

Whitehorse, Yukon**Tuesday, May 1, 2007 -- 1:00 p.m.**

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

Prayers

DAILY ROUTINE

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

Tributes.

TRIBUTES**In recognition of Sexual Assault Prevention Month**

Hon. Ms. Taylor: Mr. Speaker, May is Sexual Assault Prevention Month. I rise today to pay tribute to those who raise awareness of and work toward ending sexualized violence in the Yukon.

The issue of sexualized violence remains one of the most significant barriers to women's equality. It has long been shrouded in secrecy, both in our communities and in our private lives. In order to deal effectively with this serious issue, we must at all times continue to acknowledge its prevalence in our society and work toward addressing the root causes of violence in our communities.

Mr. Speaker, public discussion and exhibits about sexual violence are important steps to raising awareness. Here in the Yukon government main administration building, from May 1 to 14, we have for public display a youth photojournalism exhibit. Nine Whitehorse youths spent 10 weeks developing this exhibit that speaks to how youth can prevent sexualized violence while developing healthy relationships. This exhibit premiered at the Elijah Smith Building back in December 2006 and recently showed in Old Crow.

We hope that other communities will be interested in hosting this exhibit as a way of breaking the silence and increasing awareness of sexualized violence. Each May we focus on public awareness, training and education. This year the Women's Directorate and Kaushee's Place will partner on a training program focusing on domestic violence and substance abuse. On May 28 and 29, Patricia Bland from the Alaska Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Centre will be delivering this two-day workshop for front-line workers. Ms. Bland will introduce several practical tips to be used by advocates and front-line workers on how to assess domestic violence as a barrier to sobriety and wellness.

The Government of Yukon is pleased to support and fund projects, programs and training initiatives throughout the year that work toward the prevention of sexualized violence against women and girls. These include the aboriginal women in violence prevention initiative, which supports unique projects addressing community violence, as well as a continuation of the long-term public education campaign on violence against women and children.

The Victoria Faulkner Women's Centre has also organized events and public education on Sexual Assault Prevention

Month that will take place throughout May. We applaud these efforts and encourage everyone to participate in many of these public events. By working together, perhaps in some small way we can give encouragement to those whose wounds remain open, strength to those who feel powerless and optimism to those struggling to maintain hope.

In recognition of May Day: International Workers Day

Mr. Cardiff: I am honoured today to rise on behalf of the Assembly to pay tribute to May Day, or International Workers Day, May 1. May Day is celebrated around the world. A meeting of workers in 1886, which was to begin a general strike for a shorter working day, ended when a bomb was thrown at police, killing one of them. Three workers who weren't even at the meeting were hanged for the killing. This travesty was used to attack the labour movement, and May Day was eventually replaced in Canada and the United States with our September holiday of Labour Day, hiding the real facts of that May Day.

We are proud to stand in solidarity with workers everywhere in the world on May Day to celebrate their achievements. It was the labour movement that brought the idea of an eight-hour working day to the workplace. Workers struggling for respect have brought about job security, free collective bargaining and well-deserved payroll benefits.

The fight for workers' dignity and rights has not ended, and it is even more important today than it was a decade ago. Large corporations such as Wal-Mart use their clout to intimidate and dismiss anyone who dares to organize for the good of all.

Today the need for security and the fear of terrorism is manufactured by vested commercial interests. This is a time of danger for all, but the biggest danger is the elimination of Canadians' rights and freedoms. The labour movement has been instrumental in the fight for all people, not just workers. Universal pensions, veteran benefits, unemployment insurance and medicare are all at least partially the result of actions taken by workers. The rights of workers are everyone's rights. May Day is marked not only by demonstrations about safe workplaces and a living wage, it is also a time for promoting causes such as nuclear disarmament and attempts to stop the war in the Middle East and the rights of immigrants. We must take note of the Canadian *Workers' Bill of Rights*, which says, "Democracy and human rights cannot flourish where workers' rights do not exist or are not enforced."

Thank you.

In recognition of Yukon Writers Festival

Hon. Mr. Hart: Mr. Speaker, as minister responsible for Yukon public libraries, it gives me great pleasure to rise today to recognize the 17th annual Yukon Writers Festival, known as "Live Words". Each year, this successful event brings Yukon people together with local and visiting writers to celebrate the joys of Canadian writing and reading.

This year's festival will again be exciting and interesting for all participants. It kicks off tomorrow with an opening reception at the Beringia Centre. Yukon enthusiasts are looking forward to readings by six guest Canadian authors. This year's roster includes former Yukoner Ivan Coyote, as well as ethnog-

rapher Julie Cruikshank, who has spent many years working with Yukon First Nation storytellers and elders. I would like to welcome them and Gail Bowen, Donna Morrissey, Anna Chatterton and Carl Leggo to our territory. The excitement will continue for the next week as Yukoners exchange ideas, skills and stories with these acclaimed Canadian writers. The public is encouraged to participate in readings, workshops, book-signings and receptions.

I would like to emphasize that this is a Yukon-wide festival with events taking place in Haines Junction, Teslin, Carcross, Pelly Crossing, Mayo, Dawson City as well as here in Whitehorse.

The Yukon has an abundant literary talent. It is part of our history, and it is such events as the Live Words writers festival that encourage Yukon writers to work hard and to pursue national and international literary success.

I'm particularly pleased to say that the 28th Yukon Young Authors Conference is taking place on Thursday and Friday at F.H. Collins Secondary School. This event includes almost 100 grade 8 to grade 12 students from schools throughout the Yukon. The students work closely with the visiting authors to develop their craft through workshops, readings and discussion groups. For our young writers, this is always an intense but wonderful opportunity to write and be coached by Canadian experts.

Mr. Speaker, events like these only happen with the support from many community groups and businesses. I would like to thank all our partners and sponsors who have collaborated over the years to ensure the success of this conference and festival. Financial support from this government as well as the Canada Council for the Arts, the Writers Union of Canada and the Playwrights Guild of Canada has made it possible to bring writers from across Canada to the Yukon. I wish to offer special acknowledgement and thanks to our Yukon volunteers. It is their love of the written and spoken word and their hard work that will ensure this year's events are a success.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind Yukoners that the festival events are free or at nominal charge. Program information is available through the local media and from the public libraries branch. I would like to thank you and I invite all Yukoners to enjoy the festival. I'd also ask my colleagues to welcome Julie Ourom, Anna Pearson and Don Allen who are staff from the local public library.

Mr. McRobb: I would like to thank the minister for giving the tribute to the writers and the festival. I would invite all members of this Assembly and the public who are interested to attend the meeting in Haines Junction on Saturday night. I plan to attend and I am very interested in and looking forward to the readings by the authors. Hopefully, if enough of us from the Assembly attend, it can help to improve both the grammar and the level of debate in this Assembly, although I don't want to get my hopes too high.

Speaker: Are there any further tributes? Returns or documents for tabling.

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Mr. Fairclough: I have for tabling feedback from the pre-consultation with First Nation communities and organizations. This is for the education reform project. It's on *What We Heard*.

I also have for tabling from the education reform project the schedule of public meetings that was in the newspapers.

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

Reports of committees.

Are there petitions?

Bills to be introduced.

Are there any notices of motion?

NOTICES OF MOTION

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to

(1) release all test results that have been conducted to determine mould levels in public buildings, including Whitehorse General Hospital, both the old and new Carmacks schools and the Thomson Centre, and;

(2) provide a list of the number of employees at these facilities who have taken long-term disability or are collecting workers' compensation benefits as a result of mould-related workplace problems.

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

THAT it is the opinion of this House that

(1) six months have passed since the tabling in this House of 2,500 signatures on Petition No. 1 concerning the protection of animals;

(2) the petition asks the government to review existing animal protection legislation and create a modern animal protection act;

(3) no concrete action has yet been taken by this government in response to the petition, and;

THAT this House urges the Yukon government to immediately consult with humane societies and animal protection personnel in and beyond the Yukon to develop an effective, enforceable animal protection act and accompanying regulations that include a schedule of strict sanctions against the abuse, neglect or mistreatment of animals.

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

THAT this House urges the Yukon government to immediately begin negotiations with interested non-governmental organizations and First Nations to provide addictions and mental health treatment services in the form of treatment centres in Whitehorse and in the rural communities in order to

(1) activate the substance abuse action plan guiding principles of partnerships and integration of policies and programs;

(2) bring badly needed treatment services to the clients living in communities outside of Whitehorse; and

(3) respond to the substance abuse action plan treatment recommendations for expanded outreach, pre-treatment and aftercare services.

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: Climate change conference

Mr. Elias: Mr. Speaker, on April 19, the chair of the Council of the Federation announced that all of Canada's premiers will be meeting in Toronto on May 1 -- that's today -- to discuss an issue that is very important to all Canadians. The premiers are all getting together to talk about climate change -- all the Premiers except our own, that is. The Yukon will not be represented at this meeting on climate change. So much for climate change being a priority of this government. All the premiers are getting together to discuss a national plan for climate change, and the Yukon does not have a seat at the table. The Premier can't be bothered to go.

Now, just last month, the Premier went all the way to Ottawa to sit in the gallery and listen to the federal budget when he could have listened to it on the radio -- which brings us back to today. The Premier is sitting silently and not standing up for Yukoners, not using the national stage to make the case for how important this issue is. Why did the Premier skip this national meeting that is being attended by every leader in this country?

Hon. Mr. Fentie: Well, Mr. Speaker, this is somewhat of a confusing position for the Official Opposition, which mere days ago were berating the government for disrespect of this Assembly by not being in it. Well, Mr. Speaker, the short answer is the Premier is here, the government side is here, debating the budget.

Second, I would expect that, given Premier Binns has announced an election call in Prince Edward Island yesterday, Premier Binns isn't at the conference either.

The third and most important point: Yukon is very well represented at the conference. The conference is to table reports and other discussion items around climate change, energy, internal trade and to prepare for what is the important meeting, and that is the annual Council of the Federation in New Brunswick in August.

Mr. Speaker, I have no problem whatsoever with what is going to happen in Toronto over the next day or two. The Yukon definitely has a plan for climate change, and it is certainly in sync with the national discussion.

Mr. Elias: Mr. Speaker, this is a meeting of the premiers. Those are all great excuses, Mr. Speaker, but it is the government that sets the agenda in this House. If this meeting was a priority, the Premier could have had the schedule of the House business changed. There is no excuse. There is a national meeting today to discuss climate change. It is being attended by all the premiers in Canada, except the leader of the Yukon. It really shows how unimportant this issue is to the Yukon Party government. This meeting is all about the prov-

inces and territories getting together to develop a national energy plan to share best practices for climate change. It is a premiers conference. Why did the Premier decide to skip out of this very important national meeting?

Hon. Mr. Fentie: The short answer is because we are here living up to our obligations and responsibilities, and debating the budget in Yukon's public interest. More important, Mr. Speaker, what the member opposite is missing is that many of these items have been discussed on many occasions. Much of what is going to transpire at the council is the tabling of reports -- reports that the Yukon has had input into for months and years. Furthermore, the priority council meeting is in August. This is a preparatory meeting that Yukon has already had input into. Once again, I point out that Premier Binns did drop the writ in Prince Edward Island yesterday in a community on the island, so it is pretty hard for him to be at the conference at the same time.

Mr. Elias: Mr. Speaker, I'm sure all the other premiers in Canada are pretty busy too, but there is simply no excuse. The Premier doesn't need permission of this Legislature to travel; the Premier has missed lots of House time for travelling. If this meeting were all about oil and gas development or mining, I bet the Premier would be there, but it is about the environment, so the Premier decided not to attend. This really demonstrates to the public what the priorities of this minister really are. All of Canada's premiers are meeting today to talk about climate change to come up with a national plan of action. And that plan will come together with no input from the Yukon's leader.

There's an old saying, Mr. Speaker: if you're not part of the solution, then you're part of the problem.

Why is this issue so low on the priority list that the Premier could not be bothered to go to this meeting and marshal Yukoners' concerns about climate change?

Hon. Mr. Fentie: I know that the member is quite excited about this moment here in the Legislative Assembly, but the member brought up a point that somehow attending a meeting demonstrates the priority of the government. I would point out to the member that I didn't attend the recent Cordilleran Roundup -- I was busy here working on the environment here in Yukon.

Furthermore, this conference, by my decision and the government's, was not the priority conference to attend. That's one point to be made. Second, the Yukon is in the lead when it comes to climate change and what we're doing in the north with respect to our climate change strategy and our climate change action plan. A third point: Yukon has had a tremendous amount of input on climate change.

I would point out that the recent survey poll shows clearly that in Yukon, the environment is of the highest priority for Yukoners, and as the media reported, the Yukon Party's support rockets. That's because we're in sync with the public debate here in Yukon. We're in sync with the national debate, and furthermore, in August we will definitely discuss climate change with our colleagues in the provinces and territories, but more important, it's our national government's position that is critical.

Question re: Seniors housing policy

Mr. Mitchell: I have some questions for the minister responsible for the Yukon Housing Corporation. There's an individual with us in the gallery here today who is having some problems with the Yukon Housing Corporation and the Whitehorse Housing Authority. The individual would like to move into seniors housing. His application has been denied because he owns his own home in a mobile home park.

It's a catch-22, Mr. Speaker. He can't get into seniors housing until he sells his house but he does not want to sell his house until he has confirmation that there's a guaranteed unit for him. I'm sure the minister can appreciate the situation that this person is in.

Is the minister prepared to change this policy -- a policy that has left this person in limbo for the last three years?

Hon. Mr. Kenyon: Mr. Speaker, again the member opposite has things badly confused. The minister does not set these policies; they're set by the Yukon Housing Corporation Board of Directors. We do have a priority assessment point rating system that recognizes a variety of targeted housing priorities. In descending order: (1) victims of violence and abuse; (2) rural relocation households for seniors; (3) homeless or evicted households; (4) mobility-challenged households; and (5) all others.

The system does not guarantee that any of these applications would go ahead, but we do have that system in place. Other programs are being revised and examined as we speak, and the member opposite quite well knows that.

Mr. Mitchell: We didn't really get an answer to the question. What's particularly troubling to this person is the fact that other individuals have been given an exception to this policy. They've been guaranteed a seniors housing unit and then been given some time to sell their current accommodation. In other words, the policy does not seem to be being applied evenly, and this is the minister responsible for it. All this person is asking for is a guarantee that he has a new place to move into. Once he has that assurance, he'll sell his existing home. Asking seniors, or anyone for that matter, to do it the other way around is unfair. It could leave people with no place to live while they wait to get a unit. I wrote the minister about this issue two weeks ago, but I have not yet received a response, so I am asking him today. Will the minister undertake to look into the unfairness of this policy and ensure that we are not putting our seniors in this catch-22 situation?

Hon. Mr. Kenyon: What I just heard the member opposite say is that he has personal information that these guarantees have been given to other individuals. As minister responsible, I certainly would expect and absolutely demand that he put those on the table and provide me with that information as it would be contrary to the current policy. But again, for the member opposite, this is a matter that has come up in the past -- my understanding is it has come up with that same individual -- and the policy is before the board for revision. Again, the member opposite either is poorly informed or --

Mr. Mitchell: I don't believe we should be treating people this way. This catch-22 has created a lot of hardship for my constituent. He has been trying to get something done for

the last three years. This gentleman is a constituent, and he has asked me to try to assist him because he cannot get any satisfaction from this government or this minister.

The minister can give direction to the board to make changes. He meets with them regularly.

Mr. Speaker, I will be more than happy to bring this person together with the minister if he can take some time from his busy schedule to actually meet with a member of the public and help solve problems rather than talk around them. My constituent is tired of fighting the system. He just wants a place to live.

