

Whitehorse, Yukon
Tuesday, December 11, 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.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Elias: Mr. Speaker, I ask that all members join me in recognizing the presence of Lorraine Peter, former MLA for Vuntut Gwitchin, in the gallery today.

Applause

Hon. Mr. Kenyon: Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure today to ask all members of this Assembly to welcome the grade 5 class from Whitehorse Elementary School, their teacher, Ms. Gloria Roman, and in the front row, grandson number one, Mr. Marcus Deuling.

Applause

Speaker: Further introduction of visitors.
 Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Mr. Elias: Mr. Speaker, I have a written question for tabling today.

Hon. Mr. Kenyon: Mr. Speaker, I have for tabling today the annual report of the Yukon Liquor Corporation, dated April 1, 2006 to March 31, 2007.

Mr. Speaker, I also have for tabling today the *Yukon State of the Environment Interim Report* for 2003.

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

Reports of committees.

Are there any petitions to be presented?

Are there any bills to be introduced?

Are there any notices of motion?

NOTICES OF MOTION

Mr. Inverarity: I give notice of the following motion:
 THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to use part of its \$100-million surplus to provide funding to the local chapter of the John Howard Society.

Mr. Cardiff: I give notice of the following motion:
 THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon not to permit the manufacture of beer, wine or spirits for commercial purposes to take place in areas zoned for residential purposes.

Mr. Edzerza: I give notice of the following motion:
 THAT it is the opinion of this House that
 (1) climate change is a matter of great urgency for humanity;

(2) Canadians are ashamed that our country was recently ranked 53rd of 56 countries for its lack of commitment to tackle climate change;

(3) Canada was criticized at the Bali conference as the "Fossil of the Day" for obstructing the negotiation of meaningful, effective international agreements by demanding that developing countries with high degrees of poverty meet the same emissions targets as richer, developed countries;

(4) Canada's reputation for leadership on the world stage in such areas as peacekeeping and protection of human rights has been seriously eroded by our failure of leadership on climate change;

(5) Canadians expect their federal government to advance positions internationally that reflect Canadian values; and

THAT this House urges the Government of Canada to lead by example and commit to targets recommended by the Nobel Prize-winning United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions by least 25 percent below 1990 levels by 2020 and 80 percent below the 1990 levels by 2050 as part of an international effort to avoid a two-degree Celsius temperature increase that scientists say would be devastating to humanity.

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

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Electrical rates

Mr. McRobb: Yesterday afternoon in this House, the chair of the Yukon Energy Corporation let the cat out of the bag on one of the Energy, Mines and Resources minister's secrets. This should concern anyone who pays a power bill. The chair admitted that there is no intention of even filing an application to reduce power rates until next fall. Filing the application only signals the start of the long hearing process. This means that the hearing itself wouldn't likely be until February 2009.

This represents a delay of a full year from what the minister promised Yukoners only seven months ago. Furthermore, it means the board's decision on whether to reduce power rates won't likely be known until the summer of 2009. How long has the minister known about this delay and why did he choose to keep it secret, instead of informing the public?

Hon. Mr. Lang: I would like to correct the member opposite. I don't make the decision for when the Utilities Board goes in front of the Utilities Board. That's done by the utility. We have two of them: Yukon Energy Corporation and Yukon Electrical. I was very happy to see that they've made a decision to move forward in the new year with the GRA, which they're proceeding with, and I encourage them to get it done as quickly and efficiently as possible.

Mr. McRobb: Let's refresh the minister with what he promised Yukoners seven months ago. On May 15, he said -- and I quote: "We're committing to, in February, going forward with a rate reduction application with the Yukon Utilities Board." He also stated he looked forward to: "being able to report to this House in the next 14 months that the rate stabilization fund is no longer needed in the territory because we have rate reductions."

We now know those were hollow promises. Yesterday we learned about the delay to the whole process for the first time. The final decision isn't likely until the summer of 2009.

When does the minister expect his promised rate reduction to actually take effect?

Hon. Mr. Lang: Again, the member opposite is wrong. The corporation committed to go to work on a GRA in the new year. There is a lot of work to do on a GRA before it goes in front of the Yukon Utilities Board. They are looking forward, in conjunction with Yukon Electrical Company Limited, to be in front of the Yukon Utilities Board by this coming fall. They have committed to do that, and I have encouraged them to do that.

I remind the member opposite that the government does not order the utility company to go in front of the Yukon Utilities Board with a GRA. The utility company has to make the move on its own. That commitment to move forward was made yesterday afternoon. I am looking forward, to seeing in the next 12 months, what comes out of the GRA.

Mr. McRobb: The minister responsible for energy is saying that his promises are meaningless. I guess we will note that. This was supposed to be a two-step process. Step 1: in May of this year, the minister announced the Yukon Party government was doing away with the rate stabilization program. That sudden decision continues to cost Yukoners an additional \$20 per month on their power bills. That will double to about \$40 when the fund is completely abolished in July 2008.

Step 2: that bill increase was supposed to offset the minister's promised rate reduction hearing. But we now know about the minister's secret. There is a delay in his timeline of one full year. In the spring, the minister said he was confident that in the next 12 months we would see a rate reduction for all Yukoners. Will the minister admit that he won't be keeping his promise?

Hon. Mr. Lang: Again the member opposite is wrong. His dates are not correct. The corporation is looking at a GRA over the next 12 months. We're looking forward to rate reductions for all Yukoners on their power bills. We're doing just that. The corporation should be complimented, along with their partner Yukon Electrical, for opening up and going for a GRA. We're looking for rate reduction here for all consumers, and we look forward to the fall of 2008.

Question re: Electrical rates

Mr. McRobb: The Yukon Party decided this past spring to jack up power bills for all customers. Since July 1, 2007, Yukoners have been paying 15 percent more on their power bills thanks to the Yukon Party's cut to the rate stabilization fund. Next July, bills will again increase by 15 percent

thanks to the Yukon Party's complete abolishment of the rate stabilization fund.

Let's add it up: that's 30 percent in 12 months under this minister's watch. In monetary terms, that's more than \$400 per year for each customer. That increase was supposed to be offset by a rate reduction promised repeatedly by the minister in this House last spring. That promise is now worthless.

I've got a suggestion for the minister. Instead of gouging consumers, why doesn't he give them money back? Will he instruct the corporation to provide all ratepayers with an energy bill credit of \$400 a year for both this year and next?

Hon. Mr. Lang: In replying to the Leader of the Liberal Party I would like to make it very, very clear that this side of the House is working with Yukoners to give every Yukoner a break on their power bills. We're also working with all Yukoners on conserving power -- education and other tools that individuals can use to lower their energy costs. The corporation made a commitment; they're working with Yukon Electrical; they're going to have a GRA over the next 12 months. We're looking for a rate reduction for all consumers in the territory. I hope that answer addresses the Leader of the Liberal Party's questions.

Speaker's statement

Speaker: I didn't want to get in the middle of the question or the answer. However, the member is the "Member for Kluane", or the "Official Opposition House Leader", not the "Leader of the Liberal Party". Please refer to him as such.

The Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources is done. Thank you.

Mr. McRobb: Mr. Speaker, the minister made a promise this past spring. He said he'd be increasing power bills now, but don't worry, because a decrease is on the way next February. Yesterday we learned the decrease is delayed for about a full year. The minister hasn't kept his end of the deal, and Yukoners are left paying bills that are 30 percent higher. I'm asking the minister to protect consumers. Many are being hit with an increased tax bill from the City of Whitehorse, and this Yukon Party government is taking another \$400 a year in higher power bills.

I have a suggestion for the minister. Give people their money back. Will the minister direct the corporation to provide ratepayers with a credit on their bills for both this year and next, at least until this promised rate reduction comes into effect?

Hon. Mr. Lang: Mr. Speaker, again, the member opposite is wrong. We're working with the corporation, which is an independent, arm's-length corporation who is going to work on a GRA to reflect the business at hand, which is rate reductions for all consumers. We're looking forward to the finale of that, and I think by this time next year, we'll have rate reductions for all Yukoners. But that's not the only thing we're doing, Mr. Speaker. We're working with Yukoners to conserve energy so that we can expand our power grid and also work smarter with the energy we have at hand. It's the obligation and responsibility of all consumers to have the education and tools to go

to work to lower their power bill by lower use, Mr. Speaker, not by subsidization but by using less energy.

Mr. McRobb: Since it axed the rate stabilization fund in July, this hands-in-your-pocket Yukon Party government is benefiting by millions of dollars in extra revenue. That money belongs to ratepayers, not the minister, not the government, and they should give it back. This minister boldly promised that he would be reducing rates for the hearing in February 2008. That is not going to happen. It will be delayed for about a year. The public only learned about his secret yesterday. There are many Yukoners who don't have \$400 per year to pay in higher electric bills. There are seniors, people on fixed incomes, single parents, all of whom just don't have the money. I'm asking the minister to do the right thing. Give back the increase.

Will he give Yukoners a break on their bills at this year-end and at the end of 2008, until his promised reduction materializes?

Hon. Mr. Lang: The member opposite is wrong. The corporation said very clearly in here the GRA is going to start in the new year, hopefully to be in front of the board by this coming fall. Those are exactly the dates I laid out here in the House. At the end of that, there should be relief and lower bills for all consumers of energy in the Yukon. That's good news for Yukoners, Mr. Speaker.

Question re: Alcohol manufacture in residential neighbourhoods

Mr. Cardiff: I have a question for the Minister of Community Services. The west Dawson development area regulations were established in August 1990 under the *Area Development Act*. The lots in west Dawson subdivision are rural residential, which allows for a certain amount of home-based business activity under the category "home occupation". Hotels, lounges and taverns are expressly prohibited. Recently the minister's department -- the Minister of Community Services -- issued a building permit for a small building to be used as a liquor distillery in the west Dawson homestead subdivision under the "home occupation" category.

Does the minister consider the manufacturing of alcohol acceptable in residential neighbourhoods, rather than in areas zoned for commercial or light industrial activity?

Hon. Mr. Hart: With regard to zoning and land, the department reviews the zoning requests that come in from all areas throughout the Yukon. We follow the procedures and processes that are identified in the act.

Mr. Cardiff: I don't believe there was a request for a change of zoning. Under the area development regulations, up to 20 percent of the lot can be used for home occupation activities. The lots in question are five acres, which means there is nothing to prevent this small distillery from expanding into a much bigger operation, as long as there is only one non-resident who is employed. I am sure that is not what was intended when the area regulations were written.

One concern that some neighbours have is that it might be the thin edge of the wedge that could drastically change the quiet residential character of their subdivision. I suspect that homeowners in other residential areas probably have similar concerns. Will the minister agree to review development area

regulations, especially on the question of restricting or even prohibiting alcohol manufacturing in residential areas?

Hon. Mr. Hart: I will repeat what I indicated earlier: the department reviews the issues with regard to land use and zoning throughout the Yukon. Processes are provided and we are following those processes.

Mr. Cardiff: When the *Liquor Act* was amended last spring, it was to permit the manufacture of wine and spirits. The minister responsible for the Yukon Liquor Corporation rhapsodized about the cottage industry that this was going to create in the Yukon. Unfortunately there had been no discussion about where these cottage industries were or weren't appropriate. That's a zoning issue, and the Community Services minister needs to take some ownership of that.

Some of the other lot owners in the west Dawson homestead subdivision have expressed a variety of concerns about this distillery proposal, including the noise from diesel generators, possible odours, increased traffic, waste disposal issues, increased risk of fire, and security issues arising from large quantities of alcohol being stored in a residential area.

Why has the Minister of Community Services done nothing to address those concerns and why is the decision on what is basically a zoning question being left up to the Liquor Corporation Board?

Hon. Mr. Hart: For the member opposite, just to help refresh his memory, everyone on that side of the river uses a generator and/or diesel operation for their power source.

In regard to zoning, our department has a process in dealing with all the issues with regard to land use and planning areas all over the Yukon. We are following that process throughout.

Question re: Child benefit supplement

Mr. Edzerza: The national child benefit supplement has been used since 1998 as a replacement for the universal baby bonus. It provides monthly benefits to low-income families with children in order to reduce child poverty. Part of the agreement is that provinces and territories can claw back this benefit from social assistance recipients if they choose. Half the provinces didn't have the social assistance clawback at all and three have a partial clawback; the Yukon is one of those with the full clawback.

If there is a clawback, the money is supposed to be reinvested in programs and services that will benefit children living in poverty. What programs and services is the Minister of Health and Social Services providing for Yukon children in poverty that replaces the amount their families would have if there were no clawback?

Hon. Mr. Cathers: In answer to the Member for McIntyre-Takhini, he has it partly right but partly wrong on this issue. In fact, as I've indicated previously in the House, when the national child supplement was established as part of the Canadian children tax benefit program, it was specifically established to lower what is referred to as the "welfare wall" and to do so by providing a benefit to low-income families, to either be clawed back, as it is referred to -- or factored as income, technically -- for social assistance recipients or to have

social assistance payments for families with children reduced accordingly. That is the case.

The Yukon is one of those that have chosen not to reduce social assistance payments for children but, in fact, to reinvest the program. Some of the areas where we have investment here -- I don't think I have the note right in front of me, but there is a list, including the children's drug and optical program. I can provide the member opposite a list with that information. I remind him that this has been in place since the Yukon signed on to this program under an NDP government. The structure was established by an NDP Minister of Health and Social Services and, in fact, we agree with it and we'll be maintaining it.

Mr. Edzerza: It might be in reverse order here. I may be supplying the minister with the reinvestment lists. Last spring's budget listed recoveries from the national child benefit at \$482,000. The reinvestment lists the Yukon healthy families initiative, kids recreation fund, food for learning, the children's drug and optical program and the Yukon child benefit. These are all good programs that Yukon families deserve from their government.

We are happy to see the increase to the Yukon child benefit, which is not clawed back, but there are also services that are available to other families, not just those on social assistance. How does the minister justify social assistance recipients subsidizing general government programs that they may not even be able to use?

Hon. Mr. Cathers: Again, we have an example here of how the member has it partly right and partly wrong. In fact, the list of programs he read is correct. Those programs are not entirely funded through the recoveries from the national child benefit supplement. Healthy families program receives additional funding; we just increased the Yukon child benefit, effective January of the next fiscal -- next month -- by an amount of \$20 per month per child, which will apply to all children of families within the income range, which has been raised from previous levels of \$25,000 maximum family income to a new level of \$30,000, and the benefit has been increased by \$20 a month from a previous level of \$37.50 to a new level of \$57.50.

This is yet another area where this government is supporting families with children, not to mention the significant increase we've made to the childcare subsidy, as well as increasing the threshold level in that area. In fact, I would encourage the member to look around the country and note the Yukon families and children of low income, including those on social assistance. Compared to the rest of the country, we do a very good job of taking care of those individuals and assisting them. With the new changes to the social assistance program, we've taken further steps to help them into the workforce.

Mr. Edzerza: Mr. Speaker, the fact is that the government is clawing back the child benefit supplement from social assistance families. Listed with the programs subsidized by social assistance families is the Yukon child benefit.

The minister loves to talk about how this government provides a benefit to all families under a certain income level. Despite the recent increase, the amount of the Yukon child benefit

is only a small fraction of what children in poverty could have if there weren't a clawback of the national child benefit.

The Yukon child benefit also includes a contribution from Indian and Northern Affairs. In other words, Yukon children who are living in poverty are losing federal support in order to subsidize the Yukon government's programs.

Will the minister immediately stop clawing back the child benefit supplement from social assistance families and start paying for their children's programs out of the government's massive financial surplus?

Hon. Mr. Cathers: Mr. Speaker, I'm trying to deal with the member's question in a positive manner. I know he's bringing it forward genuinely, but he does have the facts wrong here. The member understands some elements of the structure; in other areas he does have it wrong.

The national child benefit credit from the federal government is the only child credit that the Yukon government considers as income for the purposes of social assistance determination -- or clawed back, as the member refers to it. That's the structure of the program. It is designed, as the member pointed out -- about half the jurisdictions do that.

