

Whitehorse, Yukon**Tuesday, December 12, 2006 -- 1:00 p.m.**

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

Prayers

DAILY ROUTINE

Speaker: We will proceed with the Order Paper.

Tributes.

Introduction of visitors.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Mr. Rouble: Mr. Speaker, today in our gallery, we have the grade 11 social studies students from Porter Creek Secondary School, and they're accompanied by their teachers Mr. Toews and Mr. Sullivan.

Also, Mr. Speaker, I understand that Graeden Ferguson is celebrating his birthday today.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any further introduction of visitors?

Are there returns or documents for tabling?

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Hon. Mr. Fentie: Mr. Speaker, I have for tabling a list of approved projects for the northern strategy trust.

Hon. Mr. Lang: Mr. Speaker, I have for tabling the following documents: Yukon Energy Corporation's Annual Report, 2005; Yukon Development Corporation Annual Report for the year 2005; Motor Transport Board Annual Report for 2005-06; Fleet Vehicle Agency Annual Report for 2005-06.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Are there any further documents for tabling?
Petitions.

PETITIONS**Petition No. 1 -- response**

Hon. Mr. Hart: Mr. Speaker, I rise to respond to Petition No. 1 regarding the protection of domestic animals.

The protection and well-being of all animals is as passionate an issue for the majority of Yukoners as it is for most of the civilized world. The vast majority of Yukoners attend to their animals with respect, dignity and attention to ensure their continued health. Most Yukoners do not need to be regulated by law in order for them to care for their animals this way. They do it because of the respect, affection and sense of responsibility they have for their animals.

Occasionally some animal owners fail to provide appropriate care and attention for their animals. Animals are sometimes mistreated by strangers. There are situations where animals are either abandoned or roaming at large. There are a number of possible situations to be considered in developing any regulatory instrument that addresses appropriate animal care.

While the majority of animal abuse and neglect cases involve dogs or cats, the creation of regulations must also speak to all domestic animals and their treatment.

Domestic animals in human care range from hamsters to horses, and there are many different issues to consider within the spectrum to ensure their protection.

Some domestic animals are raised as livestock, and while their final purpose may be for food, during their lives they also deserve to be treated with the appropriate care and respect.

There are a number of approaches being used across Canada to address the protection of domestic animals and in determining penalties for those who abuse them. The Department of Community Services is examining the legislation and regulation in other jurisdictions and researching how they are successfully achieving the desired outcomes we are seeking.

Our government is moving forward on this important issue. We do, however, want to do it right and in the appropriate manner. The care of domestic animals will be considered in the context of developing legislation that works. Through the good work of the Department of Community Services, our government is doing the hard work and due diligence to determine the best options for moving forward on this important manner.

We agree with Yukoners who have signed this petition in that the territory needs an animal protection act that clearly defines the appropriate care and attention for all domestic animals and sets out the appropriate penalties for those who abuse domestic animals. Ensuring the humane treatment of domestic animals was a key issue that this government campaigned on and we will deliver on this commitment.

Speaker: Are there any petitions to be presented?

Are there any bills to be introduced?

Are there any notices of motion?

NOTICES OF MOTION

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

THAT this House work with the Youth Directorate and with non-governmental organizations, including the (Yukon) Anti-Poverty Coalition, the Whitehorse Youth Centre Society and the Youth of Today Society-the Blue Feather Youth Centre to establish a public youth shelter to incorporate the following objectives:

(1) to provide a safe public place for youth who may not have a safe environment in their family home to go to for shelter;

(2) to provide a safe public place for youth who may be at risk of sexual abuse and other violent behaviour to go to for shelter; and

(3) to provide healthy living alternatives and career counselling to youth at risk.

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: Finance ministers meeting

Mr. Mitchell: I have a question for the Minister of Finance. The Premier and Minister of Finance will be attending a national meeting of finance ministers later this week. Clearly there is an extensive list of concerns to be addressed, especially in light of recent cuts by the federal government.

Will the Premier outline for this House which items will be on his agenda on behalf of Yukoners at the forthcoming meetings?

Hon. Mr. Fentie: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member opposite for his question, because the up and coming meeting with the federal Minister of Finance is critical to the country itself. It's to address fiscal imbalance among the provinces, the territories and the federal government, and it will include, of course, the territorial funding formula and issues that are pertaining to equalization. But there will also be discussions about the cuts to literacy, the GST rebate cut for travellers coming into Canada and especially our neighbours to the west, the Alaskans, travelling into Yukon. There will be discussions on status of women issues and the federal decision to reduce investment in that area. So it will be a broad-ranging discussion, overall targeting fiscal imbalance in the country.

Mr. Mitchell: Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister for that answer. I think he's reading from my notes. The list of issues that Yukon has with the federal government is a long one. Fiscal funding formulas are important, but there are some other issues that Yukoners want answers to: the closure of the regional status of women offices, and the minister has made some reference to that; northern housing needs beyond the \$50-million northern housing trust pledge; and support for literacy funding. I am pleased that the government took many people's requests and the opposition's suggestions and gave the short-term fix of \$50,000, but a long-term stable commitment from the Government of Canada is required. The tourism GST tax rebate issue, which the minister has mentioned, needs to be resolved. Childcare programs have not been properly addressed and should be done through a national program. Many social programs are taking a hit, and pressure needs to be applied. These problems do not go away just because the government ignores them. So will the Premier be making the case for these Yukon concerns when he meets with his fellow finance ministers and the federal finance minister?

Hon. Mr. Fentie: First, it is most important that we understand that Yukon will continue to take a pan-northern approach and our representation on the national stage will include our sister territories and our common position on all these matters and all these areas. It will also include discussions on cuts to museums.

The member opposite has raised the issue of housing, especially as it reflects on aboriginal Canadians. The issues and the discussions there are to address the gaps, whether it be housing, safe and clean drinking water, economic opportunities, education, and the standard of health in which aboriginal Canadians find themselves in today's Canada.

Overall the discussions are very broad-ranging, but we must be targeted in our approach to ensure that, in order to ad-

dress all of these issues, Canada recognizes and addresses the fiscal imbalance issue because all of these are encompassed by that.

Mr. Mitchell: The Premier mentions addressing important issues for aboriginal Canadians and addressing the gaps. I would like to suggest to the Premier that this would be a most opportune time to once again make the case for the Kelowna accord. The Premier was a signatory to the Kelowna accord so he must have endorsed the approach.

Yukoners and Canadians from all over this country have been asking, demanding and in some cases even pleading, for the federal government to bring back the scrapped accord.

Will the Premier assure all members that he will speak out to restore the accord on behalf of our First Nations people so that Yukon can get on with addressing long-standing issues and move forward in a positive and constructive manner?

Hon. Mr. Fentie: I am always glad to accept suggestions from the leader of the official opposition. Good suggestions are not unique to the opposition or the government side. That is what this institution is all about; it's about combining our collective approaches to making the lives of Yukoners better.

When it comes to Kelowna, I would remind the member that even the Assembly of First Nations is not fixated on the name of an accord, but more on dealing with the gaps and issues that aboriginal Canadians face today. That includes First Nations in the Yukon. We will continue our work with the council and federation, along with all representative bodies and agencies for aboriginal Canadians to address the aforementioned gaps. For the member opposite's benefit, I will repeat that those gaps exist in housing, clean and safe drinking water, economic opportunities, education and the standard of health for aboriginal Canadians.

Question re: Whitehorse Correctional Centre rebuild

Mr. Inverarity: I have a question for the Minister of Justice. One of the first decisions the Yukon Party made after coming to office was to cancel the construction of the new jail. This decision has cost Yukon taxpayers more than \$1 million over the last four years, as the current jail is in constant need of repair. Since the Yukon Party has come to office, taxpayers have shelled out more than \$1.3 million for repairs to the current facility.

The budget that the minister tabled this fall contains even more money. There is \$315,000 for upgrades and renovations to the current facility. These costs could have been avoided if a new jail had been built. Why is the minister needlessly wasting taxpayers' dollars instead of getting on with building a new jail?

Hon. Ms. Horne: Mr. Speaker, first of all, I would like to say that the recidivism rate has cost millions more than a new corrections facility, which, in our planning, will be nil -- hopefully close to nil.

This government is committed to building a new correctional facility. We are not, however, simply going to build another warehouse. This is precisely why the government undertook the corrections consultation. We are committed to devel-

oping the entire correctional system and to build a facility that will allow Department of Justice staff, First Nations, program providers and volunteers to deliver high-quality correctional programming.

The corrections action plan puts forward the vision of a correctional system that reflects the Yukon's unique social composition. It is a correctional system that is client-focused and supports a continuum of correctional services. It is also a correctional system that works in active partnership with communities and others.

It is clear that the Yukon requires a modern correctional centre that will allow corrections professionals to carry out their responsibilities.

Mr. Inverarity: It's nice to see the minister has finally acknowledged we have a new big-box store in town.

Mr. Speaker, there is a cost for doing nothing under the Yukon Party's decision to delay the jail. It has cost taxpayers more than \$1.5 million and it gets worse. When you take a look at the budget tabled this fall, there is no money to actually build the new jail. In fact, the government has taken \$400,000 out of the budget -- money that had been set aside in the budget. We're actually going backward, not forward. The new jail was not a priority for the Yukon government over the last four years, and we are not off to a good start.

On the bright side, the minister has said things so far are coming along and they are planning to do something about it. What is the minister planning on spending to build the new facility? Can she give taxpayers any ballpark figures in terms of what it's going to cost?

Hon. Ms. Horne: Planning for a new correctional facility is currently underway via committee, in accordance with the action plan developed during the corrections consultation period. The action plan was the result of extensive consultation with the individuals and stakeholder groups across the Yukon. The plan is not to build a new jail. We are reforming Yukon's entire correctional system to end the revolving-door system.

A new corrections facility is just one component of the action plan. Proper treatments, skills training and remedial programming will also be fundamental to our success. Our government will not build another warehouse just to lock people away in. Our goal is to help and heal offenders so they are able to lead productive lives in the future.

Mr. Inverarity: Mr. Speaker, this is supposed to be the number one priority for the Minister of Justice, but it sounds like nothing is happening except that \$400,000 is being cut from the budget.

Let's try a different issue. When is construction on the new building going to begin? The Yukon Party said, "Re-elect us", it will ensure that there will be no delays in getting things up and running with the new Legislative Assembly. Construction should start this spring. Will the construction on the new jail start this spring?

Hon. Ms. Horne: Mr. Speaker, in the context of a new correctional centre, the new approach to corrections must reflect a First Nation inmate population. These consultations are ongoing, and the correctional facility planning will begin once that is completed.

Question re: Whitehorse waterfront development

Mr. Edzerza: It has always been my nature to go back to issues and clear the air, so to speak. So I would like to follow up on a question the Premier chose to avoid answering yesterday. It's about the waterfront lots the government got from the City of Whitehorse as part of the athletes village deal the Premier made with the former mayor. In his response, the Premier spoke about an arrangement made at Management Board and even suggested what my position on that arrangement had been. If it's now the Premier's policy to discuss what goes on in Management Board and Cabinet, perhaps he expects me to ignore the oath I took as a former minister. I won't do that, Mr. Speaker, even though there are many things I learned in the Premier's company that Yukoners may be interested in.

Regarding waterfront lots --

Speaker's statement

Speaker: Order. The member has to ask his question within a minute. You know full well that when I give you the signal, please ask the question. Your question.

Mr. Edzerza: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Regarding the waterfront lots, does the government intend to keep that land for its own use, or will it be sold, leased or transferred to some other entity?

Hon. Mr. Fentie: I'll ignore the preamble; it's personal in nature.

I'll answer as I did yesterday. The arrangement was reached by government and the municipal government of the City of Whitehorse and the host society. The lots in question were purchased by the Yukon government. The purchase value of those lots was given to the city, which in turn invested further into the Canada Winter Games in facilities such as those on the college site to house athletes during the games -- nothing by agreement, will be done with the lots until the games are concluded, because as anybody has seen driving down Second Avenue, there is a massive structure going up on those lots that will be utilized throughout the course of the Canada Winter Games.

Mr. Edzerza: We are talking about an extremely valuable piece of real estate in a prime location. Whoever ends up with it could play a key role in the most highly visible development in the Yukon. Just off the top of my head, I can think of at least three entities that might be very interested in getting their hands on it, and that doesn't include any private developers. As the current owners, Yukon taxpayers have the right to expect that the public interest will trump political considerations when the government decides what to do with that land.

Has a decision been made about who will be occupying the two Motorways lots the government picked up in a deal that at least one city councillor considered a bad deal for the city?

Hon. Mr. Fentie: I didn't know that the government put political interests ahead of the public interest. At least I've never been involved in a government that did such a thing.

Second, I have already answered the question. We cannot do anything with those lots until post-Canada Winter Games. We'll allow that process to conclude and then we'll decide through engagement with the public, the City of Whitehorse --

because, by the way, the City of Whitehorse has what's called an official community plan, or city plan, that certainly includes the waterfront. The Minister of Tourism is spearheading a major consultation process with the public and stakeholders on a theme for the waterfront. Significant investment through CSIF -- the Canada strategic infrastructure fund -- is now ongoing on the waterfront providing off-site infrastructure and other infrastructure that would be necessary for further development on the waterfront, so there is a tremendous amount going on right now with respect to the waterfront. The lots in question are but a small part of that.

Mr. Edzerza: I understand the need for a certain degree of secrecy when it comes to real estate transactions, but the Premier seems to take secrecy to a new level. When he and the former mayor were working on the deal on the athletes village nearly two years ago, it was very much a hush-hush process. City councillors didn't know. Certainly, the taxpayers didn't have a clue what was happening until it had already happened.

In the same spirit of secrecy, the government recently reached an agreement with the Ta'an Kwach'an Council regarding a land dispute in the Shallow Bay area of Lake Laberge. Did the two lots at the former Motorways site play any part in resolving the Shallow Bay dispute with the Ta'an Kwach'an Council? I am not asking for details, Mr. Speaker, just a plain, simple, yes or no.

Hon. Mr. Fentie: Well, on the plain, simple, yes or no, flat out, no — N-O; it played no part whatsoever. The member's assertion of secrecy on this matter is astounding. It was done publicly. It was done by request of the host society and the city, who were at a stage in the Canada Winter Games process where the host society had jettisoned its request for proposals for an athletes village. The process was made public through a major public press conference. There is a document called a "memorandum of understanding" that is public in nature, signed by the city and the government. To suggest there has been secrecy on this matter is absurd.

Question re: RCMP street crime reduction team

Mr. Cardiff: This government has stated that it has a zero-tolerance policy toward drug dealing. Yesterday, the Minister of Justice announced that a special RCMP unit will be patrolling the streets to enforce substance abuse laws. We know that liquor and other substances often go together and that premises that are licensed to serve alcohol have been known to harbour drug dealers.

My question is for the minister responsible for the Yukon Liquor Corporation. While the new police street patrol is out looking for drugs, will those officers also be patrolling inside bars and lounges to enforce the *Liquor Act*?