As I said, I wrote to the minister about this situation. He hasn't responded to me either. When will the minister do something and get this resolved?

Hon. Mr. Kenyon: Again, the minister does not make those decisions. They are made by the Yukon Housing Corporation Board of Directors, who are very well aware of that and I am sure are listening assiduously as we speak.

I did respond to the member opposite's letter. I have for tabling a copy of that letter. I heard the member say that he has personal knowledge of other people being given these guarantees. I would expect that member to provide them to the House, understanding that, I am sure, it is a very truthful suggestion.

Mr. Speaker, the matter is on the table of the board of directors. It is being considered. For the record, I do agree with the member opposite that it is a hardship. That has been communicated to the board. The board will make its decision in due course. But this is not a political decision. What I get out of this conversation and this question is that the member opposite is very happy with what this government is doing when he has to come to this level to get a question answered.

Question re: Non-governmental organizations funding

Mr. Cardiff: I have a question for the Minister of Finance.

In the past three days, all three members of our caucus have tabled motions calling for stable, long-term funding for non-governmental organizations. Our office also conducted an informal survey of 52 community organizations that rely on territorial government funding. Of the 19 groups that responded, only two had received a firm assurance of funding for 2007-08; 11 others had verbal indications of support, but no confirmation and no cheque. This annual merry-go-round is disruptive to service providers and their clients and is completely counterproductive.

Will the Minister of Finance agree to end this chaotic situation by moving forward to a long-term funding model for NGOs with a proven track record in providing service to Yukoners?

Hon. Mr. Fentie: First of all, it is important that the member opposite recognize that this government is one of the first governments to increase resources that we make available for NGOs -- NGOs that work on behalf of women's issues and others in this territory who are on the front lines.

Furthermore, all the contribution agreements and the financial arrangements we enter into with NGOs are within the confines of the policies and the regulation and the *Financial Administration Act*. There is always room for discussion, but to

suggest that, each and every year, NGOs are left in the dark on what their role will be and what they will receive in the way of resources is not borne out by the facts. Each and every year, NGOs receive resources that we make available so that they can continue their good works, and much of that, by the way, is in the special warrant that the members opposite have such an aversion to.

Mr. Cardiff: Well, they may end up receiving the money, but they don't know when they're going to get it or if they're going to get it. Perhaps these groups should register as mining companies. That way they would know the government's door is open. As it is, countless hours of administrative time are used in writing annual funding proposals. Then the long wait begins while the government gets its act together to make a decision.

Some of the comments we've received from NGOs were very telling. One group said it was forced to run its programs off credit cards. Others said employees and contractors were told not to cash their paycheques. But the minister should memorize what one organization said, which is this: if seamless service is expected, seamless funding is also required. If the Premier can't or won't guarantee long-term, stable funding, will he at least consider adjusting grant application deadlines so these groups know before the government's new fiscal year that their proposals have been approved?

Hon. Mr. Fentie: Well, Mr. Speaker, resources flowing to NGOs in a seamless, smooth manner continues under this government.

But the member said something about mining and that if this was a mining interest we'd be much more focused. Well, how can the member say that? When you take operation and maintenance alone in this budget, 2007-08, \$213 million is for Health and Social Services. A mere \$40 million goes to the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources. The contrast is pretty obvious. Our attention is on the social safety net.

Mr. Cardiff: Mr. Speaker, hundreds of community groups with volunteer boards and often with paid professional staff provide extremely valuable services on behalf of this government. They provide services to youth, to seniors, to families, to people with serious health issues, justice issues, education issues. Non-profit organizations foster the wealth of artistic and cultural programming that adds so much to the quality of our lives. NGOs are a vital part of life in the city and in every community in the territory.

Will the Premier agree to set up a task force involving all departments to deal with NGOs in order to provide an effective mechanism that will allow them to provide a seamless service to Yukon people? Will the Premier make that commitment today, please?

Hon. Mr. Fentie: The government and our NGOs are providing a seamless service on a daily basis in this territory. Furthermore, the member mentioned youth -- it's this government that increased the resources available to NGOs that work with youth in this territory. When the member mentions women, it's this government that has increased the resources available, especially through the Women's Directorate, so that women's issues are being dealt with in this territory. When the

member mentions culture, it's this government that has been steadily increasing, on a year-by-year basis, the emphasis on and the investment in the arts and culture community.

Where is the member missing the facts of the matter? There are seamless resources and delivery of services in a seamless manner for all Yukoners by government and by our non-governmental organizations.

Question re: Dental care in rural communities

Mr. Edzerza: My question is for the Minister of Health and Social Services. At the end of March, the contract to provide dental services to 10 Yukon communities expired when the dentist from Hay River, N.W.T. chose not to renew his contract. Whitehorse dentists have also chosen not to provide travelling service to rural communities. According to media reports, the government has launched a Canada-wide search for someone to provide this valuable service.

Has there been any progress on this file, or should people in rural communities who need dental care expect to remain in limbo for some time to come?

Hon. Mr. Cathers: I thank the Member for McIntyre-Takhini for his question. I would point out first, for the information of members, and remind them that dental health is in fact not an insured health service. In most areas, it is not dealt with under Health and Social Services, but we in the Yukon recognize the needs of rural Yukon and the challenge that can be faced with having to come into Whitehorse. We have provided this in the past. Local dentists have informed us that they're quite busy right now. We have not had any update in trying to get them to go to rural Yukon. We have also had the situation with the clinic in Hay River, which was not willing to extend the contract due to being rather busy and the number of employees they have.

Work is underway right now between my department, Health and Social Services, and Health Canada to try to put together a strategy to step in here. I don't have an update that I can provide to the member at this time, but work is ongoing.

Mr. Edzerza: Proper dental care is a critical component of good health. We have probably all had experiences with toothaches and know how uncomfortable they are.

Without access to dentists for regular checkups, small problems can turn into much larger problems that require expensive intervention later on. Local dentists have said they are booked solid with Whitehorse patients and they lose time and money serving rural Yukon. They also have ongoing concerns about the avalanche of paperwork required by the federal government to treat First Nation patients under the uninsured health benefit program. Has the minister had any direct discussions with his federal counterpart or with the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development about ways to resolve this continuing problem?

Hon. Mr. Cathers: I would point out for the member's understanding that one of the challenges we face as far as rural Yukon is concerned -- he raised the issue of the rates paid to go to rural Yukon -- is that the dentists in Whitehorse are busy enough that, if they go to rural Yukon, not only is it not profitable to them but it means they are not serving someone in Whitehorse. The solution to this is obvious. We need more

dentists in the territory to provide that service, both in Whitehorse and to rural Yukon.

As far as whether or not I have had discussions at the ministerial level, no, I have not. Work is underway right now between Health Canada and the Department of Health and Social Services. The discussions are very positive. This is the type of matter that is often worked out at the officials level. Discussions are going well, so we don't see a need to ask the minister to do what they are in fact already doing -- have their officials work with ours to resolve the problem.

Mr. Edzerza: In some communities, the government already provides some support services to travelling dentists, such as clinic space within nursing stations for them to work. However, it is clear that these incentives are not enough to ensure that people in rural Yukon can get the service they need. Having to come to Whitehorse for dental care can be very expensive and time consuming, not to mention the need to book appointments far in advance.

The president of the Yukon Dental Association has said he hopes the government would consider paying dentists a daily wage to service the communities. In the current recruitment campaign, is a salaried position or a daily wage among the incentives being offered to attract Outside dentists to come here?

Hon. Mr. Cathers: Mr. Speaker, again, for the Member for McIntyre-Takhini, options and a means to go forward in an attempt to get more dentists in the territory to provide services to rural Yukon are being worked on right now between the Department of Health and Social Services and Health Canada. That's in the technical stage, and discussions are underway. So I don't have anything that I can update the member on at this time. I am not going to get into discussing draft proposals at this point in time. The work will be underway.

Again, I have to emphasize to the member that as far as the rates, to which I alluded, paid to dentists from Whitehorse travelling to rural Yukon, again we have a capacity problem. Dentists in Whitehorse are very busy. If they go to rural Yukon, they are spending time on the road when they are seeing no patients, and that is why they have chosen not to go and why, at this time, that doesn't seem to be as feasible an option. But work is underway.

Question re: Minto mine power purchase agreement

Mr. McRobb: Mr. Speaker, last week, I asked the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources some energy-related questions, but he couldn't seem to get on the right wavelength. This government, by order-in-council, ordered the Yukon Utilities Board to rush its hearing process on the power purchase agreement for the Minto mine near Carmacks. Yesterday this minister took a direct hit when the regulatory board denied the PPA as applied for and directed Yukon Energy back to the drawing board on many issues. Where does the minister plan to go from here?

Hon. Mr. Lang: Mr. Speaker, we certainly will be looking at the Utilities Board decision. Tomorrow I'll be getting a total review from the Yukon Energy Corporation and the plan on how we're going to move forward.

Mr. McRobb: Mr. Speaker, it's unfortunate that this minister has not taken the time to thoroughly acquaint himself with the real issues. Not only has the government failed to protect the interests of our territory's electrical ratepayers, it has fallen flat with respect to helping the Minto mine.

It is time for this Yukon Party government to actually think enough of Yukoners to give proper authorities to the Yukon Utilities Board to clean up the mess by setting effective reporting and filing guidelines to protect Yukon ratepayers in future.

Will this minister now commit to ensure that Yukon Energy Corporation will hold off spending money that it doesn't have on projects the board has said are not feasible?

Hon. Mr. Lang: We certainly are using and respecting the Yukon Utilities Board, not like the party he's sitting with, on the Mayo-Dawson line. The Yukon Utilities Board is a very important group that we take very seriously; its sober second thoughts about our energy -- we certainly will be addressing the issue in the next couple of days and moving forward with the Yukon Utilities Board to answer some of their questions so we can move forward on this project.

Mr. McRobb: Again, the question wasn't answered. This government's whole plan to speed this application through the board's process can be rightfully compared to a fallen house of cards. Not only has it failed to protect the interests of our territory's electrical ratepayers, it has fallen flat with respect to helping the Minto mine. This government continues to prevent the board from conducting thorough reviews of the power rates. Now everything is in a rush with overlapped issues, new issues that have yet to be dealt with and government plans gone awry.

In its decision yesterday, the board has repeated its January 15 recommendation to this government that the utility companies should come before it for an overall review of costs and rates this fall.

When will this government finally reply to the board's January recommendation and direct the board to conduct this thorough review of electricity costs and rates?

Hon. Mr. Lang: We certainly are not going to repeat the folly of the Mayo-Dawson line, which was led by the Liberal government of the day. In that case, Mr. Speaker, the Yukon Utilities Board was not part and parcel of the decision on the Mayo-Dawson line, and we are still living with those decisions the Liberal Party made at that time.

As I said to the member opposite, I'll be reviewing the Yukon Utilities Board decision -- and, of course, the Yukon Energy Corporation. I will be getting briefed tomorrow and will be planning on how we will move forward with this issue.

Question re: Education reform

Mr. Fairclough: My question is for the Minister of Education concerning the educational reform project and the direction they are taking. The minister said in this House yesterday and I quote: "The executive group includes me, Chief Joe Linklater and Chief Liard McMillan. We are the ones who signed the last letter giving them direction. We are the principals behind this."

Will the minister table that letter?

Hon. Mr. Rouble: Mr. Speaker, would the member give me a day to consult with the other two people who signed the letter before I table it in order to advise them that I have been requested to do so?

Mr. Fairclough: I think the minister could just say that he can, after consultation.

Mr. Speaker, this government is not prepared to deal with the hard and very real issues at stake here. The key word in the educational reform project is "reform" and reform means changes. This government doesn't seem to have the stomach for addressing the big issues here. Yukoners want changes to the system. They want input into their children's education. They want to be consulted, but they want to be consulted on the recommendations of the report and not just about what we are hearing, as I tabled today. We feel that this is just another stall tactic.

Will the minister table the letter and release a gag order on the former co-chair? Will he do that? Yes or no?

Hon. Mr. Rouble: Mr. Speaker, I have just made a comment to the member opposite regarding releasing the letter. I will consult with the other signatories to the letter before it is released.

I have said it before in this House that the government is committed to reforming education in order to better serve the needs of all Yukoners. We only have to look at this budget to see many of the new initiatives that are coming forward to do that -- things like expanding experiential education; working with school councils; working with the communities. We want to see a greater involvement by the community in decision-making. That is one of the issues that the education reform team is working on. Now, before any recommendations or final conclusions are made, Yukoners have to have their input. Yukoners are going to be part of the solution. The recommendations will come at the conclusion. We are not going to do the reverse process of saying, "Here is the final idea; how do you like us so far?" The member opposite and others have criticized government in the past for taking that approach. It doesn't work.

Let's involve Yukoners in the solution and we will all be better off, and we'll have a better system in the end as a result.

Mr. Fairclough: It would be nice if we could get some answers with regard to questions from the public on this very matter.

What the committee is doing now is going out for consultations for what has already been said. The minister wants to know if this is exactly what was said. Has it changed from the time we consulted until now? We want the government to go beyond that. We want people to be able to be open and give out the information. That is why I asked the question. It is very important.

What we heard was the 15 points. That is what the consultations are about now. I would like to ask the minister this again: will the minister remove the gag order on the former co-chair? Will he do that? Yes or no?

Hon. Mr. Rouble: Mr. Speaker, I am not going to justify or acknowledge that question or respond to it. To respond to something that doesn't exist -- we're just not going there. The

final report that I'm expecting from the other members of the executive committee for the education reform group will be a report that will identify the goals that Yukoners have for education, outline the barriers to accomplishing those goals and look at strategies for overcoming them.

In the education reform team's initial targeted consultation, they reviewed the material that was provided by the previous *Education Act* reform. They had very targeted and focused consultation with various different groups, but it didn't include all groups at the same time. We need to have an exchange of the different ideas so that the different stakeholders and partners in education can hear the issues, hear the ideas around them and not just hear one group's idea and one solution. That is not the way to build an inclusive system.

Mr. Speaker, the education reform process has a good model to follow. They are out there consulting now. The member has seen the schedule in the newspaper. I would encourage him to participate and share his ideas.

Speaker: The time for Question Period has now elapsed.

Government House Leader's report on length of sitting

Hon. Mr. Cathers: Mr. Speaker, I rise pursuant to Standing Order 75(4) to inform the House that the House leaders have met for the purpose of achieving agreement on the maximum number of sitting days for the current sitting. The House leaders have unanimously agreed that the current sitting should be a maximum of 32 sitting days, with the 32nd sitting day being June 14, 2007.

Speaker: Accordingly, I declare the current sitting shall be a maximum of 32 sitting days, with the last sitting day being June 14, 2007.

Notice of government private members' business

Hon. Mr. Cathers: Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 14.2(7), I would like to identify the items standing in the name of the government private member to be called on Wednesday, May 2, 2007. They are Motion No. 28, standing in the name of the Member for Klondike and Motion No. 55, standing in the name of the Member for Klondike.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

Motion No. 96

Clerk: Motion No. 96, standing in the name of Hon. Mr. Fentie.

Speaker: It is moved by the Premier

THAT the Yukon Legislative Assembly, pursuant to section 2 of the *Ombudsman Act*, recommends that the Commissioner in Executive Council appoint Tracy-Anne McPhee as the Ombudsman of Yukon for a term of five years, effective April 9, 2007.

