

Whitehorse, Yukon**Tuesday, November 27, 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.

Introduction of visitors.

Returns or documents for tabling.

Reports of committees.

Petitions.

PETITIONS**Petition No. 4 -- received**

Clerk: Mr. Speaker and honourable members of the Assembly, I have had the honour to review a petition, being Petition No. 4 of the First Session of the 32nd Legislative Assembly as presented by the Member for Klondike on November 26, 2007. The petition meets the requirements as to form of the Standing Orders of the Yukon Legislative Assembly.

Speaker: Petition No. 4 is, accordingly, deemed to be read and received.

Are there any other petitions to be presented?

Are there any bills to be introduced?

Are there any notices of motion?

NOTICES OF MOTION

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

THAT this House urges the Yukon government to respond to the 2007 report card on child and family poverty in Canada by urging the Government of Canada to set minimum targets of a 25-percent reduction in the child poverty rate over the next five years and a 50-percent reduction over 10 years through improving federal income programs for the poor and working poor in order to

(1) act on the unanimous House of Commons resolution in 1989 to reduce child poverty by the year 2000, which has consistently been ignored by both Liberal and Conservative governments;

(2) lift hundreds of thousands of children out of poverty, benefiting our whole society; and

(3) allow all Canadian children and families to enjoy our prosperous economy.

I give notice of the following motion:

THAT it is the opinion of this House:

(1) 2,000 scientists contributed to the U.N. Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change;

(2) the final volume of that report, *Climate Change 2007*, is now available;

(3) the report states that climate change is a reality beyond doubt and that aggressive programs are now needed to prepare for the inevitable change;

(4) the report calls on world leaders, governments and individuals to respond, which our Prime Minister failed to do at the Commonwealth Conference in Uganda; and

THAT this House urges the Yukon government to do its share in taking up the challenge of climate change as outlined by the U.N. Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

Speaker: Are there any further notices of motion?

Statements by ministers.

This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD**Question re: Whitehorse General Hospital taskforce**

Mr. Mitchell: I have some questions for the Minister of Health and Social Services. In June of this year, the Yukon Hospital Corporation announced the formation of a task force to look into the ongoing problems at Whitehorse General Hospital. The taskforce was put together to address a long list of concerns at the hospital. The mandate was to be focused on examining shortages, recruitment and retention of health care professionals and technicians at the hospital. It has been five months since this announcement was made.

Can the minister confirm that the taskforce has only met once in all that time?

Hon. Mr. Cathers: In fact, the member is actually correct on that point. The task force did meet once, but the hospital, as the member would note, has had some changeover in leadership with the appointment of a new CEO, whose appointment took effect at the beginning of October. The previous CEO had left in the middle of August.

There has been some change and the indication that I have received to this point from all involved in the hospital -- from administration and from staff and from doctors -- is that they are pleased with the working relationship so far and they look forward to continuing to work on these issues.

As far as the overall human resource issues go, this is a matter that I discussed with the board of the Hospital Corporation when I met with them in October. I identified the need to continue working with them together to build on the health human resources strategy and to ensure that territory-wide, system-wide, together, we are identifying the needs of the system, the challenges and building on the strategies already developed to ensure effective recruitment and retention.

Mr. Mitchell: Throughout the spring sitting, we raised several concerns about working conditions at Whitehorse General Hospital. There were huge problems with staff shortages, morale problems and the relationship between the CEO of the hospital at the time and the doctors. At that time, after insisting that everything was fine and that he had full confidence in the CEO, this minister changed his tune as soon as the Legislature adjourned in the spring. I appreciate the fact that there is a new CEO and that may help to ameliorate some of this but, nevertheless, a task force was announced before the CEO left town. The CEO was under contract until 2009.

Will the minister confirm that a severance package was paid out to the former CEO, and will he tell the public what the amount of that severance was?

Hon. Mr. Cathers: It's unfortunate that the member is again taking this approach of going after individuals here. The member suggested some things in his question that were not quite accurate. I would point out that the board of the Hospital Corporation is responsible for the appointment of the CEO and for any change in that position. The minister does not, by virtue of the structure of the act, get involved in decisions of that nature. I work with the board and will continue to do so. The board of the Hospital Corporation is doing a good job, and we're very pleased to have the new chief executive officer, who has a 17-year record of service to the Yukon public in a number of capacities, including a former role as director of the insured health branch within the Department of Health and Social Services. He's a well-respected individual, and I look forward to continuing to work with him and with all who are involved in the hospital in ensuring that we move forward together in effectively addressing the needs, not only of the hospital but of the health system as a whole.

Mr. Mitchell: First of all, we're not going after individuals here. This is the public's money and we're asking for an accounting of how the public's money is being spent. The hospital board does not appear in this legislative body, so we have to ask questions of the minister responsible.

Now, in the spring this minister said he had full confidence in the former chief executive officer; two months later that CEO was gone and we suspect he took with him a big severance cheque from Yukon taxpayers. Now the minister tells us that Yukon taxpayers have no business asking about this money and how much was paid out -- so much for accountability.

Let's go back to the task force. Since it was announced with great fanfare in June, there has been no public mention of it. The public has not been told who is on it. A copy of the mandate has never been released. There is no budget figure attached to it, and the public has no idea when it will issue a report because the minister has not released any timelines for a conclusion. So will the minister provide some accountability for what is happening with this task force and at the hospital and answer these basic questions?

Hon. Mr. Cathers: Once again we have the Leader of the Official Opposition clearly sticking to his script rather than reflecting the responses given in this Assembly. As I indicated -- in fact the member is correct -- the task force did meet once. There has been change in management there and they are working together on addressing a number of issues in a collaborative manner. As I said, the feedback that I have received from all involved has been positive and we will allow them to do so in an appropriate manner. They have not continued operating with the task force in the manner as before. They are pursuing things through other discussions and operational matters, and to date the feedback has been very positive. The task force can be reactivated if it is needed, but the feedback to date has indicated that the work has been addressed through other matters at an operational level and that feedback has been very positive from

doctors, from staff, from administration. They are very pleased with the new chief executive officer. He has been well-received to date according to all who have spoken to me. As I indicated, they have great respect for this individual who has 17 years of dedicated service to the Yukon public in a number of capacities. We will allow the board to do their good work. We will allow the CEO to do his work.

Question re: School psychiatrist

Mr. Fairclough: I have a question for the Minister of Education. Many Yukon educators are becoming increasingly concerned with the number of students who exhibit extreme behaviour disorders. Many are referred by teachers for possible autism or attention deficit disorders because of the characteristics these children display in school.

The procedure to be followed is for the parent or parents to take the child to a family doctor and then get a possible referral to a psychiatrist. This can be a very long-drawn-out process. Meanwhile the child is paying the price of possibly months of waiting, not to mention the other students in the class who also pay a price for the disruptive behaviour.

Can the Minister of Education assure this House that a full-time psychiatrist will be available for Yukon schools?

Hon. Mr. Cathers: The member should recognize that mental health services are provided through the Department of Health and Social Services.

Again, if the member had listened to previous discussion in this Assembly, just in this session, I've indicated to several members in several Question Periods some of the enhancements that the Yukon government has made to services in mental health, particularly for youth mental health, including the hiring of a clinician based out of mental health services specific to youth, including the hiring of a rural clinician based out of Dawson City. In fact, there will be another rural clinician provided in another Yukon community in the very near future.

We are continuing to enhance these services, as well as the contracting of a second psychiatrist who will be providing services to Yukon citizens, both youth and adults, beginning this January 1. That will assist in addressing some of the issues with capacity and access to a psychiatrist for both youth and adults.

Mr. Fairclough: Mr. Speaker, that doesn't address the full-time need for a psychiatrist in Yukon schools. There are months of waiting for an assessment report, and that's not acceptable. So there will have to be follow-up meetings with the department and the school staff to develop IEPs, or individual education plans, which will not bring about instant change. Now, many of these children need the help of an educational assistant assigned to them at least while the medical assessments are taking place.

So to the Minister of Education: what steps has the department taken to give our classrooms the additional support they need in the form of additional EAs?

Hon. Mr. Rouble: Mr. Speaker, the Department of Education has a very extensive branch in the public school division that looks at special needs, and that's working with children who do have different challenges. We have several psychologists, either on staff or on contract to the department, as well as other occupational therapists, speech and language pa-

thologists, people to look after physical disabilities and other disabilities, as well as ongoing assessment of individuals to look at educational impairments, and we work with all of our children in all Yukon schools to help them be the best that they can become. We will work to address individual needs wherever we can.

Mr. Fairclough: Well, the minister didn't address the need for additional EAs in the classroom, and I'm hoping perhaps he can do it while he's on his feet and answering the next question. Mr. Speaker, there are too many children who are not having their needs addressed, and many classrooms suffer as a result of these children, who need and deserve our help now, not months down the road. Now, we should not have principals dipping into their sub budgets to pay for an EA who should be funded by the department. It's time that the Yukon has its own psychiatrist.

Now, Mr. Speaker, parents of children are concerned, the educators are concerned, and this government has millions of dollars in surplus in the bank. They can move quickly to address the EA support component while addressing the larger question of faster psychiatric help. Will the Minister of Education commit to address this problem before more children fall through the cracks?

Hon. Mr. Rouble: Well, the member opposite was correct when he mentioned earlier that there is no magic wand and no immediate single solution that will address this. The Department of Education will work with all the professionals involved, including the child's general practitioner, the school teachers and the parents.

In our school system, education assistants are working with individual students -- those individual students who have been identified as having specific needs. We identify those individuals and then an education assistant is provided to the student to assist them with their learning activities and their whole school career.

Question re: Nurse recruitment

Mr. Edzerza: One of the major recruiting and retention incentives for nurses and nurse practitioners in rural Yukon is knowing that they aren't alone and on call 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Having a backup nurse available to support their primary on-call nurse is very important. Nursing applicants look for that kind of support when they apply.

Will the Minister of Health and Social Services outline a policy for having backup, on-call nurses for health centres outside of Whitehorse, particularly Watson Lake, Haines Junction and Dawson City?

Hon. Mr. Cathers: I appreciate the member's concern. The issue of staff who are sometimes on call or serving without others in the building is something that we pay close attention to. It is one of the key reasons why we created a position for an individual responsible for risk management and quality assurance. It is why that has been a significant focus that is currently underway in the department: to assess the risk and necessary supports, and to address those matters appropriately.

The operational decisions are in place, as they have been for many years, but we are reviewing that right now in a concerted process to ensure that the appropriate supports are in

place where people are working alone. At times, it may be necessary to ensure that there is someone there or on call. That should be done and that work is ongoing.

Mr. Edzerza: There are several instances where a second on-call nurse is required. For example, if the first on-call nurse is busy, especially on a medevac, if there are more than two patients, or if a patient is intoxicated or belligerent, serious situations like this can and do arise, especially in smaller communities. Is there any policy now in place that would allow a paramedic to substitute for the second on-call nurse when this kind of situation arises?

Hon. Mr. Cathers: I appreciate the member's concern. The details of these things are operational matters. As I indicated, my involvement, through Cabinet, has been resourcing a position of risk management and quality assurance, which we recently put in place. I forget the exact date but it was during my tenure as minister that we created this position. There will be further work ongoing in this area, because we recognize there needs to be work looking at these areas and ensuring that at all times we take the steps necessary to both protect our staff and remain an employer of choice in those matters. All of those issues are currently under review. They are being looked at but they will be dealt with, as they should be, at an operational level, not at a ministerial level, nor in this Assembly. I would be pleased to provide the member with information once that work has gone a little further and there is information we can pass on.

Mr. Edzerza: Paramedics are not trained or licensed to do what registered nurses do. There may even be major legal implications if paramedics are substituting for nurses. Many services cannot be performed without a second nurse assisting; for instance, administering several cardiac drugs, intubations and administering sexual assault kits on rape victims. Worse, when a nurse is on a medevac and there is no second on-call nurse, the patient in distress can be left with nothing but a phone message to call the health centre back when it's more convenient.

Will the minister confirm that in at least one rural health centre, nurses have been told that once the volunteer ambulance fiasco is straightened out, and a full-time paramedic is in place, the community will lose its second on-call nurse?

Hon. Mr. Cathers: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the member's concern in this area, but he is not currently reflecting the facts of this situation. Again, these matters are operational in nature. I would be happy to provide the member information in this area, but I do leave the details of operational staffing to department officials. When there is a need to attain further resources for these matters then that is the level of my involvement as minister. I don't micromanage the department; I leave it to the very qualified staff we have in this area.

As I indicated to the member, we are taking the steps through risk management and quality assurance to ensure that the appropriate staffing levels are in place and appropriate procedures are in place. With regard to the member's off-hand remark regarding the situation with rural EMS -- I have to again remind members that we are following the process exactly as we committed to. In July when volunteers turned in radios we

committed that we would provide a proposal to them in early fall of how the government would address the pressures placed upon them. That is the timeline we followed, and that proposal included the very first recognition in Yukon history of support for the principle of standby pay for rural EMS attendants. We're pleased to have that provided to them and we look forward to continuing to work with the many fine volunteers who provide services in Yukon communities.

Question re: Drinking and driving

Mr. Cardiff: Mr. Speaker, it is always intriguing to read the Blues after the minister responsible for the Yukon Liquor Corporation gives one of his performances. Yesterday, the minister stated that alcohol problems in the Yukon aren't related to liquor sales. Now that is fascinating, Mr. Speaker, because in a recent tribute to Mothers Against Drunk Driving Red Ribbon Campaign the minister made this statement: "Driving while under the influence of alcohol or drugs can have tragic consequences." Can the minister tell us how much of the corporation's annual budget is aimed directly at efforts to combat drinking and driving?

Speaker's statement

Speaker: Before the honourable member answers the Member for Mount Lorne, I think characterizing a member's statement here as a performance, if not out of order, will lead to discord. I would just ask the honourable member not to do that.

Hon. Mr. Kenyon: The Yukon Liquor Corporation does have a social responsibility. The committee looks after that. It has nothing to do, as the member opposite knows, with the treatment and everything else. It's simply not within the mandate of this corporation. It is clearly, however, a mandate of the government and looked after by other jurisdictions. We're very pleased and proud to be able to support Mothers Against Drunk Driving and their efforts. We support the safe grad efforts of our high schools. We do a number of things in a number of different ways and, again, MADD is an excellent organization that we're very happy to work with.

Mr. Cardiff: The minister didn't answer the question. It was about the annual budget. How much? So now he has two questions to answer.

We're certainly familiar with the little kits that the Liquor Corporation sells for hosts to give to party guests who overim-bibe. They're right next to the corkscrews they sell that are so convenient for opening a bottle of wine in your car or in the park. We've seen some excellent posters on the wall about drinking and driving, especially ones aimed at young people. There was one featuring a teenage boy that asks something like, "Will his first drink be his last?"

Can the minister explain why the Yukon Liquor Corporation often hands out that first free drink right in its own store to customers who have just arrived by car or truck?

Hon. Mr. Kenyon: I think most jurisdictions in North America would admit that prohibition was a dismal failure. It's interesting to hear that the member opposite is now supporting it.

Liquor in so many different ways, used socially, responsibly and used properly, is a tradition in most parts of the world. Allowing people to try new or unusual brands allows us to bring in a wider range of products. The average price of a bottle of wine in the last couple of years has gone up by almost 85 percent. People aren't drinking any more, but they're drinking and demanding a higher quality, a higher priced item and more variety, which is what we're trying to promote. I suspect that the member opposite would next try to criticize and complain about the Rotary wine festival, which this year hosted over 400 people, with a wide variety of gourmet foods. The only complaint I got out of that was that people would like to see higher end products and more expensive wines to be able to sample and perhaps purchase.

The social responsibility is part of it, but we are providing a product and social responsibility to those who choose to utilize alcohol.