Hon. Mr. Kenyon: To speak to some of the items that the member has woven into his story, to begin, any criminal activity that occurs within any licensed premises is the responsibility of the RCMP. Illegal drug use, sales and distribution is a criminal act. The RCMP is solely responsible for that enforcement. If Yukon Liquor Corporation inspectors discover illegal activity during their inspections, they dutifully report these immediately to the RCMP for their immediate attention.

As I have noted in the House previously, the Yukon Liquor Corporation works very closely with the RCMP as they, too, perform inspections for violations under the act. Contrary to what some may believe, premise inspections have been increased. In the fiscal year 2005-06, there were 1,343 inspections made. So far, in the fiscal year 2006, there have been 1,667 checks. We also added a fourth liquor inspector to our summer staff complement in 2006-07. Clearly, inspecting the Yukon's licensed outlets has been stepped up.

Mr. Cardiff: Well, recent news reports reveal that government records, obtained through the *Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act*, showed several liquor infractions committed by a local hotel. This summer, we witnessed a group of people rallying outside a hotel in an effort to do something about drug dealing going on inside and the violence that resulted from that drug dealing. While we don't condone vigilante justice, the zero-tolerance policy these young people displayed seemed to be very successful.

Why has the minister allowed the Yukon Liquor Corporation inspection and enforcement service to atrophy, despite what he says? Is he waiting for another vigilante group to take up the slack and draw attention to the *Liquor Act* violations?

Hon. Mr. Kenyon: The statistics I have just given the member opposite I think speak for themselves. The member implies that maintaining decorum in enforcing the capacity limits is the responsibility of the Yukon Liquor Corporation inspectors. Clearly, Mr. Speaker, it is not. The inspectors conduct their periodic inspections to ensure that the staff and members of the establishment are doing their jobs and maintaining compliance with the *Liquor Act*. Door staff and bouncers are responsible for ensuring that they do not violate the capacity limits and are checking for legal age verification. The liquor inspectors are responsible for ensuring that the bar staff are doing their jobs.

Liquor inspectors do not serve drinks. They are responsible for ensuring that the bar and waiting staff do not over serve patrons and that the patrons are of legal age. The staff of the establishment is responsible for the decorum of their institution. Some establishments cater to an energetic crowd with live music, while others provide a quiet bar where people can actually talk. The choice is theirs. It is their responsibility to remain compliant with the *Liquor Act* as they do it. Clearly, for the member opposite, enforcement of drugs and so on is clearly the responsibility of the RCMP. We are very happy to have made the announcements yesterday that increased enforcement will be provided.

Mr. Cardiff: The part the minister is missing is: he talks about the inspections, he doesn't talk about the enforcement and what closure orders are done when infractions are found. The *Liquor Act* is there to protect the safety of the public, and it's designed to protect people from harming themselves or others.

About a year ago, there was a tragic accident near Rabbit's Foot Canyon where one person was killed and another was severely injured. Witnesses said the driver who died had been seen drinking to the point of intoxication at a nearby bar, and there were licence infractions on record that the Liquor Corpo-

ration has chosen not to enforce. The Yukon Liquor Corporation proudly promotes the responsible host program as a way of preventing exactly this kind of accident.

Has the minister considered the legal and financial implications to the government if a court decides, in some future accident case, that the Liquor Corporation was negligent by failing to enforce its own legislation?

Hon. Mr. Kenyon: I can state unequivocally that I'm extremely pleased with our liquor inspectors and their good job, and it's a disappointment to hear the member opposite may not hold that same opinion.

If and when violations of the *Liquor Act* are discovered by either the inspectors or the RCMP, there is an established procedure that is followed in each and every case for all licensed premises. The inspector first speaks with the on-site manager or person in charge, advises them of the infraction and records the response. A report on the incident is completed and reviewed by the Yukon Liquor Corporation and, depending on the infraction or its severity, either an advisory letter or warning letter is then sent to the licence holder, advising them of that infraction and recommendations to correct the situation.

The Be a Responsible Server, or BARS, training course educates servers on alcohol, its effects, recognizing signs of intoxication, et cetera.

The Yukon Liquor Corporation has researched the suggestion that warning and suspension letters should be more accessible to the public and, on that point, I agree. To this end, the information will now be posted on the Yukon Liquor Corporation Web site for all to read. Work is underway on building that information product and we hope to have it on-line either before the new year or shortly thereafter.

Question re: YEC/YDC officials appearing before Committee of the Whole

Mr. McRobb: Mr. Speaker, each fall the Legislature sees a number of regular visitors, and not just people in the gallery. For example, yesterday witnesses from the Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board appeared to answer questions. One group that usually appears, but not this year, are officials from the Yukon Energy Corporation and Yukon Development Corporation. The Yukon Energy Corporation is currently dealing with some major decisions about the Yukon's energy future. It would have been a good idea to have them in here to answer some questions, but the government has refused to accommodate this request. Why has the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources refused to allow these officials to appear this fall and maintain more than a decade of tradition in this Assembly?

Hon. Mr. Lang: Time was not here in this sitting. We only had 12 days. We will bring them in, in the fall of next year, like we've done in the past.

Mr. McRobb: Well, Mr. Speaker, this government can try and wiggle out of this, but the fact is the officials did not appear this fall, as is customary, because the government made a decision to stop them from appearing. We asked several times and the answer was always no.

One of the things we wanted to know is referenced in last year's annual report, which was tabled today by the minister. It

relates to the latest letter of expectation negotiated between him and the corporation officials. It lays out specific priorities and performance expectations of the corporations. For some reason this letter has not been made public. Will the minister table that letter before the end of this sitting so Yukoners can know what instruction he has given to corporation officials, or is that a secret?

Hon. Mr. Lang: I'd like to remind the member opposite that this government was just elected in the last two months. We'll expect to get that letter in the new year, and when we get the letter of expectation from the board, we will make it a public document. It always is public.

Question re: Rate stabilization fund

Mr. McRobb: I have more energy-related questions for this minister. We have already established that officials from the Yukon Energy Corporation were not allowed to appear before this Legislature this fall as has been the practice for more than a decade, and this government made that decision.

One of the issues the corporations are currently wrestling with is the future of the rate stabilization fund. This program began in 1998, following the closure of the Faro mine and the resulting impacts to electrical rates. The annual cost of this program is approximately \$3.5 million and it reduces Yukoners' electricity bills by as much as one-third. The program is set to expire March 31, 2007. The future of this fund is in the government's hands. What does it plan to do about this fund?

Hon. Mr. Lang: In answering the member opposite, in the year 2002, the corporations did not appear in this House in the fall. They will appear next fall. The rate stabilization fund is a concern and we will be working on that. We have until March of next year to answer the member's question.

Mr. McRobb: It was this minister who refused to allow the officials to appear before us so we could question them about the workings of the corporations. Now the future of the rate stabilization fund is in the air and the minister is refusing to tell people whether their power bills will be going up as much as 30 percent in the spring. This is something people need to know now. Does the minister plan to phase out this program or does he plan to extend it or does he plan to discontinue it? What is his plan?

Hon. Mr. Lang: Those are some of the issues we will have to address as we move into our mandate. We have some time and we will do it properly giving the proper time to these decisions.

Mr. McRobb: There is a lot of concern about this government deciding the future of this program without respecting Yukoners' right to be heard. This is a matter that should be on the table for the public and energy stakeholders to review and comment on. At the very least, this minister needs to let them know what process he will use to determine the future of this program. Will he commit today that, before any changes are made to this program, there will be public consultation to ensure that people will have an opportunity to present their views on the future of this program? Will he at least do that?

Hon. Mr. Lang: We will use the appropriate form of communication and work on this subject. We are committed. We were elected to do it, and we will do just that, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The time for Question Period has now elapsed.

Notice of government private members' business

Hon. Mr. Cathers: Pursuant to Standing Order 14.2(7), I would like to inform the House that the government private member does not wish to identify any business to be called for Wednesday, December 13, under the heading, "Government Private Members' Business", in the interest of expediting debate on the budget.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

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

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

Motion agreed to

Speaker leaves the Chair

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Chair: I now call Committee of the Whole to order. The matter before the Committee is Bill No. 3, *Second Appropriation Act, 2006-07*, Vote 8, Department of Justice.

Do members wish to take a brief recess before we begin?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

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

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

Chair: The matter before the Committee is Bill No. 3, *Second Appropriation Act, 2006-07*, Vote 8, Department of Justice.

Department of Justice

Hon. Ms. Horne: Mr. Chair, it is my pleasure and honour to speak to this Assembly about this supplementary budget. I noted in my comments during second reading that I support this budget. I also noted that I would hold many of my Justice-related comments until we reached this point of the debate. As I stated then, in my preparations I have become even more aware of the impact of drug and alcohol abuse in our territory. This is a critical issue that we must address clearly. This is a significant challenge and it is one that this government is committed to addressing.

I am pleased to say that we have been providing, and are continuing to provide, leadership on this issue. As the challenge evolves, so does our response. How are we responding? Earlier this sitting, we announced the opening of the safer communities and neighbourhoods office. Yesterday we informed this Assembly of our commitment to a new eight-person street crime reduction team.

During the debate, some members have questioned what we are doing to treat those with drug and alcohol addictions. Mr. Chair, the short answer is that we are addressing those concerns through the community wellness court. I will come back to that point later.

Total supplementary funding for operation and maintenance is \$784,000. Of this amount, \$199,000 is recoverable. Total supplementary funding for capital is \$43,000. In March 2006, the Yukon government and the Council of Yukon First Nations concluded a 15-month, territory-wide public consultation on how to better meet the needs of offenders, victims and communities within the correctional system.

The corrections consultation final report set the stage for correctional reform and a new approach to corrections in the Yukon through the corrections action plan. This plan has resulted in the establishment of the corrections action plan implementation office. Work is now underway to develop options for a new correctional centre and an implementation plan for programs and services in the centre and in the communities.

In April, the Yukon forum endorsed the corrections action plan recommendations and approved the implementation framework. The implementation framework provides for the establishment of an oversight committee. This committee is co-chaired by the Yukon government and Council of Yukon First Nations, and it will direct the work that was presented to the Yukon forum on December 8.

Under the direction of the oversight committee, the following work is in progress: the building advisory committee is identifying options for a new correctional centre; the correctional framework development committee is working with the Department of Justice correctional redevelopment committee on a correctional redevelopment strategic plan and workplan. The operation and maintenance budget for the corrections action plan implementation is \$415,000, and capital funds total \$8,000 for computer workstations and office furniture. The Yukon government budgeted \$1 million in the 2006-07 capital budget to begin redevelopment of the Whitehorse Correctional Centre.

The corrections infrastructure project is currently in the functional programming and schematic design stage. As part of this project, a total of \$423,000 was requested to be transferred from capital to assist in funding the O&M costs associated with the corrections action plan implementation office. A total of \$175,000 in capital funds is allocated to the Whitehorse Correctional Centre in order to purchase a new administration trailer. This trailer will replace the existing administration trailer which, for occupational health and safety reasons, is no longer suitable to accommodate staff. Once a new correctional facility is completed, this trailer could be easily reconfigured for alternate uses.

The *Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act* was passed by the Yukon Legislature in the spring of 2006. The legislation reflects the government platform commitments of protecting the family and creating safer communities. As part of the implementation of the act, the Department of Justice has established a SCAN office and hired investigation and administrative staff. The office is now ready to begin receiving complaints about unsafe and illegal activities. The 2006-07 O&M main estimates included \$104,000 for start-up costs for the implementation of the act.

Additional funding approved in the supplementary budget will provide for the hiring of staff, the purchase of specialty equipment, office space, leasehold improvements and renovations.

The supplementary budget consists of \$84,000 in operation and maintenance, and capital costs of \$215,000 for leasehold improvements and specialized equipment.

Before I leave SCAN and move on to my comments about the community wellness court, I would like to remind members of this Assembly and the public that this office engages only when there is a complaint. The support of the public is critical to the success of this initiative.

In addition to this, we also announced yesterday, in cooperation with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, that we will establish an eight-person street crime team. This street crime reduction team is a proactive complement to the traditional policing approach. The RCMP street crime reduction team will focus exclusively on street-level crime.

The street crime reduction team will deliberately focus on crime hotspots and prolific drug and alcohol offenders. This will be in addition to our continued enforcement efforts aimed at disrupting and dismantling the illicit drug trade at all levels.

This eight-person team will be comprised of six police officers dedicated to enforcement. The civilian personnel will be an intelligence analyst and a communications position. This team will further support our enforcement efforts with respect to the abuse of drugs and alcohol. It is dedicated to reducing criminal activity on our streets. With our partners, the RCMP, we are committed to reducing the presence and availability of harmful substances in our communities. We are addressing our enforcement concerns.

Now I would like to turn my attention to the community wellness court. The Yukon community wellness court is a specialized court that will provide intensive supervision from a multi-disciplinary team of professionals. The community wellness court will work with offenders who have substance abuse problems, fetal alcohol spectrum disorder or other diagnosable mental health problems that contributed to the offence facing the court. The community wellness court is designed to make a concerted effort to break the cycle of substance abuse and criminal recidivism by providing a court-managed therapeutic alternative to the regular court process.

While there are six courts across Canada that deal with offenders who have drug addictions, this is the first court that recognizes that offenders may have multiple problems that bring them into conflict with the law and prevent them from being productive members of society. The court will deal with

offenders with drug and alcohol abuse problems, those affected by FASD or with other diagnosed mental health issues and will refer them for treatment to address those problems. The first court date for the community wellness court is expected to occur in the spring or early summer of 2007. The offenders will be required to participate in an individualized treatment plan to address the factors that have contributed to their criminal behaviour.

The supplementary operation and maintenance budget requested is \$253,000, which consists of \$86,000 transferred from the Executive Council Office's substance abuse action plan and an additional \$167,000, which is 100-percent recoverable from the national crime prevention committee, Government of Canada. Capital funds requested total \$7,000 for furniture and computer workstations for the community wellness court office.

Mr. Inverarity: Mr. Chair, before I start I have just one comment. As you know, time is very critical in this short sitting that we have here. I think we should all make a real effort to keep our breaks on time rather than running a little bit late, just so we can get through everything.

I would like to start by thanking the minister for her opening comments. Some of the information was very enlightening, and I look forward to asking a few questions. I know we have, I think, three or four departments to get through this afternoon, so perhaps I can keep my questions short and the responses timely too.

I think some of my questions might be a little bit mundane, only because we again didn't receive an opportunity to get a briefing by the department. I understand that time was probably part of that problem. Perhaps in the new year they could find an opportunity to sit down with me and go through the department in some detail so I can be brought up to speed as a new member. I say that in the spirit of cooperation that we're talking about with the new government.

I know that in this particular budget we're only really talking about \$1 million in terms of differences. But I do have a couple of questions.

I think the main priorities that we're going to be talking about are the new correctional facility and the issue of the legislative agenda. So I think what we could start with is probably the legislative agenda.

The Minister of Justice is in charge of the legislative calendar or the agenda for the government, and we have been expecting a number of bills over the last couple of years. Just to name a few: the *Children's Act*, the animal protection legislation, the new WCB act, a new *Liquor Act*, whistle-blower legislation, forest stewardship act and a new corrections act. Will the minister confirm that we will be seeing these bills and give us an agenda and an indication of whether they will be on for the spring sitting's agenda or not?