Hon. Mr. Fentie: Mr. Speaker, this is a formality to fill the vacancy left by the retirement of the previous Ombudsman. The work done to date was done by a joint panel of the Assembly. The recommended replacement was brought forward by that panel. The motion has been tabled, and of course the effective date is for April 9, 2007. Should the motion pass today, that will conclude our responsibility as an Assembly in making sure that our Ombudsman is in place and doing the good works that the office does.

Mr. Mitchell: As the Premier has noted, this appointment is being recommended with unanimous support of all parties. We are very pleased that such a qualified person has been found to assume the responsibilities that were so ably fulfilled by the former Ombudsman, Mr. Moorlag.

This is a very important office. It is often seen as a last resort by people who feel that their voices have not been heard by various agencies of government and other public bodies. We would just point out that we also would hope that the government will review the recommendations in the annual reports of the past Ombudsman and move on some of the recommendations that have been outstanding.

Mr. Cardiff: Mr. Speaker, we recognize, too, the importance of this motion and the good work that the Ombudsman's Office does. We would like to thank the panel that did the work in selecting this individual to come to this position and congratulate the person on this appointment when it passes.

Likewise, I would like to also indicate that we hope, as well, that this government acts on recommendations made by the previous Ombudsman and that it moves to review and make improvements to the *Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act*. With that said, we will be supporting the motion. Thank you.

Speaker: Are you prepared for the question?

Before putting the question, the Chair must draw attention to section 2 of the *Ombudsman Act*. That section requires that the recommendation of the Legislative Assembly to the Commissioner in Executive Council respecting the appointment of an ombudsman be supported by at least two-thirds of the members of this Assembly. The effect of section 2 is that for the motion to be carried, at least 12 members must vote on it. In order to ensure that the requirements of section 2 of the *Ombudsman Act* are met, the Chair will now call for a recorded division.

Division

Speaker: Mr. Clerk, would you poll the House.

Hon. Mr. Fentie: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Cathers: Agree.

Hon. Ms. Taylor: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Kenyon: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Rouble: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Lang: Agree.

Hon. Ms. Horne: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Hart: Agree.

Mr. Nordick: Agree.

Mr. Mitchell: Agree.

Mr. McRobb: Agree.

Mr. Elias: Agree.

Mr. Fairclough: Agree.

Mr. Inverarity: Agree.

Mr. Cardiff: Agree.

Mr. Edzerza: Agree.

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

Speaker: The yeas have it. I declare the motion carried by the required support of two-thirds of the Legislative Assembly.

Motion No. 96 agreed to

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

Speaker: It has been moved by the 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: Committee of the Whole will now come to order.

Chair's ruling

Chair: Toward the end of yesterday's meeting of Committee of the Whole, a point of order was raised by Mr. McRobb with respect to remarks made by the Hon. Mr. Fentie.

As Chair of the Committee, I undertook to review the matter raised and to provide a ruling. It is the Chair's ruling that there has been no breach of the Standing Orders in this instance. The Chair will, however, exercise ongoing vigilance to maintain decorum and moderate the tenor of the debate.

I would remind all honourable members that the purpose of our being here is to discuss the budget and the content of the budget. The Chair requests that debate in Committee of the Whole focus on the budget and that members forgo references to past items of the daily routine.

I thank Mr. McRobb for raising this matter.

Bill No. 4 -- *Third Appropriation Act, 2006-07*

Chair: We will now begin general debate on Bill No. 4, *Third Appropriation Act, 2006-07*, but before we commence debate, the Chair would like to remind members of a procedural matter regarding the reading of our supplementary budget. Once general debate is concluded, the Committee will only deal with those votes that have new appropriations identified in Schedule A. Should members wish to ask questions or make comments on other issues such as revenue or lapses in departments for which we have no new appropriations, they should do so within the context of general debate.

We will now begin with general debate.

Hon. Mr. Fentie: In the spirit of cooperation, the government side has chosen today in the business of the House to bring forward the *Supplementary Estimates No. 2*, Bill No. 4, for the closing out of the fiscal year 2006-07. This is intended to assist the opposition, especially the Official Opposition, in debate, as this supplementary sets the start numbers for the 2007-08 budget and fiscal year. I think that might help us move along in a more constructive manner when we debate the main budget for 2007-08.

Mr. Chair, in this speech, I don't plan to go into any great detail on the appropriation bill. I think I explained the detail necessary for the supplementary. The supplementary is always a formality here in the Assembly and a formality of fiscal management and processes for the Yukon government. It provides the Legislature with information about expenditure changes that require this Assembly's approval for the period ending March 31, 2006-07. It also is used to provide the general public and the Legislature with updated information on the financial position of the government. It reflects the projected year-end financial position. The supplementary estimates for fiscal year 2006-07, seeks authority to increase operating and maintenance expenditures by just over \$5.7 million and to decrease capital expenditures by some \$37.5 million for a gross expenditure decrease of \$31.8 million. The government's revenues, transfers from Canada and other third party recoveries are decreased in total by a net amount of \$679,000. After adjusting for expected lapses and the effect of changes in tangible capital assets, the results in a year-end forecast for annual surplus is just over \$46.5 million.

This amount is greater than the projected \$24.4 million outlined in the first supplementary budget for the fiscal year, which was passed in this House last fall. Mr. Chair, a little later, I will quickly summarize the changes that give rise to this a little later with respect to debate and in my speech. However, after these revenue and expenditure changes are approved, the net financial resources of the government to year-end are projected to be \$110.8 million and the accumulated surplus, as of March 31, 2007, is forecast to increase to almost \$535 million.

It's evident that not only is our year-end net financial position a very healthy one, our accumulated surplus continues to build and the fiscal position of Yukon continues to strengthen.

On the operation and maintenance and capital expenditures, Mr. Chair, the \$5.7-million increase for O&M identified in the supplementary budget is derived from a few major expenditure areas.

Health and Social Services has identified increases in programming amounting to \$8.2 million, and the Department of Education is requesting additional funding of \$1.8 million.

It is interesting to note that the members opposite -- the opposition benches -- have on many occasions in this short sitting stood in the House and berated the government for no investment, no attention being paid to the areas of government responsibility that relate to those in need. Once again we are demonstrating, by the facts and by the evidence, that that is not the case given further increases in programming and service delivery through the Department of Health and Social Services and, of course, the Department of Education.

There are offsets that are important here and one of those is the northern strategy expenditures of \$2.7 million, which is administered through the Executive Council Office, but also smaller amounts in the departments of Energy, Mines and Resources and in Tourism and Culture.

On the capital side of the expenditures, departments -- with a few minor exceptions -- have generally identified decreased funding requirements. The largest decrease, of almost \$26 million, is in the Executive Council Office. That is due, as we talked about earlier, to the appropriation lapses in the northern housing trust, which we discussed at some length yesterday. I will repeat for the benefit of the members opposite that, under accounting direction, we must book the full value of the trusts that are created by Canada in the year that the trust is established. That creates an anomaly because as you go forward in years related to the timeline of the trust, there are going to be expenditures against the trust with no corresponding revenues, as all the revenues are booked in a prior year's budget.

Highways and Public Works have identified a decrease of \$7.4 million in capital requirements. The areas of decrease are in the MoCS, or mobile communications solution, and, of course, some items in the Shakwak project. Similarly, Health and Social Services will lapse over \$2 million in capital in the fiscal year.

Mr. Chair, I remind the members of the Assembly that many of the lapsed funds -- and this is part of the financial process we must go through -- will be reflected in the 2007-08 main estimates as revotes later in the year. The choice today to debate the supplementary, closing out fiscal year 2006-07, is about this particular area, so that members opposite recognize that when we spend a great deal or an inordinate amount of time debating such issues as lapses, that they can see now what I would call a significant percentage of lapses are actually revoted into the next budget, the mains for 2007-08. It only makes sense then to move on to a departmental, line-by-line debate so that those questions can be asked directly of the departments where the lapses occurred and what those lapses and revotes were for.

So Mr. Chair, this is once again in the spirit of cooperation intended to expedite debate and provide a more constructive discussion with the members opposite by assisting them in recognizing where the fiscal framework has come from and where it is going with the tabling of the 2007-08 budget. All the ministers of departments that have been named, as well as ministers from other departments, are always available to provide responses to the questions posed by members opposite, especially when we get into department-by-department and/or line-by-line review.

Mr. Chair, I'm pleased to be able to present this supplementary budget to the House, to the people of the Yukon. It clearly demonstrates, as you look at our close-out for fiscal year 2006-07, the fiscal prudence in managing the finances of the territory by the government. We on this side of the House are very proud of what we've achieved. There have been dramatic increases in the financial strength of Yukon. We have used that to improve and enhance program and service delivery. We have used that to invest in our public service. We have

used that fiscal strength to invest in infrastructure. Indeed, we've used that fiscal capacity to create increased stimuli in Yukon, increase cash flow, which has certainly assisted turning this territory to where we are today compared to where we were four and a half or five years ago.

I think it clearly proves what can be done with appropriate fiscal management, appropriate budgeting, setting your priorities and investing accordingly. What we have demonstrated over the course of the last mandate and continue to demonstrate with our new budget for 2007-08 is those very fundamental principles of financial management and investment.

Beyond that, Mr. Chair, I would be very pleased to discuss, in a productive manner and a manner reasonable to public debate, the supplementary budget in general debate here in Committee of the Whole.

Mr. Mitchell: We agree with the Premier and Finance minister that our time would be better spent in discussing the main estimates for this year. There is a lot there that we obviously need to go over and hear explanations about. We don't want to spend a lot of time here today.

What we don't agree with is -- and we need to correct the Premier because he is erroneous in stating that the members on the opposition side have asserted that there is no money being spent on the social side of the ledger. We haven't said that. He continues to say that we are saying that, so those are his words, not ours. What we have said is that there are areas where there is a lack of action in addressing the shortfalls of people on social assistance and a lack of action in addressing some funding issues for childcare. I just want to correct the minister and ensure that the record is correct.

We have acknowledged that there is a great deal of money in the departments of Health and Social Services and Education, as there always is in every annual budget. We have not asserted that there is nothing on that side of the ledger -- rather, there are some long-outstanding issues that continue to remain outstanding while, as the Premier asserts, there are a great deal of financial resources available.

Rather than go through all this, it is a supplementary budget, it closes out the year and, as the Premier has mentioned, it gives us the starting points for the next main estimates. Perhaps I will ask a few questions here in general debate. If the Premier can provide us with answers or forward answers to us later, then we can move forward expeditiously.

First of all, the some \$37 million in funding has lapsed and it may well be revoted on the capital side. This just shows the lack of ability to plan and execute, to a certain extent, because some things were brought forward as projects and, I think, promises were made to Yukoners. Those promises haven't been kept and Yukoners have to hope that the promises will be kept the next time around.

So, for example, close to \$1.8 million -- I think the two lines add up to \$1.749 million -- for an affordable housing complex in Haines Junction that was in last year's budget. It has lapsed and we understand it will be revoted, but we just want to point out that that was something that was announced with a lot of fanfare last year in the run-up to an election but it didn't come to fruition, and so now it is in the 2007-08 main

estimates again. We'll address it in detail again. I'm sure the Member for Kluane and the member with responsibilities as critic for the Yukon Housing Corporation will do that. I just wanted to point it out.

The Premier mentions the MoCS mobile communications solution -- I think it's on page 9-3 of this supplementary budget. There was a lapse of some \$4.737 million. We'll look for that in terms of revotes, but I'm hoping that the Premier can explain to us what the delays were. Is there a decision that the solution that was being looked at is not the appropriate solution, or was there a timing difficulty in executing this project? Because in advance we were told for a number of years that the previous solution, MDMRS, was at the end of its useful life-expectancy. I think I see the Minister of Community Services and former Highways and Public Works minister making reference to it. Perhaps he'll explain it, but I'm just wondering why it wasn't done.

There was, I believe, money in last year's budget to fix a drinking water well in Old Crow. There are problems there with high magnesium levels and the work hasn't been done. If the Finance minister can just update us on whether this funding that has lapsed has been revoted and if it will be addressed this year, that's all we want to hear.

We would like to ask about a one-time payment to the Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board -- I think it was \$4.8 million from the Public Service Commission. What was this money for? Finally, we note again the lapse of \$2.2 million for the multi-level care facility in Watson Lake and we know that that money will be revoted as part of the \$6.9 million this year, and we look forward to having a discussion into the future about the efficiency of that project.

In any case, as the Premier has said, our time is better spent elsewhere and so I'm not going to ask any more questions in detail. If the minister can answer the few questions I've raised, we'd be prepared to deem all lines read and agreed to when we come to the time. I believe the third party may have a few things to say in general debate and then they would agree as well.

Hon. Mr. Fentie: I know the Leader of the Official Opposition is quite sensitive about what's said in the House, especially when it comes from the Official Opposition as represented by the leader. That sensitivity is due to the fact that we, the government side, continue to correct the record and present the facts to Yukoners. When the government demonstrates clearly throughout any fiscal year the emphasis we place on areas like health and social services, those in need and so on, we must correct the record when the members opposite are alluding to the fact that we are ignoring a very important part of our obligation and responsibility to the Yukon public.

So we start with this debate on the supplementary so the members can get a good look at where the investments are and how much they are for departments like Health and Social Services, and then give due consideration to such things and comparisons to such things as where we were at in closing out 2006-07, where the mains are taking us -- because the members opposite alluded to a lack of direction in this budget -- and

where we are taking this budget and the territory through the investments within the 2007-08 budget.

Let's look at an example. The members say that we are neglecting our responsibilities in areas of health care and social services. Let's talk about the capital.

The capital alone is showing a 53-percent increase in investment in Health and Social Services. We have demonstrated throughout the course of last fiscal year, and in the supplementary closing out 2006-07, and in the main budget when it comes to program and service delivery through O&M, a steady increase of investment in program and service delivery. That investment is for people in need. That is exactly why the increases are taking place to the point where our 2007-08 budget for Health and Social Services, on the O&M side where all programs and services are being delivered to those in need in the territory, is a total of 56 percent of total O&M expenditure. So over half of the investment of O&M in the 2007-08 budget, compared to where we have taken that investment in prior fiscal years, shows the steady incline, the consistent increase in investment in program and service delivery, for those in need here in Yukon.

That is why we on the government side stand up and correct the record. We have to debate factually what is actually transpiring in the Yukon. These investments include family and children's services; they include social services; they include continuing care; they include health services and regional services. These are the areas that capture, to the greatest degree, Yukoners in need, whether it be families, children, those in the social safety net, those who are sick and require the health care system to take care of them -- whether it be here in Whitehorse or regionally. Those investments have steadily and consistently increased. So it is wrong for anyone to consider, or say, or try to make the case, or create the perception, that the government has been remiss in attention and emphasis and priority placed on those who most need our attention.

Let's look at some of the other things that we are doing here, and the members opposite bring this up from time to time. Let's take alcohol and drug services and where we have gone overall in this area.

Between 2006 and 2007, there is an increase in that overall area of program delivery for Yukoners. We have detox admissions. We have outpatient and youth client services. We have outpatient and youth average base caseload, which shows that we are doing quite well there because the caseload has decreased. That's a substantial point to be made. We have inpatient treatment with a number of clients served and a number of hours tabulated. If you take in-patient services for alcohol and drugs, drug services, total clients served, 135 -- total hours, as calculated, 981 hours. In outreach and prevention -- and this is meeting our commitments under the substance abuse action plan where again the members opposite know full well significant investments are taking place. But yet they continue to try to make the case in the face of all the evidence that that is not so. Outreach prevention, community meetings, prevention and training events -- all these things are happening in the alcohol and drug services areas. So it's another example of us, the gov-

ernment side, having to correct the members opposite on their view.