Mr. Cardiff: Mr. Speaker, once again, the minister wants to trivialize a very serious question here, and he doesn't even recognize his own mixed messages. Since it is visitors who drive up our liquor stats, according to them, let's let them buy even more by branding booze in a Yukon-shaped decanter. Think Yukon, drink Yukon. Drinking and driving is bad, but it's okay for drivers to have their first drink or their fifth drink on the house, right in the liquor store. It's all about marketing. The social costs are an unfortunate by-product. If the minister is serious about reducing problem drinking and drunk driving, will he end the practice of giving out free samples? Will he end the practice of selling convenience merchandise like corkscrews and bottle openers? And will he discontinue the think Yukon, drink Yukon decanter promotion?

Hon. Mr. Kenyon: Again, it's interesting to hear the member opposite's theories on this. If the member opposite seriously thinks that people are going to pay extra for a ceramic bottle that features the Yukon and take that off and get drunk, I suggest that he not consider a career in marketing and certainly not a career in the tourism industry.

Question re: Old Crow drinking water well

Mr. Elias: Mr. Speaker, I have some questions for the minister responsible for the drinking water well in Old Crow. In 2006, the limit for arsenic in the guidelines for Canadian drinking water quality was lowered from .025 to .010 milligrams per litre to reduce the health risk associated with arsenic. In addition to the Yukon government's budget highlights for 2006, it provided \$50,000 for repairs and upgrades to the drinking water well in Old Crow. This type of coincidence makes me somewhat nervous, mainly because the filtration system and the upgrade to the drinking water well in Old Crow have not been done for two years now. Why wasn't this project completed and, more important, can the minister assure the public that arsenic levels in the drinking water well in Old Crow are within acceptable levels?

Hon. Mr. Hart: I'd like to assure the member opposite that the water in Old Crow meets the standard health requirements for right now.

The issue of arsenic is to do with the future standards under Health Canada regulations. We are dealing with those regu-

lations in other areas that are also affected -- i.e. Ross River and Carcross. We are currently looking at those regulations, along with the federal government, to ensure that when these new regulations come into effect, these facilities will have the necessary equipment in place to ensure that the drinking water meets the standards required at those times.

Mr. Elias: I'm sure the minister can understand why this is of great concern to me. I don't want to cause alarm here, but we need some answers. Some of the health risks associated with arsenic include an increased risk of cancer of the internal organs, such as bladder, liver and lungs. These changes in the acceptable arsenic levels and the corresponding funding make me a little nervous again, especially when the minister responded to my colleague last week in this House about the water well in Old Crow: "We are in the process of the design to deal with the issue of arsenic in the water."

I'm hoping the minister can put my mind at ease and supply the arsenic level measurements from the Old Crow well. When will the drinking water well be upgraded, and will the minister release the test results of the water in Old Crow?

Hon. Mr. Hart: I'll reiterate what I indicated earlier: we are in the process of having a design take place to ensure that the arsenic levels can be removed from not just the water in Old Crow but from all the water in other areas, due to the fact of new regulations coming into place, imposed by Canada. We are going through that process of dealing with the filtration that will be required for arsenic as well as other metals in order to meet the requirements under Health Canada.

Question re: Construction budgets

Mr. McRobb: I have some questions for the Minister of Highways and Public Works.

By now, everyone knows that this Yukon Party government is being investigated by the Auditor General of Canada because of the Premier's questionable investment decisions. Let's not forget how the Auditor General examined this minister's department and reported strong criticisms earlier this year. The Auditor General reviewed some construction projects to evaluate whether or not the Yukon Party government followed the appropriate procedures. Unfortunately for the members across the floor, the Auditor General found that they failed to conduct mandatory post-project reviews. These reviews are necessary to identify problems and avoid future mistakes.

The minister's officials said that they didn't have enough money to do the reviews. This is clearly a financial matter for the minister. Has he put money into the budget to ensure these reviews are done or has he again ignored the Auditor General?

Hon. Mr. Lang: To correct the member opposite, the Auditor General works with our government on a daily basis. We are not being investigated by the Auditor General. We get audited by the Auditor General on a regular basis. They did a review of the highway department and will be doing them on all departments of the Government of Yukon. We take seriously any recommendations that come out of those audits and we are working on the whole report internally. Hopefully, the Auditor General, in the next audit, will be pleased with what has happened in our department.

Mr. McRobb: The minister is responsible to ensure prudent spending of the public's money. I am concerned that he isn't taking that responsibility seriously enough. These reviews are mandatory for good reason, yet the minister is willing to let them slide. No wonder the Auditor General keeps investigating this Yukon Party government.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

Speaker: Order. On a point of order.

Hon. Mr. Cathers: This is the second time the member has referred to this as an investigation, when in fact it is a standard review by the Auditor General. In one case -- the case of the Property Management Agency -- it was a requested review.

Speaker's ruling

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

Mr. McRobb: The auditor also criticized this government's poor handling of the Property Management Agency, which oversees the construction of government buildings. This government ignored the previous auditor's review, done in 2004, which identified problems that still exist. A new plan was supposed to be submitted to the minister this year. Has that review been delivered, and how will he fix the problems at the Property Management Agency?

Hon. Mr. Lang: Mr. Speaker, we certainly take the Auditor General's review seriously, and we're in the process of getting the review done, and I'm looking forward to the final review that is being done, as we speak.

Mr. McRobb: Well, obviously, he has no idea how to fix the problems. It sounds like the minister continues to ignore concerns expressed by the Auditor General. It's no wonder this government keeps getting investigated.

The auditor cited another problem -- the massive cost overruns of construction projects. According to her report tabled earlier this year, 10 projects were examined and found to run overbudget by more than \$8 million. The worst example was the upgrade to the Watson Lake hospital. This project has skyrocketed from an original budget of \$5.2 million to almost \$10 million.

Six months ago, this government refused to provide a final cost estimate -- unbelievable. What's the final cost of this project, and when will it be completed?

Hon. Mr. Lang: Mr. Speaker, I enjoy the Liberal Party -- the opposition -- when they talk about cost overruns. Let's review a few of their cost overruns. A powerline between Mayo and Dawson -- \$40 million to \$50 million over the projected costs. The costs have not been finalized and we've been working with their hand-picked contractor for five years, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The time for Question Period has now elapsed.

Notice of opposition private members' business

Mr. Cardiff: Pursuant to Standing Order 14.2(3), I'd like to identify the items standing in the name of the third party to be called on Wednesday, November 28, 2007. They are Bill No. 104, standing in the name of the Member for Whitehorse Centre, and Motion No. 213, standing in the name of the Member for Mount Lorne.

Mr. McRobb: Pursuant to Standing Order 14.2(3), I would like to identify the items standing in the name of the Official Opposition to be called on Wednesday, November 28, 2007. They are Bill No. 106, standing in the name of the Member for Kluane, and Motion No. 219, standing in the name of the Member for Copperbelt.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

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

Motion agreed to

Speaker leaves the Chair

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Chair: The matter before the Committee is Bill No. 8, *Second Appropriation Act, 2007-08*, Department of Environment. Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

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

Bill No. 8 -- *Second Appropriation Act, 2007-08* -- continued

Department of Environment

Chair: The matter before the Committee is Bill No. 8, *Second Appropriation Act, 2007-08*, Department of Environment.

Hon. Mr. Kenyon: It gives me great pleasure to present today the supplementary budget for the Department of Environment.

The major increases for this year in the supplementary budget are basically to cover salary and benefits for managerial and bargaining unit employees. While some of the supplementary budget items are revotes for expenditures that could not be completed in the last fiscal year, others are for activities that could not be foreseen earlier. For example, we had to respond quickly this past June when excessive sand that had built up because of high fall and winter tides made the Herschel Island airstrip unusable for planes that were critical for resupply and for charter companies with visitor bookings to the island. The

solution was to bring in a four-by-four ATV with a blade to clear the strip of accumulated sand.

Protecting Yukon's pristine environment, preserving our wildlife and studying and mitigating the impacts of climate change will figure prominently in the months and years to come. I think we all understand that. We allocated an additional \$178,000 for two climate change research projects being carried out during the International Polar Year. These funds are recoverable from the project's sponsors.

The first project is an International Polar Year moose project in the Old Crow Flats, and that's sponsored by the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation. This work will involve getting moose tracking collars on the animals. It will involve aerial surveys, data retrieval and satellite imagery to build a habitat map for moose locations. The second project is sponsored by the University of British Columbia to study climate change impacts on Canadian Arctic tundra ecosystems. We have brought forward funding for this winter to help us with work now in progress to consult with First Nations on proposed amendments to the *Wildlife Act*, to bring the act into sync with the provisions agreed to at the land claims tables -- a very high priority for this government.

We've also brought forward funding for this year to help us to continue the legal review required to bring forward species-at-risk amendments to the *Wildlife Act*. This project was not completed last year because of the fall election.

We are proud of the work that is being carried out in the area of special management area planning and the management of our campgrounds, our parks and recreational areas. This budget contains provisions for the public consultation initiative now underway for new regulations under the *Parks and Land Certainty Act*. As we announced earlier, these proposed regulations are the first major changes in 23 years and are intended to ensure that Yukon parks and campgrounds remain safe and pleasant places for residents and visitors to enjoy.

The proposed regulations are an important legislative tool to support the government's commitment to protect Yukon's environment plan and manage a system of wilderness preserves, natural environment parks and ecological reserves throughout the territory. We are continuing our commitment to the Yukon Wildlife Preserve by bringing forward \$283,000 this year to continue facility improvements. These will include land survey work that is required for continuing the exterior fencing project, the installation of the animal feeding stations around the complex, the demolition and removal of older buildings considered unsafe and hazardous, office renovations in the main building, road repairs and maintenance caused by high summer use, and the drafting of a site master plan and building development program.

Overall, Mr. Chair, this supplementary budget provides for a modest 3.3-percent increase in expenditures over the total that was approved last spring. Of this amount, 15 percent is money from other agencies and 47 percent consists of revotes to complete projects started last year.

With that, I would certainly entertain any questions from the members opposite.

Mr. Elias: It is always an honour and privilege to rise in the House to discuss issues with regard to the environment. I do have a lot of questions for the Acting Minister of Environment and I hope that this debate in the House today can be as productive and meaningful as possible.

I do intend to cover areas with regard to water, land, fish and wildlife, air quality, climate change, our charismatic megafauna that we value so much in the territory -- moose, caribou, sheep, chinook salmon trends, grizzly bears, thin-horn sheep, birds, et cetera. I'll also be asking questions with regard to updates on ticks, various caribou species, some questions I brought up in Question Period with regard to the Mayo landfill, hunting restrictions on the Dempster Highway, and legal review of the *Porcupine Caribou Management Agreement*. Those are some of the things that I'm going to be asking the minister about today in some greater detail. I hope for some fruitful discussions here because I believe there are a lot of unanswered questions with regard to the state of our environment.

Maybe I can start with some water issues, because they have been in the forefront of Question Period and other debates with regard to the Yukon's water quality, quantity and rate-of-use statistics. I understand the department does have statistics with regard to this as well as a general overview of the safety of drinking water quality in the Yukon. Can we begin the discussion with regard to water?

Hon. Mr. Kenyon: I can answer a little bit there, but I think, to a large degree, he's in the wrong department for part of this. The Department of Environment measures the height of water, flood plains and a wide variety of those things. When it comes down to the quality of water, the majority of that falls under Health and Social Services. Our water issues are height, flooding, waste-water management and these sorts of things. It is a shared responsibility.

In general, the thing we share is source protection. Preservation, utilization and drinking water provisions lie with a number of different departments, including Environment and Health and Social Services. I also have to unfortunately throw in Highways and Public Works, which has some responsibility, as does the Executive Council Office, Energy, Mines and Resources and Community Services.

In addition, municipalities, First Nations and the federal government and the Yukon Water Board also have varying degrees of responsibility within their respective jurisdictions. The water management framework per se -- that project was initiated by the ADMs and directors of the Yukon government departments mentioned above, so it's quite a large group. The project evolved into support for YTG to develop an overarching water management framework for all the Yukon government programs. So it's a wide variety of that sort of thing. For instance, arsenic is naturally occurring in the Yukon, so this is why it comes up so frequently. It's in the natural water. It's just a question of when the federal government sets safe levels, and then we have to respond -- probably more than other jurisdictions because it is in all the water. For instance, when that issue came up at Army Beach, it was in a Yukon government campground. The reaction at that point in time was to cap the well and allow Health and Social Services to start investigating how

that could be remedied. That wasn't Environment. So I'm sorry to sort of obfuscate the whole question here, but unfortunately it falls under a wide range of departments.

Mr. Elias: I thank the minister for that answer.

I would like to move on to some land-based issues. Can the minister provide an update on any new or developing protected areas? Are there any special management areas or parks or things coming out of land claims that have yet to be implemented? That's one question with regard to land. The other one is with regard to contaminated sites around the Yukon. How many contaminated sites are still out there, and how are they being treated and by whom?

Hon. Mr. Kenyon: If I can take the member opposite's questions in order, if we look at the management planning for habitat protection areas as an example, some of the ones that are under consideration, such as the Nordenskiöld HPA -- I won't even attempt the other pronunciation -- is in a draft plan referred to in April 2000. It is in conjunction with the Little Salmon-Carmacks First Nation. It is in the draft stage. For the Ddhaw Ghro habitat protection area, the steering committee recommended the management plan in September 2007, so that's moving along, working with the First Nation of Na Cho Nyak Dun and the Selkirk First Nation.

There is also an HPA in Stewart River. Planning is underway, hopefully during the winter of 2007, to work with the Mayo Renewable Resources Council and the First Nation of Na Cho Nyak Dun. There is a steering committee for Lewes Marsh HPA in 2007-08. We are working with the Carcross-Tagish First Nation and the Kwanlin Dun First Nation on that. We are forming a steering committee for 2007-08 for the Tagish Narrows HPA in conjunction with the Carcross-Tagish First Nation.

Habitat protection areas can be established through First Nation final agreements or through submission of a proposal to the minister subject to criteria that are set out within the *Wildlife Act*. Under the final agreements, chapter 10, special management areas, there are set out managerial objectives on how a management plan will be prepared. There is also usually the designation for the area, such as habitat protection area. It could be a park or something else.

The fish and wildlife branch is the lead on HPA planning or for special management areas that are established in consideration of fish, wildlife and/or important habitats. A steering committee with technical planning support from Environment Yukon develops a management plan for the HPA. The parties nominate members to the steering committees and approve the final management plans.

Protected areas can occur in a number of different ways. When we look at the special management plans that I referred to for territorial parks, the Yukon government has requested that each of the affected First Nations -- and I can speak of the Kusawa area or Agay Mene or Asi Keyi territorial parks. We are working with a steering committee on that, including Champagne-Aishihik.

The steering committees for Agay Mene and Asi Keyi territorial parks are to be established by January 1, 2008 and January 1, 2009, respectively. A request has been sent out to

Carcross-Tagish First Nation and Teslin Tlingit First Nation to designate a member for each of the steering committees.

In May 2006, Champagne and Aishihik First Nations sent a letter to the Yukon government requesting a time for establishment of the Kusawa steering committee. This respects the interest of the Champagne and Aishihik First Nations by providing additional time for affected First Nations to discuss the overlap boundary issues, and we're happy to work with them on that. There are no problems there at all.

In terms of contaminated sites, the member opposite brings up something that could probably entertain us for the next few weeks. There are, of course, very well-known contaminated sites, but we're finding, due to a variety of reasons -- be it simple human habitation or the remnants of the war and the U.S. and Canadian armies and everything else -- that a number of sites often emerge. As we get there and do something, we find there's another site we have to deal with.

I can't give a number. It's not being facetious; it's simply that it changes on a day-to-day basis.

