental liabilities are being worked on?

Hon. Mr. Edzerza: We will be working on the Klondike Highway maintenance camp, Marwell tar pit area and three other highway maintenance camps.

Environmental Liabilities in the amount of one dollar agreed to

On Site Assessment and Remediation

Ms. Hanson: Could I have a breakdown of this site assessment and remediation and how it relates — is that the 500 sites? — and the differentiation between the work identified as being done on, for example, the Klondike camp as liability versus remediation?

Hon. Mr. Edzerza: The \$850,000 is to coordinate and provide for the investigation, assessment, remediation and ad-

ministration of contaminated sites in accordance with the Yukon government environmental liabilities policy. A net increase of \$83,000 is due to an additional \$59,000 for Marwell tar pit project management and collective agreement increases. The 500 sites referred to by the member opposite are sites that are not responsibilities of the Yukon government.

Site Assessment and Remediation in the amount of \$850,000 agreed to

Environmental Liabilities and Remediation in the amount of \$850,000 agreed to

On Revenues

Revenues cleared

On Transfer Payments

Transfer Payments cleared

Total Operation and Maintenance Expenditures in the amount of \$28,008,000 agreed to

On Capital Expenditures

On Environmental Sustainability

On Parks

On Parks Special Management Areas Planning

Parks Special Management Areas Planning in the amount of \$50,000 agreed to

Chair: Just so members are aware, I did skip forward a couple lines. We are currently on page 10-9, under Capital Expenditures.

On Special Management Areas Resource Assessment

Special Management Areas Resource Assessment in the amount of \$35,000 agreed to

On Prior Year's Projects

Prior Year's Projects in the amount of nil cleared

On Conservation Officer Services

On Prior Years' Projects

Prior Years' Projects in the amount of nil cleared

Environmental Sustainability in the amount of \$85,000 agreed to

Chair: We will proceed to page 10-7. Sorry, I missed that at the beginning.

On Corporate Services

On Information Systems, Equipment and Furniture

On Yukon Environment Information System

Yukon Environment Information System in the amount of \$50,000 agreed to

On Information Technology Equipment and Systems

Information Technology Equipment and Systems in the amount of \$90,000 agreed to

On Operational Equipment

Operational Equipment in the amount of \$265,000 agreed to

On Prior Years' Projects

Prior Years' Projects in the amount of nil agreed to

On Lands and Facilities

On Capital Maintenance and Upgrades

Capital Maintenance and Upgrades in the amount of \$282,000 agreed to

On Swan Haven Erosion Mitigation

Mr. Elias: Can I ask the minister for a breakdown of this line item, please?

Hon. Mr. Edzerza: The purpose of this project is to mitigate the bank erosion and stabilize the viewing decks at Swan Haven. Erosion of the bank below the viewing deck has created potential public safety hazards and liability concerns. Engineering and design work to stabilize the bank and viewing deck will be completed in the 2010-11 fiscal year. Completion of the project in 2011-12 will ensure that Swan Haven staff and the public have a safe and secure work environment and public viewing deck.

Mr. Elias: Does the minister have any idea whether this erosion mitigation was a result of the flood that happened in Marsh Lake — I believe it was three years ago?

Hon. Mr. Edzerza: No, we can't pinpoint it to being a result of that flood.

Chair: Any further debate?

Mr. Elias: The reason why I asked is because if there is a \$233,000 mitigation for Swan Haven, which many Yukoners enjoy each and every year, what could be determined at a future date as a result of climate change, then there is a direct line item cost to climate change with regard to flooding in that area. That is why I asked. If the minister can get back to me on whether or not this was a natural occurrence or an occurrence of the flood, which at a later date could be associated with climate change, then I would appreciate that. Thank you.

Hon. Mr. Edzerza: I don't know what other way to answer that except that a flood is a natural occurrence.