Hon. Ms. Horne: I would suggest that the member direct the specific questions to the ministers responsible. Justice will table bills as appropriate in the spring session.

Mr. Inverarity: That's a timely response; I appreciate that.

The next question, I guess, will be about the jail. In the minister's initial speaking notes that she gave, she alluded to the fact that she is going through some planning sessions. Does this mean that the work of the old government that had actually turned some soil on the new facility is now scrapped and that she is looking at a completely new structure, new foundation and a new location? If so, what might that new location be?

Hon. Ms. Horne: The building advisory committee has been working on the new correctional facility. They have taken the old location into consideration, but they have not reached their final decision as yet. When that is reached, the position of the new correctional facility will be announced.

Mr. Inverarity: The actual construction and the plans that were previously designed -- are they also under review? What time frame are we talking about?

Hon. Ms. Horne: As I said earlier, our government is committed to building a new building in this mandate and our government is conducting consultations on this new correctional facility. This consultation is a wide-ranging document that challenges the department to build the best correctional centre in Canada.

We will use the report of the consultation on corrections as the foundation for building a new correctional centre. The correctional centre must reflect the spirit of that consultation. Yukoners require a modern correctional centre that will allow corrections professionals to carry out their responsibilities in a positive environment that will support the provision of programs to offenders.

In addition, the correctional centre must be part of a larger, integrated correctional system that is client-focused and supports a new correctional services plan. It is also a correctional system that works in active partnerships with communities and others.

In the context of a new correctional centre, we need to develop a new approach to corrections that reflects a First Nations inmate population, that provides a healing environment and also holds offenders accountable for their action.

Modern corrections administration supports moving from simply a secure facility, which had been planned, to one of multi-level secure healing that provides programs that address why individuals come into conflict with the law. This involves additional plans and it may improvise on the old plans, but we won't know that until it is decided by the building advisory committee.

Mr. Inverarity: Let's move on. Yesterday you mentioned the street crime reduction team. I found that very interesting and highly supportive, from our perspective.

I did ask three questions in my response yesterday to which I didn't receive a reply. Could you tell us now specifically if the \$485,000 earmarked for this project in the current year is coming out of this year's budget or will it come out of next year's budget that hasn't been tabled yet?

The second question I have is this: will this team only be located in Whitehorse or will it be located throughout the Yukon, thereby enabling all the communities to reap benefits from this excellent initiative?

The third one: on the overall issue of the substance abuse action plan, what measures, if any, has the government set up to determine the effectiveness of this entire plan? We're spending a fair amount of money on the program, as I mentioned, and there seems to be no discussion on how we intend to measure the effectiveness of the plan. What is your criteria for the measurement and how will we judge if the plan is effective?

Hon. Ms. Horne: The \$485,000 is a commitment for next year's budget.

The second question: this team will service all the Yukon and outlying communities, as well as Whitehorse.

As to the monitoring of the plan, the community will also monitor, and that measuring will be our safer communities and safer streets. Also, the community wellness court is a built-in monitoring system, which will come into effect in the spring of 2007.

Mr. Inverarity: Mr. Chair, I look forward to seeing all those checks and balances that we're going to have, so it will be really interesting to see how we do a year from now.

Yesterday, Mr. Chair, the chair of the Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board was here, and I think he had a bit of a Freudian slip in that he implied that they had gone through the 88 recommendations on the act and they felt that the act was going to be coming forward fairly soon. I was wondering if the minister had a time frame or if she had received that back from the Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board or not.

Hon. Ms. Horne: Mr. Chair, the questions on the Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board should be directed to the minister responsible for that portfolio.

Mr. Inverarity: I was talking to the Justice minister. Don't the acts come from the Justice department?

Hon. Ms. Horne: Mr. Chair, the Justice department is the central agency, as well as Finance, and we provide the services on behalf of that department. To get the details from Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board, you still have to go back to the minister responsible for that portfolio.

Mr. Inverarity: Mr. Speaker, it's my understanding that Faro and Ross River do not have access to a justice of the peace to deal with any local issues. The RCMP are forced to try to deal with these issues that arise by a long-distance conference call with the JP in Whitehorse, but obviously that has difficulties and limitations. There is a candidates list available, I understand, identifying people who have expressed an interest in this government position.

This minister and, I might add, the previous Yukon Party ministers have not addressed the issue of the shortage of JPs in Ross River and Faro. I understand, though, that there are at least two on the waiting list who would be interested in the position. Is the minister aware of this problem, and is she going to do anything about it?

Hon. Ms. Horne: To the best of my knowledge, all the communities in the Yukon have the services of justices of the peace and coroners.

Mr. Inverarity: Well, they may have the services, but there is not anyone local. Sometimes there are issues around that, such as they need someone to sign warrants and so on. It

presents a problem, but it has been a problem for some time. It is a problem that the Yukon government is aware of. It is also a problem that the government has done nothing to fix.

As a former justice of the peace yourself, you should have a good idea about how this works and how dealing with Whitehorse on every issue is probably not the best way to do it. Can you give us a timeline as to when you will actually have this problem corrected? Will it be next week or month? When will the residents of Ross River and Faro actually have a JP?

Hon. Ms. Horne: Mr. Chair, as I previously stated, as far as I know, each of the communities has the services of a JP or coroner. There may be temporary vacancies but, as far as I know, it is very seldom that calls are made to the Whitehorse office. That would be only on a temporary basis.

Mr. Inverarity: Well, let's look at it a bit differently then. There are some communities, such as Faro and Ross River, that don't have the services of a local JP, but I understand that there is also a problem that I will call "overcrowding" of the current JP list. I understand that there are about 100 JPs appointed; however, many of them are inactive or have moved away. As I understand it, some actually spend six months of the year in Florida. I could have said "six months in Faro". Some of them need training and some have not kept pace with their training. In short, they are incapable of doing their duties as a JP, yet they remain on the list, giving the impression that there are lots of JPs to serve the entire Yukon Territory, but there are areas of the Yukon that are underserved.

What is the minister going to do to resolve the problem? Again, this has been an issue for the two previous Yukon Party Justice ministers, who did nothing to resolve it.

Hon. Ms. Horne: There is an active list of Yukon volunteers in the communities for justices of the peace and coroners and there is training done annually for JPs and the coroners. I can assure you that if the JPs are going to Florida, it is not on the JPs' salary.

Mr. Inverarity: On the safer communities initiative, I noticed that in the budget there is \$161,000. How is this money being spent? What is the anticipated full year of operations? Is it going to be \$500,000 or \$600,000? What is the estimate for a full year's operation for this initiative?

Hon. Ms. Horne: I can report that it's \$188,000 for this year. We cannot give an active amount until the activity is measured from that office.

Mr. Inverarity: So the answer is, you don't know, I guess.

I'd like to thank the minister for her time today. I guess we will just see how things go in the near future. I appreciate her time. I will turn my time over to the Member for Mount Lorne.

Mr. Cardiff: In the interest of time today, because we have several departments to get through, I am going to try to put some questions on the record. If the minister could respond today, that would be most helpful. If not, I would be more than pleased to receive the information in a legislative return at a future date, sometime before the next sitting.

The reason I am going to do that is because I have quite a list of questions, and I would like to get them on record.

The first one has to do with the community court that the minister was mentioning earlier. I applaud the minister and the department for this initiative. I think it is a good thing. It is long overdue and is something that was recommended. We actually saw it as something that was needed. The minister talked a little bit about this in a previous answer, but the problem I see is that there is going to be a need to respond to the needs of the offenders who are coming out of that community court. We are talking about people with mental health problems, with addictions and FASD. There will be a need for counsellors, probation officers, mental health and medical health services and probably even in some cases a requirement for housing for some of these people in order for them to fulfill the plans that come out of that community court.

I'm going to pass on any questions with regard to the correctional facility. I think the minister has laid out where we are going on that. I'm not totally happy with the time frames, because we are not receiving anything around what the time frames are for the construction of the facility.

Another recent initiative that the minister announced yesterday was the \$1.4 million -- and this is probably a question that might be better suited for the spring budget, because the money is not located in the supplementary budget despite the fact that it was announced yesterday. I would be interested if at some date before then we could get a breakdown of that \$485,000 per annum.

Will there be any activities between now and April when the new street crime unit comes into effect? I believe the question about how communities would be served by this new initiative was already asked, but one thing I'd like to know is if there will be any special training for the members of this unit who will be dealing with street crime. Where will the unit be located? Will it be in the Department of Justice, will it be with the RCMP, or will it be split between two locations?

Some other questions I have of a general nature have been asked before, but I'm wondering where we're at and whether or not there will be a review of the *Corrections Act* at some point in time. The *Corrections Act* is fairly old, like much of the legislation we deal with and are responsible for. Could we get a time frame for that review and for the implementation of recommendations that could come out of that review?

If possible, I'd like the minister to provide some statistics, if they're available, on the new adult decision-making legislation that came into effect within the last two or three years, if I recall rightly -- basically, things like how many people have used the legislation and whether or not there's an evaluation of how well that new legislation is working.

I also have some questions with regard to probation officers, specifically around communities and how we deal with probationers who are in rural communities and how the Department of Justice meets their needs and the needs of the justice system, the number of probation officers that are in communities and with what frequency probation officers travel to communities to fulfill their duties.

As well, I'd be interested in knowing how many First Nation probation officers we have working for the government and I'd like statistics for charges of breach of probation. It's

kind of a recidivism question around probation. The minister talked about recidivism in relationship to the Whitehorse correctional facility. I'd like to know what the statistics are for breaches of probation and a recidivism aspect to that -- if they are seeing the same offenders who are continually breaching their probation and whether or not we have a problem there.

I have some questions as well about victim services and the family violence prevention unit. I'd like to know whether or not there are victim services workers in communities and whether or not there is any expansion of the family violence prevention unit to meet the needs of rural communities.

Again, are there some statistics around the recidivism rate for violent offences for both males and females after they received counselling from the family violence prevention unit -- statistics for the number of emergency interventions put in place under the *Family Violence Prevention Act* in the past year? Are there any First Nation counsellors in the family violence prevention unit? Are there elders involved in the counselling services provided by the family violence prevention unit to First Nation clients?

I would also request that the minister provide information as to whether or not -- and I believe that this question has been asked before -- there are any plans in the department to establish a police commission, and whether or not the department monitors the use of Tasers by police officers in the RCMP.

I am getting close to the end of this list, but I would also like to know whether or not there are any plans in the future -- I don't see anything in this supplementary budget that would indicate it -- for increasing the resources for legal aid. I would like an explanation as to how legal aid services are accessed in rural communities outside of Whitehorse.

I would also like some statistics around the number of people, the success rate and whether or not there were any savings involved through the use of the Adult Resource Centre, better known as the ARC. I'd also like to know whether or not there is any evaluation of the services provided at the Adult Resource Centre. Is there an evaluation, or is there one being done or is there one being planned?

I know that is a pretty big list for the minister to answer, but I kept it as short as I could and I look forward to either hearing the minister respond or providing a legislative return.

Hon. Ms. Horne: The member opposite asked a long list of questions and I wasn't able to write them all down, but I will answer as much as I can.

As to the question on the *Decision Making, Support and Protection to Adults Act*, you would have to go to the minister responsible for that portfolio.

I can answer the question about the community wellness court, which I have already addressed but will do so again for the member. The community wellness court is one of the initiatives that came out of the substance action plan. The community wellness court is designed to make a concerted effort to break the cycle of substance abuse and criminal recidivism by providing a court-managed, therapeutic alternative to the regular court process. While there are six courts across Canada that deal with offenders who have drug addictions, this is the first court that recognizes that offenders may have multiple prob-

lems that bring them into conflict with the law and prevent them from being productive members of society.

The court will deal with offenders and drug and alcohol abuse problems, those who are affected by FASD or those offenders with other diagnosed mental health issues, and it will refer them to the treatment centre to address those problems. The first court date for the community wellness court is expected to occur in the spring or early summer of 2007. The Yukon community wellness court will make a concerted effort to break the cycle of drug use and criminal recidivism by providing a therapeutic alternative to the regular court process.

The multidisciplinary nature of the court will ensure that the full range of the offenders' risk factors is addressed, from drug and alcohol addictions to housing, literacy, parenting, employment, childcare and spirituality. The court will be a partnership among the judiciary, Crown and defence counsel, the police services providers from the Department of Justice and the Department of Health and Social Services and non-governmental organizations and First Nation communities. A considerable amount of work has already been undertaken on this initiative. The court should be in a position to receive offenders by the first court date of February 6, 2007, and evaluation will be conducted in the first two years of operation to look at whether the court program has been implemented as planned. The evaluation will also document the community wellness court model. This year's costs for community court amount to \$253,000 in total -- \$103,000 for courts, the clerk and coordinator, and \$150,000 for probations and treatment.

I can respond to your question about the services to victims and families. The Department of Justice offers many services to individual victims, families and communities. Victim-LINK crisis line is provided in partnership with British Columbia; it is a toll-free service available 24 hours a day, staffed by professionals who are trained to provide victims of crime access to Yukon support, information referral services and crisis support to victims of family and sexual violence.

As to the Domestic Violence Treatment Option Court, or DVTO, it is offered in Whitehorse and Watson Lake. The DVTO is a process that recognizes that family violence is a serious criminal act but provides a more innovative response to the issue of domestic violence by combining court proceedings with the proven benefits of treatment for the offender.

We also have programs for children who witness domestic violence. It is funded through the federal victims of crime initiative and is a five-year agreement. Victim services/family violence prevention unit has hired a program coordinator to create and implement this program, and it is expected to be implemented in the fall of 2006. The victim services/family violence prevention unit offers support services and professional assistance to victims of crime and abuse, as well as treatment programs, such as the spousal abuse program and the sexual offender risk management program.

Every Yukon community has counsellors assigned to work directly with both victims and offenders. There are seven employees who provide services to victims, both in Whitehorse and their assigned communities. In addition, there is a one-half time victim services worker located in Dawson City and a full-

time position available in Watson Lake. We are currently recruiting for this position.

There are two separate but integrated and complementary programs to support victims. The victims program offers short-term services to victims of domestic violence and sexual assault. The women's program offers longer term individual and group counselling services to women who have experienced or are experiencing violence in intimate relationships.

Formal training sessions have been provided in a variety of communities to shelter workers, JPs and RCMP on such topics as how to use the *Family Violence Prevention Act*, sexual abuse prevention, how to work with victims of domestic violence and coping with vicarious trauma. The unit has also provided peer support training to individuals who are working with FASD victims in the With a Little Help from My Friends project, operated by FASSY. The unit, in collaboration with the RCMP, is doing community training on the *Family Violence Prevention Act* and the Domestic Violence Treatment Option Court.

They will also receive training in trauma and victimology. We also have an interactive CD-ROM training program, which has been developed by Yukon Justice that is being used by RCMP officers who are new to the Yukon and have not been able to attend a regular training session. This is an accredited course within M Division training. The unit also provides an annual three-day training session for about 40 community members on skill development for community members interested in facilitating a work group as it relates to family violence.