We have to respect our environmental liabilities and the remediation programs. There is pressure under our budgetary and financial processes to book environmental liabilities within these, and that's something that becomes difficult to do when nobody really knows what they are.

Environment Yukon has submitted a proposal to Management Board to establish an environmental liabilities and remediation program, which would be established under the financial administration manual policy on environmental liabilities accounting.

That's a long name there but, if it's accepted by Management Board, the proposal will enable the Yukon government to begin to work to investigate, assess and remediate contamination on Yukon government-owned or -operated properties, which will fulfill the recommendations of Canada's Auditor General's Office.

As mentioned during Question Period, the Auditor General of Canada routinely looks at departments, routinely looks at budget and financial structure and, despite attempts to make it sound like it's an investigation, the Auditor General does this on a day-to-day basis and has done so for many years.

In February 2007, Management Board approved an environmental liabilities accounting policy, which was initiated by the Finance department and establishes a Yukon government environmental liabilities remediation program -- it desperately needs an acronym -- to be housed within Environment Yukon. The current Management Board submission requests the creation of a new environmental liabilities and remediation coordinator and technical program assistant positions to manage the identification, prioritization, investigation, assessment and remediation of Yukon government contaminated sites and a budget for their investigation and assessment. That program was just approved by Management Board so I'm a little ahead of my notes here.

In general, when we talk about the contaminated sites, we certainly work in conjunction with Energy, Mines and Resources, but again, Energy, Mines and Resources is the regulatory body for that and so many of the remediation plans, et cet-

era, are passed through Energy, Mines and Resources. Many others, of course, aren't the result of anything to do with mining and, of course, were more of a lead on that. So I hope that gives the member opposite a bit of an overview of what he's asking for.

Mr. Elias: I thank the minister for that answer. I would first of all like to take this opportunity to thank all the employees in the Department of Environment, from the conservation officers out on the land to the front-line workers at the Department of Environment, from policy and planning branch and from fur-bearers to fish and wildlife branch. I just want to congratulate them on their good work over the years. I have had the opportunity to work with many of them. Many of them have provided Yukon with excellent work and I just wanted to recognize them and take this opportunity to do that.

In moving on, I do have two specific questions with regard to protected areas in my riding that some constituents did ask me to raise with the acting minister. One is with Ni'inlii'Njik -- or Fishing Branch, as it has come to be very well known. Constituents of mine were asking why there are no Vuntut Gwitchin hired to work within the Fishing Branch park and protected areas. I'm not 100 percent sure that is true, but there was a concern that the vast majority of the protected area is within the traditional territory of the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation and they wanted to know if there's going to be any movement from the Department of Environment to actually get someone of Vuntut Gwitchin ancestry working within the protected area of Fishing Branch. That's one question.

A couple of weeks ago I had the opportunity to travel to Old Crow with the honourable minister's colleague and receive the draft north Yukon land use plan, and a protected area is being considered for recommendation in the Whitefish wetlands. I believe it is about 400 square kilometres. I'm just looking for the Minister of Environment's view on that proposed recommendation and how he intends to move forward with it. If he could answer those two specific questions, that would be great. Thank you.

Hon. Mr. Kenyon: I can mention a few things on that, of course. I certainly appreciate his comments on our conservation officers and staff. I would go one step further, and it is not that many of them do a good job -- I think that all of them do a good job. We've been very pleased to be able to assemble the staff that we have over the years.

In terms of Fishing Branch, this is a very interesting area. I had the good fortune to sort of pass over it on my way to Old Crow last Friday -- fascinating areas. We recognize the various parts of that -- the cultural sensitivity to it, the wilderness, and the desires of the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation to develop that area to their own specifications, and we certainly honour that.

The member opposite mentioned that he wasn't sure if there were Vuntut Gwitchin members working within the Joint Management Committee. To my knowledge there are. In fact, I think that right now things are a little quiet just given the time of year, but in general there are bear monitors and this sort of thing, which have come out of the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation as well as our intention to support that in the future. It is both good management and it is capacity building -- and capac-

ity building in both directions. There is sort of the learning curve for the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation members but it also puts our staff in touch with them and working with them, so there is capacity building in both directions on that.

In terms of the other area that the member mentions, a lot of that within land use planning -- again, he's in a different department. That's why he went up with a colleague of mine in terms of lands and Energy, Mines and Resources, which is sort of where that falls.

We will be involved certainly, as I mentioned before, with the development of that as it goes. It is certainly a valued area and we look forward to that as it progresses, but I think now it's very much in the early stages and we haven't quite gotten to that point yet.

Mr. Elias: Just for a point of clarification, I guess, with regard to Fishing Branch, maybe I wasn't articulate enough to express the point of my constituent. It was with regard to the actual Yukon government parks officers, I believe, or park rangers. They felt that maybe there could be some employment and training programs that could work toward getting some Vuntut Gwitchin beneficiaries to work within the Fishing Branch Territorial Park.

If we can move on here with regard to some other areas within the environment, one of them would be with regard to forestry. I do recognize, again, that this may not be in the purview of the Environment minister, but some forestry aspects are, and the question is with regard to timber harvesting and with regard to habitat and agriculture and things like that.

Is forestry increasing? Is timber harvesting increasing or decreasing or staying the same in the last five years, or can the minister shed some light on that? That's my next question.

Hon. Mr. Kenyon: To put away that point first, forestry falls within Energy, Mines and Resources. So it may well or well not, I don't know. Now, if you leave the trees standing and call it habitat, then that certainly is in the Department of Environment. But as soon as you want to cut them down, that's a different department. We monitor that they're still standing there and everything else.

In terms of employment opportunities within Fishing Branch, one person who has been working up there is a Tr'on-dek Hwech'in citizen. We do have ads in the paper right now. We're looking for people, and I encourage the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin to please talk to people up there and encourage somebody to apply for this and get involved in it. The ads are in the papers now, looking for park rangers, et cetera.

Okay, I misspoke there. The park ranger program isn't specific, but for other things within Fishing Branch, there are ads now in the paper.

Mr. Elias: I just have one last point, and I appreciate the comments coming from the minister. In different protected areas within the Vuntut Gwitchin traditional territory, some of them are mandated to have 50-percent employment -- in Vuntut National Park, for instance. Again, a couple of my constituents thought that could be something the territorial government could work toward: targeting some citizens to get them involved in the park, because it will be there forever. A Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation citizen working inside the operations of

the territorial park system would be beneficial, not only to the community but to the whole program itself.

I would like to switch gears to some fish and wildlife issues with regard to some population estimates of some of our larger ungulate populations within the territory. I could go through them: caribou, moose, bison, elk, thin-horn sheep, muskox -- did I forget any?

If we could shed some light on population estimates with regard to how our populations are doing Yukon-wide, it would be great to hear from the minister. I do have one specific question with regard to the Chisana caribou herd. In 2003, a captive breeding project was started. Could the minister shed some light on the success of that and give an update on that specific herd?

Regarding population estimates, how are they looking in regard to some of our larger ungulate species? That's a question I have.

Hon. Mr. Kenyon: I would be happy to try to shed some light on that. I made a note of the member opposite's opening remarks. He referred to charismatic megafauna. Maybe I misheard that or maybe he is reading too many books; I am not sure which it is.

With the big guys -- the caribou, moose, elk, and you would have to include at this point the deer, both mule deer and white-tail deer, that are apparently moving north due to global warming, but who knows? Population estimates are certainly one way of determining how these populations are doing. For instance, we expanded the winter inventories in 2006-07 and put in an additional \$500,000 in August 2006. Most of this addressed the most urgent needs for moose and caribou counts.

For aerial and ground surveys, \$1.3 million was allocated for surveys of fish and wildlife and their habitat starting in April 2007. A report outlining the results of all these surveys carried out will be completed at year-end and the results will be made available at the 2008 environment forum.

One of our challenges here, as the member opposite is aware, is that the increasing costs for helicopters, reduced availability of small so-called Super Cub aircraft and increased fuel costs are raising the inventory costs through the roof. Climate change, industrial activities and regional land use plans are all increasing the need, however, for up-to-date inventories of fish, wildlife and habitat.

The fish and wildlife branch of the Department of Environment has carried out surveys on species that have been harvested for over 25 years. These surveys focused on highly accessible areas and answered questions of interest to hunters, trappers, outfitters and fishers. The one species that I think the member opposite might have mentioned and I missed are muskox. I don't think the muskox population is absolutely taking off, but there is a small muskox population that actually walked in from Alaska and, I believe, they originally came from Greenland. They were depopulated historically many years ago in the Yukon.

With increased demands for land use planning, landscape scale mapping and information relevant to developers, there is a need to not only update our current information but also to focus on remote regions of the territory that have high mineral

and oil and gas potential and on species that are not harvested. Of course, we were talking before session here about sheep. That's another species that we completely missed in here. So there will be a tie-in to the overall inventory budget in 2007-08, which certainly will change depending on weather. We have had years, as the member opposite knows, where we budgeted and with all good intentions tried to get a count but with weather and everything else, we never got an aircraft off the ground. We've had other years when we expected problems and we've had great success.

Right now we are working on an elk survey for both the Takhini and Braeburn herds. Another survey of both herds will be done later this winter to get a better picture of the status of the elk that is in there. The caribou rut counts at Clear Creek, Ethel Lake, Tatchun, Hart River, Logan Mountains, Ibex, Carcross, Aishihik, Kluane -- these are all areas that we're trying to get a look at. I believe a count of the Chisana herd has been done. If it hasn't, it's probably close.

I recognize the member's interest in the Chisana herd. This is a sub-population of caribou with a very distinctive genetic background and a very great importance, and we recognize that. It was Environment Yukon staff that came up with the idea that rather than interfering in so many different ways potentially, that much of the loss within that herd occurred with the young calves right at the very beginning, at birth. So the idea was to bring a number of the pregnant females together, allow them to calve in safety, and allow them to get over that first hump, so to speak, so that they're better able to protect themselves when they get out. So far, it has been a raging success, and we've been very pleased to be working with Alaska Department of Fish and Game and other groups on that.

We will also be doing a census in March of the Aishihik-Kluane caribou herd. In March as well, we'll be looking at the Carcross-Ibex caribou herd census. We'll have basically completed the caribou body condition monitoring of the Porcupine caribou herd, and in March we'll be looking at some further radio collaring as a way to try to identify where they are, which will also, of course, cut down on the amount of aircraft use necessary.

Our ground-based moose surveys use the knowledge of hunters, trappers, outfitters, miners, loggers, prospectors, Mayo, Selkirk, Carmacks and all of southeast Yukon. We'll be doing a lot of that in February and March. We'll be doing a further -- probably going on right now or within the next little bit -- moose population survey in Carmacks-west and another one in the Dawson gold fields. By February and March we'll be looking at Nisutlin River, and it is probably going on right now in the Dezadeash-Aishihik area and around Red Mountain. Also, we're hoping to do some work on the moose habitat suitability in the Dawson area. With luck, that will be going.

In January we will be doing a ground-based sheep distribution survey through Aishihik. We are trying to spread this out over time so that we have the resources. A sheep survey in the Ruby Range has been completed and one in the Pelly Mountains has been completed also.

We'll be looking at the goats -- another charismatic megafauna that I missed -- on the Tungsten road in February.

Somehow we've all forgotten grizzly bears, which we can't forget. In the Kluane region we have purchased collars to get ready for the 2008-09 survey, so at least we've started the thing there.

When you look at fish, we've done surveys of Old Crow freshwater fish. We've also completed an inventory through the Peel-Werneck region, and in February we'll be looking at Braeburn whitefish status. Small-mesh sampling has been done in several lakes throughout the Yukon. Most of that work is complete as is an Aishihik index survey in support of the Yukon Energy Corporation's water licence application. That's a cooperative venture there. A creel census in Marsh Lake and Lake Laberge is complete.

When you start looking at species at risk and the biodiversity, bats and some of the small mammals -- the mini fauna, I guess. Most of that is done with the bats and small mammals, and we're continuing -- but pretty well complete -- with the support for ongoing inventory of songbirds and bird banding. We've completed a bison census, and the bison winter distribution survey, will be done in March. Also complete is an inventory around the Coast Mountains on the gyrfalcon.

For Dawson, land use planning inventory support for data gathering and ground truth verification -- I love that term -- is effectively done -- and a survey on beaver.

So that's an overview of much of what we're doing in those areas. I hope that gives the member some overview of what's going on.

Mr. Elias: I thank the minister for that response. What I was looking for is an estimated woodland caribou population that's between, let's say, 35,000 to 40,000. It's distributed among the 22 herds around the territory.

Or there is the moose population. Another Yukoner came forward and was worried about the Southern Lakes moose population because traditional knowledge in the community of Carcross and the Southern Lakes says that they're not seeing any moose tracks any more. They're quite concerned about the moose population in the Southern Lakes area.

Is the moose population stable in the Yukon? Is it increasing? Is it declining? Since we're on the topic of moose, I just took some moose from the fall -- my brother had the hunt for me because I was on tour around the community -- to get some sausage made. When it's done, I'm more than willing to share some with the honourable members across the floor and my colleagues on this side of the House as well.

Those are the kinds of numbers I was hoping to get because it is important for them to be communicated over the years.

Again, if we could switch gears to some statistics with regard to freshwater fish, I'm interested in the number of licensed angler statistics -- if the minister could provide how many anglers bought licences in the last number of years for freshwater fish. The other one is with regard to fur-bearers -- what's the overall population looking like, and what has the annual fur harvest been for the last five or so years? So two questions, one with regard to freshwater fish and the number of licensed anglers, and the other one is fur-bearers, the overall population: what's it looking like? Again, is it stable, increasing or declin-

ing? And what have the annual fur harvest numbers been? Depending on the minister's answer, I'll talk about a harvest program later in the debate.

Hon. Mr. Kenyon: I can answer a few of those things. The member opposite basically can direct me in the right direction, I suppose, for some of it. There is an annual wildlife report, which is issued in the spring, and that will give a very, very good breakdown of a lot of the information that he's asking for. I don't have it at my fingertips. As I say, it's all being assembled for this report.

There is also a fishing synopsis, which is done probably just very early in the new year, and that will give everything on anglers and on and on with that.

I'd like to spend a little bit more time with fur harvest, however, because that's something with a number of challenges at the best of times. We have been struggling for a number of years to get an accurate count or an accurate indication of the fur harvest, and it's actually what is brought in. The difficulty with that, among many difficulties, is the fact that so much of the fur coming in is actually processed for things like the vest that I'm wearing, moccasins, trim for parkas and mukluks, and this sort of thing. So is it being used? Yes, it is. Is it actually marketed through the Trappers Association? No, it isn't. So we have had some issues where we thought the traplines were underutilized or not utilized at all when, in fact, they were very heavily utilized.

The populations of most small mammals, of course, go up and down over the years, in terms of whether they are on the upswing or the downswing. I can remember that a number of years ago the rabbit population was right at the top of one of these swings. One could barely keep up to speed on Yukon highways for the number of rabbits that were scattered all over it. Two or three years later, one could drive to Dawson and not see one in either direction.

The trappers are usually very aware of these swings and cycles. Again, they can market their furs either through the Trappers Association or independently or for trim and things. That's a very difficult thing to monitor at the best of times.

The member had asked about recovery on some of the big guys -- the megafauna. The Southern Lakes caribou are recovering. We are very happy to see that, in partnership with First Nations and other governments. There will be a caribou count done in March 2008 and we will have more accurate details then. The Yukon government will sit on the Southern Lakes Wildlife Coordinating Committee, which was recently established through the Kwanlin Dun and the Carcross-Tagish land claim agreements, to undertake a two-year review of both moose and caribou populations as part of their mandate.

Moose numbers in general have been on the decline since surveys were initiated in the early 1980s. Through the years, moose have been put on a limited-permit hunt system. First Nations hunters have certainly continued to harvest moose in the area, but in most of those areas, the First Nations have been very good about voluntary compliance. We very much appreciate that cooperation.