We're trying to debate the budget by going back to the starting point or the close-out point, which is the 2006-07 supplementary, so we get to the starting numbers for 2007-08. The members can then see for themselves that there are increases again, continuing increases if they compare the last fiscal year to this fiscal year, mains to mains, and do a critique of the supplementary budgets that have been brought forward herein the House. They will see what it is that we are accomplishing here in the territory in strengthening our overall social systems, health and otherwise.

Of course, we're doing more, and that is in the main budget here for 2007-08. But the debate for questions like MoCS -- we have a minister responsible for that particular area. When we talk about lapsed funds for that particular area, there is good reason for that. Mr. Chair, the biggest lapse, however -- and the member conveniently ignored that -- is the housing trust through the Executive Council Office.

The member also makes a point, and I am going to apologize to all the officials in the Property Management Agency in Highways and Public Works and contracting services on behalf of this House for those kinds of comments. The member is pointing a finger at hard-working Yukoners who are up against major challenges in the supply of materials, access to trades and skilled labour and we, through all those challenges that we face, are still delivering the goods.

Look at what has been accomplished with community centres at Marsh Lake, in Mayo, and in Ross River. Look at the amount of highway construction, reconstruction and maintenance that is undertaken and the way these hard-working individuals oversee these things. Look at the other initiatives that require their dedication and attention, including the investment required for the Canada Winter Games. On this point, the members opposite continue to say that the investment in the college was a massive cost overrun with the athletes village. What they conveniently ignore and do not put on the public record is that all they had to work with was a bid committee's allocation for an athletes village of some \$2.8 million. What exactly was that going to deliver?

What happened is that the government, thanks to the hard-working officials in departments like Highways and Public Works and Community Services -- stepped in to assist the host society and the games committee and the City of Whitehorse to deliver what turned out to be the best games ever.

The member opposite gets on his feet in this House and berates those individuals, because there are a couple of lapsed projects that he sees in the budget. He tries to make the case that it is poor management. It has nothing to do with fiscal management. That is what the member fails to recognize. The money was booked and in the budget. The fact that some projects are being continued on in post years has more to do with the challenges I spoke about moments ago.

How can the member stand on his feet, in all good conscience, and berate those individuals who are working with what they are given?

So, Mr. Chair, I think that speaks volumes about what the Leader of the Official Opposition thinks of the public service, the professionals within the public service. That's not a good sign from one who aspires to one day -- and hopefully not -- lead this territory.

That's not what the government side does. We work very constructively with our public servants and we believe that they do everything they possibly can to deliver the goods. If I got into the long list of delivery, it would be quite a damning indictment of the Leader of the Official Opposition's view of those public servants and the effort they put forward and the product that they deliver.

The same holds true, by the way, for what the members, the Official Opposition, are trying to do once again with the Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board. When I sit here and listen to this stuff, it really, really boggles the mind why the Official Opposition would come forward with something like this.

First off, they conveniently ignore that any increase in remuneration was not specific to one person on the board; it was the board in its entirety. As stated yesterday, it's clear by the support from labour and the employers of these people on the board that the remuneration is consistent with the product.

But I notice the members don't have a problem with the fact that a campaign manager for the Liberals received a goodly sum to be on a panel for the Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board; that wasn't a problem when it came to that remuneration. I notice that the members opposite, the Official Opposition, have no problem with tremendous remuneration for a candidate in the last election and the efforts and the work that the candidate, this individual, put forward in educational reform. There was a large remuneration there, but there was no problem with the Official Opposition on that one. So these are important things that demonstrate that there's a bit of a problem with the Official Opposition in its approach and I would encourage the Leader of the Official Opposition to recognize that. We're not here to criticize public servants or members of the public. We're here to debate what is, once again, the largest budget in the history of the Yukon -- another record budget. It is investing, Mr. Chair, in the quality of life, whether it be health care, education, infrastructure, community needs and so on. It is investing and protecting our environment.

Contrary to what the Official Opposition is saying, the Yukon is well advanced on climate change. Unfortunately the members opposite have been caught up in the media hype and uproar, and I think they suddenly recognize which way the parade is going and they are rushing to try to get in front of the parade. Unfortunately they are still way behind, struggling along in the dust of the Yukon Party government, which has seized the initiative and has definitely gone forward with a strategy to deal with climate change here in the Yukon.

These are all issues that the government side witnesses on a daily basis, and these are not a good indication of a reasonable alternative to leading and governing this territory. The third party, however, has been constructive in most instances. We place great value in what they have brought forward with

smoking-ban legislation, and we'll work very closely with members of this House and the third party in that regard.

Of course the third party has its own view of how things should be managed fiscally, and we respect that because they don't waiver, unlike the Official Opposition who are in a bit of a ping-pong mode. The third party is very consistent in their position and what they bring forward. They are clear and succinct in all matters of where they would spend and invest the taxpayers' money. We accept that and understand that. We may not agree with it, but it is a lot easier to have a constructive debate when you are talking about things that both sides in the debate obviously have an understanding of and have no reason to correct the record constantly.

I'm not sure what else I could offer the member opposite, other than the fact that the member is going to get all of this detail in departmental line debate. That is where it is at. General debate is for questions of a general nature. Specifics regarding lapses and the amounts and projects that the lapses may be related to are not in the order of a general discussion. It is a specific discussion that is by tradition and procedure here in the House much better left to a departmental line-by-line debate.

That's another area that the member might want to sharpen up on and recognize that it is in the public interest to proceed in that manner so that we can expedite debate and be much more constructive.

So with that, Mr. Chair, I'm sure the member will agree with what has been presented by the government side on this matter. Yesterday, we thought we saw that the member opposite and his colleagues especially in the Official Opposition were recognizing the error of their ways. I've never witnessed citizens so irate at members of this House as I have seen in the attitude and the view of many people out there who have been subjected to the members' criticism in their attempts to criticize the government. So I think the member now recognizes that that's folly and would want to raise the bar and engage in a good debate on the budget.

Mr. Mitchell: Well, first of all, how sad that demonstration was -- really sad. The Premier has a big grin on his face, and he can chuckle with his colleagues -- oh, that's fun; oh, isn't that cute? He doesn't follow his own advice, Mr. Chair. He doesn't follow his own advice. The Premier had suggested that it would make sense to save most of the debate for the main estimates. We agreed. I stood on my feet -- I'm sure it was for less than five minutes -- and suggested that in the spirit of cooperation I would ask three or four questions about some of the larger amounts, and if he would answer them we could probably avoid the line-by-line scrutiny, get the housekeeping of the final supplementary out of the way and move on to the main estimates. No sooner did we offer that olive branch to the government when he closed the day with a 20-minute rant -- those are his words, a rant for 20 minutes -- and then he apologized. He apologized to this House for behaving so poorly. He apologized for going on a rant, and we can judge how sincere that apology was as we listen to another 15 minutes of the same tone. It's a game. It's a game of saying, "Oh, bad Official Opposition; oh, if only you would behave like the third party, then everything would be good and we would be very comfortable

over on our side directing how everybody should behave and how everybody should act." And that's all very cute. But it really doesn't accomplish anything. The Premier didn't answer a single question in his last period of remarks. He did waiver into talking about the main estimates after saying that we were here to discuss the supplementary budget, and then he went on to talk about things in the main estimates. He once again misinformed this Assembly about what the Official Opposition was saying and what a great job they were doing.

Then he says that if only we do our homework better -- and by the way, he has indicated that we shouldn't be criticizing the officials. I believe that we were criticizing the policy leaders and the government, which is supposedly leading the policy and decision-making, not the officials who work hard. It wasn't this side of the House that brought in a computer use investigation that turned into a witch hunt and that had people off on stress leave and worried about the future of anything they might have said and done -- some Orwellian approach to being the arbiter of all things that people might have ever referred to or e-mail jokes people might have received. All this was in order to find the few people who might have actually misused the government computer system. It was very few, at the end of the day, after all the searching and accusations -- very few.

We ask for answers to three or four questions. We asked about MoCS because the minister raised MoCS as one of the things that was lapsing -- \$4.7 million. So the minister tells us that this has lapsed. We ask him to explain why it didn't happen and if there is a change in direction. We asked a policy question -- whether or not there is a change in how it is going to be done and if there is a need to revisit it. The minister then says we are picking on the officials, because the minister likes to refer everything to someone else. He doesn't ever want to bear any responsibility himself. So he didn't answer any questions. He won't answer any questions. He refuses to answer questions.

Frankly, considering the complete lack of constructive debate that this minister has engaged in for the last 48 hours, I don't know why he didn't go to the environment conference, since he says that the Yukon is a leader and he has been a leader. No, he has not been able to take the time to go because he is in the House not answering questions. It is unfortunate that he is taking his cues from his colleague, the Minister of Economic Development and minister responsible for the Yukon Housing Corporation, who can stand on his feet for 20 minutes and speak eloquently sometimes and confusingly other times, but generally about nothing. I expect that any day now the Premier will start doing a little literary research and soon we'll be hearing Lewis Carroll quotes from the Premier, as well, so that we can continue to waste time in this Legislative Assembly.

The minister talks about questions that were raised regarding remuneration for boards. I believe what the Member for Porter Creek South was pointing out was that only one board had this significant increase. It did go through by order-in-council so it was approved by Cabinet.

We might point out that when the minister said that this was outrageous, that nobody should talk about these things,

what does he do? Does he follow his own advice? No. No, not this member, because it's the old schoolyard tactic -- I don't think I can use the word for what it resembles. It's a schoolyard tactic that happens on playgrounds. It happens in those types of situations. He raised other individuals and said that they were highly paid. I might point out that, while he's busying referencing two individuals and indicating that one had been a candidate for office in the last election and another had worked on a campaign, both of those people had been appointed by government to the positions they held -- one in the *Worker's Compensation Act* review and the other in the long, foundering education reform project -- before they had any decisions made to either assist in a campaign or be a candidate in a campaign -- so, cart before the horse.

The other individual that the minister is kibitzing about had taken part in several campaigns as a campaign chair and had not been without association over a long period of time. Again, this gets down to personal mudslinging, and the Premier likes to, on the one hand, stand up and say, "That's abhorrent", and on the other hand, he goes two for one. If he feels that one inappropriate thing was done in the House, he'll come back with two. That's an interesting approach to elevating the debate, which is, I believe, what he suggested he wanted to do.

So, again, he apologized yesterday after a 20-minute rant in which he didn't answer any questions whatsoever, and we can see how sincere the apology was. We know that the entire rant was planned and part of his strategy.

Chair's statement

Chair: Order. In the past, the Chair has ruled out of order claims by one member that another member's speech was a rant. It doesn't matter if the members describe their own speeches in that way. Members may not make such comments about other members.

Also, members are raising issues that are beyond the scope of this bill. Debate will proceed much better if members confine their remarks to the subject matter of Bill No. 4.

Mr. Mitchell: I will simply refer to the apology that the minister used for the manner in which he was speaking yesterday, and his words can speak for themselves. I won't make reference to the description that he gave of his own remarks, because he did it himself and that was more than sufficient.

Regarding the discussion on this for general debate, I am respectfully only trying to respond to the points raised by the member, but I will be careful in keeping those germane to general debate.

As I have said, we did ask questions about MoCS because that is in this particular supplementary. We would like an answer. We asked questions about lapses that we believed had occurred that had to do with a drinking-water well in Old Crow. We asked questions about one-time payment for Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board, and we again pointed out the inability of this government to carry forward with the multi-level care facility in Watson Lake. Those are all evidenced in this particular budget.

The reason that we have brought up particular items in the budget was because we had prefaced it by saying that if we

could ask three or four questions in general debate, we could perhaps avoid going line by line. The member didn't answer those questions. I don't know if he will choose to not answer them again, but we will leave those on the record. For the record, we will say that in general debate on this particular supplementary, it once again doesn't show additional monies toward addressing the situation of childcare in Yukon, which we know the government is studying assiduously. Instead of referring to what was done in the past and several years previous and what increases had occurred -- since the parents who have children in childcare and since the childcare providers have all said they need more assistance -- we hope the government will see fit at some point to address that in some budget.

There was another response that we heard yesterday, and we might hear it again here today. It had to do with helping those most in need; namely, the adjustment in rates for social assistance for those people who also suffer from disabilities, and that is a positive thing; however, it doesn't mean that those people who do not have identified disabilities, but are on social assistance, find it any easier to eat for \$37 a week.

I wonder if either the Premier or the Health and Social Services minister has the numbers available and can provide us with the numbers of how many people on social assistance actually qualify for that additional rate out of the 500-and-some-odd people who were on social assistance last year.

I know the Premier said yesterday that there were 576 people in 2005-06 and 534 in 2006-07 and a projected caseload of 518 people in 2007-08. So there has been a 10-percent drop, or projected drop, in people on social assistance. We're happy about that. But it doesn't mean that the other 500-and-some-odd people find it any easier to eat on \$37 a week or to find shelter for \$390 a month or, for that matter, to feed a family of five for, I think, \$185 a week. Perhaps the minister might want to answer some of those questions while he is on his feet talking about how much has been done on the social side of the ledger, because these are things that still haven't been addressed. These are things that apparently need to be studied further. But every week that goes by is another week when someone has to go shopping with very limited means.

Finally, it has been said that no one goes without because there is emergency assistance that is always available if people make their case to the department. I would suggest that some of the people on social assistance may well be those who are least able to make their case in terms of submitting the information in the format in which the government might want to see it. It's a demeaning thing to say to people, "You've qualified for social assistance, we agree that you need to be on social assistance, and now we're going to ask you to prove the point that you can't feed yourself on \$37 a week or house yourself on \$390 a month, and if you can do that, then we'll give you additional resources." So perhaps the minister can answer the few specific questions, and we can clear this and move on to the main estimates.

Hon. Mr. Fentie: Mr. Chair, let me point something out. Not one of the questions asked of this minister is within the purview of this minister. I would point out to the member opposite that a short time ago in my introductory remarks I

provided the minister with the assurance that ministers for the departments that have been named in the supplementary budget are ready and prepared to respond to the members opposite's questions. But I guess that got missed, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Chair, I did apologize to the House. I didn't need legislation to do so or to know when to apologize.

The member opposite has just said that nothing has been done on the childcare issue. Well, it is this government that increased the investment in the direct operating grant by \$90,000 annually for childcare. We are working on doing much more.

There is another important point here. When it is convenient for the Official Opposition to criticize the government for investing money without planning, it is bad because --

Some Hon. Member: Point of order.

Point of order

Chair: Order. Mr. Mitchell, on a point of order.

Mr. Mitchell: Mr. Chair, I believe that you have advised all members to keep their debate germane to the bill at hand. I believe that this is Bill No. 4, the supplementary estimates. We have made reference to a lack of additional funding in this particular supplementary estimate for this issue. The Premier is now referring to what was done in past budgets. Again, you have asked us to keep our comments germane to the specific budget. We are trying to do so.

Hon. Mr. Fentie: On the point of order, Mr. Chair, I was just trying to assist the Leader of the Official Opposition within the context of financial management. The supplementary does reflect the investment in childcare. It clearly reflects what has transpired throughout the year to get to the supplementary estimates that have been tabled.

Chair's ruling

Chair: On the point of order, there is no point of order.

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

We can't have it both ways in this Assembly. When it's convenient to criticize the government for investing money by trying to make the case that there has been no planning, we get into that debate. When it's convenient to criticize the government for not investing money when they are doing planning, we get into that debate.

The government side, when it comes to trying to debate with the Official Opposition, is never quite sure what it is we are supposed to be responding to or what we are supposed to respond with. Simply put, in general terms, as we are in general debate, the member has asked questions on every department that does not fall within my purview. The member has been assured that ministers are ready to respond, so I would leave it up to the member as to how the Official Opposition wants to continue.