The report is provided annually from all provinces. I just signed off on our participation on that, as all ministers across the country responsible in these areas do. The report will be out, I believe, early in the next calendar year for the last year of programming, reporting on how we're using the reinvestment of federal dollars. But in fact we're dealing with this as many of the provinces do. To do what the member urges would fly contrary to the spirit and intent of the program, contrary to the basic program objective, and so we will not do that. But we have taken steps, as I indicated, significantly increasing the Yukon child benefit, which is funded through other streams in addition to this source, increasing that level from a previous level of \$37.50 a month to a new level of \$57.50 a month, and increasing the income threshold by \$5,000.

Question re: Internal government audit

Mr. Mitchell: I have questions regarding the recently released report on the audit of contributions. Page 13 of the audit report is a damning report card of the government's management and administration of these agreements. Section 2 of the report card measured government performance based on the following criteria: contribution programs and projects are designed to achieve expected results, manage risks and show due diligence in spending and provide accountability for public funds spent.

Mr. Speaker, in this category all five government departments that were audited scored a D or "seriously deficient". This is the lowest grade the government can receive. "Seriously deficient" means that financial control systems are inadequate and immediate corrective action is required. What is the Acting Premier doing to address these seriously deficient management controls across government?

Hon. Ms. Taylor: As I have articulated on the floor of the Legislature many times during this past number of weeks regarding this specific question, I would just like to reiterate that it was in fact this Government of Yukon that did instigate the internal audit on contribution agreements. This was the first

comprehensive review of its kind in the last 15 years. I believe a total of 59 recommendations were made, some of which have been followed up on; for some, work is underway, and some already have been completed.

The Government of Yukon has also posted the initial management response to these particular contribution agreements on the Yukon government Web site for all to enjoy and take a look at for themselves. In fact, this particular audit does speak to accountability, transparency and our wish to better deliver programs and services.

Mr. Mitchell: The minister just gave us a history lesson with no actual specific answers. As far as "enjoyment", I don't think anybody enjoys a straight-D report card.

Mr. Speaker, we're talking about more than \$50 million in government spending that received a grade of "seriously deficient". This is a substantial amount of money, even more than the \$36.5 million tied up in asset-backed commercial paper. The audit identified serious deficiencies in the way this government manages risks, ensures due diligence in spending and provides accountability for the public funds that have been spent.

The departments of Tourism and Culture, Economic Development, Energy, Mines and Resources, Education and Community Services all received a failing grade. These serious deficiencies are consistent across government, and the audit concluded that immediate corrective action is required.

What has this government done to date to stop the financial bleeding?

Hon. Ms. Taylor: Let me correct the record. This Government of Yukon prides itself on very good net financial reporting. This government prides itself on having net financial resources in the bank, so we are able to provide investments to social assistance, children in care, childcare, childcare subsidies and so forth. It is in fact this Government of Yukon that has been able to report five consecutive years of a clean bill of financial health -- five consecutive years of unqualified audits -- unlike the previous Liberal government who, on two occasions, breached the *Financial Administration Act* and actually came up with two qualified audits. There are net financial resources in the bank, so we are able to continue to make good investments in deemed priorities, whether it be on the social or the economic side of the ledger.

I will point out as well that I want to be very clear that the government has been buying asset-backed commercial paper since 2001 under the previous Liberal government, so in effect to say that that was a wrong decision is saying that the member opposite made a wrong decision back then as well. I'll continue to defend the good financial record of this Government of Yukon, and I will defend the financial individuals as well.

Mr. Mitchell: I believe what I just heard, Mr. Speaker, was no answers. What I heard was -- to keep up with the metaphor of a report card -- that when Jill comes home with a failing report card, she says, "It's okay, Johnny once had a bad report card too."

Now, Mr. Speaker, again, what we have heard is that contribution programs and projects designed to achieve expected results, manage risks, ensure due diligence in spending and

provide accountability for public funds spent -- Ds all the way across the board. Without talking about previous governments, what is this government doing to correct this?

Hon. Ms. Taylor: Well, we continue to take the good advice of the Auditor General of Canada. We continue to take the good advice of the Finance officials housed within the Department of Finance. We continue to take the good advice of our government audit services, housed within the Executive Council Office.

Mr. Speaker, it has been our government that has actually increased the amount of dollars available to these particular audit services within the Government of Yukon. We have been able to enhance resources so that we can, in fact, do more reviews of our programs and services. In fact, we didn't think that that is a good thing. In fact, we have been wholly transparent and forthcoming.

Furthermore, Mr. Speaker, we pride ourselves in certainly contributing to very good organizations, organizations such as MacBride Museum, organizations such as the Yukon Historical and Museums Association, organizations that subscribe to the arts fund, to FireSmart, to the community development fund -- is that, in fact, what the member opposite is questioning? Certainly, the integrity of those particular organizations -- Mr. Speaker, we are supporting those organizations. We have increased the level of resources available to those organizations. They continue to deliver very good services on behalf of the Government of Yukon. We are following up on recommendations made.

Question re: SCAN act follow-up

Mr. Mitchell: I have another question for the Acting Premier. I want to address a problem facing every Yukon community, and that is the escalation of crime and, specifically, crimes related to the sale of drugs and associated prostitution and violence. It's not my intent today to accuse this government of being responsible for these social woes -- quite the contrary. This is far too serious a problem.

Almost on a daily basis, we hear stories regarding drug houses and the possible involvement of organized crime. This is a problem that touches every sector of our communities, either directly or indirectly.

My question for the Acting Premier is simply: what does her government propose to do to address this serious criminal and social malaise?

Hon. Ms. Horne: The correctional redevelopment strategic plan was approved in December 2006 by the Yukon Forum based on extensive community consultations -- 160 meetings in the communities -- and the associated report approved earlier by the Yukon Forum.

This strategic plan outlines initiatives and actions to help achieve two major goals: substantially improve the quality of correctional programs, and fundamentally change the operation of the correctional system.

Substantial work is being done on these initiatives. The strategic plan states that it is a living document with some flexibility in implementation, including timelines.

Mr. Mitchell: If the Justice minister is going to respond, I would ask her to listen to the question. She just an-

swered a different question that wasn't asked. I realize that some steps have been taken. There has been increased RCMP emphasis and presence. We have the *Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act*, and we have the alcohol and drug strategy. So let's look at the SCAN legislation. Unfortunately, as well-intentioned as that legislation was, it is falling short of its intended goal. SCAN moves a problem from one neighbourhood to another. The problem does not go away, it only relocates. One avenue suggested by some is that SCAN needs to have more teeth. It needs the ability to not just move a problem but to actually help solve it. Mr. Speaker, does this government have plans to revisit SCAN or to bring new legislation or policies forward that will give more clout to the enforcement of our criminal laws, civil laws and our social values?

Hon. Ms. Horne: Mr. Speaker, this government has accomplished several initiatives that were recommended in the correctional redevelopment strategic plan that was released in February. Accomplishments in Justice in 2007 are covered under three themes: creating safer communities, fulfilling the correctional redevelopment strategic plan to create the best correctional system in Canada and protecting the family.

Mr. Mitchell: Now again, for the Justice minister, if she wants to address this, there are many things that need to be done to improve our correctional system, but I'm not asking about any of them today. Mr. Speaker, quite possibly, these needs need to be addressed with other governments, because they cross boundaries invisibly. There is an obvious federal involvement, and since First Nation communities are not exempt from these problems they have a role to play as well.

Mr. Speaker, a forum involving all governments and the RCMP may well be a first step. This government could take the lead on this. Yukon could, early in the new year, hold a roundtable meeting to develop and bring forth a new action plan. I know members from my party will welcome and support any initiative that will address the problems of drugs and other criminal activities. Will the Acting Premier take the suggestion under advisement and consider it for early in the new year?

Hon. Ms. Horne: This government has gone out on consultation throughout the Yukon. We have listened to Yukoners. We have put in a plan to help the communities and to help Yukon. What is the member opposite asking? We are already doing it. We have done it.

Speaker: The time for Question Period has now elapsed.

Notice of opposition private members' business

Mr. McRobb: In the interest of expediting the business of this House, the Official Opposition will pass on calling items for debate on Wednesday, December 12, 2007.

Mr. Cardiff: As the Third Party House Leader, I would like to say that to expedite debate here in the House, we too will not be calling any items to be debated on December 12, 2007.

Speaker's ruling re question of privilege raised December 6, 2007

Speaker: Prior to proceeding to Orders of the Day, the Chair is prepared to rule on the question of privilege raised Thursday by the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin. At that time the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin expressed concerns regarding a comment made by the Acting Minister of Environment. According to the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin, the minister violated one or more of his privileges as a member of this Assembly by misrepresenting his position on the issue of pairing. This alleged misrepresentation has, according to the member, impinged upon his ability to act as an environmental advocate and his ability to perform his role as a Member of the Legislative Assembly.

Before ruling on the question of privilege the Chair will address some procedural matters. Standing Order 7(4) says the Speaker must rule on (a) whether there appears, on the face of it, to be a case of breach of privilege, and (b) whether the matter has been raised at the earliest opportunity.

I shall deal with the second matter first. The Member for Vuntut Gwitchin raised the question of privilege last Thursday. According to the member, the comments made by the Acting Minister of Environment were said the day before. One could argue, therefore, that the question of privilege should have been raised last Wednesday when the offensive words were uttered. However, the Chair accepts that the members might want some time to reflect on the comments raised before raising them as a question of privilege. Therefore, the Chair is prepared to accept the question of privilege for a ruling.

I shall now address the issue of breach of privilege itself. In dealing with questions of privilege it is not the Chair's role to rule that a breach of privilege has or has not occurred. That is a matter for the House to decide. The question for the Chair is whether there appears, on the face of it, to be a breach of privilege. Should the Chair decide that this is the case, the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin will be invited to place before the House a motion that would address this issue. All other business before the House, with the exception of the Daily Routine, would be set aside until the issue is dealt with.

In order to rule on the question of privilege we must first consider the nature of parliamentary privilege. According to *House of Commons Procedure and Practice* the term "parliamentary privilege" "refers... to the rights and immunities that are deemed necessary for the House of Commons, as an institution, and its Members, as representatives of the electorate, to fulfill their functions. It also refers to the powers possessed by the House to protect itself, its Members and its procedures from undue interference so that it can effectively carry out its principal functions, which are to inquire, to debate and to legislate. In that sense parliamentary privilege can be viewed as special advantages which Parliament and its Members need to function unimpeded."

House of Commons Procedure and Practice also informs us that "[T]he rights and immunities accorded to Members individually are generally categorized under the following headings: freedom of speech; freedom from arrest in civil actions; exemption from jury duty; exemption from attendance as a

witness." Of these four, only freedom of speech can be considered at stake in this case.

For the Chair to conclude that the ability and effectiveness of the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin as an environmental advocate and MLA have been damaged by the comments of the Acting Minister of Environment would require a determination of fact. That is not the role of the Chair. Whatever the effect of the minister's comments, the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin has not been impeded in freedom of speech in this Assembly. The Chair, therefore, finds that there is no apparent breach of privilege in this case.

Though the Chair has ruled that there does not appear to be a breach of privilege the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin -- or any other member -- may still bring this issue before the House. This could be done by giving notice of a substantive motion, which could then be called for debate using the usual rules of procedure.

The Chair thanks all members for their attention to this ruling.

We will now proceed to Orders of the Day.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

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

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

Motion agreed to

Speaker leaves the Chair

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

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

The matter before the Committee is Bill No. 41, *Securities Act*. 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. 41 -- *Securities Act* -- continued

Chair: The matter before the Committee is Bill No. 41, *Securities Act*.

Hon. Mr. Hart: I will pick up where I left off with regard to the act and my dissertation. I will talk about insider trading. The act includes a requirement for the filing of insider trading reports in accordance with the rules, as well as an "early warning" report in respect of a change of control of a reporting issuer. There are currently national rules in place with respect to both insider reporting requirements and early warning reports. We have not adopted these rules without the framework for doing so in the act.

Takeover bids: the act includes a requirement that takeover bids and offers by an issuer to acquire its own securities from its shareholders be made in accordance with prescribed rules. There is currently a comprehensive national rule being finalized on takeover and issuer bids. This part will not likely be brought into force until the new rule is in effect.

Civil liability -- general: the proposed act includes the right to sue for damages or to cancel an agreement to purchase securities based on a misrepresentation in a prospectus or an offering memorandum. Similar rights are in the current act but the rights in the new act would be brought into line with rights in other jurisdictions. Similar rights are extended to purchasers in the case of misrepresentations in a takeover bid circular and an issuer bid circular, as has been done in other jurisdictions.

A further right of action for damages or cancellation of a purchase agreement would be given to purchasers where an offering memorandum or takeover bid circular or issuer bid circular are not provided and where a prospectus is not filed with the superintendent, as it is in other jurisdictions. The current act only provides for remedies where a prospectus is not provided to a purchaser.

The act also includes liability for trading on inside information and front running -- purchasing a security knowing about the purchase of securities by others that might affect the market price of the security, as in the case of other jurisdictions. The current act does not include any such liability provisions.

Under civil liability, it states that, until recently, the securities legislation in Canada included civil remedies only in respect of the initial distribution of the securities by an issuer. However, most trading takes place on secondary markets in reliance on information that is made available to the public. Several industry reviews concluded that liability for misrepresentation in public information should be extended to the secondary markets. All Canadian jurisdictions have undertaken to include uniform liability provisions in their securities legislation and most have done so.

As such, the act includes the right of action for purchasers in the event of misrepresentation in information provided in documents or orally by an issuer. A right of action will also be provided where an issuer does not make timely disclosure of information relevant to the purchasers.

Interjurisdictional cooperation is a significant feature of the proposed new act. 2006 amendments to the current *Securities Act* covered similar ground, but the provisions in this bill are now more closely aligned to those of other jurisdictions, including authority: to delegate power to another jurisdiction and to accept a delegation of power from another jurisdiction; for each jurisdiction to sub-delegate the powers internally, to adopt legislation of another jurisdiction to regulate persons in the other jurisdiction; to make a decision based on a substantially similar decision in another jurisdiction; to enter into agreements with other jurisdictions on interjurisdictional cooperation.

Under immunity, as is currently the case, the act provides for immunity from legal proceedings for the superintendent and other employees acting in good faith in fulfilling the responsi-

bilities under the act. With the additional authority to delegate responsibilities, the immunity provisions would be extended to cover actions taken in respect of any authority delegated to them from another jurisdiction. A provision also was added to extend immunity to those in other jurisdictions acting under the authority delegated to them from the superintendent.

Consistent with other Canadian jurisdictions, the general limitation period for commencing an action would be specified in the act and would be six years from the last event on which action would be based. The same general provision now applies under the Yukon's *Limitation of Actions Act*.

Penalties and prohibitions: our current Yukon legislation contains significant gaps compared to other Canadian jurisdictions respecting activities that are prohibited. The maximum penalties and sanctions in the event of a conviction are significantly less than other jurisdictions. The proposed act expands upon the activities that would give rise to an offence consistent with securities legislation elsewhere in Canada and includes the following: making various misleading or untrue statements and representations; engaging in an unfair practice; fraud and market manipulation; front running; insider trading; informing others of insider information or encouraging others to trade knowing of inside information; withholding or destroying information or records; obstructing the superintendent and others exercising regulatory functions from the performance of their duties; contacting a person with whom the person does not have a current relationship with a view to selling them securities.

The act increases the maximum penalty for contravention of the act to a fine of \$5 million, imprisonment for five years less one day, or both. Where a person is convicted of front running or insider trading, the maximum fine would be the greater of \$5 million and triple the profit made, loss avoided as a result of the contravention. Where a person is convicted of an offence, the court may order that the person compensate those who have suffered a loss as the result of the offence. The court may also order that they turn over any profits made or loss avoided as a result of the offence.

Rule making: the act includes a comprehensive list of areas in which the minister may make rules on the recommendation of the superintendent, and the Commissioner in Executive Council may make regulations on the recommendations of the minister.

Transitional: the proposed act includes transitional provisions generally designed to carry forward the current status of a registrant or issuer and provide for the continuation of the proceedings that are underway under the current act.

We believe this proposed act will substantially improve the securities regulatory regime in the Yukon and Canada, both for investors and for those who raise capital through securities. We envision bringing the new act into force in a phased manner in 2008, following the development of related regulations and policies and the finalization of various policies at the national level by the Canadian Securities Administrators.