Some of the background on that, of course, is the impact on caribou and their range. They have influenced things like

fuel wood. The Member for McIntyre-Takhini has talked about woodcutting permits and that sort of thing. Sometimes this is an example of one of the things that people might not think are part of the consideration, but they certainly are. Also, there are general land use and trapline cabin applications that may have to be put on hold. They are a major consideration when we look at the impact on caribou or moose range.

The First Nations represented on the Fish and Wildlife Management Board have taken an interest in the recovery of moose in the Southern Lakes and have unanimously said they want to see this proceed, and that's a good thing. Licensed hunters and the Yukon Fish and Game Association are interested in harvesting caribou. We recognize they both may be frustrated over the time required for this recovery; again, it's not something the magic wand works well on and it will take time, but it is recovering.

The Carcross-Tagish First Nation is frustrated, I'm sure, by the failure of the Yukon government to convince the Government of British Columbia to stop licensed hunting of Carcross caribou. Of course, there's a cross-boundary thing. We can lobby in that sense, but it's outside our jurisdiction.

In February 1993, six First Nations, the Yukon and British Columbia governments and area residents actually formulated a plan to recover the caribou to about 2,000 animals. I don't know the exact number right now, but I think we're probably up in the range of about 1,500 or something like that. Again, it's a very slow recovery but it is occurring.

The caribou program includes population monitoring, habitat assessment, game guardian patrols, public education -- a big part of it -- and school programs specified by the Southern Lakes Caribou Steering Committee. A licensed hunting closure and a voluntary First Nations hunting ban are key components to that and, again, we very much appreciate that voluntary First Nations hunting ban. It's another good example of working collaboratively.

We have to manage the land use activities on the winter range. As I mentioned, we have to look at timber harvesting and residential development. We have to look at agriculture. They all continue to be a high priority for the conservation of caribou habitat in the Southern Lakes. It has been interesting because so many of these things dovetail into each other. That is always something you have to look at.

I think back to a debate in this House a few weeks ago and concern in Question Period over salt, or something like that, that was being used on the highways. One of the challenges of using different products may not necessarily be the economics, but the fact that the salt draws the caribou onto the highways and results in a lot of situations of car versus caribou or car versus moose. Invariably, as the member opposite knows, the moose or caribou usually win. They don't do well in the battle, but they usually win.

There are other things there that we have to consider on that. So we are working judiciously toward this, and I think we're having slow but very good success.

Mr. Elias: I brought this up in Question Period a couple of days ago with regard to the feasibility study on the design of the harvest support program in the Yukon. It was a re-

port created in 1998, and I am just wondering if the minister has a briefing note on that yet, or if he has any comments with regard to the question that I raised in the House, because he did say that he would have a look at it and get back to me. If he needs more time, that's understandable, but I would appreciate him getting a briefing note on feasibility of the design of a harvest support program, because I think it's an economic initiative as well as environmental. I'll give you an example. One of the elders in my community said that during the 1960s and 1970s, basically the entire community of Old Crow would disappear into the Crow Flats and out on the land -- part of the ecosystem, part of the water, part of the land and part of the wildlife concept. Nowadays, the trapping industry alone seems to be on a drastic decline. You know, this elder told me that he went out to Crow Flats with a helicopter this summer and it looked different. It looked different because all of the old camps were not being occupied and used any more, and it seemed there would be an overpopulation in muskrats. That affects the whole ecosystem, because the caribou eat the push-ups of the muskrats in the wintertime on the lakes and it's a cycle. When you take people out of that cycle, it affects the whole ecosystem. That elder made that comment to me and I just wanted to echo that to the minister.

I do have that feasibility study. It is a big document, and it took me a few days to synthesize that and get a handle on it. I still think there is value in there in this time of plenty that the minister could take the lead on. It would be something that isn't new in Canada, but it would be innovative. There is that question.

There is one more question and that is in regard to the spruce bark beetle infestation. Can the minister give us an update on that? I've been told that it is as far north as Pelly Crossing now, and I'm not sure if that is true. Has there been some aerial mapping with regard to the spread of the spruce bark beetle over the years? I understand there might be some instances of spruce budworm as well. Has the infestation subsided now, or is it spreading rapidly? I'll just leave the minister with those two questions for now.

Hon. Mr. Kenyon: To reverse the order of those questions, the second question is the easiest. Again, the evaluation of the spruce bark beetle and that whole situation really falls under Energy, Mines and Resources and the forestry branch. It is not really a part of Environment. I have heard many things, some of which the member has just alluded to -- but to give that information here, I'd be just giving hearsay and that wouldn't accomplish anything for either of us. I invite the member to throw that out when Energy, Mines and Resources is debated, and I'm sure the information will all be there.

In terms of the harvest management and harvest subsidy, I think what the member opposite is referring to is the so-called Soft Gold program. We have supported that in the past. We have continued to support it. We have even supported it through the community development fund. Assisting the Trappers Association through that and the marketing of the furs have been challenges.

I've had the pleasure for a number of years to go to the North American Fur and Fashion Exposition -- in Montreal --

NAFFEM. It was quite fascinating to see what could be done when the Yukon Trappers Association went in together with the Northwest Territories and Nunavut to do a joint show. If you wore anything into the show that was made of fur or leather, you had to have it stamped, because you obviously could slip something on from a display rack and wander out with a smile on your face.

We also supported, I believe, attendance at a fur show as far away as Hong Kong. We have been very proud of that. We are looking at assessing how effective that is right now. It continues as part of the support to see what the Soft Gold accomplishes. I know from talking to people at that show, when one says Yukon Soft Gold and, bingo, they are there and they want to know more about it. We could market many times the volume of furs that we do if we could get the trappers back out on the land. That's another big part of the push and strategy, which is to get trappers out. That's one of the frustrations, again, in trying to utilize the trappers and the traplines.

Much of that really falls -- without getting into great detail, as the member opposite knows -- within the range of category 1 traplines, category 2 traplines, et cetera. I would encourage the member opposite to encourage any of the First Nations to do what they can to promote this. I think there is a market. Often the Yukon Soft Gold furs and skins draw much more money than is normally drawn in the auctions.

One of the challenges that came up a couple of years ago, for instance, was a move by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police to change from their traditional rat cap, which is a muskrat cap, to an acrylic cap. We were very active with the RCMP trying to get them to not do this and to keep with the traditional cap. It's warmer. When one looks at the background of acrylic and everything else, it is much more environmentally sustainable to do it this way.

We try to work with the harvest management and harvest production on this, but the bottleneck right now is the number of trappers on the land. There are a number of different problems with that. For instance, there is a mechanism for assistant trappers. We can get people out to harvest, but as an assistant trapper, many people are very reluctant to put the investment into cabins and so on if they don't actually own or control the trapline. Many of the people who have traplines and utilize them don't do so to the full extent possible. It's a big challenge. I am glad to see that the member opposite has many of the same feelings. I would encourage him to do what he can to get those traplines back in use.

Mr. Elias: I'll just give some thoughts on this concept. That's what it really is -- a concept of harvest support program. It does extend past trapping.

My own community of Old Crow is dealing with the capital city stealing a lot of its resources. A lot of people, for reasons of education, sport and recreation opportunities for their children, work and seasonal work issues -- it is becoming overwhelming. In this day and age, you have to do what you have to do. The capital city, whether we like it or not, is sucking the resources out of rural Yukon -- sometimes seasonally, sometimes for longer periods of time. The concept of this in our times of plenty is that this is an opportunity where the gov-

ernment, with the member as acting Environment minister, can achieve this concept. The concept is to gather a pool of money with the First Nations, the federal government, the Yukon territorial government and put it into a trust that will stand the test of time. There's a disbursement policy, there's an investment manager and it's community-based.

People can, with regard to health and fitness and the social aspects of this -- I'll use children, for instance, in my own community again. Not 100 percent of the children fit into the system. They don't necessarily fit into the education system. So we, as legislators, end up failing those children. This is another option where we can say, "Look, maybe you'd be more comfortable learning out on the land, based on production, whether you're building a cabin, whether you're trapping, whether you're picking berries, fishing salmon, getting out on the land." For one, it's healthy, and second, in my opinion, it's going to reduce the other pressures on the social system, the health system and the legal system. So this is an investment that's innovative. That's why I resurrected this feasibility study, because this could be an opportunity to be a shining light and a way for self-governing First Nations, the Yukon territorial public government and the federal government to do something substantial. It goes from education to health to justice to a whole variety of issues. That's why I brought it up and I just think it's an opportunity here to succeed. It's a win-win situation.

Those are my comments on that. Now we have to get back to Environment.

I had a question for the acting minister with regard to wetlands territory-wide. On June 8, while the session was in, I travelled to my home community of Old Crow and watched a lake drain that I grew up on. It was catastrophic. It didn't happen very slowly. We knew something was wrong immediately. There were animals fleeing the area. Waterfowl and beavers and even the moose were running because of the sound of the water.

This is in relation to climate change. Does the minister have any data that he can provide me with regard to the surface area of water and wetlands in the territory? Are they changing? Are they changing at a rate that hasn't been seen before? What's the data on it? That's my question for the minister.

Hon. Mr. Kenyon: Before getting wrenched back to Environment, I appreciate his comments on stealing population. Again, that's one of our challenges at the best of times. We realize that's a syndrome. It hits us in so many different ways.

I don't remember whether it was the Official Opposition or the third party in Question Period earlier this sitting that was critical of the number of First Nation employees within certain branches of the government. One thing that really didn't come out succinctly in the answer or in the discussion was the fact that that is a problem. You could say that more should be employed by the Yukon government, but the corollary to that is that more aren't employed by the First Nations. While we have our capacity problems, the solution, I would suggest, isn't draining the capacity of other orders of government. So that's a challenge that we're very well aware of.

Of course, given the way the economy is going and everything else, I can remember knocking on doors in the 2000 election and being quite criticized -- to politely put it, I suppose -- by a businessman who felt that every time he brought in an employee and got him trained up, the Yukon government stole them. It's interesting now that it's working the other way -- that a fair number of people who are brought up through the ranks in the Yukon government are now being stolen back out to the private sector or to First Nation governments. We lost one of our senior people in Economic Development who has moved into one of the First Nation governments for a year or two.

Ironically, that person who was critical now works in one of my departments, so there is always an end to the story.

I appreciate the member's comments on education and training on the land. It is absolutely one of those constant juggles that a government has to use. There are a number of people who would benefit more from working on the land and learning their traditional ways and hunting and fishing. That can be carried through any culture. There are some people who do better when they come out of school to be trained as plumbers or carpenters. They probably make more money than most MLAs right now. There are ways to look at that; however, the problem is that the more training done in that area, the less training there is in the pure education. There is always a balance of what the student or child is going to do through that preparatory phase and what they are going to do when they come out of the education system.

In my own profession, many of the students felt that they wanted to such and such and that's where they wanted to train. Out of 81 in our graduating class, I could probably say that the vast majority of them aren't doing today what they thought they were going to do when they first graduated. That's another huge thing.

I think we have to put adequate education into the land and the environment. It is not to wrench us back to the environment, but gradually ease back to it and give people an appreciation of what we have up here. People came to this land for very specific purposes, whether they came 10,000 years ago or last spring. They moved here for very specific reasons. It is something we have to protect, and that is why we have to protect it.

In terms of the wetlands and the member's comments on that, he hit on an interesting area. We work in conjunction with the Canadian Wildlife Service. We work also with Ducks Unlimited to try to identify and preserve wetlands and this sort of thing. It is part of what we want to get into much more with climate change technology and the centre of excellence we want to put together. Even if it's looking at the technology to do better work, better monitoring or cheaper monitoring -- which will mean better and more monitoring -- it's something we really need to work on.

On climate change, whether you believe its origin or where it's going or how it occurred -- I certainly have my own theories on that -- one thing I don't think you can disagree with at this point is that it's happening. There are a number of different theories on the lake at Old Crow -- and perhaps others the member opposite mentions -- not the least of which is the possibility of a breakdown in permafrost and a sudden cataclysmic

drain. That's possible, but we need more people and better-trained people on the ground looking at that.

That's the sort of thing we want to work with, with the centre of excellence. That's definitely a priority of the Department of Environment.

Mr. Elias: I did have the opportunity, with regard to the draining of one of the lakes, a traditional family area of mine -- the Leader of the Official Opposition, the Member for Copperbelt, came out there with me to see it first-hand. He still talks about this at great length today in caucus meetings and to people of the general public. It was catastrophic. Traditional knowledge suggests that this is not the only lake that has drained in the last decade and that this hasn't been seen in recent history by the people of the lakes, the Vuntut Gwitchin. That's why I brought up the issue of wetlands and if any satellite mapping was being done with regard to the loss of surface water.

I can go on at great detail with regard to how important wetlands are -- the half a million waterfowl that travel to the Old Crow Flats. There are shore birds that come from Australia, Africa and from the southern tip of South America just to go to the Old Crow Flats. That's why I brought this up. This kind of data is required for the public to have a better understanding of what's going on in their environment. That's why I brought it up.

I would also like to move on here and talk about an important aspect of our Yukon, and it relates to tourism. It relates to a lot of industries -- "non-consumptive use" is a term I like to use -- and wildlife viewing and the programs that are ongoing. I'll wait for the minister's answer with regard to an update on what programs are out there. You know, Swan Haven, the Dempster Highway, the South Canol, the North Canol, those kinds of things: are they promoting any specific areas around the Yukon with regard to non-consumptive use and wildlife viewing? I'll save the next question with regard to fisheries and the Department of Fisheries and Oceans for the next round. But if the acting minister can shed some light on those two, that would be great.

Hon. Mr. Kenyon: When the member opposite talks about migratory birds and these sorts of things, there is a Canadian Wildlife Service lead on that. We are cooperative and we have a bit to do with it but, really, it's the Canadian Wildlife Service. Through devolution we control a lot of fish, but if it's salmon we don't have much to say about it, which I have a feeling will lead into his next question.

When the member opposite refers to satellite imaging and such, that is an area that I had the good fortune to deal with a little bit in the last couple of months. The organization called the Northern Forum is a subnational, regional, circumpolar organization with offices basically in Anchorage, Alaska, and in Moscow -- the Russia Federation. It's much like PNWER, the Pacific NorthWest Economic Region, and it deals with regional issues where you can deal with your own federal government not just simply as a region, but as a fact that it's affecting all northern regions, and therefore get a lot more done. It also brings people together to look at values and projects and share knowledge and data.

The satellite imaging has been a major part of what the Yukon government has done. Our hydrology people have been very much involved with the working groups on flood control, for instance, and using satellite imaging through radar satellites. Radar satellite imaging is actually quite fascinating. It will fire through clouds and everything else and get a lot of good information. By using that to determine water levels, how rivers flow, the levels of lakes -- all those things -- it really has, in the last couple of years, brought that technology together from not only Yukon and Alaska -- and, interestingly, northern Alberta is in there -- but also the Sahtu republic and Hokkaido, Japan, and Iceland and other parts of the Russian Federation.

Interestingly, since our hydrology people have been involved in that satellite imagery to monitor water levels in the north, flooding -- which is a huge problem and we all found that out very graphically last year -- has revolutionized the jurisdictions of the Northern Forum. There has not been a single death due to flooding anywhere in the 20 regions of members of the Northern Forum since we have gotten into working with satellite technology with the other jurisdictions. It's an incredible tool. Again, it's part of what we want to work with in terms of the centre of excellence and mitigating climate change and the problems with that.

We find that we do not have an awful lot of control over climate change in the sense of pollution and this sort of thing. I'm certainly not saying that we don't have to have the same sensitivities toward anything from cars to heating your homes to letting an engine idle and all of those things. That's just simply best practices, but the reality is, when you look at the cause of greenhouse gas emissions throughout the rest of the world, we're a pretty minor player. However, when it comes to what happens as a result, we're the ones who get hit first.