There is also the Protect Yourself, Protect Your Drink campaign. It is known as the coaster campaign. This is a public awareness campaign that highlights the dangers of date rape drugs, which can be placed into victims' drinks. This campaign was done with the cooperation of the local drinking establishments that allow Justice staff and members of the women's community to distribute the materials to patrons.

This successful campaign was repeated at Christmas, during Rendezvous, and in the summer. We plan to run this awareness program again in the late fall.

In addition to these services provided by the victim services/family violence unit, the Department of Justice also operates the maintenance enforcement program, which helps to collect child and spousal support for Yukon families. The Department of Justice also funds the support variation assistance program, legal aid, the Law Line, an annual meeting of the family service providers, and For the Sake of the Children parenting programs.

With respect to probation officers, there are 12 officers who provide regular services to the communities in the Yukon. Dawson City also has an officer. There is First Nation representation in the probations office.

Mr. Cardiff: I thank the minister for those answers and look forward to receiving whatever other information she can provide.

I would request the unanimous consent of the Committee to deem all lines of Vote 8, Department of Justice, cleared or carried, as required.

Unanimous consent re deeming all lines in Vote 8, Department of Justice, cleared or carried

Chair: Mr. Cardiff has requested unanimous consent to deem all lines in Vote 8, Department of Justice, cleared or carried, as required.

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Chair: Unanimous consent has been granted.

***On Operation and Maintenance Expenditures
Total Operation and Maintenance Expenditures in the amount of \$784,000 agreed to***

On Capital Expenditures

Total Capital Expenditures in the amount of \$43,000 agreed to

Department of Justice agreed to

Chair: We will now proceed with Vote 15, Department of Health and Social Services.

Do members wish a five-minute recess?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Chair: We will recess for five minutes.

Recess

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

Department of Health and Social Services -- continued

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

Mr. Edzerza: I'd like to state for the record that this is sort of getting to be a habit where departments are called but no officials are prepared to sit. That is a bit of a concern for me. However, I'll continue on from where I left off and summarize my comments from the last time we were in Committee of the Whole. I was focusing in mostly on the dire importance of moving the *Children's Act* review along as quickly as possible, as there are a lot of major, major concerns from citizens throughout the territory about flaws in the act. A lot of people in the territory believe that it is of utmost importance to bring that act up to date.

I'm just going to bring one more thing to the minister's attention before my time is up here. As recently as December 8, there were some discussions with the media with regard to a treatment centre and requests from the First Nations in south-east Yukon. In the interview, the Premier, I believe, if I read the transcripts correctly, more or less committed to, "Yes, maybe we are going to build a treatment centre in Watson Lake."

I would like to know today if the minister is aware of that and if discussions are going to take place with regard to that infrastructure. If so, what happens to the commitment made during the election and before the election to begin immediate discussions with First Nations who already have infrastructure in place, and it's just a case of sitting down and working out a partnership with those First Nations to be able to have facilities

up and running almost as quickly as the minister can get in and have some discussions with these First Nations.

Hon. Mr. Cathers: In answer to the member's question, first of all, about treatment centres, we are committed to treatment centres. As I have pointed out before, it is a key element of our treatment pillar in the substance abuse action plan that we will be working on land-based treatment centres. With First Nation governments, NGOs and other stakeholders, we will be developing more treatment centre programs throughout the territory. Exactly when, where, with whom and how will be the subject of these discussions. We have to develop models that work for Yukoners.

Yesterday afternoon the member asked a number of questions to which I did not have the opportunity to respond. I am reluctant to engage in too much debate that takes on a bit of a personal nature with the member opposite, but I do have to address some of his comments. I recognize that, with regard to issues about children in care and child apprehensions, the member is very passionate about these subjects and has great concerns about them. However, I do have to point out that his comments yesterday went too far. The member made reference to a description of communities being like dead horses and social workers being like ravens. That is far beyond the line. To suggest that a community is being preyed on is inappropriate. That suggestion was also made by the member.

I know that the member is very passionate about this subject; however, I cannot let those comments go without addressing them. I need to point out that social workers do their jobs very well and with great dedication. They do difficult jobs for which they get very little thanks. They deal with problems that most people within our society would rather not even acknowledge exist. It is not an easy job. It is not something --

Some Hon. Member: Point of order.

Point of order

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

Mr. Edzerza: The member knows very well that I did not make any accusations against any social workers and to state that I personally did, I believe was imputing false motives to me. If he read the Blues he would find that I said that a community member referred to that as a description that they told to me. I did not say that it was something that I invented.

Hon. Mr. Cathers: There is no point of order. It is a dispute between members about what the member was meaning in his comments in the Blues from yesterday which I was merely reading out.

Chair's ruling

Chair: Just to remind everybody that it is up to the Chair to determine if there is a point of order, and no, there isn't a point of order, but I would like to remind Mr. Edzerza that when in Committee of the Whole or in the Legislative Assembly members have to take responsibility for what they say, even if it is repeating what somebody else might have said.

Hon. Mr. Cathers: I want to address the fact I was not trying to speculate on the intentions of the Member for McIntyre-Takhini in making those remarks. However, I did

need to and must address the fact those remarks were not appropriate or fair to staff of the Department of Health and Social Services or other social workers within our communities. They do a very difficult job. It is often fraught with challenges, with tremendous emotions and in some cases puts them in situations that cause some personal danger. We recognize that; I recognize that on behalf of the government, and we need to applaud them for their work. The government stands behind them and as minister responsible for the Department of Health and Social Services I want to take the opportunity to express to all the social workers employed by the department that I have full confidence in their abilities and the fact that they do their jobs and do them well.

I look forward to debate with members on policy elements related to this. With regard to policy and legislation that is the responsibility of the minister, I take responsibility for that and would urge members to recognize that and not target staff in their attempt to attack me in this House.

Moving on to other areas --

Chair's statement

Chair: I would just like to remind the minister that questioning in Committee of the Whole is not an attack. Mr. Cathers.

Hon. Mr. Cathers: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

With regard to other questions asked by the Member for McIntyre-Takhini, we're moving forward on the *Children's Act*. I'd like to point out to the member -- which I'm surprised he hasn't recognized by now -- and I would urge all members of this House to take a look at the process that has been engaged and to recognize what has been done here. This is an act that is a piece of Yukon government legislation. In what has been a landmark and brand new process, we have engaged in an unprecedented level of cooperation with the Council of Yukon First Nations in the development of a new piece of legislation -- amendments to the *Children's Act*. It's a brand new road; we're walking down it and, as we've acknowledged, there were some challenges in that process. We brought things back on track together at the leadership level and, through the hard work of officials, we've resolved issues and dealt with ones that have been causes of frustration for many years.

The issues raised by the Member for McIntyre-Takhini around his concern about the access of parents to children -- yes, we recognize that. We recognize there is a desire and there are concerns, such as those of the Member for McIntyre-Takhini, related to parents who have their children taken away by government for safety reasons and then, years later, do not have access to their children when perhaps it may be safe for them to do so, causing a rift within the family.

We recognize there is a desire to ensure that, while safety is dealt with, there are steps taken to preserve family linkages when possible.

These issues are something that previous governments did not have the political will to tackle. We are tackling this issue, but I stress, and will emphasize, that our first concern -- our first responsibility -- must always be the protection of children in dealing with this legislation. We feel -- and I know our part-

ners in CYFN feel -- that we must get the legislation right and ensure that the safety of children is protected.

We had decades of issues simply not being dealt with. We began dealing with them, and it took a little longer than originally planned compared to others who dared not even tackle those issues. I think that speaks volumes of the political will that our government has for dealing with this and the political will that the Council of Yukon First Nations has in addressing these matters -- in discussing it and reaching a cooperative resolution to these matters. That work has been done both at the leadership level and by officials through the technical work in resolving these issues, discussing solutions and coming up with ways to make this legislation better. But it is not appropriate for members to suggest that our current legislation is bad legislation. No, the safety of Yukon children is protected today, but we recognize that improvements can be made and that is why we embarked upon this process and that's why we are committed to it and that's why, in cooperation with the Council of Yukon First Nations -- even when challenges arose -- we found a way to get past those, to move forward and bring this project ultimately to where its final resolution will be.

At the end of the day, I'm confident that I'll be able to stand up as minister and say that we got it right. We did the legislation right, rather than simply meeting a timeline, as has been suggested by members opposite.

To clarify that point, in doing our work, we are very committed to doing the right thing, doing it right, getting it right, getting it right the first time, not simply meeting a timeline that has been set so that members will not criticize us for being a month late. We're going to do it right.

Another issue raised by the Member for McIntyre-Takhini with regard to the *Children's Act* was a suggestion that there had not been genuine input in this process. We have engaged in an unprecedented joint development process, together with the Council of Yukon First Nations, and we are jointly advising the legal drafters. For the member to suggest that we're not consulting with First Nations is, frankly, hard to understand because in this we've gone far beyond consultation and are involving them as full partners in this process.

The member also suggested that he thought it would take two years more. Well, Mr. Chair, I think that suggestion -- again, I'm frankly dumbfounded at where the member can get this suggestion from. I have no reason to believe that we will not be able to complete this project and table the legislation in 2007. We are looking forward to doing so, but, as stated, we're doing the work. We're getting it right and the policy work has almost totally been completed on this, and we'll jointly advise the legal drafters. So the most challenging elements of this process have been resolved. We're looking forward to moving forward to the ultimate successful completion.

Again, with regard to issues raised by the Member for McIntyre-Takhini, he spoke about the domestic violence treatment option and the community court, and suggested that this was years old. That is not accurate. Although some work was embarked upon in prior years, I would point out that when the member was on this side of the floor as minister responsible for Justice, the funding was signed off jointly by him and me as the

Minister of Health and Social Services in 2006. It is not years old. It is very recent. We are very proud of this initiative.

For the member to suggest otherwise, as he did in some of his questions that asked what we are doing about treatment, I would have to point out that we have laid out some of those things we have done. For example, there is our five-step FASD action plan, including a promotion of prevention programs to eliminate alcohol consumption by high-risk parents in order to foster the birth of healthy babies; early diagnosis of FASD before the age of six and supporting people and families with FASD with a wide range of services such as professional counselling and foster homes in order to provide a stable and nurturing home environment. We are enhancing supported living arrangements for adults with FASD; supporting a diagnostic team of professionals trained in personal counselling and social work/health to provide services to Yukon schools in order to provide support for FASD students and their families. Those are just some examples. Another example in just this one area includes our work with Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Society Yukon, among other agencies, to address this issue.

I would point out that we as a government are also one of the partners in the Canada Northwest FASD Partnership, which is composed of the four western provinces and the three northern territories. This is a new initiative working together. This occurred several years ago -- I forget the exact timing, but it was during our last mandate that we were one of the founding members of this network.

We have been commended and recognized as a jurisdiction for some of the very fine work that is being dealt with by staff of government and non-governmental organizations. The Child Development Centre is another example -- their involvement in this process.

There are different elements being dealt with. Meconium testing of infants is something that was brought forward under our watch in the last mandate, and that's brand new in the country. We're breaking ground in areas, and one of the benefits of the Canada Northwest FASD Partnership is the fact that provinces and territories are all trying different things that have not been tried elsewhere in Canada, and we are learning from the experience and gaining the statistical information and data and results that have been achieved by our other partners -- the other jurisdictions within the partnership.

We are very proud of what has been done here, but we recognize that much more needs to be done. That's why we're committed to it. We're not going to be shy about saying what has been done to date, but we will not be shy about addressing the fact that we need to take further action. The problems caused by FASD within our society are significant. We recognize the link between that and recidivism, for example, and between some of the crimes that are committed -- and, although the enforcement side of it is articulated through initiatives such as the *Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act* and the new street crime reduction team announced by the Minister of Justice, those are important components in addressing the problem we have today.

One of the elements of treatment is preventing the problems of tomorrow.

Other elements from our platform include, as I mentioned before, treatment centres to continue implementation of inpatient and drug treatment programs offered at the Sarah Steele treatment centre and to enhance and expand on that with other treatment centres to provide a broader range of programming.

They also include issues such as access to the 24-hour substance abuse crisis line in partnership with British Columbia, which would allow Yukoners access to their alcohol and drug information referral service. We're working on that right now.

Mr. Chair, I recognize again that I seem to be running out of time to respond to the member opposite, but that again is just one element with regard to the community court and domestic violence treatment option.

Another issue raised by the member was that he took issue with the Premier referring to challenges in health costs in his budgetary speech. The Member for McIntyre-Takhini speculated that this might be a red flag suggesting privatization. I am dumbfounded by this suggestion. Our government has invested significantly in the public system. We have provided, for example, a \$5-million annual increase to the budget of Whitehorse General Hospital.

We have increased the Department of Health and Social Services -- this year is the largest amount that has ever been voted for this department. Our contribution and our protection of our system in terms of things such as the health human resource strategy -- unprecedented investment by the Yukon government in assisting Yukon students in attending school for education as physicians, as nurses, and a variety of other health professions. There is the family physician incentive program to attract family physicians to the Yukon. These are all elements to support and enhance our public system.

The Yukon government has fully shown its commitment to equal opportunity, the principles of the *Canada Health Act* and strengthening the public system. For the member to suggest that the fact that the Premier noted what is glaringly obvious -- from coast to coast, every jurisdiction is coping with rising health costs. It is necessary for all members to recognize this, which is why I assume the Premier put it into his speech. For members not to realize that some budgets -- such as nearly half of the Province of Ontario's total provincial budget sustaining the health system. To not recognize what is happening from coast to coast in this area would be folly for a politician, for a member of any government -- federal, provincial or territorial -- in this country. All members need to recognize this, but we are fully committed to strengthening the system we have.

Mr. Edzerza: Mr. Chair, I'm not going to continue too much longer, because I think a lot of this debate seems to be going nowhere. I believe that's one of the risks of not having staff present. The minister brought up some things here that I never asked yesterday, and he said I did ask it. Maybe that's something that the government side should look at and be more aware of. I want to say that if my comments yesterday offended any staff member, and if they took them personally, I'm making a public apology to them, because that was not the intention. If they felt offended, I sincerely apologize, because I'm not the kind of person who would discredit anybody or the hard work that they do to be successful in their profession.

The minister also stated that the *Children's Act* is back on track. Well, that's good to hear. All I'm trying to say to the minister is maybe he should consider making that public so that I don't get questioned on it. I'm merely asking about questions of concern to some of my constituents. The *Children's Act* review is a very, very big one on the minds of a lot of my constituents. I was asked to try to get some indication of where that act is really at. Is it on track? The minister said it is. Well, that's good to hear. I'm sure a lot of the people listening to this debate will be glad to hear that it is on track, and it doesn't hurt to make that public knowledge once in awhile. I know when I was a minister and doing the Justice review, how well things were moving was publicized. If they weren't, that was also known, so it's only being considerate and respectful to the public at large.

I just have two more questions I would like the minister to respond to. One is that his predecessor made some promises to the Kwanlin Dun First Nation, and I would like to know if the minister is going to honour those commitments from his predecessor and from the last mandate with regard to the treatment centre and a possible childcare facility with the Kwanlin Dun First Nation. I think that both of them are dearly needed.