I wish to commend my colleagues and their officials from across the country for their tremendous commitment to the objectives of the 2004 memorandum of understanding on security regulations, signed by all provinces and territories, save On-

tario. The level of cooperation and the mutual support by all memorandum of understanding jurisdictions in pursuit of those objectives has been remarkable. In particular, I wish to thank my colleagues in Prince Edward Island, Northwest Territories, and Nunavut, who, with the support from the Council of Ministers and in particular Alberta, collaborated with the Yukon in developing a common new securities act that we could each then tailor to our particular circumstances. The result is a proposed new *Securities Act* for the Yukon, which will provide a modernized, harmonized framework on which we can build to further enhance protection to investors, and the efficiency and confidence of capital markets in the Yukon.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Some Hon. Member: Point of order.

Point of order

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

Mr. Mitchell: Two reports were tabled and delivered to our desk. One states *Yukon Liquor Corporation Annual Report April 1, 2006 to March 31, 2007*. The other states *Yukon State of the Environment Interim Report 2003*. Is it possible that the wrong report was delivered to this side of the House?

Chair's ruling

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

Mr. Fairclough: I'd like to respond to the minister on the *Securities Act*. First of all, I'd like to thank the staff for the briefing that it gave to the opposition. It was informative and I have to say that those involved did a very good job in putting this together. It was very informative in response to the questions we had. They definitely know a lot more about this than I do.

When it was first tabled, Mr. Chair, it was something else to look at because it is a very thick document. I thought perhaps there was a lot to it that we could be questioning throughout and, of course, there is. But with the explanation given by the staff, I can accept their expertise in this.

There were a couple of areas that we had issue with and I'd like to ask those questions. I basically gave a heads-up to the minister about them. One was in regard to the Province of Ontario not signing on to the agreement that everyone has created -- this new securities act. I would like to know why and whether or not Yukon has any concern with the fact that Ontario did not sign on?

Hon. Mr. Hart: In discussing the issuance, Ontario was invited to participate in the memorandum of understanding. They chose not to. Ontario is of the opinion that a single regulator is the only way to go. Of course, they are the single regulator. That is the main reason they didn't participate with the other 12 jurisdictions in coming forth and signing the memorandum of understanding.

Although Ontario has not signed on to the passport system, the officials in Ontario are aware of the passport issues. If an applicant from Ontario wishes to register in other jurisdictions, they can do so. That is something the other 12 jurisdictions provided Ontario in trying to show some good faith in the ne-

gotiations with the Province of Ontario so they would come into the fold.

I think the big issue there, as I stated earlier, is that Ontario feels, based on a report they commissioned from Purdy Crawford, that the single regulator is the way to go. Unfortunately they also have the support of Minister Flaherty.

In essence, all 12 ministers responsible for securities in the country who have signed on to the MOU are supporting our process. We have come a long way with regard to this legislation since 2004. I think it's very commendable that 12 different jurisdictions have come together to harmonize legislation involving a complex situation such as securities. We are looking forward to dealing with our new *Securities Act* here in the future. As with anything that is new, there will be changes that come about and we will have to make amendments as they do in order to stay current with the new securities and the new changes that are evolving daily with securities throughout the world.

With regard to the member opposite's question, Ontario is aware of where we are at; they have the system in place so that we can accommodate them. The only detraction for us is that somebody in the Yukon and/or British Columbia, for example, would have to register with the Ontario process, as well as our process. That's the only issuance right now.

Mr. Mitchell: I just have a follow-up question to the question that the Member for Mayo-Tatchun has asked.

Would the very recently announced purchase or merger between the Toronto and Montreal exchanges, the two largest exchanges -- which has occurred since this legislation was tabled and went through first reading in this House -- have any effect that's not anticipated by this legislation, considering that Ontario still hasn't signed on?

Hon. Mr. Hart: No, the issuance is still operated by the jurisdictions in control. Calgary, B.C., and Quebec -- I would say those provinces all have their own securities exchanges and so who owns the securities exchange means nothing. Quite frankly, we have harmonized our securities so that other jurisdictions can operate within a facility -- for example, a person from St. John's, Newfoundland, could register there and do business in the Yukon and do it right now. In the future, way down the road, if a single regulator turns out to be the way to go, we would have to do this anyway; we would have to harmonize our legislation in order to accommodate the process.

As I stated earlier, I'm very pleased that our ministers could get together in such a short time -- when you think about it, it's just a little under three years -- get this far and have the commitment of all 12 of the jurisdictions in place -- save Ontario -- on such a very complex issue. As I said, I don't know how else to explain it. I think we've all done a substantial amount of work. I would personally at this time like to thank all the officials in the Yukon who have worked very hard on this legislation. We've had to start from scratch on this.

A lot of work went into this to get it prepped for this session and my hat is off to all of them.

Mr. Fairclough: I thank the minister for those answers. I asked the minister whether or not Yukon had any concerns with Ontario not signing on, and the minister said that,

basically, those companies based in Ontario would have to go somewhere else to register. Yukon will rely upon other provinces to do the background checks to see if these companies are in good standing.

My understanding from the briefing is that Yukon has less than a dozen companies registered here, or that would be registered here, so we would rely on a lot of the homework that's being done in the provinces.

Does this create a problem? Do companies have the ability to register in more than one province?

Hon. Mr. Hart: I have a couple of responses for the member opposite. A company can register in several jurisdictions, but it has to register specifically where it's going to do its trading. With regard to the issue of small Yukon companies, yes, I will concur with the member opposite that we don't have a large number of companies actually trading from the Yukon but, in essence, we would assist anyone who does and obtain the necessary expertise to review any prospectus that is brought forth by securities. We would follow the normal process, even under the old *Securities Act*. In essence, this is something we would normally do.

There's also monitoring aspects that can be done through the Web by following up on many of these companies.

Just to help correct the member opposite, passport jurisdictions have agreed to extend the passport privilege to Ontario-based companies. This means that if Ontario has approved someone to operate and distribute securities there, passport jurisdictions will accept Ontario's decision as if the decision had been made by a passport jurisdiction. It's only the reverse when the other 12 want to do business in Ontario and then we would have to register there, in Ontario, as well as our own jurisdiction.

Mr. Fairclough: I guess the minister is just pointing out that it's a potential problem if there isn't a place to go in Ontario -- but rather go through their old system, or the system that Ontario is using now.

In the briefing we were told that Yukon -- and the minister reiterated that today -- worked with other jurisdictions and basically came up with what's presented here today, this new *Securities Act*. One of the things said in the briefing was that this act was tweaked, I believe, to fit the Yukon. I would like to know what changes -- I know they weren't big changes -- were there versus what was agreed to by other provinces?

Hon. Mr. Hart: When I indicated that we were adjusting for the jurisdiction in question, we were using the same template. For example, we're talking about adjustments for a place like Prince Edward Island, which has to use "Lieutenant-Governor", and we would use "Commissioner", and so on and so forth -- as in the Northwest Territories and Nunavut. So really, all four of us are using the same template. It's just adjusting it to reflect the Yukon, Northwest Territories, Prince Edward Island, and the specific references to their own legal system within each jurisdiction.

Mr. Fairclough: Can the minister tell us what other jurisdictions have adopted this *Securities Act* and had it pass through their legislature?

Hon. Mr. Hart: For the member opposite, Prince Edward Island has already passed this act through their House. Nunavut and Northwest Territories are scheduled to have it go through in February.

Mr. Fairclough: What the minister is saying is that we are the second one to adopt this and pass it through our Legislature.

Is there a reason why others have not taken it forward through their legislature as quickly as we have? It is just because of timing of when their legislature sits or is it that there are some concerns that have been raised by other provinces?

Hon. Mr. Hart: I'm not sure which others the member opposite is referring to. We're the second of the four that are using the same template. All the other jurisdictions have already passed their legislation through, except us. The member opposite will notice that the Northwest Territories just went through their election and they are not having a fall sitting. They will be putting it through this spring. The situation is much the same in Nunavut and just being able to have sufficient time. They will be putting theirs through early in the spring.

Mr. Fairclough: I was under the understanding that there was only one other that had passed this through their legislature but the minister corrected me on that. I don't have any further questions so I'll just pass it over to my colleague to ask questions. Thank you very much for the answers.

Mr. Cardiff: I have a few questions of a general nature for the minister. The purpose of this act is to protect investors and support capital markets. Both are honourable intentions, I'm sure. It's a big area. Part of protecting investors is enforcement. I guess what I am curious about and would like to know from the minister is what resources the minister's department is identifying to ensure there is appropriate enforcement of this piece of legislation.

We are a very small jurisdiction. It is my understanding that we are what is called a registrar jurisdiction, as opposed to having a securities exchange or a securities commission here. Basically we are just registering companies. We don't actually have a stock exchange. But there is still the ability for companies to come here and register here under our act. What we need to protect against is unscrupulous companies. It would seem to me that that type of activity might pass off more easily in a jurisdiction where the resources weren't there for adequate enforcement. It only takes one Bre-X or one Enron or one Hollinger International to kind of ruin it for everybody. We don't want that to happen here in the Yukon. What kind of resources has the minister identified to ensure -- it may be a small area of government activity right now, but the potential for growth is there, given the new piece of legislation as well as the current economic situation.

We just need to ensure the minister will have adequate resources to ensure all the activities are monitored, all the companies are monitored, and there is adequate enforcement.

Hon. Mr. Hart: Although we can't guarantee that a company like Bre-X will never again appear, the new *Securities Act* introduces several new protection measures in addition to the measures contained in the existing *Securities Act* in an

attempt to minimize the risk and protect the average Yukon investor.

The member brings up a good issue with regard to protecting the investor and dealing with the situation in the Yukon. I concur that we are a small jurisdiction and we do depend on other jurisdictions to assist us in dealing with many of our securities over past years. I also look forward to an increase in this trade in the future, based on the economy that's coming around in the Yukon.

Securities issuers need to meet certain criteria. Minimum requirements, setting a minimum standard control, in order to operate in the marketplace have been set. The securities issuers are obligated to register with the superintendent. The test for registration is twofold: the registrant must be suitable for registration and the application must not be objectionable. The superintendent may at any time impose terms, conditions, restrictions or requirements on registration.

There's also a duty of care -- in other words, it's imposed on the registrant during registration. This duty of care is complemented by parts 13 and 14 of the new act, through the introduction of our civil liability terms, which is very important, and the registrants can be held liable by investors. That's just another aspect or venue for the investors to go after the issuer.

The superintendent also has the power to suspend or even terminate registration if he or she considers that it's in the public interest to do so.

Securities issuers are prohibited from distributing a security until such time as the issuer has filed a preliminary prospectus and a prospectus with the superintendent. Should a preliminary prospectus not contain the prescribed information, the superintendent can order that the trading of the security cease.

There is also a duty of continuous disclosure. It also imposes on the reporting issuer, to provide periodic disclosure about their business and affairs, to provide timely disclosure of material change and to provide other prescribed disclosures that may be prescribed as per the section in the act.

Also, the power of the superintendent can examine the financial affairs of the dealer, advisor or issuer that has filed a prospectus. The superintendent may order the market participant to provide information under section 28. The superintendent may also require any information, record, property or things produced to provide and verify it so that anything that is produced by the issuer can be verified by the superintendent.

The superintendent can also order an investigation into any securities-related matter. The scope of this investigation power is wide. The superintendent has almost similar powers as the Supreme Court with regard to summoning and compelling of witnesses to produce records and give evidence. A person making such an investigation may enter a business premises, examine records, property or things at the premises, and also require a person at a business premises to produce information, records, property, et cetera.

The Supreme Court, on application by the superintendent, may also make an appropriate search or seizure of the order. The superintendent can issue a freeze order, directing a person to retain certain records, property or things for safekeeping or

to hold in trust property belonging to clients or others for a receiver or receiver manager or trustee or liquidator, as per section 58.

The superintendent can also prohibit a person from further trading in or purchasing of securities, if a person fails to comply with the disclosure requirements as outlined in section 101.

The superintendent also has many other powers of broad-ranging aspects, including prohibiting, restricting and suspending registrations, seizing or trading of purchasing of securities, ordering a review of the market participants' practices and procedures, reprimanding an individual or person, prohibiting a person from acting or continuing to act in certain capacities, ordering a person to comply with specific direction and rule or law, and ordering payment of administrative penalties.

The superintendent also has additional powers to work with investors on procedural timelines and anything that will compromise the public interest. Basically, the superintendent is the watchdog for the public interest on all securities matters.

In addition to that, there is also the ability under civil liability to work and sue for damages and to cancel any agreement under purchase of securities throughout, based on representation, based on admission of material fact, as I mentioned earlier. If any of these items have been identified, or put forth by the superintendent and/or the general public, it is up to the superintendent to investigate and follow up on these issues, and the civil liability portion provides a great venue in which to protect the investor, especially here in the Yukon, and to get on to that process.

Ninety-five percent of all trading occurs in secondary markets and the provisions for civil liability are an important addition for the investor's protection point of view, because currently nothing takes place in the secondary market. The existing act makes specific provision for civil liabilities, but not in the secondary market.

Mr. Cardiff: I thank the minister for that answer. It sounds like the superintendent is going to be a pretty busy guy.

The question was not so much about what the superintendent can do or cannot do, but whether or not the superintendent is going to have any helpers. What kind of resources will there be? Actually, it says in section 14 -- I'm just looking at the sections with the summary, and, by the way, I'd like to thank the officials for providing that information to us. It has been helpful.

If we didn't have fixed sitting dates and we could only be here for a certain period of time, I'm sure we could have a longer discussion about this piece of legislation.

But in section 14 it establishes that the superintendent may delegate powers to other employees. So to put it simply and succinctly: how many employees is the minister allowing for in his budget deliberations to fall under the superintendent so that he can delegate some of these powers and the long list of things that are the responsibility of the superintendent? How many resources are budgeted for?

Hon. Mr. Hart: I thank the member opposite for his question. Currently we feel the resources are adequate right now to operate the new *Securities Act*. However, with the impending changes that may be coming next year, under those

issues, if additional resources are required, then we will provide the additional resources either in people or monies to support this important endeavour. Although it is not way up there on the revenue base for the Yukon, they do still provide a very important asset for the Yukon.

Mr. Cardiff: I thank the minister for that. The resources are adequate. I have two questions, the first one being: how many employees are currently in this unit? On the other question, the minister said something about impending changes in the new year. Does the minister have some information about some changes that are going to be happening? I'm sure that we'd all like to hear about those -- if they might be a reason for increased activity in this area of the government. What changes is he referring to?

Hon. Mr. Hart: As I mentioned in my preamble to the act, there are several issues in the act that will not be proclaimed until such time as the national policies have been developed -- in other words, the harmonization of several key items such as prospectuses, takeover bids and registrations. Once those items have been done, then obviously we will be in place, those will be proclaimed and we will be able to move on.

I also stated that, considering how complex the securities exchange is, there are always changes and it is always a moving target and we will have to make amendments to adjust and stay modernized and harmonized with other jurisdictions. It's something we are just going to have to deal with. As I stated before, there is a large amount of work that has gone into the act itself. We will be going into regulations and working with our national counterparts and trying to get all our policies done and completed so we can get moving and provide the best service to the Yukon public.

We currently have five members working in the department.

Mr. Cardiff: There are five in this area right now. I recognize that right now we are just a tiny part of the whole market, both nationally and globally. I think I heard the minister say that some of these sections that aren't being proclaimed -- the regulations come into effect nationally and we will be proclaiming portions of this act that aren't going to be proclaimed right away, and he sees that there may be a need for more resources at that time.

As the markets grow and the demand here in the Yukon grows for this type of activity, there could be the need for more capacity. There could be a need for more infrastructure, more offices, more computers. Possibly even down the road, does the minister think we would get to a stage -- it may be speculation but I am curious as to what information the minister has at his fingertips.

We're the ones asking the question about whether or not there would ever be a securities commission or exchange here in the Yukon.

Hon. Mr. Hart: Because, as he stated, we are a very small jurisdiction, when the situation arises we will probably outsource many of those difficult situations to areas that have that expertise so they can deal with those things and provide us with the appropriate information and give us a lead where we can go with those projects.

I anticipate that it will be some time before we ever get a securities exchange in the Yukon. I don't know how I could even say, but it would be sometime in the future. But with regard to resources, as I stated, like many cases, if we had a difficult prospectus that we want to have a look at, we would obtain the necessary expertise from Outside to review that on our behalf, provide us with lead on how we could proceed in the future and proceed from that point.