But the member once again -- and I have to correct the record -- has erroneously put on the public record that the government has failed to move forward with a multi-level care facility in the community of Watson Lake. Well, if we debated the supplementary in department-by-department debate, the member would quickly change his mind, considering the in-

vestment to date, the fact that 75 percent of the steel is up, a major portion of the concrete has been poured, there are consulting engineers working on mechanical and electrical, there has been a lot of site preparation done, there has been an off-site building for the heating system for the future -- there has been a lot of work done. So to suggest to the House and to the public that we fail to move forward -- I have to vehemently disagree with the Leader of the Official Opposition because the Official Opposition has simply made what I would call a drastic mistake in understanding what's in the budget and the work in progress that that creates.

So, Mr. Chair, the ministers are ready if the member wants to move into these kinds of questions on the supplementary budget, if they are questions directed at specific departments about specific items. They are not questions general in nature that would define general debate.

Mr. Cardiff: Well, in light of the Chair's statement at the beginning of this debate, it's my understanding that if we wanted to talk about revenues and lapses, we were to do it in general debate. I would like to raise a question about some revenue and some lapses, as well, and what the plans are for money that was actually -- you can't find it in either budget document. I hope the Chair will allow me to do that and that the Premier will provide an answer.

The question regards the northern housing trust. We understand from the discussion just yesterday, as well as from the discussion that we had last fall, that the government is required to book the \$50 million for the northern housing trust in the 2006-07 fiscal year, because that was the year in which it was received.

The government had indicated that it was going to distribute some \$32.5 million, which they weren't able to do since last fall, and hence there is almost a \$26-million lapse. There is a revote indicated in the main budget that we are going to debate -- hopefully later this afternoon.

Can the Premier explain why the almost \$26 million in the northern housing trust was lapsed? Can he also indicate where we might find some indication of where the other \$17.5 million is going to appear? It doesn't seem to appear in the budget we hope to debate later this afternoon, but we would like to know what the government's plans are.

There was some discussion about this yesterday. The Member for Whitehorse Centre asked the Premier about that, and the Premier said that the remaining \$17.5 million will be invested in addressing the needs here in the territory in a much broader spectrum where those who require affordable housing will have the benefits of this investment. It could be seniors and it could be others in our society.

I would like the Premier to explain the reasons why the \$25.7 million is being lapsed and to give some indication -- other than to expand upon what he said yesterday about the \$17.5 million being invested in the future needs of the territory -- of the government's intentions for that money. Is the Executive Council Office going to distribute that to communities? Is it going to give it to the Yukon Housing Corporation? Is it going to go to non-governmental organizations that provide housing, or are there other plans for that? There is much need out

there and we think the public would like to know that. We certainly would like to know that.

Hon. Mr. Fentie: Mr. Chair, the anomaly here on the portion for First Nations -- the \$32,500,000 -- is generated based on the fact that we booked the total \$50 million in the 2006-07 fiscal year. During that time, we were in a process with First Nations on a joint investment plan. When we concluded that initiative, a split of \$32.5 million and \$17.5 million was agreed to. We expensed \$6.7 million in 2006-07. The First Nations simply did not have the capacity near the end of a fiscal year to expense the remaining balance of the \$32.5 million; therefore, the balance of the \$32.5 million, less \$6.7 million that was expensed in 2006-07 has been revoted into 2007-08. That makes up that portion.

The \$17.5 million in total that is to be allocated to public affordable housing is booked in a prior year, but has not been expensed that year or, as yet, this year. We will have to follow what are very general conditions from the federal government on where this is invested. It is, for example, in such areas as single dwelling or multiple dwellings and so on. It can also, I believe, be invested in existing renovations and so on. We have to make sure that we follow, to the letter, those conditions of the trust itself, because we have obligations to respond to the federal government on the investment.

As we go forward, we will be deciding where the investment will be expensed. At that time, there will be a corresponding booking in the fiscal framework. Probably this year it will show up in the variances and come forward in supplementary estimates in the fall.

Mr. Cardiff: I thank the Premier and Minister of Finance for that answer.

I have a couple of other questions that are still on this topic. The minister mentioned conditions that are attached to the money. I am wondering if there is an agreement for this money -- the northern housing trust -- and if it is available. How is the intended use of the \$50 million spelled out?

Could he make available that and the conditions to be met for the \$17.5 million that's left? I know that it was the matter of much discussion and there were some who felt that the entire \$50 million should have been allocated to First Nation housing. I would ask the Premier to provide the evidence that says contrary to that fact -- that is basically what I'm asking for -- and whatever correspondence or agreements are in place with the federal government when the Yukon government received this money, what they had in order to receive this money -- what they may have signed and the conditions that applied to that northern housing trust.

The \$17.5 million that's going to be, at some point in the future, expensed -- how are the decisions around the spending of that money going to be arrived at? Is there going to be some consultation with housing providers? I asked if it is going to go to the Yukon Housing Corporation? Is some of it going to go to a non-profit organization, or is it going to be something similar to the affordable housing program where people can apply for affordable housing projects or social housing projects?

I think that the Member for Whitehorse Centre made it pretty clear that if you look around the downtown core of

Whitehorse, what we're seeing is -- you could call it a housing boom, but it's a housing boom for the affluent, basically. At the same time, it's displacing what used to be affordable housing, albeit substandard in some cases, but some of that housing that was available and less expensive is disappearing. Something needs to be done to address that.

Now we're just talking about in the City of Whitehorse; we're not talking about communities like Carcross, Watson Lake, Teslin, Ross River, Carmacks, Mayo, Dawson City, Haines Junction -- where there are housing needs as well. \$17.5 million seems like a lot of money, and it would seem like a lot of money to the people who are in dire need of adequate housing and affordable housing. But unless we ensure that we spend it right, then the need is not going to be met. We need to ensure that. That's why we're here -- to ensure that those needs are met. I know those are a couple of questions that I'm asking here, but what kind of a process does the Minister of Finance envision for that \$17.5 million?

Hon. Mr. Fentie: I think it's important, though, that we start at this point. The member has asked if there is an agreement or where these conditions are and so on. Everything is dictated by a federal bill. It's Bill C-48, which passed Parliament last fiscal year. That is the agreement. That is the instrument that dictates the flow of the funds.

The member made a point about who should receive the investment for the northern housing trust. The issue about whether it all should be allocated to First Nations was raised irresponsibly by our MP, who didn't even understand the content of his own government's bill. We are not going to fixate on that. The bill is pretty clear. It's a matter of public record. It can be pulled off the Web and looked at. It outlines not just this, but the national housing trust, which is quite broad. I think the total for the north was \$300 million -- \$200 million went to Nunavut, \$50 million for N.W.T. and \$50 million for the Yukon.

There is, I think, sound rationale for that decision by the federal government regarding Bill C-48. It is clear that the housing needs in Nunavut far out-distance other jurisdictions such as the Yukon. That is not to say, however, that we don't have our own challenges here. That is how we went about the process with First Nations. We first went to the Yukon Forum to suggest that we jointly develop an investment plan. We went through the work of doing that and came to this arrangement. A lot of how that evolved was based on an assessment of requirement or need. That was what generated the calculation that resulted in the investment distribution of \$32.5 million to First Nations and \$17.5 million to public government.

Now, I think we have to recognize that the First Nation portion of this investment will, to a great degree, find its way to rural Yukon in rural communities because, in many cases in rural communities, that is the highest demonstrated need -- First Nation housing requirements.

There are also housing needs in rural Yukon that we will be addressing and we have Yukon Housing Corporation already with an inventory throughout Yukon communities, community by community. We have to look at that -- the possibility of what we can do there. We are also very conscious of the fact

that the public government's portion will also address housing needs of First Nations that may fall out of the investment in First Nation communities. For example, there are a number of First Nation people who don't live in their home communities or in their traditional territory. They have moved into Whitehorse, or other examples are evident. It is those individuals who will also be beneficiaries of the public government's portion of this affordable housing or northern housing trust.

For now, I think the best way I can summarize what it is we want to accomplish out of our portion of the \$17.5 million is this: to maximize the number of units. In going ahead with that objective in mind, we will address, to the greatest degree possible, the issue of affordable housing needs here in Yukon, community by community.

Mr. Cardiff: I thank the Minister of Finance for that answer.

I have more questions for the minister. The more answers he has, the more questions I have, actually.

There was an investment plan jointly arrived at the Yukon Forum. I actually requested this at the briefing that we had. It was related to the distribution of the money. Which First Nation and which community received what amount of money? I haven't received that information yet. I look forward to receiving it. Can the minister ensure that we get it? I don't know if that information is contained in the investment plan, but I would be interested, as I am sure others would, in seeing what is in it for the \$32.5 million. If it's a public document and if it is available, I would look forward to receiving it.

The other comment that the Premier made was about maximizing the number of units that are available. I don't disagree with that. We were talking earlier today about NGO funding. Is it quantity or timing? In this case, I agree that it is good to maximize the number of units, but it's also important to maximize the benefits to communities and the citizens in those communities. I realize that the \$32.5 million is out there somewhere and is going to be split up among those communities. They will build to suit their housing needs as they see fit, which is their right. I wish them well with it. I am hoping that there are some good housing projects out there.

At the same time, there are some good opportunities, given the amount of construction -- and coming from the construction industry myself -- \$50 million worth of construction is a lot of construction and it employs a lot of people. Also, however, speaking as a tradesperson, we have to recognize that there is a shortage of skilled tradespeople according to the Premier and many other people, and we all recognize that.

But what kind of training opportunities can be built into those projects, and is the government prepared to work with the First Nations in those communities, around those housing projects, to ensure that there's adequate training in those communities? That's another legacy. It's not just the ability of those communities to provide housing but it's the ability of those communities to provide training, and the legacy can be not only the housing, but the skilled trained people who can stay in that community and continue to build housing and other infrastructure, and do the maintenance and upkeep on all that infrastructure in those buildings and housing.

I don't know if the Premier -- as opposed to just maximizing the number of units, we should also be maximizing the training opportunities for Yukoners, for skilled tradespeople, to meet the need, not just now, but for the future.

Hon. Mr. Fentie: First off, the member asked in the budget briefing a question about the breakdown of the \$32.5 million that is being earmarked or allocated to First Nations. That is not something the government is part of -- the distribution and the split of the \$32.5 million is being handled by First Nations themselves as governments. All 14 First Nations are collectively on that and I believe they have an investment plan that splits out the \$32.5 million, but that is the work and the decision of First Nations.

The last portion of the member's presentation is important because originally the government approached First Nations with this fund to do exactly what the member is pointing out. It included training, it included manufacturing here, it included putting together an overall plan that would really maximize the number of units here in Yukon on the ground, community by community. First Nations chose another route by having the formula that directly allocated the funds to the First Nations.

I can attribute some of that, I think, to the irresponsible comments made by our MP, who raised the spectre of whose money it apparently was. Of course, the MP was entirely incorrect -- very irresponsible -- and may have contributed to reducing our time spent in going over the possibility of creating a \$50-million investment in housing manufacturing, training and the contribution for each and every community.

The government takes no issue, however, with First Nations wanting to accept a portion of this housing trust directly, and we leave the responsibility of the number of units that will be realized out of the investment and each First Nation can undertake that on their own. We take no issue with that, but I make the point that we actually had, early on, discussions about the very concept that the member opposite has just tabled here. The choice was to not go in that direction.

However, we still have available programming in communities and through the college campuses for training here in Whitehorse and out in the communities. We are still going to be challenged with trades. There is absolutely no doubt about that. But through training, we may be able to increase our ability to get the actual construction going here in the territory.

Materials are going to be a challenge. This is a sizable amount of material when you consider the \$50 million for housing. If you translate that into a per-square-footage fee or value, you can see that it could very well be a high number of units constructed. The challenge for materials is certainly there.

There were discussions, I think, awhile ago, about OSB chipboard versus plywood. Well, there is one of those challenges in getting materials. It's very hard to get plywood these days. It's a lot easier to get oriented strand board. But one of the main reasons why it's hard to get plywood is that the regions of the country where the plywood industry got established contained regions of large timber. Well, Canada is having a more difficult time finding large timber, or what's known in the industry as peelers.

Therefore, the industry itself shifted -- I think this is a positive, this is not a negative -- toward a better use of value-added in the timber industry by going into oriented strand board because it is more efficient in utilizing the total cut that comes out of a cut block versus a peeler concept where there is a set size of diameter at the end and at the butt. I think if the member looks at trees, the stem usually tapers at some point, so there is a big chunk that can't make peeler, but if you re-profile that for oriented strand board, it all gets utilized.

I bring that out because there will be challenges for materials, too, considering what is going on in the country, and indeed on the continent, with such difficulties as Katrina and the construction demands down there -- the demand for material down there. We are not isolated from that pressure. That is all part and parcel of the manufacturing and distribution networks on the continent. We recognize that, but there are a number of things that we can do and we certainly as a government make those offerings to First Nations on training and in other areas out in the communities that could be helpful.

Chair: Is there any further general debate?

Seeing none, we will proceed, line by line, with Bill No. 4.

Hon. Mr. Fentie: Mr. Chair, what we would like to do here, with the concurrence of the House, is if we have cleared general debate for *Supplementary Estimates No. 2*, Bill No. 4, we are prepared to go back into general debate on the mains. We can bring back department-by-department and line-by-line debate on the supplementary at a later date.

If the members opposite wish to go department by department, line by line, the government side would certainly not oppose it, but I think for expediency here in the House, it would be much preferred to help officials get ready to go back into general debate on the main budget for 2007-08.

Mr. Cardiff: Mr. Chair, I request unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all clauses, schedules and title of Bill No. 4, *Third Appropriation Act, 2006-07*, read and agreed to.

Unanimous consent re deeming all clauses, schedules and title of Bill No. 4 read and agreed to

Chair: Mr. Cardiff has requested unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all clauses, schedules and title of Bill No. 4, *Third Appropriation Act, 2006-07*, read and agreed to. Are you agreed?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Chair: Unanimous consent has been granted.

Clauses 1, 2 and 3 and Schedules A, B and C deemed to have been read and agreed to

On Title

Title agreed to

Hon. Mr. Cathers: Mr. Chair, I move that Bill No. 4, entitled *Third Appropriation Act, 2006-07*, be reported without amendment.

Chair: It has been moved by Mr. Cathers that Bill No. 4, entitled *Third Appropriation Act, 2006-07*, be reported without amendment.

Motion agreed to

Chair: Would members like to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Chair: Committee will recess for 15 minutes.

Recess

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

Bill No. 6 -- First Appropriation Act, 2007-08

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

Hon. Mr. Fentie: Mr. Chair, we've already had quite a bit of discussion in general debate on the mains. I want to extend the government's encouraged feelings here because of the way the members opposite handled the supplementary debate here this afternoon. That's a good sign.

But in general debate, a tremendous amount has been discussed already. So I would submit that the logical thing to do, considering the size of this budget and the extent of investment in departments like Health and Social Services, Highways and Public Works, Education, and so on -- this would be a good time for us to start to drill down into the major detail, department by department and line by line, because this is some \$862 million of investment. Much of it is targeting the social side of the ledger, whether it be education, health care, Women's Directorate, justice and other services in that regard. But it also invests in continuing the stimulus in the territory through the investment that the government can make throughout the Yukon. A lot of it is certainly geared to community well-being and building Yukon's future, especially when you look at some of the infrastructure.

So with that, I'll close my comments and turn it over to the members opposite.

Mr. Cardiff: I have a couple of questions. As we found out earlier today, the more questions the Minister of Finance answers, the more questions we have sometimes.