There were I guess what you might call some raised expectations of the First Nation. It would be much appreciated if the minister could maybe get in contact with the leadership at Kwanlin Dun and bring them up to date on where those commitments were at -- whether they are still on the table or not.

I would also like to know if the minister would be prepared to have discussions with the Kwanlin Dun First Nation on some possible interim arrangements with regard to childcare while the act is being reviewed.

Hon. Mr. Cathers: In response to the member, I would note first of all that he raised the issue of commitments that were apparently made to Kwanlin Dun First Nation. But I would point out to the member that the issue of these commitments that were allegedly made -- there was certainly no written documentation provided from my predecessor. Certainly there was no caucus approval, let alone Cabinet/Management Board approval. We have reports of a verbal commitment that was allegedly made. I think that it is a bit of a pointless discussion.

The member is aware the former Minister of Health and Social Services, my predecessor, is no longer a member of this government, much like the member opposite.

In terms of moving forward in discussing issues such as treatment centres, I'm reluctant and don't want to spend too much time in pointing the finger back and forth with the member opposite. I would remind the member opposite that, during my tenure as Minister of Health and Social Services in the last mandate when discussions with Kwanlin Dun on issues relating to treatment centres came up, we agreed that the Member for McIntyre-Takhini -- the then-Minister of Justice -- would take the lead in those discussions. That was something on his plate; obviously nothing was concluded.

I point out here, without getting into the issue of how and why -- and I'm certainly not attempting to point the finger at the member opposite and I would just reflect the facts that now,

in this mandate -- that I have been tasked, as Minister of Health and Social Services, with the responsibility by caucus of moving forward on our platform with issues related to the development of treatment, including cooperation with First Nations and NGOs in how we enhance those treatment services. I will not stand here and make any financial commitments or commitments to exactly where this will take place, or exactly how, but we are committed to working with First Nations in discussing this. Of course, this will include discussion with those who have possible facilities in place the appropriateness of doing so in that manner. It would be irresponsible and inappropriate for me to stand here and name numbers, to pull them out of the air and to suggest for certain that we're even going to be able to engage in an appropriate relationship with the Kwanlin Dun First Nation in providing treatment.

It's an option; it's something we're very interested in exploring with them, but we need to have these discussions with them and with other First Nations where we may be able to partner in treatment.

An issue was raised earlier, and I can't see from my notes whether it was raised by the Member for McIntyre-Takhini or one of the Liberal members. It was regarding foster families and funding for grandparents who are not foster parents. I would like to respond to that and note that we don't want to rule out other options related to the provision of assistance to those who help out with the care of children; however, we would also have to evaluate whether it is appropriate to deal with that in the context of the foster parent program or within the childcare area. This could get tricky if a grandparent has not formally assumed guardian or foster-parent responsibilities. There is a need to determine exactly how funding would be provided, when it begins and how it is administered. There are some tricky elements to it, but we are certainly not averse to taking a look at it to see if we can come up with an appropriate structure to provide some assistance in that area.

I think I have mentioned this before, but I will stress again that we are committed to looking at the issues around foster parenting and the funding arrangements provided to ensure that appropriate resources are provided to them to help them take care of the children, so that they can fulfill that very important responsibility. This will include, as I mentioned, looking at the interaction between that and the services we provide to parents and daycare operators and those funding arrangements.

Other areas that I would like to quickly bring to members' attention are related to questions that were asked previously. There are issues that we are addressing with this budget. In answer to the Member for McIntyre-Takhini's concern about rising health costs, I would like to give him a few examples of what we are doing.

In this supplementary budget, we are requesting additional funding for pharmacy supplies for continuing care in the amount of \$79,000. That is a significant increase for that element of the budget, but one that we must provide and are providing. There has been an increased demand for residential and treatment services at Aspen House in the amount of \$115,000. We are also requesting the House's allocation of an additional \$165,000 to support residential services for mental health cli-

ents and \$3.7 million to cover the shortfall in the Hospital Corporation's employee pension plan. Again this is an area that, although not strictly the responsibility of the Government of Yukon, we have stepped forward to protect the pensions of employees who paid into those plans in good faith and, due to decisions outside of their control and market conditions, they were placed in a situation where the future of their pensions were in jeopardy. We stepped forward. We have dealt with that. We will provide the funding, as stated by the Premier in his initial speech in the 2006-07 supplementary budget. That includes, in this year alone, \$3.7 million, and overall, as stated by the Premier, the amount required to cover the deficit in future years is in excess of \$14 million, but we are committed to providing this both out of a sense of fairness to those employees while ensuring that our system remains strong, that questions around the pension plan do not cause us to lose employees at the hospital and do not create problems or disincentives to recruitment.

There are many areas where there is an increase to the cost of providing the best possible medical services to residents of the Yukon, including \$1.5 million due to forced growth in the claims submitted by family physicians; \$1 million for forced growth in insured hospital claims. These are examples of the areas where we as a territory are facing increases in costs, and we are stepping forward. We're dealing with those costs.

Another area is increased cost for immunizations due to forced growth -- \$216,000.

We have increased fuel costs.

Mr. Chair, it is interesting that the member across the way was asking these questions and now he doesn't seem to like that I am responding to them. It is very frustrating and difficult in dealing in debate with the members. It is a bit of a thankless task as a minister to stand up and we are either accused of not providing enough information or it's suggested that we are not providing too much information.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Chair: Order please. Mr. Cathers has the floor.

Hon. Mr. Cathers: Another area that I should address in reference to questions asked by members previously includes seniors housing in Haines Junction and how we would provide services within that context. The members asked how we would assist in providing that seniors housing.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Hon. Mr. Cathers: Mr. Chair, I am attempting to respond to members. It is very difficult with the heckling coming from members opposite. Do I indeed have the floor?

Chair: Yes. Mr. Cathers does have the floor.

Hon. Mr. Cathers: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I am sure that the member's colleague from Klwane would be interested in hearing what we are doing to help out his constituents.

In seniors housing in Haines Junction, although the construction of facilities is in fact the responsibility of Yukon Housing Corporation, Health and Social Services will be partnering with them on the implementation, and in terms of providing increased services to seniors within those facilities, we will be doing that through home care. As I mentioned earlier,

we are committed to increasing our investment within home care in addition to the reopening of the Thomson Centre to provide new continuing care beds. We are committed to ensuring that seniors and elders are able to remain in their homes as long as possible by increasing home care and other services.

I hear from the member opposite that discussing facilities in Haines Junction is a waste of time. Well, we don't think so. The government is committed to moving forward. We will address these issues. We are committed to ensuring that our care for our seniors and elders remains strong and grows to address the increased demands that we will face in years to come. We recognize that the demographics that we have cause us challenges in terms not only of staff who are forced to retire or are retiring due to them nearing the end of their careers, but we recognize this creates challenges in terms of the number of people who rely on those services.

Further, within continuing care and home care, we are committed to looking at the need for seniors facilities in other communities such as Teslin, for example, and we will continue to work with NGOs that provide support services to elders and seniors.

Another area brought up by members -- the leader of the official opposition spent some time talking about the need for a food bank. I would draw to the member's attention the fact that we have, through the Department of Health and Social Services, provided funding to the group lead by the Anti-Poverty Coalition to assist them in doing the feasibility study for the need for a permanent food bank in Whitehorse and how that would be provided. So we have done that work and we are providing that assistance. I point out to the member that we would not be supporting this if we did not believe it was worth supporting. We will work with them both in terms of the need for that and how that should be executed and dealt with, but we are very cognizant of the pressures that exist in this area and of the challenges that people with low incomes or on social assistance are forced to deal with.

Moving on, at this point I hope I've managed to address most of the questions asked by members opposite. It has been somewhat difficult; members have had a tendency during debate to fire off a long list, and unfortunately the time to reply is short. Perhaps at SCREP we'll have to discuss issues such as lengthening the time for ministers' replies.

In terms of questions previously asked by members, another area of increased cost is that we've provided additional funding for knee surgeries in the 2006-07 fiscal year. This is an area that will still require work in years to come to ensure we're providing those services in a timely fashion.

Also in this year, we had increased travel costs, which we are required to fund. This is in addition to the \$1.6 million investment we put into increasing medical travel where we have raised the per diem provided to Yukoners travelling Outside. The previous level of \$30 per day has been raised to a new level of \$75 per day, which is now effective on the second day outside the territory, rather than the fourth day, as had previously been the case. We also increased the in-territory travel subsidy from 18.5 cents a kilometre to 30 cents a kilometre.

For the first time, we're providing it to people who live in rural areas outside of communities.

I think I may have addressed the bulk of the questions that members opposite have asked, so I look forward to further questions from members across the floor.

Mr. Elias: I just have one quick question. I got a phone call from a constituent and I understand that this program is funded through this minister's portfolio. It is a program that I am familiar with and participated in for my community of Old Crow. It is the health and fitness program. It is geared toward youth and other members of my community. Although the final dividends have yet to be realized, it is bearing a lot of fruit. I would like to bring it up with the minister, as my constituent just let me know that the funding is about to run out in the spring. It is a very good initiative that my community enjoys. We have a committed administrator and committed volunteers. I would simply ask the minister if continuing this program in my riding is on his radar screen.

If he wants me to set up a meeting with him over coffee or whatever, outside of this House, so that I can explain the benefits of this program to my community, I would be more than willing to do that. The simple question is whether or not the minister would consider continuing the funding for this program in my community of Old Crow, as it is showing great results. Just a simple answer would be good.

Hon. Mr. Cathers: I thank the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin for bringing his concerns to my attention. I would indeed appreciate any further comments he wants to offer. We could perhaps sit down for a few minutes outside of this House and discuss things.

That's actually a program that yes, indeed, we are very interested in. In fact, the last time that I discussed this and looked into it was earlier today. It's a matter that we are actively looking at because we are cognizant of the fact that the funding runs out at the end of this fiscal year. At this point, we are not questioning whether we support the concept. We want to have a discussion including Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation just to see if we should be doing it exactly the same way we did in previous years or adjust the program in some way.

I want to stress that we are very supportive of the concept. We recognize that this type of thing is needed and we need to engage in the discussion of what the respective involvement is of Health and Social Services, the Department of Education, and Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation in the mechanics of moving this forward and managing the program. We are very interested in doing that and continuing this forward and providing that certainty, prior to the end of the fiscal year, so those who are assisting in the program and the administrator can have some opportunity to make their plans and have some confidence that they will have a job after that point.

We believe it has had some very positive results so far, as the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin noted. We also recognize that some of the results are things that are hard to measure until years down the road. Issues related to nutrition, improved health and more activity -- which are elements within our society, including children, and especially in this case -- are something that an increased investment and focus on would have

tremendous dividends, not only in terms of reduced health care costs but in a higher standard of living, better personal fitness and an extended life and ability -- all of the elements I am sure I don't have to explain to the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin: enhanced physical well-being and an enhanced sense of well-being that results from better physical activity.

Better nutrition, increased activity and wellness are tremendous, and it's an area that we will focus on as a government in looking at how we can expand this through programs such as the one in Old Crow and the whole child program that has been done at Whitehorse Elementary School and the Elijah Smith Elementary School, and look at this in an inclusive setting for how we can expand the focus that is being placed on health and nutrition for children and on physical activity and, of course, in both cases, on community involvement in raising children to have such a lifestyle.

As I mentioned previously to members, I will just very briefly note that under the territorial health access fund plan that we have, we've put aside in excess of \$2 million for enhancing our investment in health and nutrition programs, and we will be taking a look at this, of course, within budgetary processes of other areas, but we as a government are very interested in expanding our investment in the public health side of things, and that includes nutrition, physical activity, et cetera, for all ages, as well, of course, as reduction of addictions such as smoking. But it has been shown that improved care for one's health and improved level of activity have a dramatic reduction on health care costs and, of course, increase people's life spans.

So I would indeed appreciate it if the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin would take the time to sit down with me at some point, and I'd look forward to hearing his suggestions regarding the health and fitness program in Old Crow. As I say, we are very interested in continuing this forward and are only considering just exactly what manner that's being dealt with and how. But we very much support the intent, and with that, I look forward to further questions from members opposite.

Mr. Fairclough: Mr. Chair, I have a couple of quick questions for the minister. They don't require long answers, but the community of Mayo has gone without a social worker for quite some time now. I'd like to know when the government is going to backfill the position and when that person will be hired. People in Mayo want to know.

My second question concerns the Northern Tutchone Tribal Council. They do have a treatment centre at Tatlain Lake, an alcohol and drug treatment centre. It's still not recognized by this government as a legitimate treatment centre. The counsellors are not recognized as counsellors qualified under the Yukon government. I would like to know when the government is going to recognize this treatment centre as a place to which the department could give referrals.

Hon. Mr. Cathers: With regard to a social worker in Mayo, I don't have the information relating to that in front of me right now. As the member is aware, we don't manage personnel issues at the minister level, nor should we. I am aware we've had challenges in keeping different positions within rural communities fully staffed, and social workers are one of those areas.

That is something I'm confident the department is working on right now. I will check and follow up on members' concerns, but the standard practice or common process within these areas is that we do sometimes experience challenges in staffing some of our rural positions due to their remoteness and the difficulty in getting people to serve in those areas and, when that happens, we make efforts to recruit as quickly as possible and provide services from Whitehorse or other regional centres to backfill that service until we're able to fully resume at the staffing level we want to have in place.

I will look into that for the member and we'll deal with that as quickly as we're able to. We want to ensure we have the best services in place in all areas. If the members can suggest people for any position, I would urge them to direct them on how to make the application and to contact the department's human resources and go through the appropriate process.

I say that somewhat facetiously. I'm intending that in good humour, as well. I think we all realize here there are challenges in recruiting some of the professionals we need at different times, particularly in community locations. Best efforts are made to provide those services and they will continue to be provided.

With regard to Tatlain Lake and treatment services there, I would again stress to members I'm not going to make any determinations here on the floor of the Legislature about the mechanics of any agreements we'll have with First Nations in terms of enhancing our treatment services for alcohol and drugs, nor make any commitments -- particularly financial commitments -- here on the floor of the House related to that.

We are going to look at it. It will be an area of focus, and it will be moving forward during this mandate. We will consider options related to Little Salmon-Carmacks and Northern Tutchone Tribal Council and Tatlain Lake, but we'll have to consider the feasibility and the appropriateness of any program that we put in place before making commitments to engage in that. I look forward to the discussion, but that is all I can responsibly commit to today.

Certainly the member is more than welcome to make me aware of suggestions and concerns related to that. We will take a look at them, but we'll make the decisions at the end based on what we believe in the best interests of Yukoners and that will include the types of programs we are able to agree to and the provision of services when appropriate, where appropriate and how appropriate. With that, I think I have answered the member's questions.

Mr. Cardiff: I have one brief question for the minister and it is a concern that was raised, I believe, last spring and probably earlier than that as well. That is the question around the recruitment and retention of dental therapists for the in-school program. It is my understanding that that unit still faces some challenges, has faced some challenges this fall. I have heard that from parents and people within the schools and I am wondering if the minister has a plan. Part of the problem, I believe, is the salary level and part of the problem could be the recruitment process and the length of time between doing an interview and actually offering someone a job. These people are in short supply and high demand, and I think in order to

ensure the continuance of this program in our schools, the minister needs to look at a better recruitment and retention strategy. I am wondering if he could briefly outline his intentions in this area.