Historically, the Yukon is a very small player, as the member opposite indicated, and has not acted as a principal regulator for the purposes of reviewing prospectuses. We have not traditionally done that. The Yukon has basically agreed not to act as a principal regulator for the purposes of reviewing a prospectus. We get that done by expertise from Outside. We don't have that expertise sitting in the office, plus we don't have enough prospectuses to justify a person sitting there and doing that kind of work. That's a very specialized skill, and we can't have an individual sitting at a desk, looking at maybe one a year or maybe even none a year and three in the next year, for example. So in essence it's much more fiscally responsible for us to contract that piece out and get the information back from one of our corresponding jurisdictions and get them to assist us in making the decision.

Mr. Cardiff: I thank the minister for the answer and I understand what he is saying. That is one of the things that I needed to know the answer to. How far do we intend to take this? How much in resources are we going to put into it? I think that it is important that we protect investors and, at the same time, allow for businesses to grow and develop here in the Yukon, and that we encourage them to come here and do business, but we want to make sure that everything is on the up and up.

With regard to the investigative powers of the superintendent, the minister talked about how the superintendent can investigate if he feels there is something that is not quite right or if something has gone awry somewhere. Are these investigations initiated on a complaint-type basis and, if so, where do the complaints come from? Do they have to come from within the Yukon? Can they come from other jurisdictions and from other countries? Do the complaints have to come from within the Yukon?

Hon. Mr. Hart: Any person can file a complaint and/or the superintendent can review or investigate a situation with regard to a company. It can come from any source; it can come from another jurisdiction or it can come from the Yukon or it can come from the securities exchange in Montreal, Toronto or B.C. and it can be acted on by the superintendent.

Mr. Cardiff: At this point, in the interest of time, I'd like to thank the minister and his officials for providing the answers to the questions I've asked today. I have no further questions.

Chair: Is there any further general debate?
Seeing none, we'll proceed clause by clause.

Mr. Fairclough: I request the unanimous consent of the Committee to deem all clauses and the title of Bill No. 41, *Securities Act*, read and agreed to.

Unanimous consent re deeming all clauses of Bill No. 41 read and agreed to

Chair: Mr. Fairclough has requested the unanimous consent of the Committee to deem all clauses and the title of Bill No. 41, *Securities Act*, read and agreed to. Are you agreed?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Chair: Unanimous consent has been granted.

Clauses 1 to 185 deemed read and agreed to

On Title

Title agreed to

Hon. Mr. Hart: I move that Bill No. 41, entitled *Securities Act*, be reported without amendment.

Chair: Mr. Hart has moved that we report Bill No. 41, *Securities Act*, without amendment.

Motion agreed to

Chair: Committee of the Whole will now consider Bill No. 37, *Legislative Assembly Retirement Allowances Act, 2007*.

Bill No. 37 -- *Legislative Assembly Retirement Allowances Act, 2007*

Hon. Ms. Taylor: As I was saying the other day, this particular bill speaks to a decision that was made at the Members' Services Board back in 2004, and that was to go forward with the drafting and passage of a new *Legislative Assembly Retirement Allowances Act*. As I mentioned the other day, it's a review that was conducted by a task force comprised of a number of individuals and officials housed with the Government of Yukon to consult and so forth.

As I mentioned, this particular bill has been prepared by the taskforce and is being recommended by the Members' Services Board for acceptance and introduction in the Legislative Assembly here today.

As I mentioned the other day, this legislation does a number of things with respect to the law governing pension plans of the Members of the Legislative Assembly. In particular, it brings its provisions in line with the recent changes to the *Income Tax Act*, adds provisions to reflect the establishment of an MLA trust fund and adds new provisions to bring the act in line with standard pension practice, including provisions respecting creditor protection, marriage breakdown, shortened life expectancy and disability. It also updates provisions to clarify current administrative practices.

Further to my remarks during second reading the other day in which I made reference to the age 69 in reference to the *Income Tax Act*, I wish to correct the record for all members.

There have been so many changes made to the *Income Tax Act* over the years, but the most recent changes to the *Income Tax Act* changed the age limit under registered pension plans from age 69 to 71. This change has been incorporated in the *Legislative Assembly Retirement Allowances Act, 2007* and is incorporated under section 20, which reads, "Despite any other provision of this act, payment of an allowance to a member or former member shall commence no later than the member's or former member's latest allowance commencement date."

The latest allowance commencement date means the latest date when an allowance may commence to be paid under section 8202(e) of the income tax regulations of Canada.

The inclusion of this definition and the change, as outlined in section 20, will permit future changes to the age limit under the *Income Tax Act*, without requiring further amendments to this particular piece of legislation.

I also wanted to make reference to the number of events that have occurred since the *Legislative Assembly Retirement Allowances Act* was drafted that necessitated a number of further amendments. In particular, amendments to the *Legislative Assembly Act* led to changes required to the *Legislative Assembly Retirement Allowances Act* to bring it into conformity and adherence with the *Legislative Assembly Act*. The amendments to this particular act, which I am about to bring forward, are being recommended by the Member Services' Board for acceptance. Most of the changes required are technical in nature and bring the provisions in line with the recent changes that have been brought forward to the *Legislative Assembly Act*.

Four changes of note have been made in sections 4, 35, 42 and 44 in particular. Section 4 is a new section that makes clear that during a period of transition, a Premier-elect shall be paid as Premier from polling day until such time as the party that person leads forms the government.

Section 35 is a revised section that recognizes that effective June 1, 2007, the definition "pensionable remuneration" no longer includes expense allowances payable to a member.

Section 42 transfers the severance allowances provisions from the *Legislative Assembly Retirement Allowances Act* to the *Legislative Assembly Act*. This section has been modified to allocate severance, based on years a member has served and makes clear that calculations of the severance allowance will be restricted to the indemnities and salaries payable to members.

Last but not least, section 44 deems that the act will come into force on June 1, 2007. That concludes my remarks and I'll leave it up to members opposite.

Mr. Mitchell: I thank not only the minister for the explanations that she has provided today as well as at second reading and for clarifying that people at the age of 71 are now allowed for pensionable service. I will point out, in the spirit of humour, that there is no obligation for any members of this Assembly to work until they are 71 as MLAs, but nevertheless they can contribute to their pension plan if they do so.

I also want to thank the taskforce for the work they did to bring us to that point. I also want to thank the Members' Services Board, which has been working on this since before I was elected to this Assembly and chosen to be on the Members' Services Board by this Assembly. It has all been very well explained.

I also want to thank, in particular, the officials for being able to move so expeditiously to make the required changes in the amendments that the honourable minister speaks of today to make sure that all of this reflects Bill No. 36 and Bill No. 45. I appreciate that they have been working under deadline to get this done at the appropriate time. I just want to thank them for their work.

I don't have any questions. I think that the explanations have been provided, both in Members' Services Board and at second reading and today. It is good to know that we'll now be in full compliance with the *Income Tax Act*.

Mr. Cardiff: We in the third party will be supporting this. We'd like to thank the minister for her explanation of the consequential amendments today to this bill. I'd like to thank the people who have done the work, the heavy lifting on drafting this, and those who most recently drafted the amendments to this piece of legislation to comply with the other legislation that is before us. So I don't have any questions for the minister. The explanation was satisfactory, and I look forward to moving forward with this.

Chair: Is there any further general debate? Seeing none, we'll move to clause-by-clause debate of Bill No. 37.

Mr. Mitchell: I request the unanimous consent of the Committee to deem clauses 1 through 3 of Bill No. 37, *Legislative Assembly Retirement Allowances Act, 2007*, read and agreed to.

Unanimous consent re deeming clauses 1 through 3 of Bill No. 37 read and agreed to

Chair: Unanimous consent of the Committee has been requested to deem clauses 1 through 3 of Bill No. 37, *Legislative Assembly Retirement Allowances Act, 2007*, read and agreed to. Are you agreed?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Chair: Unanimous consent has been granted.
Clauses 1 through 3 deemed read and agreed to

On Clause 4

Amendment proposed

Hon. Ms. Taylor: Mr. Chair, I move

THAT Bill No. 37, entitled *Legislative Assembly Retirement Allowances Act, 2007*, be amended in clause 4 at page 6 by adding the following new subsection:

"(2.1) The period of time that an individual shall be considered to hold the office of Premier includes those days, identified in subsection 42(3) of the *Legislative Assembly Act*, during which that individual was a Premier-elect."

Chair: It has been moved by Ms. Taylor

THAT Bill No. 37, entitled *Legislative Assembly Retirement Allowances Act, 2007*, be amended in clause 4 at page 6 by adding the following new subsection:

"(2.1) The period of time that an individual shall be considered to hold the office of Premier includes those days, identified in subsection 42(3) of the *Legislative Assembly Act*, during which the individual was a Premier-elect."

Amendment agreed to

Mr. Mitchell: I would request the unanimous consent of the Committee to deem clauses 5 through 34 of Bill No. 37, *Legislative Assembly Retirement Allowances Act, 2007*, read and agreed to.

Unanimous consent re deeming clauses 5 through 34 of Bill No. 37 read and agreed to

Chair: Unanimous consent of the Committee has been requested to deem clauses 5 through 34 of Bill No. 37, *Legislative Assembly Retirement Allowances Act, 2007*, read and agreed to. Are you agreed?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Chair: Unanimous consent has been granted.
Clauses 5 to 34 deemed read and agreed to

On Clause 35

Amendment proposed

Hon. Ms. Taylor: I move

THAT Bill No. 37, entitled *Legislative Assembly Retirement Allowances Act, 2007*, be amended in clause 35 at page 21 by deleting it and substituting the following:

"35(1) For the purpose of this Part, up to and including May 31, 2007, 'pensionable remuneration' means an annual, daily or other indemnity and expense allowance payable to a member.

"(2) For the purpose of the Part, effective June 1, 2007, 'pensionable remuneration' means an annual, daily or other indemnity payable to a member."

Chair: It has been moved by Ms. Taylor

THAT Bill No. 37, entitled *Legislative Assembly Retirement Allowances Act, 2007*, be amended in clause 35 at page 21 by deleting it and substituting the following:

"35(1) For the purpose of this Part, up to and including May 31, 2007, 'pensionable remuneration' means an annual, daily or other indemnity and expense allowance payable to a member.

"(2) For the purpose of the Part, effective June 1, 2007, 'pensionable remuneration' means an annual, daily or other indemnity payable to a member."

Amendment agreed to

Mr. Mitchell: I would request the unanimous consent of the Committee to deem all clauses from clauses 36 through 41 of Bill No. 37, *Legislative Assembly Retirement Allowances Act, 2007*, read and agreed to.

Unanimous consent re deeming clauses 36 through 41 of Bill No. 37 read and agreed to

Chair: Unanimous consent has been requested of the Committee to deem all clauses from clauses 36 through 41 of Bill No. 37, *Legislative Assembly Retirement Allowances Act, 2007*, read and agreed to. Are you agreed?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Chair: Unanimous consent has been granted.
Clauses 36 to 41 deemed read and agreed to

On Clause 42

Amendment proposed

Hon. Ms. Taylor: Mr. Chair, I move

THAT Bill No. 37, entitled *Legislative Assembly Retirement Allowances Act, 2007*, be amended in clause 42 at page 25 by deleting the proposed subsection 51.1(2) and substituting the following:

"51.1(2) The amount payable under this section shall be based on the aggregate of the indemnity and salary received by the member during the preceding year under this Act and shall be calculated as follows:

"(a) 25 percent of the aggregate if the member served five years or less,

"(b) 50 percent of the aggregate if the member served more than five years but did not exceed eight years, and

"(c) 100 percent of the aggregate if the member served more than eight years."

Chair: It has been moved by Ms. Taylor

THAT Bill No. 37, entitled *Legislative Assembly Retirement Allowances Act, 2007*, be amended in clause 42 at page 25 by deleting the proposed subsection 51.1(2) and substituting the following:

"51.1(2) The amount payable under this section shall be based on the aggregate of the indemnity and salary received by the member during the preceding year under this Act and shall be calculated as follows:

"(a) 25 percent of the aggregate if the member served five years or less,

"(b) 50 percent of the aggregate if the member served more than five years but did not exceed eight years, and

"(c) 100 percent of the aggregate if the member served more than eight years."

Amendment agreed to

On Clause 43

Amendment proposed

Hon. Ms. Taylor: Mr. Chair, I move

THAT Bill No. 27, entitled *Legislative Assembly Retirement Allowances Act, 2007*, be amended in clause 43 at page 26 by adding the following new clause:

"44 This Act shall be deemed to have come into force on June 1, 2007."

Chair: It has been moved by Ms. Taylor

THAT Bill No. 37, entitled *Legislative Assembly Retirement Allowances Act, 2007*, be amended in clause 43 at page 26 by adding the following new clause:

"44 This Act shall be deemed to have come into force on June 1, 2007."

Amendment agreed to

On Title

Title agreed to

Hon. Ms. Taylor: Mr. Chair, I move that we report Bill No. 37, entitled *Legislative Assembly Retirement Allowances Act, 2007*, with amendment.

Chair: It has been moved by Ms. Taylor that we report Bill No. 37, entitled *Legislative Assembly Retirement Allowances Act, 2007*, with amendment.

Motion agreed to

Bill No. 36 -- Act to Amend the Legislative Assembly Act

Hon. Ms. Taylor: As I mentioned the other day, this particular amendment to the *Legislative Assembly Act* is being recommended by Members' Services Board for acceptance.

Basically, as I mentioned the other day, the current legislation does not permit rental expenses for a member who lives in Whitehorse and represents an electoral district outside of Whitehorse. The result of this particular amendment would be that a member representing an electoral district outside of Whitehorse who owns accommodations in Whitehorse would indeed qualify for payment of rental expenses in their particular electoral district.

Mr. Mitchell: I would state that I rise in support of Bill No. 36, *Act to Amend the Legislative Assembly Act*. This amendment as described by the minister will correct a long-standing situation whereby the members could only collect rental allowance for a rented dwelling in Whitehorse despite the fact that rural members have to maintain dwellings in two different areas -- Whitehorse and their home riding. I know it has affected many members in the past and would, no doubt, have continued to affect members in the future.

I also think this is a good change for rural members and their ridings -- to be able to apply the rental reimbursement to either ridings -- because, when it's applied in the rural ridings it in fact is additional revenue that will go through that rural riding's economy, small though it may be. I think all members would be prepared to support this bill and we certainly are.

Mr. Cardiff: I think the explanations provided by the minister and the Leader of the Official Opposition are sufficient. We in the third party will be supporting this bill too. I have no questions.

Chair: Is there any further debate?

Seeing none, we will proceed with clause-by-clause debate.

Mr. Mitchell: I request the unanimous consent of the Committee to deem all clauses and the title of Bill No. 36, *Act to Amend the Legislative Assembly Act*, read and agreed to.

Unanimous consent re deeming all clauses and title of Bill No. 36 read and agreed to

Chair: Unanimous consent of the Committee has been requested to deem all clauses and the title of Bill No. 36, *Act to Amend the Legislative Assembly Act*, read and agreed to. Are you agreed?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Chair: Unanimous consent has been granted.

Clauses 1 to 3 deemed read and agreed to

On Title

Title agreed to

Hon. Ms. Taylor: I move that you report Bill No. 36, entitled *Act to Amend the Legislative Assembly Act*, without amendment.

Chair: It has been moved by Ms. Taylor that Bill No. 36, *Act to Amend the Legislative Assembly Act*, be reported without amendment.

Motion agreed to

Mr. Cardiff: Mr. Chair, I move that the Speaker do now resume the Chair.

Chair: It has been moved by Mr. Cardiff 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: Mr. Speaker, Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 41, *Securities Act*, and directed me to report it without amendment.

Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 37, *Legislative Retirement Allowances Act, 2007*, and directed me to report it with amendment.

Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 36, *Act to Amend the Legislative Assembly Act*, and directed me to report it without amendment.

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

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Speaker: I declare the report carried.

GOVERNMENT BILLS

Hon. Mr. Hart: I request the unanimous consent of the House to move that Bill No. 45, *Act to Amend the Legislative Assembly Act, No. 2*, be now read a third time and do pass.