I have heard the Premier on the radio speaking about this a little bit, but I'm interested in the new arrangement that the Yukon government has with Canada with regard to formula financing, if he could maybe explain it a little bit. I believe one of the phrases he used was "principle-based arrangement."

Could he please explain that for the members of the House and the public who are listening in and would like to hear the answer to that question? The question basically is: what is the new arrangement with Canada with regard to formula financing? The other question tied into that is: has that eliminated the perversity factor that was in previous arrangements?

Hon. Mr. Fentie: This is a very good question because there has been a significant improvement in our fiscal relationship with Canada. Let me begin by where we were under the former federal Liberal government. They cancelled, discontinued, the original principle-based territorial funding formula and set a floor for all the north to essentially a one-budget envelope across the north -- a floor with a 3.5-percent escalator. We split the floor and all we got in continuing years was a 3.5-percent

escalator. None of this was relevant to what the rest of the country does.

Now I will go to the "principle" part of this. The new territorial funding formula, by principle, recognizes that, as for provinces, we as a jurisdiction have a level of earning. It also recognizes that there is a standard, comparable delivery of services across the country that reflects what all Canadians expect and receive. In getting from our capacity of earning to that level of delivery of standard and comparable services, there is a gap. In the provinces that gap is filled with what is called "equalization" where, by formula, the nation's wealth is distributed among the provinces to take them from that level of own-source revenue or capacity to earn, and it fills the gap between there and that standard level of comparable services. That is what this territorial funding formula does for us. It recognizes our level and capacity of revenue and it recognizes that there is a gap to get to those services. It is a gap-filling fiscal arrangement.

The other part of the principle is, when we earn more, will we reduce our dependence on Canada? When our own source revenues grow, we will be reducing our transfer from Canada. Those are the two areas of principle that are most important. The perversity factor was a formula under the old territorial funding formula or fiscal arrangement. I think I've alluded to the fact that, as the perversity factor did, there was reduction in transfer when certain things occurred. Our funding formula also has an EDI built into it now, which is something we fought hard for. An EDI is an economic development indicator. That allows us some flexibility and room on our own source revenues versus the clawbacks. As it has been established, we are retaining 30 percent that's not calculated in the overall fiscal capacity of Yukon in relation to that gap between capacity to earn and standard delivery of comparable services.

There are other matters present. How do we measure our revenue? It's measured on a representative tax system. There are seven main revenue sources on that measurement. Then there's a revenue block that is lumped in and calculated. This is a federal government issue, but it's a revenue block of other sources of revenue, like licences, lottery tickets and these types of things. These are all calculated with our fiscal arrangement and it considers, in this area of comparable services, what's happening in other jurisdictions. That has a tendency to be able to ensure that Yukon can deliver comparable services to its citizens as southern Canadians are receiving. It provides us more certainty with our fiscal framework, because we have a much better ability now to calculate and project where we are going. So when we recalculate, it's based on a three-year average with what's known as a two-year lag.

Let me just sum up. It creates an expenditure base, as I outlined. We then subtract the representative tax revenues under the seven tax measures. We then subtract the revenue block I spoke about. This is also integrated into this, so that all our revenues are now part of it. It provides the economic development indicator of which we retain 30 percent. That results in what our Yukon grant will be. It is much more complex and detailed than it sounds standing here talking about it. There is a tremendous amount of financial accounting and work that is

done on an ongoing basis to be able to get to these calculations. We will, through the good work of the Department of Finance, be very vigilant in those calculations, because population numbers can affect us. There are a number of things that can trigger upward or downward pressures in that fiscal framework.

Overall, simplified, it creates an expenditure base. It subtracts revenues, and that equals the Yukon grant.

Mr. Cardiff: I thank the Minister of Finance for that explanation. I note that he had what looked like a nice, coloured, glossy handout with flow charts and all kinds of other things on it. If he could make that available to this side of the House, it might clear things up for us and the Official Opposition, and maybe we could make better progress. I think he has another one there too. If the Minister of Finance could make that available to us sometime in the future, that would be most helpful in our understanding and that of the Official Opposition as to the formula financing and budgeting process.

I have a question about certain things. The move to full accrual accounting is something we have talked about. We have talked about having to book revenues when they are received to ensure that all our liabilities are covered.

When you book those liabilities, it is my understanding that the government has to retain that money so it can meet its obligations. That affects the financial position of the government. So there is a liability that is booked -- I believe it's in the Public Service Commission -- on severance payout. That would be things like severance and benefits payouts and that type of thing. That money is booked as a liability and I am assuming that the money is there to cover that liability should we have to meet that obligation.

What I am wondering is: what kind of interest is being accrued? That would be a pretty substantial liability. We are talking about if you are covering off the liability for severance payouts for the entire government, which is what the Auditor General has asked the government to do -- it is my understanding. That money must be sitting somewhere accruing interest. What I would like to know is: how much interest is being accrued on that particular pot of money and how does that affect the government's overall financial position?

Hon. Mr. Fentie: First off, there is not a specific in liabilities as the example the member used, so I want to touch on what constitutes liabilities for the government. Liabilities include accounts payable, long-term debt, deferred revenues and post-employment benefits. Simply put, that is what defines liabilities, but there is also a major calculation that we go through to get to where our net financial resources position is.

Now, to the member's specific issues, we have to understand when it comes to that type of employee benefit, it is invested. So, in the calculation of interest on every three-year period, an actuary is involved to look at the earnings of the fund, if I may put it that way. The government doesn't get to benefit from the interest. This is for the employees. The government pays a portion into that fund and the employees pay a portion into that fund.

But everything from there is based on the fund itself and the return to the fund. I think we have to understand here that this is not a benefit for the government, where we start accruing

interest earnings. It's the fund that accrues the earnings, hopefully, because there are examples, I guess, out there -- Enron -- where funds don't really earn a whole lot, and they just disappeared. But here, our funds are set up to earn, recalculated every three years by an actuary, not government. So there are outside, objective bodies that take care of this. It's a very serious business. Over time, the fund builds up. When employees retire, they receive their benefits.

Mr. Cardiff: I'd just like the Minister of Finance to clarify this. He talked about liability for post-employment benefits. Does that include things like severance, sick leave and special leave? Because when an employee leaves the government, they are paid out based on their years of service and what their accruals are. I'm not talking about what pension they have coming. I'm talking about the benefits that accrue to them during their service in the employ of the government. It was my understanding that the Auditor General was requesting the government to book that as a liability. What the Premier, the Minister of Finance, is saying is they've put that into a fund that is accruing interest for the benefit of the employees. That fund is always there. I mean, I don't think that we're ever going -- I hope we're never going to need that fund. Because, basically, what the Auditor General is asking for at that point is for the government to be able to pay out all its employees should they all decide to leave the employ of the government on the same day, or the government winds down its operations and we don't have government any more.

This is not something that would be beneficial to the Yukon. I am just looking for an explanation. That is the idea behind booking this as a liability -- to ensure that if we do have to wind up the operation, we would be able to pay all our bills. Those are the bills that I am talking about, such as severance, sick leave and all the things that would accrue to an employee and would be paid on the date that they would leave the employ of the government.

Hon. Mr. Fentie: Exactly. Mr. Chair, there are two distinct areas: retirement benefits and post-employment benefits, which include severance and things like sick leave. It's not based on having a separate account somewhere. It's based on the calculation of the government's financial assets versus the government's liabilities. Then you look at the outcomes. In this case, the Yukon has sufficient financial assets to cover its liabilities, so that it leaves a net financial resource position of close to \$100 million. That is how the calculations are done. With any accounting done on this, we would receive the stamp of approval that we can pay all our bills.

It wasn't that long ago, however, in this territory that Yukon was in a situation under the Liberal financial management where we were paying overdraft charges to be able to pay the bills. So, we have come a long way, thankfully, and we want to make sure that we continue to keep Yukon in this very healthy financial position so we can continue to pay the bills.

Mr. Cardiff: I just want to go back to something I talked briefly about yesterday with the Minister of Finance. It has to do with the *Income Tax Act*, tax cuts and the whole concept that I mentioned last fall regarding low-income family tax

credits. I would like to see if we can maybe make some progress on that today.

I want to go back to November 30 and the comments the Premier made when we were discussing this. One of the things the Premier said was, "We've made these amendments and now we've delivered on looking after those individuals in our society who may be challenged for whatever reasons and who may require assistance. That is not the case. This is merely one step in an ongoing process of dedication and commitment to make Yukoners' lives better."

What I've been trying to ask the Premier to do -- I will go back to what I said on November 30. I won't repeat the Tommy Douglas quote, because I think it was already mentioned earlier today. I'm not sure how often Tommy Douglas is quoted in legislatures around the country or in the House of Parliament, but it seems recently in the Yukon people have been quoting him a lot.

There is a lot of money in this budget, and there is a lot of surplus money. I don't think it's too much to ask the Premier, the Minister of Finance, why it seems so impossible to make one small change that would help the least fortunate in our society. What I said was that, while this bill doesn't in any way affect the low-income tax credit, the universal childcare benefit doesn't affect the low-income family tax credit. That is a good thing. That's what the Premier said yesterday. That's what he said the other day when I asked him the same question. It was, "Don't worry about the low-income family tax credit; what we did was ensure the universal childcare benefit wouldn't be used to claw back that low-income family tax credit."

It's my understanding that the tax credit that is provided is only about \$300 a year.

If the Premier really believes that changes to the *Income Tax Act* are merely one step in an ongoing process of dedication and commitment to make Yukoners' lives better, what I am asking him to do is to make a commitment now to increase that low-income family tax credit from \$300 to \$500, if that's what it is. That's my recollection going back to the briefing that we had in the fall. The threshold for the low-income family tax credit is \$30,000, so I just don't understand why, if the tax credit is \$300 a year, it can't be \$400 or \$500 a year -- if the Premier really believes that it is just one step in an ongoing process. Changing it from \$300 to \$400 or \$500 or \$600 or whatever would, I think, show some dedication and commitment to making Yukoners' lives better. I would just like an explanation of why that is impossible, because this past fall we did make changes to the *Income Tax Act* that made the lives of many Yukoners better, but it didn't do a lot for low-income families -- people who make less than \$30,000 a year. It provided lots of benefits to others who make more than \$30,000 a year.

Again, we have to go back to how we will be judged by how we treat the least fortunate in our society. It was interesting to reread this again last night and pick that comment out -- that it is only one step and what we did in November was only one step. What I am asking the Premier to do now is to commit. I know that the government can't bring forward any other legislation this sitting, but there are going to be 28 days in the fall

where there will be legislation brought forward. I think it would be an appropriate time to take one more step in that process of making Yukoners' lives better and to raise the low-income family tax credit.

So I asked them for a commitment last fall. He has had a lot of time to think about that and I've raised it again. I raised it again the other day, albeit probably a little bit off-the-cuff, and it was good to reread the comments from last fall. I look forward to the Minister of Finance's response.

Hon. Mr. Fentie: I think we have to take this and discuss it in its entirety. We already have one of the lowest basic personal amounts, basic taxes here on the personal side. We've added to that the universal tax credit and we're not clawing that back. That's another element assisting those. We also have to be careful here on ensuring we're harmonizing our regime with what's going on nationally. There are a lot of areas there that we have to flesh out and understand what it is we've got to do so that Yukoners will receive the maximum benefits that are being established under the federal regime.

For example, a working income tax benefit, WITB, is important because it's complemented with a disability supplement. This is a focus on those in need and it assists individuals in that area. That's a federal system, but we have to understand what we need to do.

Registered disability savings plan is another area of savings. There's a new child tax benefit, or credit, coming into existence under the federal regime, so we have to understand how that reflects our regime. What we've done to date is to harmonize our regime with Canada and add to it certain elements in specific areas to assist with our tax regime.

To say today that we could add X number of dollars to anything on the floor of the Legislature is imprudent by any finance minister, because any finance minister worth his salt would want the accountants to go through the full equation, do the full calculation. That's where governments and jurisdictions get in trouble. They start getting into these kinds of decisions without doing the full calculation.

To maintain the earlier point the member made about being able to ensure that our financial assets can cover our liabilities, we must do the full calculation on all financial decisions.

Mr. Cardiff: True to form, the more questions the Minister of Finance answers, the more questions we have.

Maybe what I'm asking is too much. What he said was that we are harmonizing our tax regime with the federal tax regime and we are adding to it. What I am asking him to do is add to it. This is something we can add to it.

The other thing he said was that any finance minister worth his salt wouldn't do this kind of thing on the floor of the Legislature without asking the accounting officials to look at all the calculations and the full equation.

I have two questions for the Premier: will he consider adding to it, and will he ask his officials to do the calculations and the full equation and get all the numbers? I will give him a figure. Change the low-income family tax credit from \$300 to \$500. I don't think that is too much to ask for the least fortunate in our society. Will he do that and come back in the fall with the answer I am looking for? Maybe he will have the answer.

Maybe the first bill that gets tabled in the Legislature in the fall will be an act to amend the *Income Tax Act* and it will contain this amendment that I'm asking for, and he will have all the information, calculations and full equation. We can add to it and continue to take one more step in the process of dedication and commitment to making Yukoners' lives better. If he will do that, then I have something to look forward to in the fall in those 28 days we will spend together then.

Hon. Mr. Fentie: It's easy to say we should go from \$300 to \$500, but it's minus a lot of very detailed calculations that go with it. That's why the government is not going to commit to that today. In fact, we are quite proud of what we're doing for those in the low-income bracket.

We also want low-income earners to earn more, so our focus is on having them earn more and continuing that kind of trend here in the territory. So in conjunction with the tax regime, Health and Social Services is going through a very detailed exercise in the whole social area of those out there who may be in a low income as it relates to social assistance. Finance will be very much involved in that process, because those calculations will take place. The member said to harmonize -- yes, because if we don't harmonize our regime, Yukoners could lose out. We have to make sure our mechanisms are compatible to what the federal government is doing so that Yukoners receive their full benefit and the benefit that is due to Yukoners in the tax regime of the country. I can say right here and now, "No, the government has no plan in the works to raise this particular component of a big, complex tax regime in the territory."

We are looking at the tax regime in its entirety so that all Yukoners -- those of low income and those in other areas -- are receiving a better tax regime so that their hard-earned dollars remain in their pockets -- we're talking about retained dollars -- and we've done that. So we have to look at it on the basis of all Yukon. We do many other things in the area of low income and those in need, so we can't take this in isolation. We have to factor in all that the government invests to assist people. It's not always the best course of action to try to take a one-shot approach at a solution, because it may or may not help people. If you consider the regime itself, there is a possibility here that, as we strive for people to earn more and we implement things like the Member for Mount Lorne is suggesting, there could be instances, depending on the calculations that are required where people actually get penalized, because we have to remember, in the low-income bracket, you're only eligible for 80 percent return. So there is another approach to this that we have to understand. I think, for everybody concerned, the more beneficial approach is to increase earning power.

But in the Yukon we're all, I think, in a very good position in our tax regime because we're certainly not in the higher threshold as are other provinces in the country when it comes to the paying of taxes. We've done some reductions.

This is not a contest between sectors of our society. Our approach has been very balanced to assist those with low incomes -- seniors, for instance. And we're doing more work in that area because there are many ways we may be able to improve the lives of pensioners and so on, and we've done it cor-

porately. I'm trying to comfort the member. A great deal of attention has been paid in this area along with the full equation so we can ensure that, to the extent possible, all Yukoners are receiving a much fairer tax regime.