It's interesting to look at statistics given in the paper. On average, the temperature went up .3 degrees. That sounds really nice in the paper until you start realizing that they might have gone up .1 near the equator or .01 near the equator. When you get up north, it went up a couple of degrees. So we're getting hit very, very rapidly with that.

We do work in partnership with Tourism. We have reviewed the wildlife viewing program, and we've had a positive and active program with the Department of Tourism. For instance, there is Faro and Swan Haven -- of course the member mentioned that. We have a lot of activities within schools, pamphlets on bats, sheep and everything else. We're continuing to develop a Web site. There are so many ways that we can work on that and educate people, but here, it's mitigation and adaptation to global warming -- in my mind anyway -- much more than trying to be the major player in solving the problem. Like I say, we're the ones that get kicked first, but we can do the least about it. So I hope that gives some degree of information to the member opposite.

Mr. Elias: Well, it wasn't the answer I was hoping for, but I have a lot more to go through so I will just move on. I have one specific question with regard to satellite-based mapping. I understand that under the northern strategy trust there has been a \$500,000 allocation to satellite-based mapping and developing high-resolution base maps in priority areas of the

Yukon. I was just wondering if the Department of Environment had a hand in the development of this proposal and it being accepted. Where are the priority areas with regard to the development of high-resolution base maps in priority areas of the Yukon?

Hon. Mr. Kenyon: That certainly gets right into the actual budget that we are trying to debate in terms of physical mapping and such. We work in conjunction with Energy, Mines and Resources and there is something within this budget. For land classification and mapping, I believe there is an additional \$34,000 to design a strategic and tactical plan for establishing a biophysical and land classification system for the Yukon. The broad scope of the project and the contract tendering process resulted in the contract not being completed by year-end, but it is in the works. Part of that was the slow uptake on contracts, and that is something that I think every government is seeing right now. With so much work being done in so many different areas, it sometimes becomes difficult to get the contractors with the proper expertise in the area to get working. That is something that we are actively working on, yes.

Mr. Elias: The acting minister is going to have to excuse me, but I didn't hear the answer to the actual question with regard to the northern strategy trust. Does the Department of Environment have a hand in that successful application? Do they have partners with it? Is it in partnership with another self-governing First Nation or another non-government organization? Do they have any involvement in that line item that was accepted in the northern strategy trust in the 2007 approved projects for \$500,000 to develop high-resolution base maps in priority Yukon areas? Because in the spring I did already talk with the Environment minister about priority areas and they weren't identified yet. I've seen that in the northern strategy trust approval. If he can just let me know about that question, that would be great.

Hon. Mr. Kenyon: I can follow up with a letter or something on that. I don't have that at my fingertips. There was \$180,000 in the budget. We are looking in the supplementary for another \$34,000, for a total of \$214,000. We are looking at the biophysical and biological aspects. I suspect that the rest of that is actually through Energy, Mines and Resources and we are dovetailing in with our part of that. In terms of the actual funds that the member opposite is referring to, I will have to get back to him.

Mr. Elias: I would again like to switch gears. Just to be respectful of the time, I would like to move on. I could talk about climate change for days on end. Recently, our Prime Minister did not agree to any specific goals with regard to climate change. That was quite disappointing. Canada actually halted the climate change discussions.

Here at home, there has been a lot of talk about a climate change action plan. Can the acting minister please shed some light on where we're going with this? When will it be completed? What role does he see Yukoners playing in terms of energy conservation, adaptation or mitigation? I realize that adaptation for the north could mean billions of dollars, but we do have a role in reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

It was even talked about in my home riding recently with regard to discussions around putting a community recreation complex together with a community hall. The discussions in my community surrounded the climate change we are experiencing at a very rapid rate in Crow Flats and up north. Why not set an example by building the greenest building we can by using waste heat from the generators, putting solar panels on the roof and so on? This is coming from our youth. They asked me to mention it here in the Legislature. The children in my riding are running around the streets playing hockey because they don't have a recreation complex to go to. They are playing ice hockey and talking about having a community hall where they can go. They are talking about using the waste heat from the electrical generators and putting solar panels on the roof, so that we above the 67th parallel can set an example for the rest of the world. That is pretty special.

Can the minister shed some light on the climate change action plan? What stage is it at? When can we see it and when can Yukoners look at a substantial climate change plan?

Hon. Mr. Kenyon: I can answer that in two different directions, I suppose. Obviously the main instrument for implementing the climate change strategy is through the development of the action plan that the member opposite alludes to.

The development of the climate change action plan is currently underway, with a draft expected in November 2007, so we should have that draft fairly quickly. Public consultation will take place during January and February 2008, with a final plan to be released in late spring 2008. It's coming down the highway now.

We're certainly committed to taking that action where it will be the most effective over the long term. To that end, since the question is very much related, I want to spend a moment or two on some of the things that Yukon Housing Corporation does. The member opposite is quite right -- we have to look at all the aspects of fuel consumption and everything else.

First of all, solar panelling is a somewhat controversial area. If the kids are actually getting interested in that, I'd love to see their research on it. For the most part, while it generates good, warm, fuzzy feelings and it's good and green and everything we want there, the reality is that more energy and more use of fuel and more greenhouse gases are emitted in the construction of the solar panel than actually comes out the other end in what the solar panel accomplishes.

As technology emerges, that may be substantially changing, but I know that a couple of years ago it was the case, and it may be a solution for someone who lives off-grid, it might prevent the Member for McIntyre-Takhini from having to run his oil down to the dump a couple of times a year -- we talked about that before. But the reality is, is it really solving much of the issue? Well, it's debatable.

Again, I could be corrected on more current technology.

But one of the things that we certainly look at is the quality of buildings and homes and the energy consumption. Most of us, I think, are familiar with the old days, so to speak. Old days may be well before the member opposite's time, but it's the so-called R-2000 homes and how energy efficient they were. Yukon has pioneered and developed the so-called green homes,

R-2000 on steroids. We are now looking at the super green homes -- green homes, again, on steroids, with as much as R-50 in the walls, R-100 in the ceilings. They are more expensive to produce, but some of our data make it look like you will recover that amount of energy within a 10- to 12-year period, and after that they are basically houses that you could heat with a match or, as our wonderfully verbose Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources has put it, you could probably heat it with a cat. If it's a big house, you might need two cats, but they are pretty energy efficient.

So we have set up a potpourri of programs within Yukon Housing Corporation to either help people build these or to upgrade their homes. Loans of up to \$30,000 are available for alternative energy systems, with an interest rate set at zero percent for the first 10 years and then one percent less than the posted home repair program interest rate upon renewal if it goes beyond the 10 years. Also, a zero-percent interest rate is available to owners of rental properties who undertake energy efficiency upgrades.

One that has been really misunderstood and hasn't been picked up by the media -- great shock, of course -- is that a grant of \$400 is available -- I stress the word "grant" -- to offset the cost of an energy evaluation. The reason for this is to not just simply give you that information, but there are a number of federal programs that you can only access if you're willing to undergo an energy evaluation. In other words, why would you do even marginal repairs if you have to lay out \$400 for an energy evaluation before you start? What we do with this program is that this grant is available to do the evaluation and give you that information, and then it allows you to go back to the federal programs and to access the money there.

There's a grant of up to \$1,750 available for homeowners accessing the home repair program to upgrade their home to meet that Yukon Housing Corporation's green home standard. There are others, without going into a lot of detail, for the construction of a new certified green home; there is up to \$750 to offset design and inspections, and then up to \$450 from the Energy Solutions Centre for the purchase of Energy Star appliances. A potpourri of programs look at cutting the cost and everything else but, the reality is, you cut the cost and you use less fuel, then we're going to put out less greenhouse gas, and it all ties in to climate change.

I'm very glad the member has given me a chance to speak on that because we're very proud of those programs.

Mr. Elias: I'd like to talk about a couple of specific issues: one is chinook salmon and the other is the winter ticks. I'm going two at a time here just so we don't get overwhelmed.

I've expressed in this Legislature the very serious nature of winter ticks. I understand there is an elk management strategy to deal with this. Can the acting minister give an update on how the plan is going? Again, a Yukoner from beautiful Kluane, as my colleague continually likes to say, came to me and said that bull moose, after a rut, usually congregate on south-facing slopes of hillsides. This person from Kluane was very concerned that, the fall congregation of these bull moose after the rut is a dangerous time for them to pass on the winter ticks, if

the moose do have them. Can the minister give me an update on the implementation of the plan to deal with the winter ticks?

The other one is with regard to chinook salmon. I raise this here in this Legislature with regard to escapement of the salmon, the zones along the Yukon River, the number of salmon that actually came across the border. As for the numbers, the minister did say they work with some federal departments -- Canadian Wildlife Service -- and Ducks Unlimited and non-government organizations to get this information. Can the minister shed some light on the issues with regard to chinook salmon, winter ticks and elk?

Hon. Mr. Kenyon: To reverse the order, I appreciate the member asking two questions at a time, which is refreshing. He seems to always pick the easiest one second.

The chinook salmon are a federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans responsibility. The low run this year was obviously of great concern to all of us. Yukon government will work with the Department of Fisheries and Oceans to address the concerns. Since 2001, when the treaty was ratified, the United States has always met or exceeded border escapement targets. The border escapement target was not met in 2007 by the United States. As a result, all commercial, domestic and recreational fishing was closed in the Yukon River.

The Yukon River Panel will be meeting in December to conduct a post-run management analysis. Since this is the first time that border escapement targets have not been met since the treaty was signed in 2000, the panel should be allowed to do its job and make the necessary management changes to ensure that this does not happen again next year. The positive working relationship the Yukon has with the State of Alaska and with Governor Palin will enable us to have the necessary conversation around this topic. So we are very actively working on that.

In terms of the ticks, we are doing a number of different things and we're very happy and very lucky to have some good biologists and a veterinarian within the department who have jumped right onto this whole issue.

As an interim measure, the Takhini and Braeburn elk herds will be provided with medicated feed this summer to reduce the risk of ticks spreading from elks to other Yukon wildlife. Prior to distributing the medicated feed, details on how it will be provided to the elk will be worked out in consultation with planning and all our management partners. A cooperative working group made up of affected First Nations, non-governmental organizations, and individuals with an interest in the elk will be established to consider the situation and make recommendations on how to deal with it. A risk assessment and planning workshop involving the First Nations, working group members, and tick experts -- and there are, in fact, tick experts -- and epidemiologists will be organized for later this year. A long-term strategy for dealing with the tick infestation will come out of that workshop. So again, that is part of our consultation.

Our information so far -- and I stress so far -- is that, while the winter tick on elk has the potential to spread to moose, in fact it does not appear to have spread as yet. Environment Yukon staff has consulted and will continue to consult with experts throughout North America to gather the needed base-

line information to assess the risk to Yukon moose populations and identify options for eradicating and controlling the ticks. Affected First Nations have been notified and Environment Yukon has offered to provide a technical briefing to any who wish it.

The implementation of the elk management strategy will need to proceed in tandem with the development and execution of plans for dealing with the infestation. The current risk to moose has yet to be determined. That is not to trivialize it, by any means, but at least it hasn't been determined at this point in time.

Moose and elk tend to use different habitat types and that does limit the risk of transmission and we may be very fortunate in that regard. If, however -- there is always a however, Mr. Chair -- the elk herds continue to grow and expand into higher density moose areas, then that risk obviously has to go up.

Livestock and deer may also be bringing small numbers of ticks into the Yukon.

Winter ticks basically do not pose a risk to human health. That's at least the one good thing that's very much there. The background on this, for the member opposite, is that elk from Alberta were released in 1991 by the government and the Yukon Fish and Game Association jointly. They were observed to have winter ticks. The best information at the time indicated that winter ticks would not survive in this part of the Yukon. Along comes climate change.

In the spring of 2007, wild elk in the Takhini Valley and Braeburn areas were confirmed to be heavily infested with winter ticks, also known as moose or elk ticks. The scientific name is *Dermacentor albipictus*. Winter ticks drop off elk in spring and lay the eggs. Eggs hatch to larva and climb the vegetation in the fall to grab onto a new host animal in late summer, fall. The larva stay on that animal all winter, intermittently feeding and growing. The changing climate in Yukon may contribute to winter tick infestation on elk and increase the impacts on moose or caribou in the future. The loyal reuse of the same spring and fall habitat may be amplifying that infestation in the Takhini and Braeburn herds.

Winter ticks are known to have caused insignificant moose die-offs in southern jurisdictions in severe years. But again, we don't know what's going to happen here. So we're looking at assessment or controls in 2007-08 that would or will likely require additional funds that aren't in the current budget. It's hard to say, but there are certainly good drugs that would affect this. Unfortunately the effect on the subsequent human consumption of the meat is of great concern. But we have a very active group looking at this and working with it. So I can assure the member opposite that we have some very good people on it.

Mr. Elias: I would just like to make a quick comment about the chinook salmon run. I have had the opportunity to work at Bio Island tagging chinook salmon during my renewable resources career. It was fun work and I understand a bit of the science portion of it, but I have also had the opportunity to work with commercial salmon fishers along the Yukon River near Dawson and, as well, to fish traditionally with the Tr'on-

dek Hwech'in and the Teslin Tlingit, drifting with fish wheels. In my youth, I drifted with some of the Hon. Member for Pelly-Nisutlin's relatives around Teslin and they used to drift for chinook salmon. In one drift they would pull up 100 fish. They had a connection with the salmon. My dad told me to ask myself why the chinook salmon on the Nisutlin River throw themselves, with their last breath, on the beach? He said to go ask a Teslin Tlingit elder and they will explain it, but I might need a translator.

Those are the reasons why I bring these issues to the floor of this House. If we do all the salmon enhancement and restoration on this side -- a lot of people feel that that run was not properly managed on the Alaskan side and that it wasn't fair. That's why I brought it to the floor of this House. I hope that the Premier can bring this to the next level and point out that this is affecting Yukoners and the people he represents. It puts food on their table and money in their pockets. That's what I said. It is one of the main reasons why I brought this to the Legislature in that way.

I would like to talk about the Porcupine caribou. After the initial shock of the lifting of the hunting restrictions on the Dempster Highway -- everyone knows what happened earlier this fall. I have direction from my constituents to be very solution oriented. I was hoping to have this discussion with the Premier. I do wish him well. I hope he heals and joins us in this Legislature for some productive debate. I send good wishes to him.

I did put a motion forward earlier this session with regard to a legal review of the *Porcupine Caribou Management Agreement*. In my opinion, it doesn't reflect the authority or jurisdiction of north Yukon self-governing First Nations -- the Inuvialuit, the Vuntut Gwitchin, the Tr'ondek Hwech'in and the Tetlit Gwich'in Tribal Council. In my opinion, the jurisdiction and power with regard to management of that herd needs to be shared.

I go back to what my constituents have told me, to be solution oriented. I encourage the minister to be cautious with his answer, because I see this as a solution. That agreement was made in October 1985. I've gone through it and there are things that are just outdated and need to be reviewed.

There's no doubt that this is going to be a challenge and there's no doubt that the harvest management strategy right now, which I fully support, is a step in the right direction. However, as long as the authority rests with one public government, in my opinion -- I'll use one issue with regard to the Dempster Highway. The hunting and access issues on the Dempster Highway are always going to be there unless -- I'll use my First Nation that I'm a member of -- the Vuntut Gwitchin can exercise their jurisdictional authority and control over their land and their people.

It's my vision that one day we will have a Porcupine caribou conservation agreement that recognizes the authority and jurisdictions of all governments over their people and their lands.