Unanimous consent re third reading of Bill No. 45

Speaker: The Minister of Community Services has requested unanimous consent of the House to move that Bill No. 45, *Act to Amend the Legislative Assembly Act, No. 2*, be now read a third time and do pass. Is there unanimous consent?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Speaker: Unanimous consent has been granted.

Bill No. 45: Third Reading

Clerk: Third reading, Bill No. 45, standing in the name of the Hon. Mr. Hart.

Hon. Mr. Hart: I move that Bill No. 45, entitled *Act to Amend the Legislative Assembly Act, No. 2*, be now read a third time and do pass.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Minister of Community Services that Bill No. 45, entitled *Act to Amend the Legislative Assembly Act, No. 2*, be now read a third time and do pass.

Motion for third reading of Bill No. 45 agreed to

Speaker: I declare that Bill No. 45 has passed this House.

Hon. Ms. Taylor: I request the unanimous consent of the House to move that Bill No. 37, entitled *Legislative Assembly Retirement Allowances Act, 2007*, be now read a third time and do pass.

Unanimous consent re third reading of Bill No. 37

Speaker: The Minister of Tourism and Culture has requested unanimous consent of the House to move that Bill No.

37, entitled *Legislative Assembly Retirement Allowances Act, 2007*, be now read a third time and do pass.

Is there unanimous consent?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Speaker: Unanimous consent has been granted.

Bill No. 37: Third Reading

Clerk: Third reading, Bill No. 37, standing in the name of the Hon. Ms. Taylor.

Hon. Ms. Taylor: I move that Bill No. 37, entitled *Legislative Assembly Retirement Allowances Act, 2007*, be now read a third time and do pass.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Minister of Tourism and Culture that Bill No. 37, entitled *Legislative Assembly Retirement Allowances Act, 2007*, be now read a third time and do pass.

Motion for third reading of Bill No. 37 agreed to

Speaker: I declare that Bill No. 37 has passed this House.

Bill No. 36: Third Reading

Clerk: Third reading, Bill No. 36, standing in the name of the Hon. Ms. Taylor.

Hon. Ms. Taylor: Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 36, entitled *Act to Amend the Legislative Assembly Act*, be now read a third time and do pass.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Minister of Tourism and Culture that Bill No. 36, entitled *Act to Amend the Legislative Assembly Act*, be now read a third time and do pass.

Motion for third reading of Bill No. 36 agreed to

Speaker: I declare that Bill No. 36 has passed this House.

Bill No. 41: Third Reading

Clerk: Third reading, Bill No. 41, standing in the name of the Hon. Mr. Hart.

Hon. Mr. Hart: Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 41, entitled *Securities Act*, be now read a third time and do pass.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Minister of Community Services that Bill No. 41, entitled *Securities Act*, be now read a third time and do pass.

Motion for third reading of Bill No. 41 agreed to

Speaker: I declare that Bill No. 41 has passed this House.

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

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

Motion agreed to

Speaker leaves the Chair

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Chair: 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

Health and Social Services. Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

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

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

Department of Health and Social Services

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

Hon. Mr. Cathers: I am pleased to introduce the first supplementary operation and maintenance and capital budgets for the Department of Health and Social Services for the current fiscal year. The total increase requested for operation and maintenance is \$7.4 million, with an anticipated recovery of \$1.7 million.

The total request for capital expenditures is \$5.2 million, with \$1.6 million of that recoverable from the federal Infoway funded electronic health records project, which includes, of course, funding for telehealth -- or, I should say, that funding is specific to telehealth.

With regard to operation and maintenance, this budget continues to hold the course on the priorities that this government has set by increasing funding to critical areas of need for Yukon citizens, including childcare, seniors, and access to health care. This includes total changes to the collective agreement amounting to \$3 million. That is, of course, the collective agreement for Yukon government employees.

Some of the highlights related to the current fiscal year include increased funding for childcare services to improve childcare worker wages, training and recruitment and retention of childcare workers, as well as increased parent subsidies. There is \$1 million in this current budget for that purpose. This was, of course, part of the announcement made in November of the annual increase to childcare funding, which will total \$1 million per fiscal year, culminating at the end of that period with an annual budget for childcare of \$10.3 million.

Another area includes an increase to two contracts for group home services as a result of a new three-year contract that was recently tendered. That cost is \$88,000. As well, \$180,000 is required to support children requiring out-of-territory treatment.

\$70,000 is requested to provide higher social assistance payments for electricity resulting from the reduction to the rate stabilization fund. There are also changes to the continuing care program, including a transfer of responsibility for the Hospice Yukon contract from Social Services to Continuing Care, which is simply an operational matter related to the fact that Hospice Yukon works very closely with Continuing Care. As we continue to work with this NGO, they will be a key partner in the development of the palliative care programs that we

committed to establishing within the Thomson Centre -- once that building is brought back into operation, totalling a seven-bed unit in that area -- and the palliative care programs running in people's homes and assisting them within the community.

As well, I'm pleased to have increased the funding to Hospice Yukon for this fiscal year to a new level of \$234,000, which is an increase of \$40,000 from the previous level of \$194,000. As I indicated, as we move forward with developing the palliative care program, we will work with Hospice Yukon to determine their financial years for 2008-09 and future fiscal years.

Also under continuing care, there is \$797,000 for the operational impact of opening 12 new beds at Copper Ridge Place.

Under health services, there are increases totalling \$1.3 million for medical claims due to an increase in the number of physician services provided, the number of specialists and additional psychiatrists, greater access to walk-in clinics and more surgeries. The amount for that area is \$664,000. \$109,000 is required for price-driven increases to chronic disease, extended benefits and children's optical programs due to increased drug and medical supply costs, increasing the average cost per claim.

\$191,000 is requested for additional funding for the Outreach van and youth outreach worker wages amounting to \$191,000.

\$50,000 is requested for contracts to assist communities with assessment and, if required, remediation operations to comply with the new, lower acceptable level of arsenic in Canadian drinking water related to the change in the Canadian drinking water standards particular to arsenic.

\$104,000, which is fully recoverable from the Canada Public Health Agency, is requested for the chronic disease surveillance project and is to be used to contract an epidemiologist.

\$214,000 is requested for additional wage costs associated with mentoring staff completing primary care paramedic training and covering staff on leave, as well as additional costs for services in Watson Lake and Dawson City.

Increases to the application of territorial health access fund amounting to a total of \$899,000 include health human resources strategy projects of \$663,000. This includes the funding of a coordinator, a health professions policy analyst, training of emergency medical personnel, a variety of bursary programs, family physician incentive program, nurse mentoring program, physician residence program, Whitehorse General Hospital workload increase and a variety of health profession training initiatives.

For members opposite, as they may or may not be aware, the health human resources strategy has programs under it -- there are bursaries to assist Yukon students attending medical school. After this program was launched in 2006, we have assisted in this fiscal year, with more students attending medical school. On the increased funding of students for the medical bursary in 2007-08, in September we announced four additional students to receive programming through the medical education bursary. The program helps offset the cost of post-secondary medical education and the seven bursary recipients

are currently receiving \$10,000 per year to assist them in attending medical school while another is receiving \$15,000 to support him in his family medicine residency. As members will recall, in establishing this program we provide up to \$10,000 a year to assist Yukon students while in medical school and provide an additional incentive to attract them back to the territory by providing up to \$15,000 for each year in a two-year period while they are in their period of medical residency.

This complements the programs we have established for the health education bursary, which supports students in nutritional science, dental therapy, pharmacy and practical nursing. There was a total of five new recipients this fiscal year, and I believe the total number is 28 students we're supporting through the three bursary programs, the third being the significant expansion to the previously existing nurse education bursary, which is supporting a total of 11 nursing students at this point in time. That is a key part of the health human resources strategy. In fact, we see it as good news that our costs are increasing in these areas for the amount I outlined before, \$663,000. It is a sign of some of the uptake we've had in these areas, as well as some of the initiatives we've been working on with health professionals, including the initiative we announced of the nurse mentoring program, the social worker mentoring program and the support through the YMA to assist in attracting doctors to the territory by providing funding to enable them to renovate a previously existing medical practice. This requires that they create space resulting in at least one new physician providing services.

Other related areas include our tobacco reduction campaigns, amounting to \$131,000. I'm also pleased to inform members that in the next fiscal year I look forward to an announcement of the areas in which we will be providing support for nicotine reduction therapies. That program work is currently being developed and the intention is to review the best practices of other jurisdictions and look at the feasibility of things such as the nicotine patch and other related supports. It will be a pilot project that will be launched at that time. As I said, based on the experiences of other jurisdictions' best practices, the program criteria are currently being established for launch in the 2008-09 fiscal year.

Another area under this current year's request under the territorial health access fund includes the assessment of privacy protection and the ability to share health information in support of the electronic health record initiative, and that amount requested is \$105,000.

Under capital highlights, there is a total increase of \$5.2 million requested. This is broken down into areas including increases in policy, planning and administration amounting to \$2.7 million for Infoway system projects and the Yukon government portion of these costs, which is \$312,000. The amount we're receiving from Health Infoway is \$1.6 million in this area. The Yukon government's portion is \$312,000.

For completion of the insured health claim system implementation, another part that is key to the electronic health record, the amount requested is \$395,000.

Expansion of the telehealth network to remain in Yukon communities is a \$1.6-million amount and fully funded by Can-

ada Health Infoway. This has resulted in new telehealth equipment that members have seen in the nursing stations. They will appreciate, I'm sure, that this is state-of-the-art equipment.

It is an advancement, not only in providing the opportunity for increased support, counselling, teleconferencing, et cetera through this service, but it has the ability to do things such as through a movable camera that looks somewhat similar to a mouse; it's a little bit larger, but it's also on a cord that can be moved to provide a streaming video of the location, such as a wound, rash, infection or other matter, which can be transmitted directly over the telehealth system to a physician or a specialist.

This is something that will have significant benefits in years to come with our ability to deliver programming on a cost-effective basis, to deliver it to people directly in their home communities at very little cost for running those programs, particularly when compared to the cost of travel to engage in a consultation.

Other highlights under capital include increases to family and children's services: the request of \$1.4 million for a number of renovation projects totalling \$131,000, including \$20,000 requested for the Liard Road group home, \$35,000 for the children's receiving home, and \$88,000 for the young offenders facility.

Secondly, under the \$1.4 million requested increase to family and children's services, we have an expenditure of one-time federal funding to improve childcare capital facilities and equipment.

Increases to social services under capital is a requested \$125,000 to complete a lifecycle costing and options report for the St. Elias block. Requested increases to continuing care amount to \$784,000 for Copper Ridge renovations totalling \$269,000, and new furniture and equipment to open the remaining 12 beds, amounting to \$350,000.

Thirdly, under the area of continuing care, there is \$100,000 for planning for the Dawson City multi-level care facility.

Increases to health services are requested, amounting to \$131,000, for equipment for the Yukon communicable disease unit, for a total of \$15,000; planning for housing options for mental health clients, a total of \$30,000; two renovation projects at community nursing facilities amounting to \$76,000; and emergency medical services equipment amounting to \$10,000 over the amount originally budgeted.

This covers many of the highlights for the Department of Health and Social Services. As well I would like to take this opportunity, Mr. Chair, to remind members opposite of some of the areas where we're facing, I would say, both challenge and opportunity in the area of health care today. We are dealing nationally with significantly escalating costs at a time when we're facing the retirement of many of our health professionals and an aging population that will result in significant cost increases, particularly due to the demographics resulting from baby boomers retiring.

Of course, the health human resources strategy, as I indicated and have indicated before, is a key part of this government's approach to addressing this area. It involves working

with health care professionals and includes ongoing efforts to expand on this program and to review what has happened to date. This includes working with a group such as the Yukon Medical Association, Yukon Registered Nurses Association, as well as Whitehorse General Hospital and, of course, many other health care professionals and staff in these areas.

I'd like to take the opportunity to thank John Greschner, who was the deputy minister for -- I'm not sure the exact length of his time, but he was deputy minister when I took over in 2005 as minister. He left us to move to B.C. in June of this year. I just want to take this opportunity to thank him for his service to the Yukon public and to his assistance over that time, as well as to welcome Stu Whitley who is the new Deputy Minister for Health and Social Services.

With that, Mr. Chair, I would simply say -- I understand that my time for my introduction is almost out -- that I look forward to questions from members opposite. I hope that we will see a departure from previous practices of very little debate of the details. I would encourage members to provide constructive comments and I would answer constructive questions in a constructive manner.

Mr. Mitchell: I will thank the minister for that overview of the supplementary budget dollars for the Department of Health and Social Services. I'd like to start by thanking all the officials, the health care practitioners, doctors, nurses, physiotherapists, pharmacists, dentists, technicians, lab technicians, X-ray and CT technicians who work in the department for the good work they do for all of us every day. I know that at some time or another we all have occasion to make use of the services and we do appreciate them.

As the minister in closing made reference to the departing deputy minister as well as the new deputy minister, I would also like to thank Mr. Greschner, who was a constituent, for the service he provided Yukon during his time here. I also welcome back Stu Whitley, who was also a constituent, to the position now of Deputy Minister of Health and Social Services.

Having said that -- and the minister said he was looking forward to detailed and specific questions -- I would just like to note for the record that -- although I recognize it may not have been the practice not only under this government but under previous governments of differing political stripes as the budgets get ever larger and programs become ever more complex -- the government might in the future consider the possibility of departmental briefings for the first supplementary budget of the year in the fall as we receive in the spring sitting. That would enable us to craft our questions more specifically because the level of detail that minister just provided is much greater than the detail we see in the budget document in front of us.

Although I was trying to take notes as the minister read his briefing notes, I don't write nearly as fast as the minister can speak. What tends to happen is, for those departments that have debate over two days or more, we end up relying on the Blues for the second day, but I don't have that in front of me now.

In the interest of time, I've tried to group questions together on particular areas or themes. So rather than simply asking one question and sitting down -- and the minister may speak at great length to it -- I'll ask a few but will try to keep

them focused on one particular area and do it that way. Hopefully that will make sense to the minister and make it easier for the officials, and I look forward to good, constructive questions and answers, and debate.

They're not in any particular order. Some are things the minister has spoken to and some are new areas. Before I do that, I just want to mention some of the things the minister has spoken to. I'm pleased to see the \$1 million for increases in childcare subsidies. This is obviously something we've been asking for on this side of the House for some time. The minister has been telling us that there would be increases coming and, although it may or may not be everything we've asked for, we're always pleased to see it.

Similarly, we are happy to see increases in funding for out-of-province payments and for medical travel. We're pleased the minister noted the increased funding for Hospice Yukon and working toward palliative care. We're happy to see that.

The 12 beds at Copper Ridge Place -- although just outside my riding as it's currently constructed, it's close by and I have neighbours who have made use of the service for loved ones and I have visited friends and neighbours there. It's an excellent facility. We're pleased the 12 beds first referred to -- it may have even been in the fall of 2006 and then again in the spring of 2007. I'm glad they are now opening.

The additional money for the Outreach van is something we asked for over time and we are pleased to see it. We're pleased to see what was originally a one or two day a week trial program receiving the funding -- I think it's intended to operate six days a week now, but the minister can correct me if I'm wrong. I know it's a partnership of a number of agencies and organizations. They do very important work, helping young people, street people and some of Yukon's least fortunate people, at least in the City of Whitehorse. It doesn't address the needs in other communities, but at least it addresses the needs in the City of Whitehorse.

I am pleased to see the \$50,000 that the minister mentioned for the contracts for community assessment of water, in terms of meeting the arsenic standards. There have been some questions by my colleague, the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin, about this, so I am glad to see the money is in this budget. I am certainly glad to see the increased funding for the medical education bursaries. I am not going to be interested in a debate over who came up with what idea when. It's a good idea that this Legislative Assembly has brought forward. This minister, I see, is acknowledging that it is a good idea, so we are in agreement on that. I have certainly been an advocate for it. As the parent of a doctor, I started advocating for it after my daughter had completed medical school, so there was no apparent or real conflict there.

In terms of the other funding, I only wish that there was employment for my son-in-law here because my daughter, who was born in Whitehorse and raised in the north, would be back in a heartbeat to practice medicine in the territory, even without the funding.