Hon. Mr. Cathers: We do have challenges in recruitment for this area, as the member has noted. The Yukon children's dental unit is funded for the following 10 positions: the manager, the program assistant and eight dental therapists. There are presently only five dental therapists to provide dental services, one of whom is also acting manager. Several aggressive recruitments to fill vacancies have taken place over the last three years but, although it was successful in attracting four new therapists to the territory, these efforts have not kept pace with the loss of older therapists due to retirement, illness and other factors. There is only one school of dental therapy in Canada, and it graduates 15 to 18 dental therapists each year.

Current efforts to recruit include a visit to the National School of Dental Therapy earlier this year to attract graduates to work in the Yukon, development and distribution of promotional material, attendance at health fairs and across-Canada recruitment postings. I should point out that the issue that members raise with regard to salaries falls under the collective agreement between the Public Service Commission and the Yukon Employees Union. That is not in my portfolio and it would not be appropriate for me to reflect on that at this time. It would be dealt with in due course when the collective agreement is reviewed.

The areas that do fall under my responsibility include recruitment and, as I pointed out, we have ramped that up. I would also note that we have identified this as an area under our health profession education bursary under the health human resources strategy. Under that program we will provide Yukoners who are seeking education as a dental therapist with \$5,000 a year, subject of course to the approval of their application.

We do recognize this challenge. It is a priority area that we have identified and we will be making best efforts to address that in a timely manner.

Mr. Cardiff: I don't think we have any more questions on this side of the House. I would request unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all lines in Vote 15, Department of Health and Social Services, cleared or carried, as required.

Unanimous consent re deeming all lines in Vote 15, Department of Health and Social Services, cleared or carried

Chair: Mr. Cardiff has requested the unanimous consent of the Committee to deem all lines in Vote 15, Department of Health and Social Services, cleared or carried, as required. Are you agreed?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Chair: Unanimous consent has been granted.

On Operation and Maintenance Expenditures

Total Operation and Maintenance Expenditures in the amount of \$14,185,000 agreed to

On Capital Expenditures

Total Capital Expenditures in the amount of \$2,621,000 agreed to

Department of Health and Social Services agreed to

Chair: We will now proceed with Vote 51, Department of Community Services.

Do members wish a brief recess?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Chair: We will recess for five minutes.

Recess

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

Department of Community Services

Chair: The matter before the Committee is Bill No. 3, *Second Appropriation Act, 2006-07*, Vote 51, Department of Community Services.

Hon. Mr. Hart: I am pleased to present the supplementary budget for the Department of Community Services. In the 2006-07 fiscal year, the Department of Community Services will continue to focus on building healthy and safe communities through investments in critical infrastructure and community-based improvements. Community Services remains committed to doing its part in rebuilding the Yukon economy and facilitating strong, long-term working relationships between the many orders of government it works with, both inside and outside of the Yukon.

In November, I had the great privilege of meeting with the newly elected community mayors, councillors and local area community members that were elected throughout the Yukon at the recently held Association of Yukon Communities meetings held in Haines Junction. I am confident that by working together we can achieve the targets and objectives that will contribute to the overarching goal of assisting in the development and maintenance of safe and healthy communities.

Community Services is focused on working in our local communities to improve the quality of life in each community. Mr. Chair, Community Services is also responsible for ensuring the safety of our citizens and their communities from forest fires, floods and other natural disasters. We work with them to ensure that emergency planning and training activities are up to date and meet the needs of the community.

The 2006 forest fire season was what may be considered typical, with a total of 79 fires across the territory. The Watson Lake district had the most fires during that season with 17. Watson Lake also recorded the largest area burned, with 74,000 hectares, mostly in the wilderness area zone. There were also event-level fires in Beaver Creek and near the old Pelly Farm and Fort Selkirk.

While many believe that last year was not a very active fire season, the fact is that, in mid-June, extra resources were brought in to the Yukon from Alberta to augment our fire-fighting crews. This was done as a proactive measure, as the fire danger was high to extreme throughout most of the territory and the threat of forest fire was increased.

Our highly skilled fire workers did their job with pride and dedication and we are thankful for their commitment to keeping Yukoners, our communities and our environments safe.

You may have recently seen television commercials encouraging families to develop their own emergency plans and either build or buy emergency kits. This is a national information campaign in print and broadcast media across Canada, and the Yukon EMO has contributed a great deal toward creating this campaign.

Regardless of where Canadians live, we are all at risk of some kind of threat that could disrupt our lives. The message is clear: be ready to take care of ourselves for up to 72 hours because emergency responders must attend to those in urgent and perilous situations first.

Information on how to create a family emergency plan and building an emergency kit can be found on the Yukon government homepage and I encourage all Yukoners to make a plan and be prepared.

The Department of Community Services also has the responsibility for testing and licensing Yukon drivers and for registering their vehicles. Over the past few years we have been offering electronic services such as vehicle re-registration in an effort to help improve our services for rural Yukoners. They are telling us they like the efficiency and convenience of this new service.

Our consumer and safety services branch ensures the qualifications of professionals as well as protecting consumer interests and commercial activities throughout the territory.

Community Services is also responsible for sport and recreation in the territory, and the branch is very busy right now with the preparations for the upcoming Canada Winter Games.

These are but a few of the ways the Department of Community Services serves the territory with pride and dedication to improve the quality of life for all Yukoners.

The 2007 Canada Winter Games is now just two months away, and we can anticipate people from across the nation to begin arriving in preparation for the opening ceremonies. Some will be arriving early to help establish the venues for the sports. Some will be here to train and acclimatize themselves to our time zone and the winter environment. Things are getting busy on a number of fronts. The banners are going up. The signage is coming into place. The ATCO Centre on Second Avenue is taking shape as the giant tent grows and continues to cover the steel that's there. The recent test events have been beneficial in helping the planners to practise operating their venues while Yukoners have been fortunate to watch some of the outstanding competitions in preparation for these games.

Now, Mr. Chair, several Yukon citizens have had the opportunity to attend our multiplex and view many western Canada finals as well as international events here in our multiplex, and they've seen great talent and great expertise there. We've had several celebrities here also encouraging our athletes to excel and also to broadcast our games throughout Canada. I'm also very encouraged by the increasing spirit in which the Yukoners are becoming involved. A 99-day-out event with Canadian sport royalty, namely Hailey Wickenheiser and Kelly

Hrudey, was a huge success with great community support and participation.

I have tabled the supplementary budget for Community Services, asking for an increase of \$3.89 million for operation and maintenance and a \$12.65-million increase for capital expenditures.

Under operation and maintenance expenditures in the supplementary budget, we are asking for an increase of \$100,000 for fire management to cover the costs associated with an agreement with the Carcross-Tagish First Nation for their services in participating with wildland fire management.

In the community development division, we are asking for \$3.75 million, which consists of an increase of \$3.4 million due to the write-off of the Dawson City debt and a \$361,000 increase associated with the 2007 Canada Winter Games, Western Canada Summer Games, and grant-in-lieu of taxes.

On the revenue and recovery side, we are forecasting revenue increases of \$280,000 directly related to an increase in tax revenue from new properties and housing stock not previously taxed and a decrease of only \$8,000 in recoveries.

On capital expenditures, in terms of the total, the gross supplementary capital expenditure request is \$12.658 million. Of this total, \$11.8 million is a revote request to complete work on projects that were in progress since the previous fiscal year.

The allocation of supplementary capital expenditures primarily consists of \$141,000 for network infrastructure and various information systems work, \$7.5 million for the completion of the work on the athletes village, \$805,000 for the Teslin arena upgrade, \$347,000 to fulfill the contribution agreement with the Klondike Institute of Art and Culture, and \$119,000 toward the domestic well-drilling program for projects started but not completed in 2005-06.

There is \$140,000 for the Army Beach community well project.

We are making strategic investments in providing Yukoners with potable water. There is more on water, but not the drinking kind. There is \$350,000 allocated to address the potential damage from natural waterways adjacent to developed areas in order to protect these communities. Included in this is \$36,000 to complete repairs on the walking bridge in Ross River, \$35,000 to complete the river dike protection in Mayo, and \$279,000 for the riverbank stabilization project in Old Crow.

The Canadian strategic infrastructure fund has been beneficial in improving critical infrastructure in Yukon communities. In this supplementary budget, funding is provided for the Whitehorse waterfront project through CSIF fund reallocations based on the forecasted lapse from this other program; however, the supplementary increase being requested for CSIF is \$124,000. Provision of funding for projects not as advanced as the Whitehorse waterfront project will be considered in the next capital budget.

We are seeking a supplementary increase of \$679,000 for projects under the MRIF program. We are working in partnerships with other levels of Yukon-based governments, and a number of projects have been advanced under the municipal rural infrastructure fund. As in the case of CSIF, work has been

in progress on MRIF projects and will recommence once the construction season returns. Specific projects to which this MRIF increase is allocated include the Mayo community centre, the Mount Sima ski chalet, the Watson Lake pump house and well project, and the Teslin sewer main project.

In addition, this supplementary budget includes a revote request of \$1.377 million for the Mayo community centre, \$208,000 is for miscellaneous capital items for the City of Dawson, and approximately \$1.63 million to advance the Whitehorse Copper country residential subdivision development.

Mr. Chair, the Department of Community Services is forecasting capital recoveries of \$2.31 million. A major part of the recovery is related to the revotes for CSIF, MRIF and land development projects. A tremendous amount of work was completed on these projects during the past construction season and these projects are adding value to their communities in a number of positive ways. The projects themselves are improving the local infrastructure, which contributes to enhancing the quality of life by providing reliable drinking water and/or waste systems that prevent negative impacts to the Yukon public and the environment.

New community centres are being created that will help to bring the community together in a number of positive ways, including increased access to sport and recreation programming, which will contribute to making healthy lifestyle choices.

Yukoners' skills and talents are being employed that add to their individual economic situation and also benefit their local economies.

What I consider to be a very positive outcome is all three levels of government are working together to address the infrastructure issues that are important at the local level and similarly contribute to the betterment of the territory overall.

I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the progressive working relationship we have with our partners in these projects, and I believe that future projects will enjoy the same level of dedication and support.

Overall the 2006 construction season started earlier and finished later as many Yukoners were working at maximum capacity on a number of beneficial projects in all parts of the territory. The Yukon's economic rebound has presented some challenges in advancing some of these projects as skilled labour and some equipment was at times difficult to acquire. However, ingenuity and determination of the project managers and the Yukon workforce have advanced these projects and added value to them and the communities in which they are located.

Mr. Chair, the Department of Community Services is proud to work with Yukon's community governments, First Nation governments and the many contractors and service providers in our private sector as we work together to make all Yukon communities safer and healthier.

Now I am pleased to respond to questions the other members may have.

Mr. Fairclough: I would like to ask a few questions in this department. I know that normally we in the opposition have many questions in the Department of Community Ser-

vices because there are a lot of details we need to go through. In light of the time, of course, we're not going to be able to do that today. I do have some questions and I hope the minister can be short in his answers. I do appreciate the minister's opening remarks. It covered a lot of what we wanted to ask.

My first question is in regard to recreation facilities. I've asked the question of the minister in the past particularly about my own community of Carmacks. I already have the briefing from the minister and his opening remarks in regard to the Mayo rec centre. I'd like to know if the department has been talking to the community of Carmacks to complete the second phase of their rec centre -- the first phase is done -- and if he would commit to talking to the community on this before the spring budget is put together and if he would commit to going to the community of Old Crow to discuss this same issue with members of that community. Those two issues are very important.

I would also like to know what the status is of the department in building new rec centres in other communities around the territory. If he could answer those questions, I would appreciate it.

Hon. Mr. Hart: With regard to Old Crow, we're currently in the process of a review on what will be needed with regard to recreation facilities in Old Crow. We will be working with them on that issue and will hopefully come forth with a solution to alleviate some of the concerns brought by the member opposite in his question and/or also by the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin in his questions on the Speech from the Throne.

We will be working with that review, which is currently underway.

In regard to Carmacks recreation, the member opposite talked about phase 2. Currently, we have had no request from the Village of Carmacks with regard to any additional recreation requirements or wants or needs. However, that doesn't mean that we're not willing to sit down and discuss the situation with them, but we will be heading into our Christmas season here fairly soon and that's the best that we have. Currently our big discussion in Carmacks right now is working with them on waste water.

Mr. Fairclough: I thank the minister for that commitment to the community. I greatly appreciate it. It was an issue that was raised during the campaign by many members. What the minister didn't answer was about the rest of the communities around the territory and what the department is doing to ensure that these communities have recreation centres. If he doesn't have that information on hand, I'd appreciate it sent over by legislative return.

Hon. Mr. Hart: I apologize with regard to leaving out the other centres throughout the Yukon. Currently we are only working on one other recreation facility, and that's in Carcross. We're reviewing that with the Carcross community, along with the waterfront project that we're also working on with them. We have a specific plan that we're dealing with in Carcross, and hopefully the new LAC has already made a request of us to start planning a facility for them and have expressed their

needs. We'll be going out to work with them on just how we can achieve getting there.

Also, we're working with all the sports ministers across Canada in an effort to get the federal government to develop a sport infrastructure program as part of their funding allotment to be handed out across Canada.

Basically it's to provide assistance for sports and healthy living. That's the line of thinking that we're moving along. We've made a request of the federal minister Mr. Cannon -- I believe I can say that -- on this particular issue. It has been taken under advisement and we haven't received a response yet. However, I anticipate a meeting with the federal sport minister at the end of January, so we'll hopefully be in a position to get some kind of indication of whether we're going to get that funding separation.

Secondly, all the ministers of sport will be meeting here prior to the Canada Winter Games in February, and infrastructure is the number one item on the agenda, so it will be discussed at great length.

Many jurisdictions feel that infrastructure in their particular jurisdiction hasn't seen an injection from the federal government since 1967, because many of the facilities in the southern jurisdictions came about as a result of the 1967 anniversary. So, many of the sporting facilities from that age are now decaying, especially in Winnipeg and Alberta.

So, with respect to that, we are, as I said, hoping to get a split of the pie from the federal government to be specifically allocated for sport and recreation infrastructure. If that is completed, I'm sure that, given that a precedent has already been set now with respect to funding -- that is, MRIF, CSIF and other projects, such as the fuel tax -- we would get a base amount of funding for the north, in addition to our per capita funding. So we will get our fair share of that pie, should it come about.

However, I must stress that this is a discussion that we have had with the federal government this summer, as well as in September of this year. We are continuing to work with our chain of command with regard to getting that information from the federal government as it is laid out for sport infrastructure.

Mr. Fairclough: I thank the minister for his answer to that question. I would like to move on.

A promise was made during the election campaign by the Yukon Party not to increase taxes, but some communities are showing an increase in property taxes. It has been raised with me during the election campaign by residents of Keno City. They want to know why their property taxes have increased. What dictated that increase?