I was hoping to discuss this with the Hon. Premier. With regard to this issue and all issues, for that matter, I'd be more than willing to discuss this with the acting minister's staff and

some of the solutions that I see that are required in order for us as Yukoners, Canadians and members of this Legislature not to have to deal with the Porcupine Caribou recovery program.

So I'd like to hear the acting minister's view on a formal legal review and obvious consultation with the northern First Nations. I understand this is a challenge. This agreement was made under the *Inuvialuit Final Agreement*. I'm well aware of a lot of these things, but I've talked with a lot of people with regard to this -- lawyers and people who helped negotiate this agreement -- and none have told me I'm explicitly wrong.

I just open the door to further discussion with the acting minister, and I hope he can give me a favourable, positive response.

Hon. Mr. Kenyon: We give this a very high priority too, but note also that there is a challenge in working with First Nations in an area where there is disagreement among the First Nations themselves. It's not insurmountable, but it's an additional challenge.

We signed an agreement with the Porcupine Caribou Management Board for about \$30,000 to begin to develop a harvest management strategy. All parties -- the governments of Yukon, Northwest Territories, Canada, Vuntut Gwitchin, Tr'ondek Hwech'in, Na Cho Nyak Dun, as well as the Inuvialuit Game Council and the Gwich'in Tribal Council -- have agreed to develop that harvest management strategy and that it should be led by the Porcupine Caribou Management Board.

The development of that harvest management strategy is especially important, given the commitment of all parties to address conservation of the herd. We all agree that action needs to be taken. We have problems in terms of updating the population estimate. Getting that done has been a challenge.

With the support of the Porcupine Caribou Management Board, they formed a working group that will draft a harvest management strategy, and that group met in Inuvik from October 18 to 21 of this year.

This working group, which was supported by the Porcupine Caribou Management Board, will make recommendations directly to the governments -- First Nations, Yukon and the Government of Canada. Yukon government currently contributes about \$48,000 in core funding to the Yukon Porcupine Caribou Management Board and will increase this contribution to \$75,000. The Northwest Territories has increased their core funding to \$75,000 and Canada has provided additional funds over the past several years, bringing their annual contribution to \$56,000. The Northwest Territories and Canada have contributed \$30,000 each -- I believe -- directly to the harvest management strategy.

This is a challenge and the member opposite alluded to it but, for the record, it's a harvest plan that is difficult because the herd doesn't stay in one place. They tend to move from jurisdiction to jurisdiction, which is why we have to have all of these different levels and orders of government on board.

The Porcupine Caribou Management Board has proposed the development of a three-phased harvest management strategy. Phase 1 includes community consultation and development of the planning protocol -- and that is essentially completed. We're in phase 2 right now, which is developing that

harvest management strategy. Phase 3 will be the development of the harvest management agreement and Native user agreement, and that is pending the successful completion of the strategy. The harvest management strategy will develop harvesting options dependent on the estimated size of the Porcupine caribou herd.

Interestingly, Alaska is not involved in the Porcupine caribou harvest management strategy as it is not considered an international strategy, and I would agree with the member opposite that really it should be. Contribution toward the development of that, as I mentioned, is \$30,000 in the 2007-08 fiscal year and they have requested that we add an additional \$27,000 to top it up to \$75,000.

The Executive Council Office -- I invite the member opposite to get into that discussion when that comes up, of course -- looks at the implications with the State of Alaska and intergovernmental relations. It's one thing to count the caribou and to collar them and to track them but not having a concurrent disease survey and disease management, it's more of a concern, so I certainly would invite the Porcupine Caribou Management Board to consider this. It can be done for a relatively small amount of money. If there is a disease or something within that herd that affects the production, then the harvest management becomes a bit superficial.

Mr. Elias: Well, a couple of things just occurred to me in that debate. The acting minister hasn't disagreed with me, first of all, and I recognize that there is a problem with the governing document with regard to the Porcupine caribou herd. I'd like to request a meeting with the acting minister and his excellent staff so that we can discuss this specific issue. I can talk for a long time about the specifics of this and what I've seen over the years. Maybe we can come to some sort of understanding. Again, I would like to go back to the direction I got from my constituents about being solution oriented. I hope the minister can grant me that meeting with him and his staff on this topic fairly soon.

I have just a couple of closing comments here. I'd like to end with maybe three very quick questions. Land use plans -- can we get an update on other land use plans that are starting to get going? The Peel River watershed plan -- what's the date for the completion of that? That plan could become very important here. I'd like to know if they're on track, if they're behind schedule, and what's being done with that planning commission.

The *Wildlife Act* is currently up for amendment. I was just wondering if there have been any requests for more time to review these possible changes that are being talked about. When will the changes be coming to the Legislature?

In my closing comments on this today, I would just like to give my other colleagues a chance to ask some questions, but with regard to the state of the environment report -- I have got on my feet several times over the last year to simply ask when it will be released. Why is it not being released? Why are Yukoners being kept in the dark? What is the holdup?

What I have done here today with the acting minister is touch on water, air, trapping, a lot of the charismatic megafauna around the Yukon, the migratory waterfowl, the

atmosphere, the land and basically a lot of the topics that are in the state of the environment report. I really appreciate the discussion we had today. It just lends more evidence that Yukoners and the public need to know if the moose population is strong or if our caribou population is declining. I just hope that the acting minister can give some direction and authority to get this long-overdue report released to the public. He has provided me with a lot of valuable information today, so I just don't see why it can't be put in a document so that Yukoners can judge whether or not their environment is in good hands.

Hon. Mr. Kenyon: I like the member opposite's math. There were three questions or comments that morphed into four. That's okay, it's his prerogative and I agree with that.

This time the first two are the easiest. It's the last two that are a little bit more.

Land using planning, for the member opposite again, is under Energy, Mines and Resources and not Environment, as are the Peel River studies. It is all Energy, Mines and Resources.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Hon. Mr. Kenyon: No, no, no. He's listening assiduously, I am sure.

As for the member opposite's third point regarding the *Wildlife Act*, yes, there has been a request for an extended time. We expect that there will likely be more. We are more than happy to do that and do whatever is necessary. There are no implications that I know of in terms of delaying that. It just makes every bit of sense to give everyone the time they need to be comfortable with it.

I will stick to that fourth one, since the member asked the question. In terms of the state of the environment report, people have to recognize what it is. It is not something that is put together about what happened last Thursday. It is done in terms of what has happened over past years. By definition, that report, when it comes out, is already sometimes about two or three years old. It's good in terms of documenting things, but it's not necessarily withholding any information. I am very pleased that the member opposite says that he has all sorts of questions here and all sorts of information. Effectively he has it all anyway, so I guess we don't have to do that.

The reports, as late as they are because they deal with such late information -- and usually out of date -- are on their way. The member will have them sooner rather than later.

Mr. Edzerza: The environment is a subject that is very important for the sustainability of mankind on this earth. I believe that I stated once before that First Nations always knew how important it was to take care of Mother Earth and respect everything on Mother Earth.

Mankind has not done a good job of taking care of Mother Earth. Today mankind is suffering at the hands of our own progress. Climate change, for example, pollution, polluting of the air, all of those things that are done in the name of progress, like the steel mill plants, the oil industries, all of those things that are spewing contaminants into the air, are destroying Mother Earth. Chief White Cloud once said the earth does not belong to man; man belongs to the earth; this we know. Man did not weave the web of life; he is merely a strand in it. What-

ever he does to the web, he does to himself. All things are connected. Whatever befalls the earth, befalls the children of the earth.

So when we talk about destruction of the environment, we're talking about destruction of ourselves. What is going to become of the future if we continue on this path of destruction with regard to looking after the environment? I think mankind is now beginning to realize that they can't undo the damage they've done. Ever since the word "progress" started with the human race, we have been destroying the planet, the air, the water, and the soil. It's unbelievable what mankind has done to the magnificent rivers that were supposed to provide life on this planet, and what we did to them for the sake of atomic energy, dams, electricity. I know they're all progress and people have grown accustomed to having to depend on it, but now we have a more serious issue, one more serious than anyone can ever imagine.

That's how to protect the environment. Now we're starting on the north. I've heard comments in this House before -- in this Legislature -- about the pristine north and we don't want things to change up here because it's the Klondike of the world. Well, too bad. Things have changed and things are changing more drastically every day. We are destroying the north, but we don't want to admit it. Why? Because it might stop progress; it might stop mining in some areas; it might mean that we can't destroy some river that has never been touched before.

We desperately want to get into the Peel River area and destroy that entire watershed as well -- chomping at the bit to go into pristine country in the north and destroy it. If it's not uranium mining, it's drilling for oil. As if we need it, other than to say the government of the day can pat themselves on the back for opening a big uranium mine in the Yukon, even though there are all kinds of negative effects that come with doing such a project.

At some point in time, mankind has to try to make a decision that will benefit the environment. We've done without a uranium mine in the Yukon since the gold rush. Even the gold rush wasn't a positive thing for this country. It sure wasn't for all the First Nation people who lived here. It practically caused the destruction of a whole race of people, but it was another big part of the history of the north.

Mr. Chair, I would like to start out today by talking just a little bit about the Wind River. The first question I have for the acting minister is: is the Wind River part of the Peel River watershed?

Hon. Mr. Kenyon: Not being a geographer, I can't directly answer that one. A lot of it depends on how you define it.

But he does bring up some interesting points. Certainly the overview and prologue there of the member's comments have value. I don't think that anyone needs a degree or a doctorate in demographics or statistics to realize that, with growing population and everything else, things are changing and growing and that there is pressure on many parts of the environment.

It is true that uranium mining was not there in the gold rush but Madame Curie hadn't quite stumbled onto the powers of that as of yet. That is true, but it's a little bit strange to inject that in.

I think we do have to look at all these things. I think we do have to do a proper evaluation. We have to do it with fact and not fiction, and that is the challenge with this particular issue.

Again, drawing on my background and my former life, so to speak, people, in a medical sense, will say, "Gee, we see a lot more cancer these days." Well, we see it to a large degree and of course there are risk factors and other things, but to the largest degree we see those problems because people age and we're living longer. As we cure one disease, we're discovering others that are popping up.

I remember one presentation -- and it really puts it into perspective. When you think about what you've really accomplished and done in your own life, it is a sobering thought that when Mozart was the age of the member opposite and me, he had been dead for over 30 years.

With the lengthening lifespan and everything else, is technology responsible for a lot of that? Yes, it is. Is technology therefore a bad thing? Well, that's sort of, you know, people saying that I don't care if I'm dead when I'm 65. They feel that way until they're 64, and then suddenly they have a very different view of the world. Could we do without a lot of the technology? We probably could, but we would lose on the front of lifespan, of quality of life, more disease, more of everything. So it really is a challenge with that. But again, I stress to the member opposite, we really need to make those determinations with fact and not with the fiction that sometimes enters those debates.

Mr. Edzerza: Well, Mr. Chair, I don't believe that this is fiction. It's not fiction. The facts are that there is proposed exploration in the Peel River watershed. To the best of my knowledge, the Wind River is in the Peel River watershed. Mr. Chair, some of the information I have -- and the minister may dispute this, or he may agree that this is what is being proposed -- is that there is going to be a winter access road in the Wind River area. That's being proposed. I believe the government is supporting that. It's a 250-kilometre road with 23 kilometres of spur roads with areas being widened to accommodate fixed-wing aircraft. There are two dozers to construct the road. To transport fuel and gear to caches along the road in camps, four dozers will pull sleds holding 240,000 litres of diesel, 160,000 litres of jet fuel and 800,000 kilograms of propane.

It's very easy to see that there's a real threat here to the watershed. If one of those tanks were to puncture and drain into the watershed, what would it do? I am bringing this up today to make people aware that this is a very serious undertaking. It has to be treated with a lot of respect and consideration.

As a member of society and as a Yukoner, I am not trying to stop progress in the Yukon, but I certainly want to stop the possibility of completely destroying the watershed, like we did with the Yukon River. We have used the Yukon River for sewage disposal for hundreds of years. I have a problem with that. In my mind, there is absolutely no need to do that.

This watershed is pretty pure right now. It won't be for long, once we get in there. Once this starts to take place, it will no longer be pure, I can almost guarantee that. All we have to do is go up the South Canol Road to Norman Wells. Drive

along there and see all the damage that was done to that beautiful country.

My question to the acting minister: does he think that this might be a real potential threat to the environment of this area?

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

Recess

Chair: Order please. The matter before the Committee is Bill No. 8, *Second Appropriation Act, 2007-08*, Department of Environment.

Hon. Mr. Kenyon: I will hit some of the high points of the questions from the member opposite. No, the government is not supporting anything to do with the application that he refers to. It is a private application through the YESA Board, and it is a YESAA process and we leave it with YESAB for their information and such.

The member opposite refers to Norman Wells and the damage there. We certainly look at different regimes and different ways of doing things now, and mining a number of years ago, for instance, is not anything close to the mining that is done today. We have to look at it with current technology and current everything. We don't have to look at it, it is really YESAB that has to look at it and we await their good work. In his comments earlier about the gold rush, well, half of the quartet that discovered the gold were First Nations people, so I think we both have to bear some blame on that one I suppose.

Mr. Edzerza: I'm not really blaming anyone for anything. I'm saying to look at history and learn from it. Sure, First Nations were involved in finding the gold. They are partly to blame for the destruction that went on with the gold. Along with this came a lot of hardship. Anyway, that's history, and we're making history every day. I certainly hope that my grandchildren don't stand in the Legislature one day and say, "You know, if we had listened to Grandpa 50 years ago, all that beautiful river up there wouldn't be so wrecked now. That country wouldn't be destroyed." It's possible.

Mr. Chair, as I was talking about that likelihood, the minister didn't answer the question. I think he just avoided it. That's okay.

The government did state that they would support anybody exploring for uranium. In fact, the acting minister stated that there were, I believe, six or 12 companies actively exploring for uranium.

This winter road development is within the Peel River watershed and the Yukon River watershed. I just want to put on record a few possible problems that people need to be aware of. Number one, any time a Caterpillar goes across the land, you can follow the tracks. I don't care if it's in winter or summer. You will see the tracks. Now, in my work history, I have operated a Cat that went cross-country on a Cat train. I did run a Cat train; I actually pulled it. I would be the first one to say that it's almost impossible not to have oil and diesel dumped here and there wherever you go with a Cat. It all depends on the condition of the equipment. Is the equipment broken down? Is

it old equipment that leaks five or 10 gallons of oil a day as you're travelling with it? We don't know this, but this is a potential problem.

I know that you can't travel across the land with a D8 Caterpillar and not damage it. It's impossible. It all depends on the operator and whether or not they have respect for the environment. They may knock over 150 or 200 trees unnecessarily when going over a 250-kilometre stretch of land.

I want to ask the acting minister if he would agree that these are potentially real problems and they could be very serious problems. For example, there would be increased access to the region by hunters and all people with ATVs and skidoos. There is no way around it. Once we have a road, people are going to use it. People who would never have thought of going in there before because they wouldn't have been able to find their way back out following their own tracks would gladly follow a Caterpillar train road. It's easy to do that on a four-wheeler. There is going to be increased use of that area, again, increasing the risk of environmental damage to the area.

What about all the damage to the land, vegetation, spills and barriers to wildlife movement? All those things are potential problems. Contamination of the water is number one. As I said, I don't know of a Cat train yet that has travelled a long distance, such as is being recommended here, where you wouldn't be able to follow them and see absolutely no contamination whatsoever. There has to be.

Once this area becomes a well-travelled and used area, it no longer draws people from across the world because of its pristine wilderness. Once you have development, it's no longer virgin territory.

I just want to ask the acting Environment minister if he would agree that all of these are very serious issues and that the utmost respect should be given to issues such as these.

Hon. Mr. Kenyon: Where do I start on this one? First of all, for the member opposite, if I missed something in his previous question before the break, it wasn't a question of avoiding it. I simply forgot what he was talking about.