Mr. Cardiff: All I am asking the Minister of Finance to do is to provide -- he was trying to provide the argument, I suppose, of why this may not be a good idea. Yes, I proposed \$300 to \$500. If the minister would at least have his officials look at this, I believe it would provide a benefit to low-income people. From the way it was explained to me last fall, that's what I was led to believe. That's why we are all here. We are all here to try and make Yukoners' lives better. Maybe I'm off the mark with this, but what I'm looking for is some commitment by the minister to try to make the lives of those who are least fortunate in our territory a little bit better.

When I looked at the changes to the *Income Tax Act* that we discussed last fall, the majority of the benefits that were in that act -- admittedly, it is harmonized with what the federal government's regime is -- were targeted at people who make more than \$30,000 a year. The majority of the benefits of those changes would accrue to people who make more than \$30,000.

We talked a little bit about the basic personal exemption as well, and we increased that amount. That helps out everybody, but it doesn't make a lot of difference to those who make \$30,000 or less a year. The object of the exercise for me is to express that concern for those people who struggle on a daily basis to put food on the table for their children. These are not necessarily people who are on social assistance. These are people who are the working poor -- I believe that is the term that would be used. They are the people who work at minimum-wage jobs, usually part time. Sometimes they have to work at two or three part-time, minimum-wage jobs in order to feed and clothe their family and provide housing. Any little bit of extra money that we can make available to them would make a difference.

The Premier is saying we want to increase their employability and earning power. I am 100 percent behind that, and there is nothing wrong with that idea. This will be my final go at this, because I know there are others in the House who have questions for the Minister of Finance in general debate, and I want to give them an opportunity as well.

I would just like the Minister of Finance to have a look at it and maybe they would determine that what would work best is \$325 or \$350. I don't know, but we should look at it and see where we can best make an effort to assist those who are least fortunate in our society through the income tax system.

What happens so often in the income tax system is about providing returns on taxes paid or loopholes for people so that they don't have to pay taxes, and they are in a high-income bracket. They have the ability to write off some of those things we talked about in the fall and use other tax credits and deductions as well. People who are making less than \$30,000 a year don't have the ability to take advantage of those kinds of benefits. If the Premier, the Minister of Finance, could do that, I will give up my slot here and allow others to ask questions.

Hon. Mr. Fentie: Mr. Chair, the government side has the deepest respect for the Member for Mount Lorne's approach

to this, but I want the member to understand that the tax regime alone is not the only mechanism the government uses to assist those in need.

Let's talk about the low-income tax bracket here in the Yukon and compare it to Canada. Here in Yukon, we have a rate of 7.04 percent. The national average for a low-income tax bracket is 8.91 percent. So we're already lower than the national average. Then we went ahead with ensuring that the universal child benefit was not calculated, so we've added more.

I want to do another comparison. This relates to the last year that we have figures calculated and it is the year 2005, under this government's watch.

Now the member is comparing those who have a higher earning power in society and so on as it relates to taxes. And the comparison I'm going to make is: what is returned to Yukoners in that particular area?

I'm going to start with the mineral exploration tax credit for individuals -- this is not corporate. This is strictly for individuals -- the mineral exploration tax credit. There is higher earning power, obviously, in that particular area. A total of \$266,470 was returned by the Yukon government, out of its bank account, to Yukoners because of that reduction for individuals through the mineral exploration tax credit.

Small business investment tax credit for individuals -- \$57,393. These are higher earning thresholds.

Now, let's talk about what we returned in 2005 under this government's watch -- and these will be increased, given new calculations and where we're at here in 2007. But we haven't got those figures yet, and much of that is required out of Canada.

Low-income family tax credit -- in comparison to the aforementioned higher earning brackets. Low-income family tax credit -- money returned to them by the Yukon government for the year 2005 -- is \$346,860. So we're far ahead of those higher earning brackets in returning taxable income to Yukoners in the low-income family tax credit area. That's a significant difference.

And I want to add First Nations to this, because we also returned in 2005, on a First Nation income tax credit, \$1,238,000. So let's just say, for the purpose of the discussion, that in covering a broader spectrum of lower-earning thresholds, the government has actually, in 2005, returned to those individuals across the territory a total of -- round it off -- approximately \$1.6 million.

Now, Mr. Chair, \$1.6 million compared to mineral exploration tax credits and small business tax credits leaves us at approximately \$310,000. The comparison, I think, is clear.

More money was returned into the low-income area by government in 2005 than to the higher earning area such as mineral exploration for individuals and small business investment tax credit for individuals. That is the trend. That is where we're at in the territory. Couple that with the national average in low-income taxing being 8.9 percent, and Yukon is at 7.4, we are certainly putting an emphasis and focusing on those in the lower income earning bracket. To say that that's all we're going to do, is simply not the case. I pointed out that Health and Social Services, under the minister's direction, is looking at

other areas of assistance. When you consider also that the social safety net does make contribution to assist low-income earners, I think it's fair to say that although we can always do better, by measurement, the Yukon is certainly making a contribution to those individuals who just, at this point in time, are in a lower earning bracket.

Mr. Mitchell: I just have a few things I would like to return to. Before the minister apologized in the House here the other day for his style of oration, he was admonishing or directing the members in opposition as to how we should ask questions and what questions would be appropriate to ask in general debate. I thought I would take the opportunity to look at some examples of House leaders asking questions during general debate. I have a couple here that I'll mention. It was when he was a House leader here, I believe. These are from *Hansard*. It Mr. Fentie saying, "Well, we would hope that the Premier's trip to Calgary and Vancouver is a trip to aggressively promote the Yukon, and not just a chance to showcase a wardrobe. We expected that's what she'd be doing. The member hasn't said anything here that would indicate how the Liberals intend to deliver a rebuilt economy."

So that was the style that the member opposite took up with misogynist comments about showcasing wardrobes that the member opposite would make at the time.

Another one from Mr. Fentie: "Well, this is sweet. Let me say that the Acting Premier is all wet on this one. In fact, we on this side of the House voted against the supplementary budget because it didn't do enough for mining, it didn't do enough for children and youth, it didn't do enough, period, based on the commitments that the Liberals made. So the member can talk all she wants about delaying the passage of this budget. It certainly isn't this side of the House that's delaying it. It's the member herself and her colleagues who seem to forget that their duty is to answer to the taxpaying public, the voting public and provide answers in this Legislature, and it's high time they started getting into that mode of doing their job."

Now I recognize that at the time the Premier was sitting with the NDP and perhaps he then had a change of heart following that. But that was the spirit in which he asked questions during general debate at the time. I'm wondering if that's the tone that this minister is suggesting we should take up from this side of the House.

In any case, it was interesting going back. There's more here of references to monetary issues and such.

I'm looking back at the questions we asked the other day and I realize that when the Premier handed off to this colleague, the Minister of Economic Development, we got quite a long dissertation on all kinds of subjects, but we didn't actually get any answers to questions. They remain outstanding. Some of the things we'd like to know have to do with the money for Burwash, being told by Finance officials that it's not in the budget. The answer we got was about variances and it didn't make the cut of getting into this budget when the Premier, the Minister of Finance, told us shortly before that we had actually had this delayed sitting of the Legislature in order that things could be incorporated in the budget, because they wouldn't

have been ready earlier. Apparently we didn't get to include those things nevertheless.

In the interest of being constructive, we asked a question the other day. We didn't really get an answer on the third wheel, the third turbine. It has been asked in Question Period and Committee of the Whole. What we've asked is for the Premier to explain how this is going to reduce greenhouse gases in 2008, 2009 and 2010, since that was what the eco-trust fund was intended to do.

We cited some other people -- David Suzuki, who is fairly well respected in this country when it comes to environmental matters and climate change. We mentioned Al Gore, and the minister immediately jumped up and told us that Mr. Gore was an American and we didn't need to listen to Americans. It makes one wonder if we were talking about nuclear physics and we cited Albert Einstein if he would probably tell us that Mr. Einstein was a German and we don't need to listen to Germans. In any case, we didn't really get answers to the questions, so we are just going to ask them again.

The \$850,000 -- we will ask again about the recent agreement with the government's Employees Union. Can he confirm that there is no provision for that in the budget? We know the agreement is not yet ratified but we still want to know whether or not it is in the budget. He mentioned that the officials were beavering away at working on community breakdowns. We suspect that the government side has that information. Can the Premier give us a projected date when we will get the community breakdowns?

Again, there are some other things that we would ask. One thing we would ask in general debate, because it's a policy issue, is: can the Premier give us an indication regarding coal-bed methane or gas from coal -- whichever term he prefers -- what the government's position is on this? Are they supportive of it or not? Are they going to have a policy in place before they make any decisions on allowing any of these types of projects to go ahead?

Hon. Mr. Fentie: The Leader of the Official Opposition has completely lost it. We are now talking about a half dozen years ago. The member is trying to make a point here on how someone asks questions. I can tell you that, if we fast-forward to today, the evidence shows that the questions opposition members asked in this House of the then-Liberal government were very effective, because two-and-a-half years into a mandate, the then-Liberal government had to call an election and they were, at the outcome of the election, left with one seat in this Legislature after they started their mandate with a majority government. Obviously the questions we asked were very effective.

So I'm not sure what the member was trying to accomplish with looking back a half a dozen years, other than to demonstrate, once again, that this is the problem for the Official Opposition. They are madly rushing in reverse toward leadership while the Yukon Party is leading the territory forward. We are building the future, increasing investment and stimulus. We have a growing population and one of the lowest unemployment rates, a strong social safety net, a reformed education and correctional system and we are much more focused on our pub-

lic service with an investment in public service. The list goes on and on. No wonder the Official Opposition is struggling. The third party brings forward their questions. They get their answers and we move on, but now we have the Leader of the Official Opposition fixated on what some member in this Assembly might have said six years ago. Well, that will contribute to the Yukon's future -- I can tell you that. What a marvellous building block and display of leadership.

Now, let's talk about Burwash Landing. Burwash Landing is going to get an investment from the government through the First Nation government -- an investment in a community facility. It will be an elders-youth centre. The First Nation came forward with the concept. The government agreed that it was a good one. It was a contributor to community well-being and we are proceeding. The member will have to be patient and wait for the variances to come forward. All things will be accounted for and all matters hopefully will become clearer in the Leader of the Official Opposition's mind. That is what is happening with Burwash.

The member actually asked us what a third wheel in Aishihik will do to contribute to the tenets of the eco-trust. Well, one of the tenets is reducing emissions of harmful carbon, CO₂. We have told the member opposite countless times that during peak demand, diesel is being burned in the Yukon. I can say with the greatest of confidence that when that peak demand is evident and present and we can spin a wheel with water rather than fire up a dirty old Mirreles diesel to produce electricity, we are in fact going to meet that tenet in the eco-trust of reducing our emission factor.

I believe the calculation is somewhere in the neighbourhood of 3,000 tonnes a year. So for the member's benefit, it's around/approximately/close to 3,000 tonnes of CO₂ emissions annually that at peak demand will not be present. So I hope that answers the member's question.

Now, the member wanted to talk about the community breakdown. In the spirit of cooperation, let me proceed. For 2007-08 -- and these are gross amounts, not net, so these gross amounts include recoveries. Beaver Creek will receive \$832,000 of capital investment from the government. Burwash Landing, by the way -- even though the member has a problem with \$850,000 -- is receiving \$4.3 million. This is in the Member for Kluane's riding. It is an increase far in advance of what the member has ever brought to the community. In Carcross -- \$2.571 million. In Carmacks -- \$1.077 million of capital. In Dawson City -- yesterday, we had to listen to, and were subjected to, the questions by the Official Opposition on Dawson City being neglected. I pointed out some \$20 million of investment under this government's watch -- specifically to Dawson -- and here in the gross amounts for 2007-08, Dawson will receive another \$5.324 million in capital.

Mr. Chair, I think it's fair to say that, as I go through this list -- and we'll provide this for the members opposite once the list has been completed. But Destruction Bay, for example -- now, I know this is, to a large degree, highway reconstruction. But that's an investment in infrastructure for this territory that benefits all the communities on the north highway -- \$19,850,000. I wonder if the Member for Kluane actually goes

and tells his constituents that they're receiving that kind of investment.

Eagle Plains -- \$1.348 million. And I just heard the kibitzing from the Member for Kluane about "Uncle Sam". We all know the attitude that the Official Opposition presents in this Assembly when it comes to our Alaskan neighbours and how they berate our relationship with our Alaskan neighbours.

Yes, thank you to Alaska; thank you to Uncle Sam; thank you to the Americans for all that money to build Yukon infrastructure, even though the Member for Kluane and his colleagues have a disdain for the Americans.

In Faro, there is \$255,000 in capital. In Haines Junction -- another community in the member's riding -- there is \$8.673 million. It could be, when the members get into department-by-department debate, that this will include assisted living for seniors -- and the members opposite keep trying to make the case that this government cares little for those in need in our society. What a joke.

In Lake Laberge there is \$27,000. In Keno City, there is \$28,000. These are capital investments. In Marsh Lake, there is \$991,000. In Mayo, there is \$961,000. In Old Crow, there is \$663,000. In Pelly Crossing, there is \$2.468 million. In Ross River, there is \$408,000. In Tagish, there is \$1.45 million. In Teslin, there is \$6.847 million in capital. In Watson Lake, there is \$8.641 million. In Whitehorse, there is \$58,268,000 of capital funding. For the benefit of the members opposite -- especially the Official Opposition -- therein is the community breakdown for capital.

Mr. McRobb: I can't believe the Premier would stand up and put such rubbish on the record. For the Premier of the Yukon to behave in this manner is despicable. The budget breakdowns we are requesting still have not been received, and we are not prepared to take his word for anything. We want that material. That material should have been provided.

Some Hon. Member: Point of order.

Point of order

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

Hon. Mr. Cathers: The Member for Kluane just said that he would not take the Premier's word for anything. He is clearly in violation of Standing Order 19(g). It is well understood by all members, including the Member for Kluane, that a member may not do indirectly what they may not do directly, in that he just accused the Premier of uttering a falsehood.

Chair's statement

Chair: On the point of order, the Chair will review the Blues and get back to the Committee tomorrow.

Mr. McRobb: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The information still has not been provided by this government. The information was requested during the budget lock-up, which was more than two weeks ago. It has still not been provided. The members over here even had to do their budget reply speeches without that information. Now the Premier gets up and only uses some select parts of it and chastises us in the Official Opposition. Now he feels that he has fulfilled

his obligation to provide us with the information. Well, that is completely ridiculous.

I had the misfortune of listening to his previous tirade when he attacked us in the Official Opposition. If you hadn't noticed, he is no longer an enemy of the third party. The polls suggest to him a new political strategy where they're suddenly his friends. The real enemy to the Premier is us in the Official Opposition. Yes, this is politics 101, but anyone listening to this debate had better get used to it, I guess, because there is a lot more in store, unless the Premier adopts a behaviour that is more becoming a Premier than a street fighter.

The Premier attacked us on several fronts. I just want to put on the record for any listeners or readers of *Hansard* that what you are getting is a select, one-sided perspective on every one of the issues he raised. He stood up and chastised our leader for mentioning something about what this Premier said five years ago. He accused us of living life in the past. Yet this Premier likes to raise the Aishihik issue and -- guess what? -- that is more than 10 years old now. The Premier's view on that is completely wrong.

The other day on the radio he accused me of, back in public life, influencing process and he blamed me. That was completely wrong. This Premier knows that he was part of a government -- just as I was -- that made that decision. And I was not part of that decision -- he knows that. Yet several times, including several times in this House, he has chosen to blame us for that decision, when in fact he had more to do with that --

Chair's statement

Chair: I'd like to remind members that we should not personalize debate. Budget debate will proceed much better if we refrain and discuss Bill No. 4.