Hon. Mr. Hart: The increase in taxes is due to the assessment of the property. Every two years we rotate the assessment review throughout the Yukon. This year we do all the rural areas. Next year, it will be the municipalities. Every two years we do a tax assessment in all those areas. The increase in taxes, specifically Keno, for example, as well as Tagish and Marsh Lake, are all going up because the value of the land is going up. For example, if you build a home on your land and it wasn't there the year before, the value is going to go up because the land holdings are going up. The taxes aren't going up, but the value is. That is generally what happens. We do a review

every two years on rural properties and every two years on municipal properties, in rotation. This year it happens to be on rural properties. That is why we will see a few more situations than just in Keno, such as areas around and adjacent to Tagish and Marsh Lake.

Mr. Fairclough: Can the minister tell us what the status of the Hamilton Boulevard project is? What is the status of negotiations with Kwanlin Dun? And what was the commitment to reflect money in this fall's budget? Will we see it in the 2007 spring budget?

Hon. Mr. Hart: With regard to Hamilton Boulevard, the City of Whitehorse has submitted its application for MRIF for the extension of Hamilton Boulevard. That application has been processed through the MRIF review committee. I have actually signed off that report and it is currently on its way to Ottawa for the federal minister to sign off with regard to approval for that project under MRIF. We are working closely with the City of Whitehorse. This project forms part of our memorandum of understanding with the City of Whitehorse in relation to the Canada Winter Games.

In addition, we have had recent discussions with the Kwanlin Dun First Nation on right-of-way issues to extend this particular route. We have provided them with what we think are two options and we have given them timelines. We are just awaiting their response.

Mr. Fairclough: I thank the minister for that answer. My colleague from Copperbelt has asked me to look into this matter and I wanted to ask a quick question on that.

I would like to move on. Part of the department's responsibility is for fire protection, and I believe I asked this question of the minister before. It was brought to my attention during the election campaign -- why resource management and fire suppression were separated. I know this happened after devolution took place. Those two are separate and they are in two departments. One is in the Department of Community Services and the other is in Energy, Mines and Resources. I have given an example of how things could get messed up.

The person who calls the shots for fire suppression is the duty officer, who is appointed through the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources. That could be someone who is not quite familiar with fire suppression. This is an issue that has been brought to my attention by quite a few people who would like to see them back together for efficient running of the fire suppression program across the territory. I would like to ask the minister to look into that matter and bring any information forward on how we can make improvements there.

Hon. Mr. Hart: With regard to the duty officer, in some cases the duty officer is through Energy, Mines and Resources; in other cases it is through Community Services and other areas, depending where it is.

I will maybe go back and remind the member opposite that, after our fire season in 2004, a review of our fire action was done and the results of that report indicated that the system we utilized, which was in place in 2004, was deemed very successful, and they made some recommendations on some ways to make some improvements. But, basically, the report strongly

supported our FireSmart program, as well as the design that we used that was in place at that time.

Recommendations for safety, training and certification improvements and some additional resources were identified for the wildland fire management, but safety and training are high priorities of this program and critical wildland fire positions have been identified and are being considered for training officers.

We are following up on some of the recommendations made in the report, depending on the resources we have. We also have a memorandum of agreement with the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources to supplement us with their expertise during extreme fire cases during the summer. To date, that has been working out very well.

The member opposite maybe has a situation that we could look into if it's specific to his constituency, and I will be prepared to review that and get back to him.

Mr. Fairclough: I appreciate the answer from the minister. I look forward to additional information on that. I'd like to move on in regard to a line item in the budget here, with the transit fund. It's in the budget, it's taken out; it's in recoveries and then it's not. I would like to know why it was taken out and what's happening with this.

Hon. Mr. Hart: This is merely an accounting procedure of the Government of Canada. The federal government has changed the structure in which they have sent this money. It has been put into trust. Because trust monies are outside the fund, they're out there. But in essence, the buses will be here probably within three or four days. So regardless of that particular situation, they will be here in Whitehorse. It is basically to transfer the money from us to the City of Whitehorse.

Mr. Fairclough: I have another question in regard to residential lots. From my understanding, there were a lot of lots sold this year -- some 112, I believe -- in the Whitehorse area. I would like to know what is available and what the plans are.

Hon. Mr. Lang: According to the figures, there will be approximately 40 to 50 lots available by this spring. That doesn't count any that have been turned back over the last season. And then, of course, country residential lots will be coming on-line and that will happen this spring too.

Mr. Fairclough: I asked the question; I didn't realize that perhaps the minister was in conflict. I would like to thank the Minister of Community Services for his short answers and that all ministers on that side of the House should learn from this minister about how to answer questions in this House, and I appreciate it. I thank you very much for the answers.

Mr. Cardiff: I have always appreciated the minister's answers as well. I would like to let him off the hook today, because between the Member for Mayo-Tatchun and the minister's opening remarks, I think everything was almost covered. The one thing that wasn't covered -- I don't know if he can respond to this or not, but there is an alternate -- was a joint undertaking last spring, which was signed between the Department of Community Services and Energy, Mines and Resources with regard to the land disposition process. The minister therefore may not be able to give us a progress report on

that, but I am sure that the officials will be able to brief the alternate, if necessary.

I am wondering what progress has been made. There were nine commitments in this joint undertaking, which was signed last March. I am wondering where we are at with it. There were supposed to be draft departmental operational procedures and local area planning policies made available by the fall of 2006. I would like to know whether or not it has been completed. I don't really want to go through all nine of them, if the officials have them. I would just like an update.

There were also supposed to be some regulation amendments designed to improve client service and eliminate redundancies in the *Area Development Act*, the *Lands Act* and the *Subdivision Act*. That was supposed to be up for Cabinet consideration this fall, as well as, like I said, nine items agreed to between the two departments. Can we get an update?

Hon. Mr. Lang: In answering the member opposite, we certainly are aware of the commitment the last government made -- we were that government and we're looking forward to moving forward on these recommendations. We are moving forward with them and hopefully we'll have some of them in place for the spring of this coming year, understanding that the election was this fall. So, things were put on hold for a period of time while the election was sorted out, and now we're back on the mark and moving forward on these nine different issues that were brought forward.

Mr. Cardiff: So for clarification then, there were the nine issues and the minister is saying that none of these have been completed yet -- because at least one was supposed to be completed by May 1, 2006, and that was "revise land fact sheets and other public information related to land issues for publication before May 1, 2006." There wasn't an election last spring, so was at least that one completed?

And what I was looking for was kind of an update on the status of the other ones -- how close we are. If it's too difficult for the minister to do that, I'd definitely agree to a legislative return on the status of each of the nine items, as long as we could get it sometime early in the new year.

Hon. Mr. Lang: I guess in answering the member opposite, Community Services -- I can go through these -- agrees to draft departmental operational procedures and local area planning policy to make available for the fall of 2006. Community Services is preparing a document that outlines the current practices and procedures for completing local area planning and zoning, amendments to planning and zoning, subdivision review and approval process -- example, expected time of completion, end of November 2006.

The Department of Energy, Mines and Resources agrees to take the lead in coordinating workshops and information sessions on the land disposition process for interested government organizations starting in the fall of 2006.

Ad hoc information sessions between the lands branch and various Community Services branches are already occurring. Completed sessions with the property assessment branch and the building safety branch are focused on staff training for lands branch staff, not Community Services staff.

Meetings on project-specific issues are occurring throughout spring and summer on Fish Lake planning, Hamilton Boulevard, mapping issues, and YESAA implementation. A fall series of workshops to provide an overview of process from start to finish will be scheduled starting mid-September. These workshops will originally be focused toward Energy, Mines and Resources and Community Services staff and other Yukon government departments; also, look to more generic-type workshops for First Nations, municipalities and other interested stakeholders and groups.

Both departments agree to bring forward regulation amendments designed to improve client service and eliminate redundancy under the *Area Development Act*, the *Lands Act* and the *Subdivision Act* for Cabinet consideration in the fall of 2006.

Prior to background work on proposed regulation change from 2002 -- approved by Community Services prior to renewal and also approved after renewal and will be reviewed and repackaged for the Deputy Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources' approval -- the Department of Community Services is implementing regulatory changes on an ongoing basis as new zoning regulations are developed. Spot zoning submissions are to be forwarded to Cabinet for review and approval.

Both departments agree to realign the subdivision approval office and responsibilities between the two departments. Energy, Mines and Resources and Community Services are to meet with the Justice department to identify the legislative changes required. Both departments agree to develop a standardized use of land-related policy, procedures and definitions.

Energy, Mines and Resources land policies are updated annually. April 2002: available for clients at the office and on-line. Energy, Mines and Resources is completing a draft legal review of the land decision review process and the land application and decision review process documents. These documents replace the LARC terms of reference regarding the review and decision making on spot land applications.

This work resulted from the implementation of YESAA. The final document was scheduled to be ready for public distribution at the end of August 2006. Energy, Mines and Resources has focused attention on process clarification around YESAA implementation and impact on decision-making processes. An annual policy review in April 2006 was undertaken with Community Services involvement and review of proposed changes, policies, updates, focus on YESAA, implementation, along with small process clarification and policy interpretation.

Community Services is preparing a document that outlines the current practice and procedures for completing local area planning and zoning, amendments to planning and zoning, subdivision review and approval process -- example, expected time of completion, end of November 2006. Both departments agreed to standardize the use of GIS and AutoCAD systems to improve the interdepartmental sharing of digital mapping information. Energy, Mines and Resources and Community Services have organized bi-monthly meetings with mapping staff for data sharing. Community Services has implemented GIS functionality and is recruiting an individual with GIS expertise to the cartography section. There will be continued staff train-

ing on both systems. Software and hardware updates are required. Both departments agree to review the lot enlargement policy and its optional operational relationship to local area planning and zoning regulations.

Energy, Mines and Resources is ensuring that all clients are advised of the role of local area plans and zoning in regard to lot enlargement. Community Services is required to ensure that each community discuss and make recommendations on lot enlargement potentials in their communities.

Both departments agree to revise land fact sheets and other public information related to land issues for publication before May of 2006 -- Energy, Mines and Resources fact sheets, application forms and policies updates available for clients at the front counter and on-line prior to April 2006. All updated documents forwarded to the district offices in the communities -- all government departments, First Nations, municipal offices and local governments were advised of updates through e-mail as of April 2006.

Currently, all fact sheets and policies are being translated into French. Community Services fact sheets were updated August of 2006. Community Services is working to improve the community land planning Web page and integrate Web pages with other land-related Web pages. The estimated date of completion is late in November.

Both departments agreed to develop and implement long-term improvements to the internal land disposition process. Energy, Mines and Resources is completing the drafting and legal review of land decision review process and the land application and decision review process documents. These documents replace the LARC terms of reference regarding review and decision-making on spot land applications. This work resulted from the implementation of YESAA -- final documents scheduled to be ready for distribution at the end of August 2006. Energy, Mines and Resources has focused attention on process and clarification around YESAA implementation and the impact on the decision-making processes. Energy, Mines and Resources and Community Services are to complete drafting and analyze on-spot zoning submissions for spot land applications outside of local planning areas.

Energy, Mines and Resources and Community Services are to complete, as stated above, the regulatory amendment to increase service delivery efficiencies. Community Services has implemented internal process streamlining to improve the review of rezoning applications. Community Services has developed a new class of zoning regulations, which allow for minor rezoning matters to be dealt with administratively, and is implementing them, community by community, as new regulations are developed. The implementation is ongoing. Community Services is working to establish more efficient appeal processes for appeals regarding the decisions of the development officer. The estimated time for the implementation of this is early 2006.

As we can see, Mr. Chair, the departments have been working on the nine issues. All the dates mentioned in this document were achieved. So, all the items that I attached a date to are history. Those dates have been met.

Out of the nine things, what have we done? It's like a scorecard here.

Number two: Energy, Mines and Resources has agreed to take the lead in workshops and information sessions on the land disposition process for interested government organizations starting in the fall of 2006. They have worked on that; that is done.

Number five: both departments agree to develop a standardized use of land-related policy, procedures and definitions. That is almost complete, Mr. Chair.

Number six: both departments agree to standardize the use of GIS and AutoCAD systems to improve the interdepartmental sharing of mapping information. That is done, Mr. Chair.

Of course this is a long list of work that was done during our last mandate. Throughout the election and now today, two months after being re-elected, I think the departments have done a commendable job -- both Energy, Mines and Resources and Community Services -- in tackling the issue of land, how we manage the land and how the departments of Community Services and Energy, Mines and Resources work together to make sure that it's a workable policy, not only internally within government, but it's user-friendly too.

Mr. Mitchell: I think I would have to say that that last response was strikingly similar to something that the Premier would refer to as a "dissertation". Nevertheless, it was very informative and thorough, and it did answer the questions so we on this side of the House appreciate it.

I have but one question for the minister. I believe it is the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources who would have to answer this. I am going to pose it in the form of a question, but it is really more of a heads-up for the future. I don't expect the minister to necessarily rise and provide a thorough answer today.

A number of constituents have approached me recently who happen to be general contractors and other tradespeople. They have expressed concerns about the decreasing number of urban residential lots that are available. I think there are some 40 who will come out for the draw this March based on the procedure that was put in place this fall.

There are the Mount Sima and Whitehorse Copper lots, which we anticipate will now be available this coming spring or summer. Nevertheless, they are concerned about there being a relatively limited number of lots. They have asked me to represent to the two departments -- Energy, Mines and Resources and Community Services -- that they are concerned that, as has been in the recent past, the relatively small number of available lots will lead to a great deal of competition between different contractors -- members of the contracting community for that portion that is available for them -- and members of the general public.

So I would urge the minister to look toward the future -- look toward that period of time before the eventual development of the lower bench will provide us with a more than adequate future supply -- and try to come up with a new procedure that may be a little less contentious than what has occurred over the past year. It's not meant in any way to be a criticism of the minister or the department, but rather just a reflection of

reality and a request that the minister make use of the intervening months before the next disposition to try to address this issue. I look forward to the minister's response.

Hon. Mr. Lang: In answering the member opposite, we are certainly supporting the land development protocol inside the City of Whitehorse, which, of course, is being led by the city. And, of course, they have the questions that the member opposite is asking. They have that on their radar screen too.

Certainly there is a land issue out there. I think if you were to follow -- and we certainly support the planning process that has just taken place regarding the lower bench. I think it's a new, innovative way of involving stakeholders -- you know, residents, contractors -- and we certainly support that. So I think that's a positive thing.

We are certainly working on a land development protocol with Whitehorse, which we have in place, and that dictates that Whitehorse takes the lead inside the City of Whitehorse. With that protocol, we have committed to work with them and their official city plan in a positive fashion -- and zoning, of course, to make lots available inside the City of Whitehorse.

Of course Energy, Mines and Resources takes the lead on lot development, or potential lot development, outside the communities, whether it's Watson Lake or Whitehorse. Any land that has to be developed outside the municipalities is taken care of by Energy, Mines and Resources. Community Services, of course, works with the city inside the thing.

I know that, until we get an inventory of land available, there is always going to be an issue of who gets the land. We certainly have a process in place. We don't want to leave the developers out; we don't want to leave out the homeowners who want to build individual homes. These are all things that arise out of the lack of land.