We are glad to hear about the territorial health access funding increase, as well as the increase for capital items. I know I have only touched on some of the operation and maintenance

items, but under capital there is the telehealth equipment for the communities, the increase in funding for family and children's services, for the Liard group home, for the receiving home on Fifth Avenue -- I am sure we will have more specific questions about the status of that facility -- and additional funding for Copper Ridge Place. There was mention of funding for the Dawson Health Centre to the tune of \$100,000 -- we will have questions on that. I am thanking the department for those increases that have come forward.

To get to some specific questions, the nurse phone line that the minister has mentioned recently -- there have been some questions asked about that by my colleague from Vuntut Gwitchin. The question I would have would be around how that operates -- would Yukon, at some point, anticipate having access to its own line so that, if somebody in a Yukon community phoned, there would actually be a Yukoner on the other end of the line who might have some real idea of the nature of Old Crow or Pelly or Ross River -- someone with more familiarity with it and, therefore, a better understanding of the particular challenges faced by the people who live there instead of operating it out of British Columbia?

I'll just lump these questions together, and I'll try to allow the minister enough time to make notes.

How much will this line cost in total on an annual basis? How much has the cost been so far for the implementation stages? I know that we have a shortage of nurses now in general. It's difficult, and now will there be nurses within Yukon staffing, or is it only meant for dealing Outside? And I think the specific question or concern that the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin had asked about earlier was that I believe his impression, based on what he was being told within the community -- and it may stand to be corrected -- was that after a certain hour of the day when a resident, for example in Old Crow, dials a number that starts with 9-9-6, that that call would be automatically forwarded after hours. I see the minister shaking his head, so he can correct that. All I'm looking for is clarification, whether it's only something where people know that they intend to call Outside for answers versus calling locally and finding out that they're talking to somebody who is Outside or in another community.

I will just leave that there. I've asked a series of specific questions, and I'm hoping if the minister can answer those questions in the way in which I've asked them specifically, then we can carry on doing it that way rather than either of us standing on our feet for 20 minutes at a time.

Thank you.

Hon. Mr. Cathers: In answer to the member's questions, as far as the nurse line goes, no. I would point out this is a new service. It has been misunderstood by some members. I think the member is clear on that now, but I just want to emphasize that the nurse line is a new service. It is not a replacement of existing services in communities. It is not going to mean getting rid of the nurses who are there or the ability to call them.

I would inform the member that -- where the misunderstanding may have occurred from -- if someone were to call the nurse line number, which ultimately is intended to be through

8-1-1, and this is part of a national initiative. Of course 8-1-1 for many years in the territory was Northwestel's business office. However, as part of a national initiative involving the provinces and territories and also the phone companies, work is underway to free up the 8-1-1 line to ultimately fulfill the goal of, from coast to coast, having it be the case that -- it's well known to dial 9-1-1 for ambulance, police or fire -- people would, at some point in time, know to dial 8-1-1 for a nurse line. We are connected to part of national work ongoing in this area, although we're in the front end of the queue, rather than the latter end.

There are significant challenges in setting up this type of service, significant costs associated with running a 24-hour call centre. For that reason, my expectation is that it would not likely ever be cost-effective for the Yukon to run its own call centre. What we will be doing is working with B.C. in accessing their nurse line to educate their staff answering the phones on some of the particular needs and challenges of the Yukon, including the realities of the difficulty of travel and how long people might have to travel in certain areas to actually access those services. Of course, in downtown Vancouver there would be a hospital nearby, whereas if someone is in a remote community or outside of a community, help may be a significantly longer distance away.

This is an enhancement in service. People in the communities will still have the ability to contact their local nursing station. The number of people who would call and who they would access after-hours is a key part of this approach. I wouldn't say it is the main intended benefit, but a side and significant benefit through this is that people in a community, if they need general health information, are not forced to choose between waking up one of their local nurses and not asking the information. They can call a 24-hour number.

The intent is that the line would provide an option for whether they wished to be connected with the local nursing station or connected with the nurse line accessed Outside. So the intent is not that it would eliminate the ability to call a nurse locally, but it would provide the option and suggestion that, if it's simply a general health question, perhaps they could avoid disturbing their local nurse or nurses, particularly if it's 3:00 in the morning.

I recognize members' concerns, but I think this has been misunderstood. We see this as being a very good-news story and I'm confident that, once it's up and running, members will recognize that and agree that it is entirely an enhancement in the service available in the Yukon. It is one key part of providing people with increased health information in their own homes, providing them with the ability to choose to call for advice when they simply need some comfort for a sick child or a disturbing cough or something that, right now, due to concerns of things such as liability issues and operation matters -- quite some time ago, Whitehorse General Hospital used to provide that information over the phone. Now they are, as many hospitals -- I believe most, nationally -- in a situation where they cannot provide that information over the phone and will direct someone calling after hours to come into the emergency

room. Because of the situation around that, I'm not questioning the appropriateness of that. In fact, they have very little option.

The point is that by providing this nurse line service, which does address the issues around liability, programming, et cetera, through accessing -- B.C. is spending a significant amount on this service -- we will have significantly reduced costs, more so than if we operated our own centre. To access this service, our cost would be significantly less than establishing our own.

At this point in time, the costs are expected to be in the order of \$200,000 per year, ongoing. That amount is not confirmed at this point in time.

We anticipate year one start-up costs, which will be 2008-09 to be in the order of \$350,000. I want to emphasize to members that those numbers may change because they are subject to some work involving B.C. and so they could change to some extent. Those are the rough numbers that are anticipated in terms of cost.

Again, a nurse line will give people more control over their own health and more comfort. If it does, as we are certain it will, reduce the demand on the emergency room and reduce the escalation of emergency room visits.

Every person who calls into this health line rather than going to the emergency room will help reduce the wait times in the emergency room if there are people waiting for service. Of course, emergency room visits, as members are probably well aware, are probably one of the most expensive ways to provide service within the health system. I won't say that it will necessarily lead to a reduction in costs but we are certain that it will lead to a reduction of growth of emergency room costs. To what extent, it would be very difficult to predict. Certainly, as was done with the *Yukon HealthGuide*, this is one step to bring information directly into somebody's home and enable them to ask minor or significant questions over the phone. They can be directed, if it is something that is severe, to immediately consult a health professional and get in as quickly as possible.

I hope that has answered the member's questions. I just want to emphasize that this along with telehealth is one example of how, through some of our improved investments in capital in the electronic area and in operation costs here, we are working to not only improve people's control over their own health but to reduce the growth of health care costs by delivering services in a more cost-effective manner.

I hope that has answered the member's questions. I think I hit the points there.

Mr. Mitchell: I thank the minister for those answers. They do answer most of my questions on that topic. I would just state, perhaps as a suggestion, that when the next phone directories are published, perhaps within the community sections there should be some real annotative clarification about that service versus the local service so that community members will know when they need to speak to a nurse -- and in our rural communities, the nurse is de facto the doctor most of the time. I know, having lived in a small northern community, that you call a nurse, because there's not generally a doctor present. If it's a localized emergency, if somebody is not breathing or having difficulty or bleeding or something like that and they

need instant help, they'll understand that service versus one that provides information and answers perhaps less urgent questions. They need to be able to make that distinction. Hopefully, the minister can see to that, together with Northwestel.

When I ask another series of questions, perhaps the minister can answer this one: will that 8-1-1 service be included in the publication of the April 2008 directory, or will there be a transition period when there's a different number, because the minister mentioned that it will be a period of time before that number is used nationally for that service. So I'm just wondering if it is going directly to 8-1-1 in the coming year, or if in some communities it would still be a different number. It's just a follow-up question.

When I lived in Atlin for many years, the RCMP had a one-person detachment at one point. They used to call it a "one-man detachment", but that's not necessarily the case any more. At one point in time, they suddenly, without any advertising or warning, changed so that when you phoned the local number, your call was forwarded and it was answered by somebody at M Division in Whitehorse. That caused confusion -- and in some cases panic, when somebody was calling because they had a police emergency. They didn't understand why somebody answered, "M Division headquarters, Corporal so-and-so speaking." They thought they were calling the person up the street.

So I can see that there is a possibility. That is the only reason why I asked the minister.

I would like to carry on in the same approach. I have a series of questions that have to do with childcare. They involve more than one program, but if we group them together on a common theme, I think the minister, when he stands on his feet, can answer them together. It will make some sense for those people who are listening or reading *Hansard* later.

When does the money for the Yukon childcare benefit come into effect? Will this new amount be taxable? Regarding the childcare subsidy increases -- and I recognize that the first is a tax measure and the second is a childcare subsidy increases -- will they be taxable? With regard to the increase in government contributions for the wages of childcare workers, which was part of the announcements that the minister made in recent months, what is the cost to this incentive? Can the minister elaborate about what the contribution has been increased from and to? I'm trying to determine what is flowing through to childcare workers.

My questions are all on one theme, although I have referenced more than one specific program or line item. I will just leave the minister to answer. Thank you.

Hon. Mr. Cathers: I'm going to have to check my notes with regard to some of the details of the Yukon childcare benefit and childcare subsidy impacts and taxation questions. I think that the member is aware that we are increasing the maximum income at which someone is still eligible for the Yukon childcare benefit. The previous level was \$25,000 and the new level is \$30,000. That, of course, refers to family income. We are also increasing the total benefit from a previous level of \$37.50 per month to a new level of \$57.50 per month.

I'll just have to confirm my recollection on that. I believe that amount is not taxed. I am almost certain of that but I will just have to double-check my notes before confirming that to the member. I do not believe the Yukon childcare benefit is taxed. I think it is exempted from Yukon income tax but I will just have to double-check that.

With regard to wages, the amount provided in this fiscal year was part of the \$1-million increase that was announced. It amounted to about a 30-percent increase for the wages of childcare workers. I am sure the member is going to reference the total numbers and some of the demands in this area. There will be further increases to the direct operating grant specific to staff wages in future years as part of the \$1-million annual increase in this area. This year it enabled the portion of the Yukon government's contribution to wages of childcare workers to increase by 30 percent.

The member asked questions about the nurse line. As far as that goes, one thing I should point out is that there will be consultation with the community nurses to ensure they are asked about the implementation. That work has begun. They will also be informed once our consultation is complete. As the program moves toward the flip-on date for the phone system, so to speak, they will be informed of the details and any changes. Of course, as I hope the member will recognize, a part of this is that we have to work with the telephone companies in this area, particularly Northwestel, and some of the technical issues related to that are not directly within our purview. We have to work with them on that. That includes the details of whether or not the 8-1-1 number will be up and running in all Yukon communities when the phone service is up and running. We have a target date for the system being implemented and accessed of late spring -- late April or sometime in May.

Again, as with the total numbers, this may be subject to change. It does involve both the issues related to technology and our access with B.C. and any technical issues they may have and a number of other variables that we can't directly control.

So the expectation at this point is that we will be looking at late April or May for the service to be up and running. The expectation is that we would hope to have 8-1-1 service immediately accessible in all Yukon communities and 8-1-1 would be the number. However, until we have received solid confirmation from Northwestel that this is in place, there may be some technical issues to work out with that. If that is the case, then we will have to advertise the numbers in that community and our best efforts will be made to get it operative through 8-1-1 at the earliest possible date.

My understanding is that the 8-1-1 number will probably not be listed in this year's phone directory because the technical issues are still being sorted out around this. I don't believe that request has been made through Northwestel yet because there is some lack of clarity around the implementation date. Since this is a new service, we would rather have some lag time in people becoming aware of it than people thinking the service was operative before it was and trying to dial a service in an emergency and dialing a not-in-service number. We think it would be more harmful than having that number not well

known for what is a new service in this area. I don't believe it will be in this year's phone directory, but I would have to leave that for confirmation.

At the point when the service is up and running, we will be working in an educational and advertising campaign to make people aware of that. That will include the standard systems -- running ads, distributing flyers, informing territorial agents and nursing stations, and distributing information about the operation of the new service to health professionals in those areas as well as their professional organizations.

Mr. Mitchell: I thank the minister for those responses. I would seek some clarification. If the 8-1-1 number is not going to be the phone number that is in the upcoming year's directory -- and if the service is in fact being provided out of British Columbia in the interest of cost-effectiveness -- I'm unclear at this point whether, in each community, there is going to be a local number that the individual seeking access dials and that will go to that service. If this were the case, I would urge the minister to ensure that it indicates somewhere in the phone book that this call is to a more remote location -- or will it be a 1-800 sort of number to a long-distance service?

I'm unclear how it is going to be identified, so perhaps the minister can check with the officials on that and when he is next on his feet he can just clarify that.

Earlier the minister made reference to some \$200,000 a year for the nurse phone line and \$350,000 start-up costs. I thank the minister for that and acknowledge that those are soft number and subject to change. I won't hold the minister to those when he explains it that way.

In the interest of those things that I asked about the taxation, if the minister can't come up with the answers this afternoon, I would certainly accept a legislative return. I would encourage the minister to try to get that response back as quickly as his colleague the Minister of Community Services does so that we might actually have the answer before this sitting concludes. These are policy questions that are broader than I would expect the minister to be able to answer on his feet.

I'm going to go to another area -- social assistance and the reforms and the announcements of future increases. Part of me wants to ask, "Why wait?" The minister has certainly heard from stakeholders on this issue. The changes make sense and they are necessary. They may not be everything that we on this side of the House have asked for, but rather than getting into a debate over whether a 20-percent increase or whatever a particular number is sufficient, we again would like to see the changes coming.

I think the minister has responded to questions in this area for well over a year, saying that it is under review. We could check *Hansard*. In fact, I recall one time when I used the word "study", the minister corrected me and said that they weren't studying it, they were reviewing it. So I'm going to stick with that word. The review has been ongoing for some great period of time. I recognize the requirement for consultation with First Nations and other stakeholders, but I would also indicate that the need is immediate and has been so for some time.

Before the minister stands on his feet to respond, I would be pleased to acknowledge that that need was also great under

former Liberal and New Democrat governments. I will remind the minister that since I have been elected this minister's government has been the only government. That's why I ask the questions of this minister. Had there been a New Democratic government, I would have asked it of them. If I had been part of a Liberal government, I would have been urging my colleagues to be expeditious in addressing this. I don't really want to get into long history lessons.

The minister, with his very announcements, has acknowledged that the need is real. That's encouraging. Now that we're out of that little 60-second or 90-second format of Question Period, I'm just wondering if the minister can give us a better timeline for when it's anticipated that the consultations will have been successfully concluded and, therefore, the changes implemented. Since the minister has already made the announcement, I would ask if there is any anticipation that, if this takes until late January or early February, any of this will be retroactive to the time period when the minister made the announcement or some other point in time.

Hon. Mr. Cathers: With regard to the nurse line, I think the minister misunderstood my response in terms of the numbers that would be used. What I was indicating was not that I didn't think it would be an 8-1-1 number when it begins operation. It does, however, require some confirmation in the communities through Northwestel.

As well, should technical issues be a problem upon immediately implementing the service through dialling the three digits of 8-1-1, we would still want to have that access in place at the earliest possible date. We would then have to determine what the phone number would be at that point in time and whether or not it would vary depending on the community.

That again would be due to there being technical issues through Northwestel preventing us from implementing the 8-1-1 service through that number. It is certainly not our objective, nor have we been told at this point of time that they cannot do so. But, as I think the member will probably recognize when we're dealing with the techies -- if I can call them that -- in dealing with the technical issues, sometimes a last-minute glitch, either in hardware or software, can be something they may not have been aware of before. We have to be aware of that possibility when noting the projected dates for implementation and the projected phone numbers. I hope that has answered that question.

With regard to the member's questions on social assistance, I have to emphasize that a very comprehensive review was underway and, in fact, members in their questioning have often not reflected on the fact that the structure of the system is even more important than the rates themselves.

Again, it was a structural issue. Emergency funding has been in place through social assistance since the last time it was changed to ensure that nobody ever starves or goes without clothing or the ability to take care of their most basic needs, if there is a shortage in the amount they have or if there are any additional costs.

What I would point out is that, with the proposed changes we've announced, it's simply providing the ability to ensure that we're not dipping into emergency funding -- that the rates

themselves are basically adequate in all areas and, of course, the changes proposed reflect the market basket cost. Food is the most significant cost in the proposed change, as well as increases to the allocation for shelter, utilities, clothing and incidentals, to reflect cost increases in those areas.

A significant amount of work was done by officials in this area. The amount of work that was done in looking at what is in place in all areas of Canada should not be underestimated by members.