Mr. McRobb: Where was that ruling when the Premier was going on with his personal attacks?

Chair's statement

Chair: Earlier on during the debate, I did make a remark with regard to personalizing the debate, and I'm actually just repeating it because I do feel that this debate has become personal in manner. We're actually in general debate on Bill No. 6.

Mr. McRobb: Thank you, Mr. Chair, for that ruling.

The bar has been lowered, but it has been lowered by the Premier. We're just responding to some of the allegations he has put on the record. I guess that if that's not allowed in here, then either the rules need to be revisited or those who enforce the rules need to ensure they apply them to all parties in this House, not just those responding.

One of the questions was in regard to the Aishihik third turbine and what that's doing to reduce CO₂ emissions in the next three years. The Premier chose to advance his reply much beyond this three-year window, and then only generalize. That had nothing to do with the question. The question asked by the Member for Copperbelt was sensible, reasonable and very germane to the whole discussion. The answer was far from that.

The answer had a value of close to zero in terms of being productive. As mentioned previously -- specifically last week -- especially in regard to our motion on climate change, we're aware of several other options that could have been deployed by the Yukon government to reduce greenhouse gas emissions starting immediately.

What this government did was select an option that was years away. It won't do anything to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in 2007, 2008, 2009, possibly 2010, 2011 and maybe even beyond, because it's all based on speculation. Even the energy regulator, the Yukon Utilities Board, said as much. And that's where our information is coming from. Our information is based on expert opinion.

Did the Premier even go out and ask people what they'd like to see the eco-trust money spent on? No, because the Premier has all the answers. He doesn't need to ask; he has all the answers.

And furthermore, on the third turbine, the \$5 million doesn't even cover the bill. It might only be half the bill. We don't know yet for sure.

Another thing the Premier has got wrong is that he says this will increase capacity on the system. This is another example where the Premier does not understand the power generation terms in the territory or anywhere else. Capacity is limited because of the water in the system. Whether that water is generated by the third turbine or the two existing, much larger turbines comes to the same thing; it does not increase capacity. If he had only read the Yukon Utilities Board's decision that said this project would be relatively meaningless for a number of years, then he would know that.

But instead -- over and over -- he argues that it increases capacity. Well, that is clearly a mistake. The Premier should maybe think about apologizing for some of these mistakes that he's put on the record -- while he's chuckling away.

He's chuckling away over there. He thinks this is funny. Well, the Yukon had a golden opportunity to really take the bull by the horns in terms of climate change. Instead we have invested all the money in some far-off project that may or may not reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Yet, when we ask a very reasonable, constructive question, what happens is that the Premier gets up and attacks us. It would be fair if we were attacked for justifiable reasons, but what we are hearing is not the facts. That is what makes it even worse. It is becoming difficult for us in the Official Opposition to try to hold the government accountable when this is how the debate is allowed to continue. It is not reasonable; it is not constructive. It really reinforces the need for legislative reform.

The Yukon Party has delayed that too. It doesn't want to change the parameters of debate or how the budgets are reviewed. It's king of the hill. If anyone disputes that, well, just give the other side the opportunity and we'll hear all about the last election, a recent poll or whatever. Again, we get that thrown back at us.

All we want are reasonable answers to the questions. I am in favour of going to some kind of committee system and trying to greatly reduce the politics injected into the discussion, because we want answers. We don't want to get attacked. We

don't want useless information from years past, such as we have been subjected to. We don't want them skirting around our questions. We want to see a new system where someone is in charge, and if the information isn't provided in response to a question, then there's a problem.

We have to clean up this debate. It starts right with the Premier. He sets the tone and the example. Let's just conclude this by saying there is a lot of room for improvement.

I want to go back to the community breakdowns.

Can he provide us with that information today? It's there in front of him; it has been on his desk for two weeks. All his members have had it, but we haven't received the community information. I see the House leader is asking him, "Didn't you just give that information?" We want the printed material. The House leader may not be aware that not all the figures were given. We want it in writing, because it comes from the Finance department. We don't want to take it from a *Hansard* quote where the Premier may have made a mistake on one of the figures. We want to get it in the normal fashion, as provided in the past.

Further to his statements about all the money in Haines Junction, that is U.S. funds. Most of that money is U.S. funds. That is the same for up the highway; that is Shakwak money. That is \$30 million in the budget that came from Uncle Sam.

I won't even bother responding to what he said about our views of Alaska and the United States. Let's just say there is no reality in what he said there at all -- none. Any listener with a fair mind would be able to tell that. I'm not going to bite on that one. I just want to know when we are going to get that material -- the same material he insisted on when he sat on this side of the House where I am now.

Hon. Mr. Fentie: I want to thank the Member for Kluane for his valued contribution to the debate on the budget. The member talked about legislative reform. The government side couldn't agree more. In fact, it's the government side that has presented the whole concept of legislative renewal here, but we didn't get a whole lot of reciprocity from the Official Opposition in that regard.

When debate occurs in this House, I think it has to reflect not just on one side setting the tone. Let us read *Hansard*. In fact, let us all commit to an exercise to be back here tomorrow at 1:00, after we all read *Hansard* and see the tone of the Official Opposition that began the day. I need say no more.

When it comes to legislative renewal -- hopefully the Member for Kluane knows that we didn't stand here in the House in opposition or otherwise and try to inform Yukoners that the government had a employment office at the Adult Warehouse.

It was the Member for Kluane who brought that brainchild forward. That speaks to legislative reform, conduct and tone.

We did not quote from a letter from the Ombudsman conveniently ignoring the Ombudsman's findings. We did not do that. That is tone. That is legislative renewal and reform, so it works both ways. If the Leader of the Official Opposition and the Member for Kluane are serious and sincere about legislative renewal, it's on the table. The government offered it months and months ago.

The member was sitting here, I am sure, when I read into the record the community-by-community gross capital breakdown for the Yukon Territory. That was to help the members opposite, because I don't have a package of documents today to provide the members. I read it into the record for the benefit of the members opposite, but it is very difficult to please the Member for Kluane. Even though we have millions of dollars invested in Destruction Bay, Burwash Landing and Haines Junction, the member resorts to saying that it is American money. Well, it is not all American money. I would remind the member that we should look at *Hansard* and some of the past debates to see what transpired with respect to our Alaskan neighbours and our relationship.

The government side and I are all for constructive debate, such as we just had with the third party. It was a very constructive debate. There was a good engagement on relevant questions that made sense and contributed to advancing the debate.

Why is the Member for Kluane so fixated on this third wheel? Now the member is discussing what I think he called electrical terms or terms of hydro. I am not sure exactly what that was. Simply put, how can adding a third wheel to utilize water within the confines of the water licence not increase our ability to produce electricity from hydro?

It's astounding that the member doesn't recognize that. I would suggest that the member ask the people from Riverdale whenever that peak demand hits and those big Mirrlees chugging away at 800 rpm flash up in this particular area of Whitehorse. They know full well that those diesels run and spew that carbon into the air. They live right beside them, Mr. Chair.

The other point is -- and I think this is indicative of why the Official Opposition is opposition -- they don't think ahead. The members are not factoring in growth -- growth in the territory, increased demand on the system. We are taking steps today so that in the future we are going to reduce our emission factor, as stipulated under the eco-trust, and we're going to do more. We don't dispute what the Yukon Utilities Board says. They rule on matters with a very specific focus, and that's what they should do. And by the way, we're very pleased that we can work with the Yukon Utilities Board on the level that we do. Unfortunately that has not always been the case in the territory. There are examples of where the Yukon Utilities Board has been ignored completely, and we are still dealing with those kinds of decisions -- for example, the Mayo-Dawson inter-tie. Did you know, Mr. Chair, that the Mayo-Dawson inter-tie is not done yet?

But this government went to the Yukon Utilities Board, and we're going to the Yukon Utilities Board with more applications of various initiatives and we'll continue to do that, exactly as we said we'd do.

I know the members opposite are trying to find a constructive course, and I have a suggestion. This to-and-fro is obviously -- as you've pointed out, Mr. Chair -- problematic because it does not fit within the parameters of debate here in this institution. So the logical thing to do is move off general debate, because we're not going anywhere with that discussion. The Leader of the Official Opposition went back to 2000-01. I don't see anything in this budget that invests in 2000-01.

That's an example of why we have to move along. The thing to do here is focus in on the departments. I know the members are somewhat upset right now. They may need some time to calm down, regroup and start to analyze what department is in their critic role, what it is they want to come forward with. Virtually all the questions that do not relate to Finance have been specific to a department and specific to an investment or initiative within said department. That is not general debate. That is specific, detailed debate that belongs in a department-by-department discussion. That's why the government has ministers. We're not a dictatorship where one individual makes all the decisions. We have ministers who are responsible for departments, and the majority of those departments are outside of this minister's purview.

For Health and Social Services, over 30 percent of the total budget is capital. That's not in this minister's purview. I'm willing to discuss a big budget in general terms -- some \$862 million -- but I'm not going to discuss specific items that belong in line departments where ministers are ready and prepared to engage in debate with the members opposite. I even went so far as to point that out in introductory remarks. Members from departments are ready to engage. It's the members opposite who obviously aren't ready.

How do we break the cycle for the members opposite? We could call a recess. The members could go back to their precincts, sit down among themselves, talk about it, reflect on their conduct, on why they're here, for what purpose they are here, whom do we serve and for whom should we be conducting business in this institution.

It's not for what happened years ago. It's not for pointing out who said what; it's for the public. It's the Yukon public we serve. The Yukon public is the reason we are here and engaged in debate. The members can go back to their precincts and they could have that discussion. They could refocus themselves and recognize that the problem is their approach in this discussion, in trying to debate a budget of significant investment for the territory. I think they could collectively come to a consensus that they could do better. They could debate better and they could be more constructive.

We thought we were close here the other day when the members tabled a motion on climate change. The government has been pursuing climate change and proceeding with a climate change strategy for a year now. We are quite pleased with our progress and how the Department of Environment is conducting its business in this area, and there is more to come. The members tabled a motion that complements that work the government is doing by committing this House -- unanimously it was supported -- to maintain a focus on this global phenomenon of climate change.

The government side thought we were getting close to being able to conduct business in this House, as we should. That all fell apart quickly once the members came up with another scheme. It's all about WCB now and somebody's campaign manager receiving remuneration. What has that got to do with a \$862-million budget? Let's think about this.

To the members of the Official Opposition, please recognize the error of your ways. Let us conduct ourselves as we are

required to. If the Official Opposition were to go home tonight and make that commitment to themselves -- they could even write lines, Mr. Chair: "I will conduct myself in the Legislative Assembly appropriately."

Maybe in doing this it might instill a focus for the Official Opposition to do exactly that. That is another constructive suggestion. I hope that the members take it as it was intended. If not, I am willing to sit down with the Leader of the Official Opposition to talk about the Official Opposition's conduct and what they bring to the floor of the Legislature. I will make myself available. I will even go to the member's house and bring a case of beer and we can sit down and talk about the conduct of the Official Opposition and the issues they bring to the House.

We have to be factual. That discussion may help, because we are all here for the same purpose -- that is, the well-being of Yukoners and ensuring that the Yukon continues to be a jurisdiction where people can aspire to stay, raise a family and contribute to the Yukon's future. It should be a prosperous, healthy place with communities that are healthy.

Look at some of the stuff we could be talking about. Look at what has happened with our investment in the substance abuse action plan. How did all that begin? It began in this institution, with all members of the Assembly coming together on an initiative first brought forward by the Leader of the Third Party, the Member for Whitehorse Centre. From there, we have evolved and built something of great value. When it comes to enforcement in this territory, look at what is happening. With the leadership of our Minister of Justice, not only have we fully implemented safer communities and neighbourhoods legislation, which is making our communities safer and healthier places, the minister's eight-member street crime unit has been very active. This is not just in Whitehorse, but also in the communities. We are, once again, living up to that commitment to get tough on crime and we informed Yukoners that this was coming. We have delivered. Those are items of discussion that make a lot of sense, for example.

Mr. Chair, we could talk about the whole concept of why we invest as we do in education. I think it's important that, for a moment, we delve into that department because our future, to the greatest degree, is dependent upon our education system and the outcomes of that system. Consider educational reform, and how we're advancing in areas of experiential learning and vocational focus and assisting Yukon students to post-secondary education through grants and other means, and how we focused on our francophone constituency and ensured that, for example, we were advancing French immersion, at least in a school here in Whitehorse. These are all important factors.

When you look at aboriginal language in our system and the investment there -- how is it that the members opposite ignore those things?

First Nation programs and partnerships -- now, we've heard the Member for Mayo-Tatchun talk about educational reform. Why then is the member not willing to discuss what investments are in this budget that are contributing to educational reform and making the public education system more receptive to Yukon First Nation students?

You know, Mr. Chair, let's look at some of the discussion we could have there. Aboriginal language teachers in schools, including the staff at the Yukon Native Language Centre -- we are investing \$2.6 million into that particular area. We are investing another \$589,000 for First Nation programs and partnerships. Yukon native teacher education program, YNTEP -- another \$540,000. First Nation curriculum and resource development -- \$500,255. Council of Yukon First Nations, Yukon Native Language Centre -- \$455,000 of investment in the budget. Cultural enhancement, funding for Yukon schools -- \$305,000. Council of Yukon First Nations education support staff -- \$170,000. First Nation elders in the school program -- another \$50,000.

There is a counselling support worker for the Champagne and Aishihik First Nations. We are even willing to go specifically to a First Nation to help them -- \$15,000. There is a youth counsellor for the Teslin Tlingit Council for \$15,000 and First Nation orientation for Yukon teachers at \$20,000 and more.

When the Member for Mayo-Tatchun stands up and discusses education reform, it should include the fact that this budget has a \$5.2-million investment in this particular area. The lesson here is to engage with the Minister of Education on the budget debate so that the Official Opposition gets a better understanding of what we are investing in and why. It's not about providing some paper with a list of numbers on it. The member's job is to debate with the government the content of the budget and any other bill that's on the Order Paper in this House. It's not all this nonsense that we get from the Official Opposition.

Once again, I want to close by telling the Official Opposition to take a lesson from the third party. Observe their conduct and the constructive approach they bring to this House in the debate. Observe that. Observe how the members from the third party have brought forward a relevant piece of legislation to this House that the government is already committing to. Observe how they bring to this Legislature business that is in the public's interest. These are valuable lessons for the Official Opposition to learn so that they can conduct themselves in a much more constructive and productive manner, as they should and as is required.

The time has come to move off general debate because the Official Opposition has hit the ditch. They are stuck. Unfortunately the government has no way to pull them out of the ditch.

I would suggest that we move off general debate. Any one of the ministers can sit down with the Official Opposition. We'll line up the departments. We have most of the briefings done now. We will make sure that we pick a department where the briefing has been completed. Mr. Chair, we will move on with debate here and advance the public's business, as we are obligated to do.

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

Chair: It has been moved by Mr. Fentie that we report progress.

Motion agreed to

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

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

Motion agreed to

Speaker resumes the Chair

Speaker: I 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. 4, entitled *Third Appropriation Act, 2006-07*, and directed me to report it without amendment.

Mr. Speaker, Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 6, *First Appropriation Act, 2007-08*, 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, the House now stands adjourned until 1:00 p.m. tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 5:30 p.m.

The following document was filed May 1, 2007:

07-1-13

Social housing eligibility criteria: letter (dated May 1, 2007) from the Hon. Mr. Kenyon, Minister responsible for Yukon Housing Corporation to Mr. Mitchell, MLA, Copperbelt (Kenyon)