So we have been very active in the last four years in resolving some of these internal issues, understanding that with the economic upswing we had a bigger demand on land, let's say, last year than there was four years ago. Four years ago, the amount of residential land that was sold in the Whitehorse area was less than 40 lots. So you understand, as the economic engine grows, the demand grows for land. If we don't get land out, it's going to be a problem for economic development because, at the end of the day, if people can't build homes or can't get homes, then your economic engine will eventually stop. So our job is to get land out.

We've worked with the city, which is very urgent about this. Contractors have questions about how they will fit into it, and we hope that with what we're doing in working with the city and, of course, with the Premier working with the Yukon forum -- the partnership with First Nations in traditional territories -- that there can be lots available and land available to all Yukoners. We take the management of public lands very, very seriously.

If you were to look at the community development of the following projects, on the Hot Springs Road we have a 20-lot country residential subdivision that is complete. The utility installation is in the process.

Copper Ridge stage 2: 119 lots were completed in September. A public lottery was held in September; 44 lots were se-

lected by individuals, and all 35 lots made available to contractors were purchased. That was in September. The remaining 40 lots are being held for public lottery this spring, so some of the lots will revert back to the government. I would say probably 10 of the lots that were sold will revert back to us. So there will probably be 50 lots available for this spring. But, out of that parcel of 119 lots, 35 lots were acquired by contractors -- those lots are in the hands of contractors, as we speak.

Whitehorse Copper: this 110-lot country residential subdivision is under construction; 52 lots are scheduled for lottery in late 2006 and the remainder in 2007. Another 110 lots are coming on-line here in the next year.

Grizzly Valley: this 61-lot rural residential subdivision is in the final zoning and subdivision approval phase. Construction of roads, power and telephone distribution lines will occur in 2007. That will be 61 rural residential lots with a public lottery expected in September 2007 -- so that is 61 lots.

Marshall Creek will have six lots -- an agricultural subdivision in Haines Junction; development work completed on behalf of Energy, Mines and Resources and there will be a lottery to do that.

Now we look at the Porter Creek lower bench and we are working in partnership with the city. It is managing the planning portion and that is going forward with what they have been doing in the last month. It looks like it has legs and it will move forward.

The Burns Road project -- commercial lots -- we are looking at four to eight commercial lots on an area levelled during the gravel haul for the Argus site property.

We are not without land. We have lots coming on-line. Some of the planning and some of the burden of making decisions -- it takes time to get them out the door.

Also, Grizzly Valley is going to have 30 lots coming on-line this year -- rural residential.

So we have a balance. Do we have enough lots? I'm not quite sure we do, but I think if we can get the lower bench up and put some legs to it and move it forward and get it into the process, that will have a great impact on the land availability in the City of Whitehorse, because I think the magic figure is something like 2,000 or 1,500 lots. It's a number of lots where 5,000 to 8,000 people would eventually be living in a community on the lower bench there, but it would also be a treasure trove of land for the next four or five or 10 years, where we could always have that inventory of 200 or 250 lots available for people in the Whitehorse area.

As far as land is concerned in the Whitehorse area, it is of course on our radar screen because this is where the major population concentration is in Yukon, but we also work with municipalities as a community service outside the area. We work in Dawson City, Watson Lake and Mayo. There are all these other communities that are looking at potential development in their areas too. It is a double-edged sword. We have the outside areas, which are the smaller communities, and then we have the City of Whitehorse, which takes up a lot of our time. But the City of Whitehorse has been very proactive and is moving forward.

If we were to define what Energy, Mines and Resources and Community Services were going to do in managing the land in the Yukon, it was very important for us to get a working relationship with the City of Whitehorse because we had overlapping responsibilities in terms of what the City of Whitehorse's responsibilities were and what their job was and what our job was, as the department, in terms of our work with them. With the agreement we signed last year, I think it was a positive move forward.

We have a new mayor and council, of course, so we are going to move forward with the City of Whitehorse and get the land, as I said, with the list of land coming out in 2007. It's not going to answer all our questions on land.

As the leader of the official opposition mentioned, it is very important that contractors have a way to acquire land so that we can have a contracting community in the City of Whitehorse or in the Yukon. They need a way to get land so they can build speculation homes and sell them to the population. This has been very successful in the past. We have been working very aggressively with contractors to ensure that, if there is land available, there is a process by which they can get access to land. As members can see from my presentation, the contractors last September had access to and acquired 35 lots. In the process here, we will be looking at more lots for contractors.

Mr. Mitchell: I thank the minister for his answer and perhaps just request that when he looks at the Blues he focus on the fact that I was simply asking him to look at the process for distribution of existing developed urban residential lots to ensure that friction is reduced.

At this point, I would like to request unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all lines in Vote 51, Department of Community Services, cleared or carried, as required.

Unanimous consent re deeming all lines in Vote 51, Department of Community Services, cleared or carried

Chair: Mr. Mitchell has requested unanimous consent of the Committee to deem all lines in Vote 51, Department of Community Services, cleared or carried, as required. Are you agreed?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Chair: Unanimous consent has been granted.

On Operations and Maintenance Expenditures

Total Operation and Maintenance Expenditures in the amount of \$3,891,000 agreed to

On Capital Expenditures

Total Capital Expenditures in the amount of \$12,658,000 agreed to

Department of Community Services agreed to

Chair: We will now proceed with Vote 2, Executive Council Office. Do members wish a brief recess to change departments?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Chair: We will have a five-minute recess.

Recess

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

Executive Council Office

Chair: The matter before the Committee is Bill No. 3, *Second Appropriation Act, 2006-07*, Vote 2, Executive Council Office.

Hon. Mr. Fentie: I'm pleased to provide an overview of this supplementary request for the Executive Council Office. This supplementary budget request deals with the revised funding estimates for devolution implementation, the substance abuse action plan and northern housing -- the establishment of a new program, the northern strategy.

There is an increase in O&M spending of \$2,484,000 and a decrease in O&M recoveries of \$917,000.

On the capital side of the ledger, an increase of \$32,500,000 is requested to address the northern housing initiative.

The changes in the O&M spending forecast consist of three components: increase of \$180,000 relating to devolution activities; increase of \$3 million for northern strategy investments; and an offsetting reduction of \$696,000 under the substance abuse action plan program line.

The increase of \$180,000 in the devolution program line reflects the approved revote of \$40,000 voted in the 2005-06 budget to support two departmental projects that were not complete at year-end. So a funding carry-over was required. There is also \$140,000 to provide additional funding for the successor resource legislation working group.

The most significant O&M increase in this supplementary budget is the \$3 million for the northern strategy program. These funds will be used to fund projects in collaboration with First Nation governments, which will support and enhance Yukon's long-term strategic interests. The spending estimate reflects anticipated expenditures to year-end.

The decrease of \$696,000 in the substance abuse action plan and its program is to reflect the transfer of funds to the departments of Education, Justice, Health and Social Services and the Women's Directorate. These departments will be reflecting corresponding increases to fund the approved projects.

These estimates also reflect a decrease in the O&M recoveries of \$917,000. This decrease consists of two elements. First, there is \$433,000 due from Canada for the anticipated signing of the White River First Nation final and self-government agreements. As this is not expected to occur by fiscal year-end, the recovery is being decreased accordingly. Second, there is \$484,000 relating to the YESAA funding from Canada, which was reflected in the final year-end figures for 2005-06 due to accounting requirements. Therefore, the estimate for this year has been adjusted accordingly.

I am also happy to inform the House that there is \$32.5 million in this supplemental budget under capital to address the investment of the northern housing funds from Canada. These funds will be directly provided to First Nations for decision-making about investment priorities.

With these comments, Mr. Chair, I will be happy to proceed with line-by-line debate and answer questions that members opposite may have on these expenditure forecasts, although they are very limited in scope and nature.

Mr. Mitchell: I thank the minister for his opening remarks. He will no doubt be pleased to know that the clarity of his remarks did answer a number of questions that I would have otherwise had to ask. I will dispense with those.

I will start with the \$3 million booked for the northern strategy. The minister clarified that it is the amount expected to be expended to the end of the year. I assume he means the end of the fiscal year. The minister just tabled the document today in the Legislature regarding approved projects for the northern strategy trust. I believe that there was no total on that list, but there was one on the news release that came out. I believe the total was \$9,340,000 of approved projects. I am wondering if the minister is able to provide us with any clarification on the prioritization of these projects agreed to between the chiefs and the Government of Yukon in terms of which projects would be coming forward first for the \$3 million that has been booked.

We won't be seeing all these projects move forward at the same rate, so I think I'll just sit and let the minister answer, and maybe we can do this one at a time.

Hon. Mr. Fentie: Yes, the member is correct. We have tabled the list of projects as approved to date from the first uptake date of the northern strategy. \$3 million has been booked based on cashflow requirements for the fiscal year. It's not necessarily a sequencing of priorities. All projects have been approved. This is about a cashflow projection that will take us from where we're at today to March 31, 2007.

Mr. Mitchell: I have not had an opportunity to look into these individual projects beyond the initial descriptions and it certainly looks like a number of them are important and interesting projects.

I would ask one question regarding the \$1,995,000 to remediate the Marwell tar pit. Now, the minister can correct me if I am wrong. I had thought that actually was a federal responsibility. While recognizing that the northern strategy trust is money that has come to us from the Government of Canada, is putting this among these projects not in some way assuming a previous federal responsibility, or is that among the terms of the northern strategy trust, to try to address some of those issues? I'll just let the minister answer that.

Hon. Mr. Fentie: Well, first and foremost, this is an area of environmental contamination bequeathed to us. However, in going through a process with Canada, it became evident that progress with Canada is moving too slowly. The time has come to start dealing with the Marwell tar pit and begin the reclamation or remediation of this contaminated site in the best interests of Yukon and the Yukon public. Therefore, a decision was made jointly with our partners in the technical review committee that this investment would be appropriate as we continue our work with Canada, not just on Marwell but on type 2 mine sites and other matters that fall into the devolution agreement with respect to pre-existing contaminated sites on the Yukon land base.

Mr. Mitchell: I guess the follow-up question to that would be, recognizing the minister's point that it has been agreed to that this is an important environmental concern that has been outstanding for many years and it was decided by the First Nation leaders and the Government of Yukon to move forward with it, would the minister nevertheless be seeking to recover those funds at some future date from the Government of Canada?

Hon. Mr. Fentie: If I may -- to do this, I am going to have to go back in history to some point. It has to do with the devolution agreement overall. One of the things that was important that did not materialize and we did not achieve was getting Canada to put a number on environmental liability. Instead, we have an agreement that one could say has some flaws. However, the agreement is done and devolution has happened. Effective April 2003, we took on management and decision making on lands, waters and resources here in the Yukon.

In a situation like Marwell, with its long-standing problem and the contamination that exists in such a close proximity to such a large population centre, the decision is made in the interests of the public. With respect to recoveries, at all times the Yukon government will hold Canada accountable for what we believe to be their obligations, but there will be examples such as these where advancing and making progress is the better choice for all concerned as we continue our work with Canada on other contaminated sites and, of course, the big one being type 2 mine sites. These are significant liabilities that rest with Canada. However, under the devolution agreement, we would also point out that, outside of type 2 mine sites, there was a component of the agreement that spoke to "these are the rest" and there was an arrangement in the devolution agreement that addressed those contaminated sites outside type 2.

Furthermore, we are now obligated by the Auditor General to clearly define areas of Yukon's environmental liability and where we are responsible. This process is very broad and we are already booking -- I believe our first booking is in the neighbourhood of \$500,000 to \$600,000 of environmental liability and more to come because we are obligated to show those clearly in the financial statements and the books of the Yukon as a liability. So we continue to do that also.

This decision is based on a culmination of all these factors, but adding to it the public interest and trying to address this contamination in an area, as I said moments ago, such a close proximity to the largest portion of the population in the Yukon.

Mr. Mitchell: I thank the minister for the history lesson. I certainly do not want to engage in debate with the minister regarding the devolution agreements. The minister has formally expressed his belief that they could be improved and there is a process within those agreements to do just that, so I will leave him to that.

I'm wondering if the minister -- with the adjustment of some \$696,000, that leaves \$1.3 million remaining in the substance abuse action plan. I'm wondering if there is a breakdown of the projects that the minister could perhaps provide by legislative return. I'll just ask one more thing because, as I've said,

I'll just ask for that by legislative return if the minister doesn't have it in front of him.

The \$17.5 million that remains with the Government of Yukon after the transfer of \$32.5 million on the affordable housing trust -- I'm wondering if the minister can give us some information. I have asked this previously and didn't get a whole lot of detail in the response. But the minister has publicly stated that some of the remaining \$17.5 million might in fact go toward dealing with additional First Nation needs, for example, for affordable housing, and I'm wondering if he can give us a bit of an overview of where he sees spending the remaining \$17.5 million.

Hon. Mr. Fentie: First, let me go to the substance abuse action fund. In the budget to date, there is a list of projects that have been funded. It is very much public knowledge. As far as the remaining balance is concerned, other than in all probability an investment in the RCMP street crime unit, there have been no decisions made. There is little I can put in a legislative return except, with the greatest respect to the member, to stay tuned, that decisions will be forthcoming. I wouldn't charge officials to go through the process of a legislative return in the manner that we have today with respect to the balance. I will say that, in all probability, a portion of this \$1.3 million will be allocated to our arrangement with the RCMP on the street crime unit.

On the northern housing trust, as the member well knows, there is going to be a direct allocation of the majority of the funds to First Nations. That is absolute. I think we all recognize that the greatest percentage of need is in First Nation communities. Therefore, we have set this up so that, immediately upon completion of the First Nation's arrangements, we can start to flow the funds to address housing needs.

On the balance for public government, no decision has been made and we will be working on those areas in the coming weeks -- where we will invest our portion of the affordable housing fund, commonly known as the northern housing trust.

I think it is important to recognize that we have to invest this portion of the fund in a way that affordable housing is enhanced in the Yukon, and that is exactly what we intend to do.

We have, of course, other forms of affordable housing, social housing and other areas, even through Yukon Housing Corporation, that will assist those who are in need of housing and other matters in their daily lives. This fund itself is certainly going to help us in Yukon to address an area, or a gap, that has existed for quite some time and we have every intention of making good use of the fund itself.

It's important also to note that we cannot always present full detail on decisions not yet made at the time of the legislative sitting.

Thank you very much.

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

Speaker resumes the Chair

Speaker: I will now call the House to order.

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

Chair's report

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

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

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Speaker: I declare the report carried.

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

The House adjourned at 5:31 p.m.

The following Sessional Papers were tabled December 12, 2006:

06-1-12

Yukon Energy Corporation 2005 Annual Report (Lang)

06-1-13

Yukon Development Corporation and the Energy Solutions Centre 2005 Annual Report (Lang)

06-1-14

Motor Transport Board 2005-06 Annual Report (Lang)

The following documents were filed December 12, 2006:

06-1-9

Northern Strategy Trust 2006 Approved Projects (Fentie)

06-1-10

Fleet Vehicle Agency 2005-06 Annual Report (Lang)