They reviewed the systems nationally, taking a look at what has worked and what hasn't worked and what has been looked at in those areas, with the goal of trying to ensure that at the end of the social assistance review when we announced the proposed reforms to the system that we ended up with the best system in the country once changes are in fact implemented.

The concept is ensuring that we support people adequately when they are forced to rely on social assistance, as well as fostering full entry into the workforce by addressing the structural areas that may be providing challenges.

With regard to the timelines that the member asked about, this is something that is not directly within our hands. We expect a response back no later than January in terms of the consultation end date that we have indicated, as per our requirements in that area. We expect a response no later than mid-January; however, this is something that is within the hands of the First Nations and Indian and Northern Affairs. The request has been made to them to expedite their consideration, if at all possible, and expedite that formal response.

I am sure the member is going to say that it would have been nice to have these changes implemented already. I know that is his assertion. What I want to assure the member is that, in fact, officials and I proceeded in this direction as quickly as possible. The objective was getting it right. There was no -- and is -- no situation that is imminent or critical that is preventing anyone from getting the food they need or the clothes they need or being able to have the house they need. The system will work much more effectively if the rates themselves are generally adequate, if the rates reflect the nutritious food basket approach and if the system is designed to assist people back into the workforce, rather than the current structure, which creates dependency. If somebody faces an unexpected cost such as their car breaking down, their furnace breaking down or their hot water heater blowing up, if they have no personal financial resources, they have no ability to pay for it. Their only option is to walk back in the door of social assistance and receive some funding through the emergency funding portion. They are then placed in a situation where, for a three-month period, when they are first on social assistance, every dollar they earn is clawed back for the long-standing level of the earned income exemption of allowing them to keep \$1 out of every four earned is applied.

As the member will be aware, the change that is proposed is, I believe, the most significant change in actually reforming the system and this part of our social safety net. It would eliminate the wait period for the earned-income exemption, thus meaning that someone in the labour force could walk back into social assistance for emergency funding if that was necessary.

They could then be allowed to continue within the work force without having all their paycheque clawed back. Having 100 percent of what they're working to earn clawed back for a period of three months creates a real cycle of discouragement and despondency and they simply can't get ahead. They're working eight hours a day, five days a week, making nothing.

In fact, if they face transportation costs, under the system as it has been for many years, they may actually be worse off at the end of the day by going to work at an entry-level job because of transportation costs and other associated miscellaneous costs that anyone faces in going to work than if that individual had simply sat at home on social assistance and waited until the three-month period ended, thereby actually keeping a little bit of what they earn.

The \$2 out of every \$4 changed the earned income exemption time-limited period to three years. The intent of this is to provide people with the ability to develop their personal savings to prevent future dependency and enable them to be assisted in re-entering the workforce. The other part of this is the fact the review found that nearly 70 percent of our caseload has been on and off of social assistance on more than one occasion.

The other part that I failed to mention in my remarks of the work the officials engaged in was not only reviewing what the rest of the country has done, but taking a significant look at the caseload experience in the Yukon to determine why people on social assistance are coming back, analyzing the case history and determining what is driving this nearly 70 percent of people who are on and off of social assistance and why they are coming back. The result was that, in the majority of these cases, it is due to a significant unexpected cost and they're forced back in the door and forced back into dependency on the system.

The proposed change is eliminating the three-month waiting period for the earned income exemption and increasing the amount they can keep to \$2 out of every \$4 earned, subject to remaining within the income range of still being eligible for social assistance. The aim of this change is to help people return to the workforce and keep them there. Caseload experience shows that once we get people off social assistance for two years, they typically never return to social assistance. They are then able to exist on their own means and that is our ultimate goal. It is to help them get on their feet, earn a living, support themselves and their families, grow their personal resources and exist as fully independent members of society.

I hope that has answered the member.

One further thing I should point out to the member regarding social assistance is that the childcare subsidy that we were previously debating is a key part of this. There are five key changes resulting from the review of social assistance that are proposed. The change to the Yukon childcare benefit is one that we are not required to consult on. That's why we have announced that it will be implemented and the expected implementation will occur next month. As well, the childcare subsidy increase is effective on December 1 and results in an average increase to those who are receiving the childcare subsidy of 70 percent in the amount of assistance they are receiving from the government.

We also increased the eligibility level in that area significantly to allow more families to access this. For example, a single parent with one infant in childcare and with an annual income of \$25,000 would go from a previous level of \$3,500 a year in support from the Yukon government under the childcare subsidy to a new level of \$6,250 per year, amounting to a 78-percent increase.

As well, a single parent with one infant, one toddler and one school-aged child and an annual net income of \$40,000 would increase from a previous total annual support level of \$9,100 per year or \$759 per month, to a new level of \$15,000.80 per year to a new level of \$1,257 per month, a 67-percent increase.

The childcare subsidy increase is one of five key parts of the social assistance recommendations. It's aimed at assisting people of low income who are in the workforce and at keeping them there. It is a key part of reducing the welfare wall for parents and families and preventing dependency on social assistance.

The Yukon child benefit is a non-taxable benefit. I can confirm that for the member. It is technically a refundable tax credit paid to low-income tax filers. Someone does not have to owe tax to get this benefit, and that's why it's referred to as a "refundable tax credit". Childcare subsidy is also a non-taxable benefit. The income tax system allows for a tax benefit if someone has daycare expenses and the subsidy amount paid by the government reduces the amount that can be claimed on the tax statement as a deduction for that purpose.

I hope that has answered the member's question with regard to those areas. The childcare subsidy and the Yukon childcare benefit are the two areas of the social assistance recommendations that we are able to implement immediately without consultation, and we have done so. The childcare subsidy increase took effect December 1 of this year. The increase to the Yukon child benefit is expected to take effect next month.

Three changes that we announced in the press release of November 28 include the increase to the social assistance rates and the incentive package, as well as enhancing the services for persons with severe disabilities and reducing the red tape that they're faced with -- those are parts that we do have to consult on.

I'm not sure if the members have fully heard the details on the proposed changes as far as the enhanced services for persons with severe disabilities but basically, in that area, we have approximately 70 individuals who are severely disabled and are expected to be on the system in the long term. Currently they are subject to the same requirements as everyone else in terms of having to complete their filing and paperwork requirements monthly.

For some people, there are challenges such as visual or hearing impairment or both, or cognitive impairments, and for many of these people it is a significant hardship to have to deal with that on a monthly basis. It is unnecessary, since we have doctors' recommendations, and the proposed change would move it to a yearly review and determination if their status has changed. For people who would be eligible for that part, it is

unlikely that their status would ever change. These people are unlikely to ever be able to fully participate in society without the assistance of a program.

That is why, under this change to the program, which we would refer to as the disabled persons assistance program, it would also provide the ability for enhanced services and enhanced supports for minor items and major items around their home that may be necessary to cope with their disability and to function in that place.

I hope that I have addressed the member's questions in that area.

Mr. Mitchell: I thank the minister for his answers and I particularly would like to thank the officials who are listening who managed to get the answers to the two taxation questions on the Yukon childcare benefit and the childcare subsidy into the minister's hands so quickly. That was helpful and saved all of us the process of going through a legislative return.

Now, the minister suggested that he knew I was going to say that the changes should have occurred long ago. He's not quite as prescient or omniscient as he might think. That wasn't what I was going to say; however, I do have some responses or challenges to a couple of statements that the minister made. When he was on his feet, he indicated that the issue is not primarily one of the rate structure, but rather of the overall structure of the social assistance program.

I'm prepared to acknowledge that he's half-right -- it's both. But when the minister says that no one needs to be going hungry or disadvantaged, I can truly say that 100 percent of the social assistance recipients that have contacted our office, or whom I have seen at various public meetings and demonstrations -- and they are considerable in their number -- would disagree with the minister's assertion. Virtually 100 percent of them said that the rates were indeed an issue and that it was difficult and degrading, in some sense, to have to go back and say, "I need more help."

So I think there is a reason for increasing these basic rates, rather than saying there is emergency assistance there. I'm certain that the vast majority, if not all, of the people on social assistance wished that they weren't requiring that assistance. I can't think of too many who feel good about having to go back and ask for additional assistance.

In terms of being hungry, the amounts that are there and tied to the basic nutritional basket of food may be sufficient or they may not. But we have heard that because for so long the amounts provided for shelter were so far below where decent shelter could be found on a rental basis, people were, in effect, spending the money provided for the one, for food, to top up the other, the shelter, in order to get what they considered to be acceptable housing for their families. So that's perhaps where the problem has been in the past.

Now, I'll just go back to one previous area in terms of childcare. The minister mentioned the 30-percent figure -- that that portion of the childcare wages paid by the government was being increased by 30 percent. There has been some confusion in the public because some people have reacted to the news releases as if it's a 30-percent increase in the wages. Of course, that's not what has happened.

When the minister is next on his feet, if he could equate that to the likely percentage of increase in wages that it's actually meaning for a daycare worker -- which is not 30 percent but some smaller figure based on the overall amount -- that would be helpful.

In addition, in terms of childcare, the minister in his news release of May 24 stated that the childcare community benefits from \$5 million over the next five years -- and the final paragraph of that made reference to a one-time childcare capital fund of \$1.3 million that has been established to focus on creating more spaces for children younger than 18 months, providing new spaces in Yukon where the supply is not adequate, and new spaces that better serve educational and cultural needs of parents and children. If the minister could provide an update of how much of that \$1.3-million fund has been expended or dispensed to address these issues and if the minister has information as to how many actual new spaces have been created as a result, that would be helpful.

I would like to move on to another area. I've noticed that the minister is using the bulk of 20 minutes in each response, so I will add one more question to it to try to get another area addressed. That is the Watson Lake multi-level health centre. I noticed in a recent interview in the newspapers -- I don't have it in front of me -- that the minister made reference in the newspaper -- I believe it was the *Whitehorse Star* -- to the fact that he now expected the total cost for that facility to be something over \$10 million and that he was not certain what the final cost would be. When this first appeared in a budget in 2004 or 2005 -- I'm not certain -- the original budget speech made reference to two \$5.2-million multi-level health care facilities -- one in Watson Lake and one in Dawson.

The 2004-05 budget speech -- I just realized I do have that note in front of me. Does the minister now know what the final cost is? I have in front of me the Budget Address from April 19, 2007 when the Minister of Finance tabled the main estimates for this year. At that point there was an update that said the Department of Health and Social Services was proceeding with the construction of the multi-level care facility in Watson Lake, the masonry firewall was completed in 2006 and the structural steel erection was about 75 percent complete; work was underway related to roof insulation, et cetera, and tenders were out for a roof membrane.

It's now two weeks shy of six months from that speech. I would be interested in hearing an update on whether the work has progressed as anticipated and to what level it is complete. I didn't hear the minister cite specific increases in this supplementary budget for that facility, but I could have missed that. I did hear him cite the \$100,000 in capital for the planning in Dawson. Could the minister provide an update of all the funds to date? I see the \$100,000 as a line item in the budget for Dawson, so it was easy to find.

Does he have a final figure for us and a ribbon-cutting date, a date for when he anticipates opening the facility?

Hon. Mr. Cathers: With regard to the member's questions, I can answer his last question first with regard to the Dawson multi-level care facility. There is \$100,000 in the budget for continuing with the project planning. There was a

delay in this and, as members are likely aware, there was a functional plan done previously, which, based on community input, was not well-designed to address the needs seen there. There will be a redesign from that. Functional design work will occur.

The Member for Klondike, officials and I will be holding a public meeting in Dawson City to talk to residents there and to lay out the proposed plans. The work has changed from what was envisioned at that point, but I look forward to having that work ongoing. We intend to commence planning early in the next calendar year. In fact, work is going on internally in the department right now. We look forward to further announcements of timelines on or before the tabling of the budget in the spring.

With regard to his questions about childcare -- the member made comments about social assistance. I have to point out that the member mentioned the issue of rates in that area and the adequacy of them. I would point out to the member that he may have taken my comments in the wrong way. I was certainly not saying that rates shouldn't be increased. If we thought that rates should not be increased, we wouldn't have recommended that they increase.

In fact, this is based on what the member noted that, once people have received money from social assistance, we want to ensure that they are not forced to come back in to request emergency funding or to have money be just too tight. The changes that are proposed are increases in food money to reflect the market basket cost, which I would point out is still a federal number. It is developed I believe by Agriculture Canada and is based on assessing what an average basket of nutritious food costs for the average individual in all jurisdictions, with changes to reflect the different costs of living. It is an assessment that is very useful in determining what the real costs are in this area. We are confident that this reflects the appropriate approach in this area.

As well, there is the issue of emergency funding. I would point out that less need to process emergency funding requests will result in some decrease in administrative workload and costs in that area. With regard to shelter costs, the proposed change, as with the other proposed changes, reflects the work of officials in determining what the real costs are in this area, and I am very much appreciative of the hard work and the many months of work done in this area. I'm confident that we've come up with a proposal that best addresses the needs of Yukon citizens, both those forced to rely on social assistance and those who are other members of the public -- the taxpayers who, of course, have every right to be concerned about the most appropriate expenditure of the public purse.

With regard to wages for childcare workers -- we have increased the Yukon government support. Back in late August, we made the announcement about the increased funding for childcare workers. Yes, as the member indicated, it is a 30-percent increase to the Yukon government's support for wages of childcare workers, provided through the direct operating grant.

As far as the member's question about what percentage of a worker's total wages that this reflects, I have to point out to

him that the Yukon government does not control the wages of childcare workers. The operators are either non-profit or are private companies that offer this service. They do have the ability to pay what they wish to pay and that is a matter between them and their staff. What we do provide is support to a portion of that salary, but the exact details of the salary are a matter between those employees and the operator.

As the member will recognize, we provide a very large amount of support from the general revenue account -- the public's dollars -- to parents with children through the investment in childcare, as well as the other announcements we've made, including the increase in the childcare subsidy portion of the expenditures in this area.

The increase to the Yukon child benefit and the tax changes in the *Income Tax Act* we had before the Assembly this fall will be a tax credit and further tax relief for parents with children. We have supported this to the tune of many millions of dollars and we will continue to do so through the announced increase of \$1 million annually and increased support to childcare overall.

With regard to the member's question on the childcare capital fund, it is \$1.3 million and is a one-time fund. This area has been used for initiatives, including partnership with the Tr'ondek Hwech'in First Nation in the City of Dawson. We provided \$300,000 to them as part of a partnership to assist them in the development of their new childcare centre. This facility will accommodate up to 60 children and employ 15 staff, providing services not only to the citizens of the Tr'ondek Hwech'in First Nation, but also the broader community and residents of Dawson City. This is part of assisting not only the First Nation, but Dawson City, in expanding their capacity to meet the growing need for quality childcare.

That is one expenditure under this; another one is the support that we have provided in terms of the general fund for toys and other educational support, which amounts to \$225,000. That was available on an allocation basis, based on the size of the daycare or the day home. There was money provided to all to assist them in this area. As well, there has been funding for other projects, ranging from \$40,000 or \$50,000 for support for capital costs at Whitehorse-located daycares, I believe. The total expenditures or commitments amount to the neighbourhood of \$900,000. The fund is still available for application to meet the goals identified in the press release.

With regard to the Watson Lake multi-level care facility -- and this applies, of course, to the facility in Dawson, which will be commenced in future -- the original allocation of \$5.2 million was an allocation; it was not a budget for the projects, but a budgetary allocation.

The Watson Lake multi-level care facility project was specifically designed in a manner -- that being construction management -- to allow it to respond to the public input as the development unfolded and, as well, seeking public input through meetings on what that facility would look like. The facility was changed very significantly as a result of that public feedback and in response to what the citizens and, in particular, seniors of Watson Lake requested. That resulted in an increased cost.

The original estimated footprint was 5,280 square feet. As a result of the input of the people of Watson Lake, it has been increased to a total of 25,000 square feet, along with a 2,000-square-foot service building, which will serve that building and also enable -- at such point in time as the Watson Lake hospital is replaced, which it will need to be at some point in time due to code issues. Once that facility is replaced, it will allow it to serve that building as well.

So, again, it's a very significant increase to the total size of the building -- an increase of over five times in the scope of size from what was originally envisioned. As a result, the costs have gone up. So, again, as I indicated, the amount allocated in the budgets to date is in the order of \$10 million.