Swan Haven Erosion Mitigation in the amount of \$233,000 agreed to

On Prior Years' Projects

Prior Years' Projects in the amount of nil cleared

On Claims Implementation and Aboriginal Affairs

On Prior Years' Projects

Prior Years' Projects in the amount of nil cleared

Corporate Services in the amount of \$920,000 agreed to

Total Capital Expenditures in the amount of \$1,005,000 agreed to

On Revenues

Revenues cleared

On Transfer Payments

Transfer payments cleared

Department of Environment agreed to

Chair: Committee of the Whole will now proceed with general debate on Vote 52, Department of Community Services. Do members wish a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

Chair: Order please. Committee of the Whole will now come to order. The matter before the Committee is Bill No. 24, *First Appropriation Act, 2011-12*. We'll now continue with general debate on Vote 51, Department of Community Services.

Department of Community Services — continued

Hon. Mr. Lang: Good afternoon, Mr. Chair. I'd like to welcome my colleagues in here this afternoon, going on with our debate on Community Services' budget for 2011-12.

We did a bit of a review — I guess it would have been yesterday, later in the day when we were up in front of the House here, putting some pertinent information on the floor.

I'd like to talk about the investment itself — Community Services is a very extensive department. It certainly covers a lot of responsibility. It touches our communities — not only our communities, but all the municipalities and unincorporated communities and, of course, the citizens who live throughout the territory. In turn, it is a very dynamic department, as you can see by the investment that the Yukon Party, the Yukon government, has put into Community Services to make sure that we move ahead with our municipalities, unincorporated communities and, of course, other parts of the department that we're responsible for within the government.

We certainly were very pleased to be able to conclude the extensive work we did on our drivers' licences. We certainly had a lot of discussions about a new driver's licence, working with our partners in British Columbia and Alaska, looking at licences that would be accepted by Homeland Security as some form of identification for us at the international border. Of course, that wasn't possible because of the many questions that were brought forward not only by the Homeland Security in the United States, but of course, British Columbia was working with them too.

Because of the nature of the size of our jurisdiction, we made a decision with our driver's licence that we would go the first phase of our licensing program. It is not a secure driver's licence, but it certainly is an improvement over the licence we've had in the past. As you can see, the Motor Vehicles branch does an extensive amount of work in their responsibilities. They deliver our new licences.

Approximately 4,000 new licences have been issued, and, of course, vehicle registrations. Some of the statistics are quite impressive with the number of vehicles that are registered, the number of drivers' licences that were renewed and also replaced because of the moves we've made in putting the new licence in place. Again, I'd like to thank the crew at Motor Vehicles for the hard work they did, and also the seamless flow of access to our new driver's licence over a period of time. Certainly, it went very well considering the size of the project that it was. Again, thank you to the department and the individuals in there who were in charge of that.

As I go through my notes here this afternoon — yesterday, we had certain questions on Dawson City and the investment we're making on the ground there for the new recreational facility in partnership with the City of Dawson and the First Nation. That's an investment this government is committed to do.

When the question arose during the lengthy debate of the financial situation Dawson City found itself in, in 2002-03, we definitely made a commitment to put some resources away so that the municipality would not bear the whole cost of upgrading the facility that they have in Dawson City. There was a \$4-million commitment put together and all of the resources are

there from a maintenance and also a safety issue. There is a building committee — I'm not quite sure if I made that clear yesterday — that is made up of the municipality, of Community Services and Property Management, to make sure these decisions are made to spend this money in a way that would lengthen the life of what is there, if that's possible, but most of all to make sure it's safe for the people of Dawson to have the facility open, while the City of Dawson, another municipal investment, moves forward with plans on what they're going to replace that with.

The partnership has worked, Mr. Chair. We certainly look forward to working with Dawson as they move forward with their plans for a new municipal structure, which will be a new recreation facility.

As we move forward with Dawson City and other communities and municipalities, there are also questions about that unfortunate situation Ross River found itself in. Of course we are all very aware of what happened in the past week in Ross River. There are going to have to be some decisions made, Mr. Chair.