This whole issue is before the YESA Board. It's not a government matter. The member takes an issue with government support. I say that the government does not support that. I think that it is something like six companies in 12 different areas. We don't really care if they're exploring for kryptonite. We're not supporting kryptonite or uranium; we are simply allowing the businesses to do their business and to do their exploration. We'll deal with what they find as it comes along but, in the exploration of it, we are not supporting that in any way, shape or form.

The member talks about destruction and oil -- oil leaks and everything else. He seems to be hung up on this but the main thing on this is Energy, Mines and Resources will have a permit, terms and conditions that come out of the YESA Board assessment if, in fact, it is allowed to proceed. That is a YESA Board decision. They will look at that; they will certainly respond and it's a regulatory body, as the member knows well. If there are oil slicks going in or coming out, then certainly I have a feeling that we would have responded long before that.

I'm a little confused that the member thinks that following the tracks made by a Cat would be easier to follow than the person's own tracks if they got in there. They would have to get in there somehow and just simply backtrack. But anyway, the main thing on this is dealing with reality and dealing with fact. I think that doing that and utilizing the Internet to generate more letters to the YESA Board than in all other issues combined, to the Mayo office, to a large degree subverts the whole process. We need knowledgeable people writing knowledgeable comments, knowing the process and knowing what's involved in that.

Putting up a Web site, for instance, that says things like, "plans to bulldoze roads" -- well, the road has been there since the early 1950s, so they are going in with a CAT. But somehow "planning to bulldoze roads" puts a spin on it that is just a little bit strange. Then try to put it in terms of trying, "to save cash on highly speculative uranium exploration". That really has nothing to do with the issue; and, "pre-empts the land use planning," also has a lot to do with YESAA, but somehow that isn't mentioned in the Web site. It then refers to, "extreme hazards of radio-active wastes". Again, this is regulated in totally different areas and is highly useful in anything from power generation -- which many environmentalist are starting to recognize that, properly done, can be a very green way of doing it. It completely ignores the medical uses and everything else. It refers to, "many jurisdictions have imposed moratoriums". Well, it is only Nova Scotia and they don't have uranium anyway so that is a really easy moratorium. It goes on and on.

I don't take issue with either direction on this; this is YESAB's decision. Regardless of all the third party comments and all the whipping up of the issue, it is in a YESAA class screening procedure. It will go through that. Everyone has a chance to look at it.

The actual claim of bulldozing roads -- well, it is actually going to use an existing piece of winter trail that was cut in there in the late 1950s and is still in very good condition. The various permits that have been issued over the years -- since 1989 -- include eight permits for equipment and supply transport to and from the mining properties along there. It is in very good condition. It is an existing road and it needs some topping up and such, and it is up to YESAB to make that determination. The reality is that the trail exists now and snowmobiles and ATVs are in there all of the time.

One person reports that, from 1980 until 2002, they had flown that route over four times per year and that there were snowmobile tracks on every trip.

Again, I don't know. It is up to YESAB to make that determination. These are the sorts of things we have to look at realistically. The airstrip mentioned, I think, is actually a widening of the road at one point in an area that is very sparsely vegetated, but we leave YESAB to make that determination. That is why it exists. That's why it came out of the land claims agreements and that's why we think it has a great deal of importance. Again, Energy, Mines and Resources is the regulatory body. They will have permit terms and conditions to address the issues that the member opposite refers to, should it

proceed through the YESAA process. That's exactly why it's in front of YESAB now.

Mr. Edzerza: Maybe that's part of the concern for me and a number of Yukon citizens. The government doesn't always respect the recommendations of the YESA Board and that is a problem.

Shallow Bay is a good example. YESAB gave recommendations that the government didn't respect. We know that there are recommendations and the government may not honour those recommendations. That's may be one question the acting minister can confirm today. Would the government honour 100 percent of the recommendations from the YESA Board with regard to this area?

I know that under the land use planning and protection of the Peel River watershed, there was another group that was organized. It was called the Peel River Watershed Advisory Committee. They have a number of responsibilities. Under 17.2.3, it states that the committee shall consider and make recommendations respecting -- and it goes on to 17.3(b), which states: the establishment of a regional land use planning commission or similar agency within Yukon for any area, which includes the Peel River watershed.

My question to the acting minister: which one of these committees has the jurisdiction to say what you do in that area? Is it YESAB or is it the Peel River Watershed Advisory Committee?

Hon. Mr. Kenyon: As he well knows, public government and First Nation governments make the decision there. There are advisory bodies, certainly. But as the member opposite well knows, those decisions on this issue are all within Energy, Mines and Resources, not within Environment. I invite him to ask those questions at the appropriate time in the debate.

Mr. Edzerza: I don't believe that. The acting minister just finished saying that they'll take their recommendations from the YESA Board. The Peel River Watershed Advisory Committee is another safeguard that was put in place to protect the watersheds of the Peel River.

One would have to ask the question: if that wasn't such sacred land and pristine wilderness, why do we have to have so many advisory boards and committees to try to protect that watershed?

I believe it is an environmental question. It has nothing to do with YESAA; it has nothing to do with what the acting minister said -- that it's up to Energy, Mines and Resources. This is about environment. I'm not talking about mining; I'm talking about possible destruction of a watershed that you'll never be able to clean up once it's done.

I believe I've exhausted my questioning with regard to the Wind River. I believe there will be a lot of concerned citizens who will come out in defence of ensuring that this very important watershed isn't destroyed by mankind, as others in the Yukon have been.

I'll now go on to a few questions regarding waste and contamination. Is the acting minister aware of all the PCB dump sites that the American army left throughout the Yukon Territory?

Hon. Mr. Kenyon: To answer some of the member's other questions on this, the Department of Environment does have a member on the land use board, and we have another similar board on the Mackenzie River system. These are good things. They allow the technical reviews and such, but the final decision rests with one or the other, or both jointly, with public government, First Nation government, et cetera. And as the member quite well knows, for our government that rests with Energy, Mines and Resources. We certainly await the decision.

But, again, I want the decision made by fact and not by fiction and fantasy, which has been the approach of the Web site I referred to.

In terms of PCB contamination and such, we certainly know about a number of them, and there are a number we haven't found yet, to be blunt. There are probably a number still out there. We are responsible for booking our environmental liability at the request of the Auditor General, in her usual and ongoing evaluation -- as opposed to the Official Opposition, which wants to make it look like this is an investigation. We deal with the Auditor General's Office all the time.

One thing that we were asked to do years ago was to start booking environmental liability. And the fact of the matter is that, when we start digging in some areas, we often find things we didn't know were there. War is a terrible thing, and when that was occurring, often -- for a variety of reasons -- adequate records weren't kept. We'd love to go back and change that, but the reality is that we really can't go back and do that at all.

The federal government has a continuing responsibility for that, as well -- I do have to point that out -- for contaminated sites. When these things happen on their watch, such as during the war with the American army involvement -- this was clearly during the federal government's watch. We do have a government environmental liabilities and remediation program. It is to be housed within the Department of Environment. It was passed by Management Board in February 2007. We will be looking at that on an ongoing basis. Again, for the member opposite, I guess that is the general overview for his question.

Mr. Edzerza: I asked that question because it appears that there are many citizens in the territory who harvest food in different areas of the Yukon. Berry picking is one of them. It has been brought to my attention that probably in a number of locations along the Alaska Highway that are good for berries, such as raspberries, there was some information that there may have been an army dump located in the area where the berries were being picked. Some of the First Nations really believe that there was a large increase of cancer among some of their citizens. They tend to believe that it may be from the contaminated soil from around these waste dumps where the berries are growing.

If the government is aware of where some of the sites are -- not necessarily every one, like the acting minister stated, where he said we know where some, but not all, are located -- are these sites marked with some kind of warning signs regarding possible contamination of berries or food found in the area?

Hon. Mr. Kenyon: The Yukon government, in conjunction with the Government of Canada, does have a contamination or contaminants program. We work together on that;

there is sampling on an ongoing basis to this day and we take those samples. If the member opposite has any information or concerns of specific areas, I'm sure the department would be more than happy to include those areas, either provide the information done already, or to test those areas.

The comment on increase in cancer rates, I'm suspicious is to a large degree not accurate. He's into an area here that involves epidemiology and such. Are there mitigating factors? Are there risk factors, for want of a better term -- things that have been developed or more commonly brought into use that could be a carcinogen? That's possible and that's something that we always have to look at but, for the most part, when you compare it to the past and you compare the longevity of people these days, as we cure some diseases, obviously as the population ages, they tend to get other new diseases.

In reviewing the Canadian Cancer Society statistics a few months ago, interestingly enough most cancer rates in Canada are going down. They're actually getting better. That's good news for Canadians. However, there are two factors to that. With an aging population, when you do hit a certain age, you start hearing about it more. Given a small jurisdiction of Yukon and a smaller jurisdiction of small villages and towns -- Whitehorse I would put back into that -- you tend to know a lot of people. I lived in Toronto for years and I didn't even know who was living next door to me. Here I tend to know a lot of people, so consequently, you hear of cancers coming up as a common disease. I think when you really look at the statistics, as the Canadian Cancer Society has done, the reality is it is not up, but is actually down in most areas, with a few very noticeable exceptions.

I think, off the top, of asbestos and some of the asbestos mines and then suddenly the realization of what asbestos was doing to people. So there are unusual circumstances like that but, for the most part, I would argue that point with the member.

Mr. Edzerza: I'd also like to just explore climate change a little bit with the minister. I know the government has talked extensively in the past about their climate change research centre. I was just wondering how far along the climate change research centre is and what the centre will really do.

Hon. Mr. Kenyon: First of all, I would suggest to the member opposite to go back and read the questions from the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin. We've covered that ground to a degree.

To revisit that a little bit, the main instrument for implementing the climate change strategy will, of course, be through the development and implementation of the Yukon government climate change action plan. Development of that plan is currently underway with a draft expected pretty well now, or within the next week or two. Public consultation will take place during January and February 2008, with a final plan to be released in late spring 2008.

Our government is committed to taking action where it will be the most effective over the long term. So we're committed to building healthy, resilient communities that are able to respond to the implications of climate change, and this includes developing adaptive responses as well as reducing greenhouse

gas emissions. As I mentioned before, greenhouse gas emissions are something we all have to take seriously -- I don't argue against the type of car that you drive, the type of house that you have, et cetera. All these things are essential, but the reality in the Yukon is that we're such a minor player in that whole area and we can't control an awful lot of it.

An example of that is the very first state of the environment report. The Official Opposition was quoted in *Hansard* the other day as saying that we had never produced a report. Actually, we have. I tabled it. It was tabled two years after the date, thanks to the previous Liberal government, which was no better than we were in putting it out. It had something in it. It was a review of old data. One of the things it said was that 4.7 percent of greenhouse gas emissions came out of the two gas wells in Kotanelee. The problem with that is that there is no blow off or burn off. The pipes come out of the ground and immediately go into British Columbia. I couldn't imagine why this would appear in a report that would alert people to this terrible situation that really wasn't true.

After much kicking and screaming, we found that it had been taken from a report done in Ottawa, written by someone who had never been to the Yukon and had never researched it. They looked at statistics on gas wells in Alberta and concluded that these must be the same. Well, they're not the same; they're not even close. We put out more greenhouse gas trying to get to the well to have a look at it than the well would ever produce. In fact, when the final numbers came in, it was 0.047 rather than 4.7. In effect, they had missed by two decimal places. This gives members an idea of how erroneous the reports can actually be.

At the same time, when one looks statistically at information coming out on greenhouse gases, rising temperatures and global warming, I think a lot of people down south still look at how the average temperature over so many years went up one degree, on average. That's nice, except that is on average. When we look at what happens near the equator, as opposed to what happens in the north, it might have gone up a couple of degrees in the north and that might be enough to start melting permafrost in large areas. That may be enough to open a hole in a lake in Old Crow that suddenly, catastrophically, fails. It is enough to cause major problems in road construction.

The American and Canadian armies found that out really fast when they did the Alaska Highway. They scraped off the surface and built a road. Well, guess what? Everything sank because they had forgotten about permafrost and that's something we have to look at. While we can do the least about global warming, we are affected the most.

So this is why we have a real commitment to establishing Yukon College as a major climate change research centre of excellence -- a research cluster. The federal government through Natural Resources Canada, or NRC, has a number of research clusters scattered across Canada -- none of them in the north. So it's our intention to pursue this initiative through a partnership with the federal government, the Council of Yukon First Nations and Yukon College.

Over the coming months, we will be working with our partners to identify gaps, opportunities, and options to support

the next steps. Although at an early stage of planning, it's envisioned that a research centre of excellence will attract more research to Yukon, build on the existing knowledge and ensure that Yukoners benefit from the results of northern research. It will increase economic and institutional benefits of research and enhance the capacity of Yukon College. It may in fact be a first step in extending the capacity of Yukon College into something closer to a university -- something I know is near and dear to the NDP heart.

At this point, the determination of physical structure and location have not been made. But we have recently appointed a project lead to initiate discussions with the key partners to identify common principles and goals. So we are starting to make progress on that.

Our government does have a platform commitment to establish Yukon College as that major climate change research centre of excellence to address the sustainability in a rapidly changing climate through innovation, adaptation and mitigation measures, to make Yukon College, with its community campuses -- a big advantage we have -- a leader in climate change research and development and to find ways to mitigate damage to the boreal forest, such as the spruce bark beetle and the pine beetle infestations that are likely part of this whole syndrome.

So we are making progress on that. Other things we could be looking at in terms of cold climate that could support this include construction -- and I won't belabour the facts or the programs of the Yukon Housing Corporation that I went through earlier. There are all sorts of areas there in terms of construction. I have to be cautious and not screw this one up because I did in Old Crow on a community tour and they are still laughing up there. While we are trying to keep the cold out, in the tropical climates they are trying to keep the cold in, and often it is the same technology -- I reversed that in Old Crow and it didn't go over well. It is the same technology in terms of insulation and construction and that sort of thing. We are also looking at the possibility of cold weather testing of vehicles -- we are looking at that as a potential project -- and cold weather testing of a number of other things, including road construction, dealing with permafrost, et cetera. So the idea is to bring these research groups in and accomplish all the things I have listed before.

Mr. Edzerza: I thank the acting minister for the explanations he gave. We know that climate change is a very serious issue around the world. I think it is going to be even more noticeable in the north. There is much to be done. This government, I know, likes to talk about its climate change strategy and we will eagerly await the climate change action plan to be released in 2008. But the clock is ticking and the world scientists are saying that climate change is occurring faster than predicted.

There are things that can be done now -- simple things. The Premier has minimized the issue in the past. He said that the Yukon contributes so little to the problem because we don't have much in the way of manufacturing and other large-scale developments. But, Mr. Chair, per capita, Canadians are some of the biggest polluters, consumers of energy and creators of greenhouse gas emissions. The north is experiencing climate

change in more dramatic ways than in other places, and putting a halt to climate change is everyone's problem.

I could probably spend two days on the environment asking different questions, but I'm just going to close off by maybe giving the acting minister some ideas to consider that he could perhaps pass on to the Premier -- ideas like the following: create a registered environment savings plan; save income taxes through investment or individual greenhouse gas reductions; ban the use of pesticides; publish a list of the worst polluters in the Yukon; create an environmental ombudsman; green the Yukon territorial government; provide funding and facilitate community adaptation planning; maybe even create a Yukon eco-trust.

These are just some ideas that are but a few words on paper, but can have a very positive effect on the Yukon.

I am going to thank the acting minister and of course thank all the staff who work in Environment, because we certainly realize that it's not the staff in Environment who are responsible for a lot of the damage that was done over the years. I know they'll work very diligently to ensure that the pristine wilderness in this territory that has not been destroyed by mankind to this date isn't destroyed. Thank you.