There will likely be costs in the next budget required, and I know that the member has tried to spin this as being cost overruns. I would hope that by providing the member with this information, he will avoid doing so in the future, based on the improved understanding. Because of the construction management approach, budgetary allocations were provided as necessary. A general contract approach provides one known cost, and there will either be a cost overrun or not.

But as contracts are managed through a process of construction management, the budgetary allocations were used and the end costs will finally be determined at that time.

However, we will be able to provide members and the Yukon public with an update on both the estimated total cost and the estimated completion date. I anticipate it will be early in the new year. In fact, officials from my department and the Property Management Agency in Highways and Public Works have been working on an update on the project and determining how to move forward on this in the most appropriate and effective manner.

As far as work that has been completed to date is concerned, the facilities have been mostly clad to weather and the roof has been completed. However, there is work internally that needs to be done and the only element missing to make them clad to weather is windows and doors. I believe that has been addressed through the use of tarps. If not, it is intended to be addressed through the use of tarps to make it a warm environment inside while mechanical and interior work is done.

Again, in answer to the member opposite, this is an example of a significant change in the project. It's based on the way that the project was set up from the beginning to respond to the needs of the community and the requests of the public. What was asked for -- there was a significant change made. That has resulted in some increasing costs, but considering how much larger the facility will be and how much more capable it will be to serve the citizens of Watson Lake than what was originally envisioned, I think the member will agree that it's still a worthy investment and good project. At the end of the day, we'll have a fine facility for Yukon citizens in place in the community of Watson Lake. That will be followed, of course, with the development of a facility that will meet the needs of the City of Dawson, which will complement work that has been done in the Village of Haines Junction, for example -- the seniors building that has been completed there through the work of the Yukon Housing Corporation. We will continue to assess the

needs in other Yukon communities, particularly in the Village of Teslin, to determine when facilities are needed there and how those facilities should be structured.

I should also take the opportunity to mention that, in addition to addressing the continuing care demands through such facilities and providing assisted living through facilities such as the Haines Junction facility, one thing that the department is working on is the enhancement of home care services and long-term planning in that area. This is to ensure that, through the home care system, we are supporting people -- particularly seniors, but also people with disabilities -- in their homes for as long as possible rather than putting them in a situation where they are compelled to enter a continuing care facility.

There will always be a certain level at which people will need to enter a continuing care facility to receive the support they need, but our goal is to ensure that the Yukon system supports them to the greatest extent practical in their own home, providing them with the ability to remain there for as long a time as possible.

Mr. Mitchell: I thank the minister first of all for his updates on childcare and the programming. I would agree with the minister that the amount of money that has gone to childcare workers as a result of the 30-percent increase in the government contribution is not within his control but rather -- to use an analogy that the minister may be familiar with -- like flow-through shares. We know that the government is providing the money and I was hoping that the minister would have some statistical or anecdotal information as to what the actual result has been.

In any case, as far as the comments about Watson Lake, I'm a little amazed at some of what I heard. First of all, the minister said that he was certain I was going to spin something, and I want to assure the minister that I have no intention of spinning anything -- spinning wool or a spinning wheel; I'm not really interested in spinning.

This is a bit of a change of pace for this minister. I think this may be the first time that the minister has stood on his feet and indicated that the whole scope of the project has changed and indicated that this was a result of additional consultation with the residents of Watson Lake. Now, first of all, let me agree with the minister -- it's always good to be agreeable when we can -- that when this facility finally opens -- and the Member for McIntyre-Takhini would like me to ask in which century that's being anticipated, so I'll just mention that he wanted that question answered -- I don't doubt that it will be of benefit to the residents of Watson Lake. That is obviously the goal of the program.

The minister has said it was designed as a 5,000-and-some square foot facility. It's now going to have a footprint that includes some 25,000 square feet so I think the minister is now telling us that we started out to build a hockey arena and we built a multiplex.

In fact, what was announced -- I have a crack research staff that is just as efficient as the minister's officials listening to debate here so I will read from the Budget Address of March 25, 2004 under Health and Social Services -- was that "\$10.6 million is planned in 2005-06 budget for the construction of the

two multi-level care facilities, the one in Dawson and the one in Watson Lake."

It didn't say as a down payment for a giant future mortgage to build the facility; it said to build the two facilities. We were taking the Minister of Finance at his word that it was \$10.6 million, some \$5.3 million each.

The minister has said that through the construction management approach this has managed to double in cost without being completed. I think this is the benefit of the construction management approach that he is citing.

The minister likes to cite power lines that were built before I was elected to this Assembly and he talks about how that wasn't a good approach -- which I think might have been somewhat similar. Then the minister comes back and says, "We thought it would be fun to try this out too" and it hasn't worked out that well. If the minister wants to -- I won't say "spin" -- weave this into a story of post-commencement of construction consultation with the residents of Watson Lake to find out that a 5,000-square-foot facility should be a 25,000-square-foot facility, then we are concerned about what consultations might occur this coming year to turn it into a 250,000-square-foot major teaching hospital, perhaps.

In any case, that is not very reassuring. I will point out that in the special report of the Auditor General regarding Highways and Public Works, I think this particular facility was among the examples given of estimations that turned out not to be close at all -- never mind inflation. It was just completely out of the ballpark. In any case, I guess we will have to agree that it is \$10 million and counting.

One of the benefits or disadvantages, depending on which side of the House you sit on, is the fact that the minister who, chooses in his capacity as House leader for the government side, the order of debate and informs us of it on any given day -- I wish I knew the word. I know that my colleague from Kluane will know the word. I know that if we had commenced debating Health and Social Services tomorrow, it would have been on the penultimate day. Perhaps the Clerk can tell me whether there is a good term for the third-to-last day but, in any case, that is the choice the minister made.

The operation and maintenance in this department is a little over 29 percent of the entire operation and maintenance budget for this supplementary budget.

We would have liked three, four or five days to debate Health and Social Services. But the minister chooses the order of debate, and I guess the advantage to the minister is that we have to move along because I know there are other members who will want to enter into the debate.

So I don't want to dwell on this any longer. I didn't hear from the minister what stage we're at, what percentage of completion, and what the projected completion date is of the now 25,000-square-foot redesigned facility. The minister did mention the \$100,000 that's in the capital budget for redesign or planning of the Dawson facility. I would ask the minister if he could inform us, when he's next on his feet, what the total amount to date -- since that 2004-05 initial budget speech -- has been expended on the Dawson facility.

The minister's recollection of what occurred is that there was a poor design -- or a less than satisfactory design -- and that the good citizens of Dawson undertook to redesign the facility. I think this may be some surprise to the architects, because I think there was some consultation, as well as a lot of expertise, that went into the design.

Our recollection is that the minister's predecessor got out his protractor, compass, calculator and slide rule and other drafting tools and undertook to redesign the facility. It turned out that he was perhaps not fully qualified for that undertaking.

In any case, we'd like to know how much went into the total cost of this facility to date and whether we have actually yet reached a set of plans. We've spent how many hundreds of thousands of dollars to date planning and re-planning and perhaps re-planning yet again a facility for Dawson. We'd be interested in knowing if that has reached the stage where we now have an agreed-upon set of improved plans or if we're still in the drafting stages of that -- or the design stages.

To move on to another area, because it's late in the day, I would like to start on emergency medical services. As a former volunteer and one-time licensed emergency medical assistant in British Columbia, it's near and dear to my heart. I know that what both the full-time professionals and the volunteers at the community level undertake is extremely important to every Yukoner. Knowing that it might be a sudden medical emergency health issue at home, a traffic accident or an industrial accident, we do rely on the work of these people.

I have a series of questions that I would like to ask. There is a potential settlement with Watson Lake on the EMS question. We may have put this in as a written question, but we certainly haven't received a written answer. We hate to have to just wait to get it.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Mr. Mitchell: I may be wrong; the minister says we haven't, so I will ask the question now.

How much was spent in total while the volunteers were off work in Watson Lake to date? I am asking about wages, travel and per diems. Are negotiations currently underway and ongoing with the Watson Lake volunteers? Can the minister provide us with an update on when we might expect the issues that were brought forward by the Watson Lake volunteers will be addressed and, hopefully, remedied to their satisfaction or to the mutual satisfaction of the government and the volunteers? Can the minister let us know if this will be resolved before the supervision of EMS is transferred to Community Services?

Can this minister let us know whether that could lead to any delays or whether there will be some continuity of the same people carrying forward, at least on those negotiations? So that is a series of questions about Watson Lake.

We've heard announcements that the volunteers are back to work in Dawson. We certainly appreciate the good faith shown by some volunteers in having gone back to work. We also know that there has been a continued expression of some frustration or concern on the part of those volunteers as to the progress of the ultimate resolution of their issues. I look forward to the minister's update on that.

I'm going to lump these into one series of questions, because they all deal with emergency medical services. In the proposed settlement with Dawson, some issues were raised with our contract in the last month. Regarding the paid full-time person, or persons, in Dawson and Watson, can the minister provide us with information on whether this would be a normal eight- or 12-hour shift? What is the shift anticipation in terms of the coverage?

I know the minister may say that is a bit of an operational issue but I think the minister has probably been fairly involved in this issue and hopefully, together with the officials, he can provide us with an update. Will those people be working a regular shift and what duties would that include? Would they be undertaking record keeping, bureaucratic, other types of duties? Will there be a training percentage of their time where they will be providing training to other EMS volunteers within the community?

Will they be expected to perform some of those duties when perhaps it is most needed outside normal business hours? In other words, if they are on shift for X hours a day, and then there is a callout at 1:00 a.m. for a motor vehicle accident, is some provision made for the people who probably have the highest level of training to respond to that as well, because of their expertise? Will those people be working a day shift or will volunteers still be expected to take on what are sometimes the busiest times for EMS, which are the evenings, overnights and the weekends? Or is the anticipation that there will be two of these full-time people in each community in order to have something closer to 24/7 coverage. Obviously it wouldn't be 24/7 coverage with two people? I am wondering how that has been anticipated.

Could the minister provide us with a bit of an update of the anticipated costs of training to enhance the level of training for the volunteers? I think there have been some offers by the government made and requests made by the volunteers to try to bring up the training of the rural volunteers to the national primary care paramedic level. Will the full-time people who are in the communities be advanced care paramedics or will there also be primary care paramedics? Will there be any opportunities down the road for those people who go through the national primary care paramedic level to advance further and perhaps go Outside to take training to the advanced care paramedic level for ground ambulance and medevac ambulance attendants?

Have any EMS people to date started attending any training? Have they reported back on the benefits or the progress of how that has gone? Those are some of the things I would like to hear the minister respond to.

The other thing is something I've asked of the minister in Question Period -- I know it must have been, because we didn't call debate until now -- and that is the possibility of using some of the increased funding for the medical education bursary and health education bursaries. This has been used to assist a number of different health care providers in advancing their training.

It was suggested to me by some EMS personnel that it might be beneficial if they could access this funding, in particu-

lar, because they have to leave the territory to take the advanced care paramedic training. That's an expense and it's difficult because of the associated expenses of being away from work, not earning an income while they're doing it, housing and so forth. I would be interested in knowing whether the minister is open to that suggestion. It came from some of the actual full-time employees, so it's not some construct from this side of the House, but rather the actual employees in the minister's department that have made the request. I don't know whether the minister has previously heard that from the employees.

I didn't see any money in this current supplementary budget to address the possibility of either a secondary or replacement ambulance station. There has been talk in the past about the possibility of such a facility being built somewhere at the top of the Two Mile Hill, closer to the Alaska Highway. This would be a better location perhaps to reduce run times into some of the subdivisions along the Alaska Highway and up into the Granger, Copper Ridge and McIntyre area without having to get all the way through downtown Whitehorse, which can be quite congested at times. I would be interested in that.

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

Chair: Mr. Mitchell has moved that we report progress. Do members agree?

Some Hon. Members: Disagree.

Chair: I declare the motion defeated.

Motion negatived

Chair: Mr. Mitchell, you still have the floor.

Mr. Mitchell: It's disappointing to see how some of this works out in debate.

Again, to summarize, I would like to know the status of the negotiations in Watson Lake and what the status is and what progress has been made in Dawson City. Is there any funding in the current budget or any planning going on regarding a new ambulance station to be more centrally located, which would help them avoid having to do the runs through downtown Whitehorse?

What is the status of advanced paramedic training being made available under the health education bursary?

Seeing the time, I would move that we report progress.

Chair's statement

Chair: With regard to reporting progress, once a motion is moved and defeated during the day, it's no longer permissible to move that motion, so we will proceed to 5:30 p.m. today.

Mr. Mitchell, you have about 15 seconds.

Mr. Mitchell: I will loan my 15 seconds to the minister for his thorough answer. Thank you.

Hon. Mr. Cathers: I will attempt to avoid too much engagement in discussion of House rules, but I do have to point out that it seems passing strange that members of the Official Opposition called for division on a motion to adjourn at four minutes to 5:30 p.m., that being 5:26 p.m. on a previous sitting day, and today the Leader of the Official Opposition moved adjournment at seven minutes to the bottom of the hour.

I've frequently heard, in meetings of House leaders, complaints from the Official Opposition House Leader about us leaving a minute too soon, but apparently this varies, depending on who would have camera time.

In answer to the member's questions --

Some Hon. Member: Point of order.

Point of order

Chair: Order please. On a point of order.

Mr. Cardiff: On a point of order, I think that the debate is supposed to reflect the topic under discussion. The minister was not talking about the Department of Health and Social Services in Bill No. 8. He was talking about something completely different.

Chair's ruling

Chair: Order please. On the point of order, there is a point of order. I would remind all members that we are discussing Bill No. 8, Department of Health and Social Services.

Hon. Mr. Cathers: With regard to the questions that the member asked, as for the multi-level care facility in Dawson, the expenditures were in a previous year. I do not have the number directly in front of me. I believe that it was approximately \$20,000 that was spent on planning work at that point in time. There is not a current design. Functional planning will be done and, as I indicated, the Member for Klondike and officials and I will be discussing that with his constituents. Ultimately, we want to ensure that the design reflects the needs of the community.

The members made some comments about the approach of the previous minister. I want to indicate in this area that the manner of addressing the project -- we have some difference in the manner in which we see doing so. In fact, as far as the basic needs identified in the community of Dawson City, there is no disagreement on the basic needs that are necessary, and we look forward to presenting a plan that will address the needs of the citizens of Dawson in the multi-level care facility, as well as in terms of their facilities for a health centre.

The member referenced comments from 2004 -- I believe he said it was the 2004 budget speech. I would point out to the member that what the Premier said at that time and what I have said today are not in disagreement. It is only the member's interpretation of what the Premier said that disagreed with what I indicated here.

In the case of Watson Lake, the project was designed to change based on what the public input was. It did change. It was a far more significant change than would have been originally anticipated, but it was a change directly responding to the interests of the people of Watson Lake, resulting in about a five-fold increase in the size of the project.

The member compared it to the Liberals and the Mayo-Dawson transmission line project. I would point out that there's a very large difference here, not only in the approach taken, but that in the case of Watson Lake, we are getting five times what we thought we were going to get at the start. In the case of the Liberals' power line project, we actually got less than what they told the public we were going to get because, in addition to the

costs going beyond \$17 million to the order of \$40 million, we have seen a power line that is still having technical issues in terms of the amount of power it can push through and vibration on the lines, et cetera. Comparing the two, there is no connection.

As far as the member's questions go, I am running short of time. To answer his question with regard to a new EMS station, that is in fact being dealt with through Community Services. The Minister of Community Services will speak to that at a future point in time. It turned out that the city pulled the plug on the idea of a co-location of the facility. Based on that, the Minister of Community Services is working with his department on a new facility.

Chair: Order please. Seeing that the time is 5:30 p.m., the Chair will rise and report progress.

Speaker resumes the Chair

Speaker: I will now call the House to order.

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

Chair's report

Mr. Nordick: Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 8, entitled *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, this House stands adjourned until 1:00 p.m. tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 5:31 p.m.

The following Sessional Papers were tabled December 11, 2007:

07-1-54

Yukon Liquor Corporation 2006-07 Annual Report (Kenyon)

07-1-55

Yukon State of the Environment Interim Report 2003: Environmental Indicators (Kenyon)