As Minister of Community Services, as part of my responsibility, I will be going to Ross River tomorrow, in conjunction with the MLA, to sit down with some of the community and start the dialogue on how we are going to move forward. That's a plan that we have. Tomorrow we will be in Ross River, and we will sit down with the community and look at a short-term plan on how we can manage the situation they find themselves in today. We will put together a longer term plan on how this facility will be replaced.

There have been lots of questions regarding one of the major situations that the Yukon finds itself in — understanding the growing population in the territory. There have been concentrated investments in land development throughout the territory. We certainly look forward to working with our municipalities to make sure that we get land available.

There is the Ingram subdivision, which is a subdivision here in Whitehorse. They made 40 single-family parcels available, nine multi-family, eight duplexes and 72 townhouse lots available in the City of Whitehorse. That, again, fills some of the void that is out there in our community.

Of course, Whistle Bend is one of the largest developments the City of Whitehorse and ourselves have ever taken on as far as lot development is concerned. The infrastructure alone is extensive. The connecting roads are 45-percent complete. Of course, there is clearing, grubbing and salvage of wood for all of phases 1 and 2. Roads are complete. The first set of lots is scheduled to be released in 2012. So they are scheduled to go ahead in 2012.

In the Haines Junction area, we have a subdivision called Willow Acres. It is nearing completion and will feature 27 country residential, 49 single family, and three multi-family and two commercial lots. Again, this is another investment in the municipality of Haines Junction, which will fill a void that they find themselves in regarding access to lots.

This government has made an extensive investment in Carcross on the Carcross waterfront projects. Seven of the Carcross waterfront projects are finished. They include the most

recent project, the *SS Tutshi* memorial, and four more projects are currently underway. The Carcross waterfront project is moving ahead to completion. I recommend that Yukoners — or any citizens or any of the members of the House here — go to Carcross and see the massive improvements in that community and look at the *SS Tutshi* memorial. It is a very incredible piece of work. I thank all the people in the department and in Tourism. They have done a very, very stellar job in recreating the Carcross waterfront and also recreating the *SS Tutshi*. It is a really fine job done by the Yukon government.

Four Whitehorse waterfront projects were completed and 13 are underway, including the KDFN cultural centre and public library project. This is a wonderful waterfront project. I did a tour of the public library. It is going to be a fine addition to the waterfront, but also it's going to be a fine addition to the community. The cultural centre is complimented by the library and vice versa. It's certainly going to make a wonderful addition to the City of Whitehorse. The estimated cost was \$22.4 million, with the Yukon government committing \$7.4 million in support of this project, so this again was another investment that we made in conjunction with the First Nation. Over the next couple of months you're going to see a massive change in that construction site.

If we were to look at some improvements in Yukon infrastructure, to date \$177 million in federal and territorial investments have been allocated for Yukon infrastructure improvements from the Building Canada base funding. That, again, is a great program where Yukon municipalities, First Nations and Yukoners can take advantage of investments in infrastructure throughout the territory.

If we were to look at the investments, we would see that five communities will receive improved public water treatment systems. That's just this year. That's Ross River, Haines Junction, Teslin, Carcross and Marsh Lake. Those investments will be done this year. It's an improvement for the potable water. Of course, that's one of the obligations that we have. We have to supply potable water to our communities.

Protective Services is another part of our department where questions have been asked. Regarding wildland fire management last year — 2010 was the earliest beginning of fire season in the history of the Yukon. Eighty-eight fires triggered, which really challenged the department and its personnel. Crews were successful in protecting Yukoners without serious injury or loss of homes or infrastructure to wildfire.

A job well done, when you take into consideration that the fire season started in May of last year where it normally would start two months later than that. We did have a break in our wildland fire in that we didn't have a lengthy season. It didn't multiply itself into a longer fire season, so that was good news.