Hon. Mr. Kenyon: From some of the terminology, I think the member opposite has been reading some books. We certainly do agree with the concepts of greening the government. We have downsized the fleet. We have reduced the number of vehicles we use and gone to, in some cases, more green vehicles with less fuel consumption and more fuel efficiency. We have utilized rental services for cars that are there without having to buy another one.

There are Yukon Housing Corporation programs that I talked about earlier with the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin. I won't go through them again, but I invite the Member for McIntyre-Takhini to read *Hansard*. They are all there and documented. There is also the work with the Energy Solutions Centre and some of their very good work. Within the northern strategy, there are already approved funds to mitigate some of this.

I think we all recognize the nature of the problem. We will continue to utilize the good staff of the Department of Environment to accomplish what we have to do.

Mr. Elias: I have a couple more questions for the acting Environment minister. It is just an observation and also a danger that I see might be happening with regard to the renewable resources councils, the new self-governing First Nations and the relationship envisioned in the land claims agreements. I have talked about this issue with members of the renewable resources councils and other people.

A comment to me was that the RRCs are being rendered a bit ineffective and that the governments are working together on issues that are to be managed by the RRCs. I am just wondering how the acting minister feels about some of those comments and issues with respect to RRCs being rendered ineffective in terms of their recommendations to the minister and to the First Nations, because the government leaders talk to each other and discuss these matters. Sometimes that happens through fish and wildlife management plans, et cetera. I am

wondering if he's aware of the problem and, if so, how will he make sure that the land claims agreements are respected?

Hon. Mr. Kenyon: The member opposite actually brings up a very good point on that. The RRCs -- renewable resource councils -- are another advisory body established under the land claim process. But, at the end of the day, the final decision rests between the two governments.

While we've had cases where the RRC has come up with a decision that public government is not totally pleased with, we have to also recognize that I've had a number of them where the RRC has come up with a decision that the First Nation government isn't really ecstatic over either.

They are an advisory body, and they have a very important role. At the end of the day, we are required, desire to, and will respect the land claim agreements and treaty rights of government-to-government relations.

Mr. Elias: I'll move on to a question I raised regarding the Mayo landfill. I was just wondering if there is anything being done to clean up that environmental issue there with regard to contaminated soil being stored there. I'm just wondering if the acting minister can give me an update on when this site is going to be cleaned up and how.

Hon. Mr. Kenyon: I've certainly walked up there and dug around in that dike, and I agree with the member. There are some real problems, even in terms of solid waste, sharp objects and this sort of thing.

The project identified approximately 2,400 cubic metres of petroleum hydrocarbon contaminated soils, and they were essentially moved to the Mayo dump. The original plan was to treat the soils in the 2006 construction season, but the two public tenders received to do the work were way above the approved budget, and the project did not proceed in 2006.

However, by re-sampling and re-testing the soils in place at the dump, Community Services has confirmed that about 1,400 cubic metres of the soil actually meets industrial standards and can be left on-site for use by the Village of Mayo as solid-waste cover.

An invitational tender has been issued to Yukon's three operational and treatment facilities to relocate and treat the remaining approximately 1,000 cubic metres. The awarding of the contract was to have been in the last few days so, again, that really is Community Services but, for the member opposite, that's the information.

On Operation and Maintenance Expenditures

On General Management

General Management in the amount of \$18,000 agreed to

On Corporate Services

Corporate Services in the amount of \$187,000 agreed to

On Environmental Sustainability

Environmental Sustainability in the amount of \$533,000 agreed to

Total Operation and Maintenance Expenditures in the amount of \$738,000 agreed to

On Capital Expenditures

On Corporate Services

On Information Systems, Equipment and Furniture

On Yukon Environment Information System

Yukon Environment Information System in the amount of \$33,000 agreed to

On Office Furniture, Equipment, Systems and Space

Office Furniture, Equipment, Systems and Space in the amount of \$23,000 agreed to

On Lands and Facilities

On Yukon Wildlife Preserve

Mr. Elias: Could I get a breakdown on this and what exactly it's for?

Hon. Mr. Kenyon: Basically this is a revote to enable the completion of various critical projects at the Yukon Wildlife Preserve that we weren't able to complete by the end of the season. There were some timing delays. It primarily involves double fencing, surveying cut lines, animal feeding stations, demolition of a couple of condemned buildings that really should be dropped down, some office renovations and some critical infrastructure repairs and upgrades. It's a revote for things we weren't able to do in the past season.

Yukon Wildlife Preserve in the amount of \$283,000 agreed to

On Watson Lake Facility Expansion

Watson Lake Facility Expansion in the amount of \$41,000 agreed to

On Corporate Planning Initiatives

On Legislation Development

Mr. Elias: Could I get a breakdown on this, please?

Hon. Mr. Kenyon: Legislation development and the \$42,000 revolve around revote approved for work on amendments to the *Wildlife Act* and species at risk legislation that was delayed in 2006-07, primarily due to the election call. It was a timing issue.

Legislation Development in the amount of \$42,000 agreed to

On Claims Implementation and Aboriginal Affairs

On Inuvialuit Final Agreement (IFA)

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

Hon. Mr. Kenyon: This relates, Mr. Chair, back to our obligations under the *Inuvialuit Final Agreement* and the fact that the Herschel Island airstrip was covered in sand. As I mentioned in my prologue, it was for equipment purchase, primarily in ATV and blade and getting it up there to clear the Herschel Island airstrip and to get it operational. The funds were transferred from operation and maintenance and offset by a corresponding decrease in the operation and maintenance budget. All of that is 100-percent recoverable.

Inuvialuit Final Agreement (IFA) in the amount of \$28,000 agreed to

On Environmental Sustainability

On Fish and Wildlife Management

On Fish and Wildlife Management Planning

Fish and Wildlife Management Planning in the amount of \$10,000 agreed to

On NatureServe Yukon

Mr. Elias: Can I get a breakdown?

Hon. Mr. Kenyon: This is a revote that was approved for data compilation and reporting on the general status of Yukon wildlife species and all the things that the Member for

Vuntut Gwitchin was asking about. This is where it's coming in. The funds required for the projects -- studying sedge in Carcross, Kluanne Park -- the item is 100-percent recoverable from Environment Canada and Parks Canada. It also includes a \$3,000 chunk in there for collective agreement increases.

*NatureServe Yukon in the amount of \$46,000 agreed to
On Biophysical Land Classification and Mapping*

Mr. Elias: Could I get a breakdown and is this with regard to the priority areas we discussed earlier and, if so, what are they?

Hon. Mr. Kenyon: This is a revote approved for design of a strategic and tactical plan for establishing a biophysical and land classification system for Yukon. It does relate in conjunction with Energy, Mines and Resources and that whole thing. We work in conjunction with them. Both the broad scope of the project and the contract tendering process resulted in the contract not being completed by year-end. So that accounts for \$31,000 of that. A further \$3,000 was again collective agreement increases. The delay on that was due to a variety of factors, but primarily there was a slow uptake by contractors, just trying to get people to do the work and having to space it out so we don't overwhelm the community.

Biophysical Land Classification and Mapping in the amount of \$34,000 agreed to

On Parks

On Parks Special Management Areas Planning

Parks Special Management Areas Planning in the amount of \$15,000 agreed to

On Special Management Areas Resource Assessment

Special Management Areas Resource Assessment in the amount of \$2,000 agreed to

On Territorial Campgrounds and Day Use Areas

On Capital Works -- Campground Facilities

Capital Works -- Campground Facilities in the amount of \$6,000 agreed to

On Total of Other Capital Expenditures

Total of Other Capital Expenditures in the amount of nil cleared

Total Capital Expenditures in the amount of \$563,000 agreed to

On Revenues

Revenues cleared

Department of Environment agreed to

Department of Highways and Public Works

Chair: Committee of the Whole will now move on to Highways and Public Works. Committee of the Whole will recess for five minutes for officials.

Some Hon. Member: Point of order.

Point of order

Mr. McRobb: Mr. Chair, we are expecting a speech from the minister. He doesn't need officials to hold his hand to read a speech. Let's continue on. There is only 20 minutes left in the day.

Chair's ruling

Chair: On the point of order, there is no point of order. Committee of the Whole will recess for five minutes for officials to arrive.

Recess

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

The matter before the Committee is Bill No. 8, *Second Appropriation Act, 2007-08*, Department of Highways and Public Works.

Hon. Mr. Lang: I am pleased to speak to Bill No. 8 for Highways and Public Works for the year 2007-08.

The Department of Highways and Public Works is a broad and highly diverse department that is responsible for connecting those within our great territory, not only to each other, but also to those beyond our borders through our network of roads, highways and airports.

In addition, the department is responsible for information technology management, fleet vehicle services and procurement services for the government.

This department is staffed by a very capable group of people who, through hard work and efficiency, are responsible, on a daily basis, for most of the territory's infrastructure, as well as providing the other services previously mentioned to those of us who reside in this vast land, as well as those just coming to visit.

Mr. Chair, it is with pleasure that I present some of the department's budget highlights.

The two-year Donjek River bridge replacement was completed this fall and is one of several initiatives funded under the U.S.-Canada Shakwak agreement. Funds in this budget were increased by \$436,000, bringing the total budget of this project to almost \$30 million, and are 100-percent recoverable under the Shakwak agreement.

The new bridge consists of eight spans and is 270 metres long with extensive river embankments and causeway constructions. A major part of the work was to ensure that the bridge met seismic requirements of the Canadian highway bridge design code and, having done so, this bridge now has a lifespan of 75 years.

I had the honour of attending the reopening ceremony of this bridge in early October. I would like to congratulate everyone who worked on this project on the completion of this bridge. It was done through the hard work and dedication of this department as well as through a valuable working relationship with our First Nation counterparts. Yukoners benefited from the employment opportunities this project brought to our territory and will now benefit from the results of their efforts.

The department takes pride in their ability to enhance the safety and condition of the Yukon portion of the Alaska Highway, especially in light of the recent events of bridge collapses in the United States. Upgrading and maintaining our bridges is a key example of sound transportation asset management. Meeting and maintaining safety standards, not only on the terri-

tory's bridges but on all infrastructure, is a key priority of this department, as is ensuring the safety of the travelling public.

Further Shakwak initiatives underway include the design and construction of both the Duke River and Slim River bridges. We have committed over \$30 million over the next three years to upgrade the Campbell Highway. These improvements, coupled with the renewed interest in mines located along that route, make it a favourable ingredient for a strong economic recipe. A supplementary increase of over \$1 million has been allocated this year to this project to allow for early tendering over the winter season and pre-engineering and design work.

Improving this highway is one way this department helps pave the road to economic sustainability. To further ensure the driving safety of our general public and those who visit, we have a supplementary amount of \$238,000 in addition to the original budget amount of \$2 million for the pavement rehabilitation and geotechnical design on both the Alaska Highway, which is Highway No. 1, and the Klondike Highway, which is Highway No. 2.

We continue to make progress with our rural roads upgrade program, including a \$50,000 upgrade to the Annie Lake Road to better serve lot owners.

We're spending \$50,000 on gravel upgrading projects on the mining roads in Dawson City and an \$11,000 allotment to engineering design work for those roads, plus a \$7,000 upgrade to the Pennycook road.

Strategic investment in Yukon's critical infrastructure is beneficial to improving the health and safety of our communities and also benefits local employment and economic growth.

In keeping with economic growth, our upgrades to the Whitehorse International Airport are moving forward. This year, Highways and Public Works has completed the schematic design for the airport and is moving forward with the expansion plans. The budget has decreased by \$2.7 million as a result of the building phase being moved into the spring of the 2008-09 fiscal year, with a proposed completion date the fall of 2009.

You may have already used the new parking lot facility that has been substantially completed this fall. The parking lot will be completed in its entirety by next summer and will allow for a smooth flow of traffic. The government is working in a variety of ways to enhance Yukon as a travelling destination. These projects focus on ensuring that Whitehorse Airport continues to be a significant gateway for tourists travelling to and from the Yukon.

The Department of Highways and Public Works is taking a strong leadership role in increasing international and domestic air access and capacity of Yukon.

Also, to further increase safety at the airport, it is with pride that I'm able to announce that through the Government of Canada's airports capacity assistance plan, funding has been secured for the purchase of an aircraft rescue and firefighting vehicle, related safety equipment and modifications to the existing fire hall at the Whitehorse International Airport.

We have purchased one truck this year and have deferred funds of \$1.2 million for the purchase of a second vehicle in the year 2008-09.

These purchases allow us to provide a higher category of safety services and ensure we are in a position to support the continued growth in tourism and economic activities in the territory.

While we are on the subject of airports within our territory, I would like to take a moment now to recognize Joe Sparling and his rise to the top in the aviation industry. Mr. Sparling was awarded the Transportation Association of Canada achievement award in October of this year for his business ingenuity that has resulted in the aviation success story of the north. To Mr. Sparling, the staff of Air North and the Vuntut Gwitchin co-owners, congratulations.

This department carries many other responsibilities in addition to managing our roads and airports. The information and communication technology branch is a key player that this government needs to better serve the public. An additional \$700,000 has been allotted to this branch, bringing the total to over \$4.5 million. This allows the dedicated employees to more than adequately fulfill the role by providing government programs and replacing aging and, of course, outdated equipment.

Through ongoing investments in business continuity planning, this department continues to display good governance and corporate preparedness. We are also continuing to improve our corporate systems and infrastructure by implementing fibre optic upgrades and connections within Whitehorse, as well as implementing human resources management systems and corporate records management systems.

Investing in information technology is money well spent, because staying on top of technology and technological advancements will help and strengthen not only this department but also the government. Part of this investment includes close to \$1 million in the multi-department mobile radio system. These funds extend the service of our existing system while we continue to invest in finding a solution for a new system, and we are currently in consultation to do just that.

The department continues to stay ahead in Transportation Engineering and Planning with the \$350,000 revote increase to apply an intelligent transportation system strategy, a road condition reporting system and a vehicle location and monitoring system.

This department is also fully committed to developing excellent working relationships with counterparts outside our department as we do within.

Intergovernmental relations involves working closely with your neighbours, not only in the Yukon government but with outside jurisdictions. Our pan-northern cooperation relationship with Northwest Territories and Nunavut continues to yield positive results with the release of the northern vision -- a framework developed to navigate today's changing environment, overcome challenges and leverage opportunities toward a stronger north.

Also, there is a pan-territorial initiative aimed at securing funding specifically for the three northern jurisdictions. It is our hope that northern-specific transportation needs and challenges will be adequately addressed and provided for. Working together with our northern counterparts, the private sector and northerners will help us reach our shared goals and objectives.

As always, our department is concerned with the environment and implementing Yukon's climate change strategy. Climate change is an issue relevant to everyone, regardless of their department. I am happy to share with the House today what this department is doing to help.

The Shakwak permafrost distress project is working with scientists at Laval University to study the effect of climate change on permafrost stability in northern climates in an attempt to develop a strategy for stable and safe transportation infrastructure in remote northern areas. It is in conjunction with these scientists that the department is working to closely monitor and maintain permafrost-rich areas in sections of the north Alaska Highway, demonstrating its commitment to action on this issue. This department is committed to investing in Yukoners by enabling them to enter the workforce well-equipped and well-prepared with the skills and knowledge they need to positively and viably contribute to the territory's workforce.

The northern strategy trust fund has allocated \$1.4 million to develop a northern strategy training project dedicated to skill development for Yukon First Nation citizens. This program allows participants to remain in their home communities while acquiring skills that will allow them to actively compete in the job market in the future.

Seeing the time, I move we report progress.

Chair: It has been moved by Mr. Lang 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 will now call the House to order.

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

Chair's report

Mr. Nordick: Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 8, *Second Appropriation Act, 2007-08*, and directed me to report progress.

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

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Speaker: I declare the report carried.

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

The House adjourned at 5:30 p.m.