We did have partnerships. We did have a wildland fire threat at Junction 37 north of Watson Lake, which would just be about 12 kilometres north of Upper Liard. That again was a partnership between us and the Province of British Columbia. It was a massive fire, and we worked with them to contain it. Again, it was a job well done by Wildland Fire Management and the crews we had on the ground.

Regarding the Ross River volunteer fire department and the situation that happened this last week, it only shows how important the training is for the fire departments in the communities.

We, the Yukon Party government, invested \$309,000 into a state-of-the-art fire pumper that was delivered in August of last year. The Marsh Lake volunteer fire department took delivery of a new \$185,000 pumper tanker — a modern pumper tanker for their facility. So these investments are very important throughout the territory. Of course, part of our obligation as a government is to replace these kinds of things in a rotation basis, so everybody in the territory can have relatively up-to-date firefighting equipment. We all talked in the House for the last couple of days about the new emergency response facility at the top of the Two Mile Hill. We did talk about the economics of that, and we have committed \$3.2 million to start the actual facility this coming summer. So we'll look forward to seeing that coming out of the ground.

Of course, we purchased three new ambulances to replace aging equipment and provide the community with modular units as they become available. Another thing we did is that we have a rotation basis on our ambulances, which is very important to make sure that our volunteers and our municipalities and communities in the territory have access to modern ambulance equipment.

Those are all investments that we made in the Protective Services branch of the department.

Going back to the driver's licence, there is the driver's licence and there is another part to it — general identification cards. They were both launched in November 2010. They have security features on them that meet the national and international standards. Those are the things I was talking about through this whole period of time: how do we get the security features accepted by national and international standards? Certainly, I think this driver's licence and the independent identification cards have done that.

Of course, we did do work with our licensed practical nurses in the territory. Now they are able to perform the full range of nursing tasks, like LPNs elsewhere in Canada. This is very important, because we had these individuals working within the territory, but the time spent here was not credited, so it not only did the individual a disservice, but it was a deterrent for these individuals to come to the territory and commit to stay in the territory and do their good work.

Another thing we have talked about is a students and parents guide. Employment standards launched the student and parent guide called *You need more than a job to start work*, which provides students with information they need to know when entering the workforce. This book has been very well received. In fact, I've been told there is going to be an edition put out in Tagalog, so our Filipino community can take advantage of the use of this book.

So I will sit down and receive questions from members opposite.

Mr. Elias: I thank the minister for his detailed opening remarks — well, today's opening remarks. I did have questions for each and every one of those topics and issues that he

brought up. I was just checking off my list of questions for the last 20 minutes and thank him for that.

I'm going to begin in my riding about a specific issue that there is no specific line item in the budget for. That's the Old Crow water well. The minister knows that I have brought this to his attention as the number one priority for my riding over the last number of years now.

I'll quote from the Premier's Budget Address on February 3, 2011, on page 23, where the line in the fourth paragraph says, and I quote: "Similarly, water treatment options have been examined in Old Crow" — examined in Old Crow, Mr. Chair. I have brought this up before in Question Period and I do realize that the minister made a joint \$40-million announcement a couple of days ago. On page 6-12 of the Community Services capital estimates, there is a line there for Planning and Administration, that says it's worth \$10,232,000.

I believe the Minister of Economic Development put forward some specific numbers during this sitting that are not in the budget on the floor of the House. I will give an opportunity to the Minister of Community Services to put some specific numbers to the number one priority in my community, which is the upgrading of the Old Crow water well, our only source of drinking water.

This has been an issue for a number of years now and not one shovel of earth has been moved. So if the minister can provide some detailed information and a breakdown of how much money is actually allocated to upgrading the Old Crow water well, that would be great.

Hon. Mr. Lang: To the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin, about the well situation in Old Crow, I'm just going to read the steps that we've gone through to move this project forward. The preliminary design award has been done. Conceptual design report is complete; YESAA and water licence approvals will be April, next month. Detail design and tendering in May of 2011; construction awarded in June 2011; construction complete October 2012.

There is \$1 million budgeted this year for upgrades and improvements to the Old Crow water supply. That's the first step. The project is expected to cost \$2 million in total, and where you'll find a million dollars is in Planning and Administration — the \$10.232 million — and that \$1 million will be extracted from that.

We are going ahead with the Old Crow well. We have been working with the community on this issue. It has been a long — and I understand the member opposite — the necessity for this well — but there are steps we have to take as a government to make sure when we do a project like this, it is done well. As I read, the actual steps that we have taken over the last couple of years have been extensive, but we look forward to getting the construction completed by 2012, but started in June of 2011. It's a \$2-million investment at Old Crow and hopefully it will address the issue Old Crow has for a potable water source in their community.

Mr. Elias: I thank the minister for that response. It is good to actually get some numbers that I can provide to my constituents and a bit of a timeline and a plan. I thank the minister for the information he put on the floor of the House today.

I will get into some specific questions here. I will begin with the YRAC grant program. It looks like this is a new program for recreational groups — the Yukon sport governing bodies and high-performance official assistance programs, high-performance athlete assistance programs.

Can the minister provide some background with regard to how these programs came about, how long they are going to run and how much the organization can apply for within this program? Is this going to be a permanent program for Yukoners to access? I'll leave it at that.

Hon. Mr. Lang: It has been in place for quite a long time, Mr. Chair. There are no plans for doing anything but work with this program. Of course, the Yukon government encourages and supports active living and healthy lifestyles in communities through promotion and development of recreational sports. Here are some statistics for the member opposite. There are 28 Yukon sports governing bodies that are expected to receive funding in 2011-12. So there are 28 Yukon sports governing bodies that are going to receive part and parcel of an investment. This affects 90 affiliated clubs across the Yukon — extensive coverage.

The figure of the membership is 10,900 individuals, 28 elite athletes, 1,325 active coaches and officials. Seven Yukon special recreation groups will receive funding in 2011-12. This affects 5,500 members. Here's a list of those: Special Olympics, youth special recreation groups, Active Living, Recreation and Parks Association of Yukon, Yukon Disability Association, ElderActive Recreation Association. You can see how extensive the investment is. It is an investment that this government has certainly carried on in the last nine years and we look forward to working with this investment for the next period of time.

It is interesting to see the amount of participation this territory gets at a very high level, if you're talking about sports and sports participation. These kinds of investments are why we have the numbers we have today. When you look at 10 years ago, the number of our Yukoners on the podium nationally and internationally, there was roughly under about 10 individuals, if that. Now, remember, I'm talking the international and national, on the podium.

That's something for a community of 35,000 people. This year we had 90. So these kinds of investments are where that comes from. This government is committed to do that.

The figures are just really enlightening to me, being responsible for overseeing Community Services. The sports that we excel in are, once again, representing Yukon in a medal count, including six sports — cross country skiing, orienteering, swimming, shooting, cycling and wrestling. There were five western Canadian championships, 47 national championships, 37 international championships, 239 athletes, including 81 aboriginal youth, plus 80 coaches and mission staff on Team Yukon from seven communities, travelling to the Arctic Winter Games in 2010 in Grande Prairie; they won 37 gold medals, 37 silver medals and 27 bronze medals.

If we get into the Canada 55 Plus Games in Brockville, Ontario, we saw 112 members from eight communities in the territory capture 83 medals in 13 sports. Athletes range in age

from 55 to 91. What a compliment to us as a community when we can turn out individuals like this list I just read off today.

Mr. Speaker, seeing the time, I move that we report progress.

Chair: It has been moved by Mr. Lang that Committee of the Whole report progress.

Motion agreed to

Hon. Ms. Taylor: Mr. Chair, I move that the Speaker do now resume the Chair.

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

Motion agreed to

Speaker resumes the Chair

Speaker: I will now call the House to order.

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

Chair's report

Mr. Nordick: Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 24, *First Appropriation Act, 2011-12*, 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?

All 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. Monday.

The House adjourned at 5:30 p.m.