

**Whitehorse, Yukon**  
**Tuesday, May 6, 2008 — 1:00 p.m.**

**Speaker:** I will now call the House to order. At this time, we will proceed with prayers.

*Prayers*

## DAILY ROUTINE

**Speaker:** We will proceed with the Order Paper. Are there any tributes?

## TRIBUTES

### In recognition of National Hospice and Palliative Care Week

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** It is my pleasure to rise today on behalf of the Assembly to formally recognize National Hospice and Palliative Care Week, which is celebrated from May 5 to 11.

Palliative care is a special kind of care for individuals and families that are living with a life-threatening illness that is usually in an advanced stage. The goal of palliative care is comfort and dignity for the person living with the illness as well as the best quality of life for both this person and their family.

The continuing care branch of Health and Social Services was pleased yesterday to officially launch our new palliative care program that is the result of much hard work by many people over many years in developing and establishing that program.

It is a collaborative initiative that is supported by an advisory committee made up of care providers from Whitehorse General Hospital, Hospice Yukon Society, First Nation health programs, pharmacists, local physicians and continuing care staff.

The program will provide support and services to Yukoners living with a terminal illness and their families. It includes a volunteer coordinator, a registered nurse and a social worker. This team will enable people to die with dignity, free of pain, surrounded by their loved ones in a setting of their choice.

Death and terminal illness is something that is often not spoken of freely in our society, and people living with terminal illness in their family can feel somewhat secluded.

This program will help those individuals and their family receive the comfort and supports they need to ensure their end-of-life care is dignified.

We formally recognize and thank Hospice Yukon and the palliative care providers for the value they bring to our society.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

### In recognition of International Youth Week

**Hon. Mr. Fentic:** I rise today on behalf of the Assembly to pay recognition to Youth Week taking place this year from May 4 to 10.

Youth Week is an annual event that celebrates all aspects of youth culture, including diversity and achievement. It shines a spotlight on the positive achievements of youth in our society.

Youth Week strives to build stronger connections between young people by bringing together youth from many different communities and networks across Canada and the world.

The Yukon government is very pleased to see the community celebrating our young people throughout this week. Several events have been organized by Bringing Youth Toward Equality, also known as BYTE, a local youth organization. Youth can enjoy a movie night at BYTE on Wednesday, and barbecues at F.H. Collins and Porter Creek high schools, and on Saturday, May 10, the City of Whitehorse will celebrate with the grand opening of the Chillax'n Lounge at the Canada Games Centre.

Let's acknowledge and celebrate the contributions of Yukon youth this week and indeed, Mr. Speaker, throughout the year. By honouring their talents, ideas and abilities, we can inspire proactive youth involvement in our communities year-round.

Let's ensure their voices are heard and recognized in a constructive and positive manner. Through the Youth Directorate, the Yukon government supports the participation of Yukon youth in social, economic, cultural and political arenas. We do this by providing support and funding to key organizations that serve young people, including Bringing Youth Toward Equality.

We are pleased to provide opportunities and projects that support youth and in turn help build healthy and safer communities. These opportunities include the Youth Directorate's activities funding, which supports activities, training and employment opportunities for young people across the territory.

Yukon youth also benefit from the youth investment fund. The fund supports many community-driven initiatives aimed at addressing the needs of Yukon youth, including leadership training, after-school activities, physical activities, cultural events and workshops.

We are working to engage youth because they can help shape our world for today and tomorrow. Issues like climate change will impact their world, which is why our government is working to engage and connect young leaders here in the Yukon on this topic.

Let's be aware of the challenges facing young people so we can help youth achieve their full potential. At the end of this month, our government will launch a new initiative, helping youth avoid some of the challenges they face today, including the pitfalls of drinking and substance abuse at a young age.

Let's encourage youth to take advantage of the opportunities at hand and contribute to the future of our territory and our nation. As the saying goes, "We have not inherited the Earth from our parents; we simply borrow it from our children."

Youth Week celebrates the contributions young people make in our communities, our country and in the world; thus, I would ask all honourable members to join me in recognizing the outstanding contributions of Yukon youth and to recognize Youth Week, both here in Yukon and internationally.

**Mr. Elias:** I rise on behalf of the Official Opposition to pay tribute to International Youth Week, and in particular, our Yukon youth.

Starting as a small grassroots movement in 1995, Youth Week has grown into an internationally recognized event held annually in May. It is a week of fun, interaction and celebration intending to build a stronger connection between young people and their communities, and to profile the issues, accomplishments and power of youth.

Locally, the organization Bringing Youth Toward Equality, formally known as BYTE, has become a leading advocate for youth programs, issues and initiatives in the Yukon. BYTE, working in partnership with a very large number of local businesses, governments, service providers and fellow non-profit groups, has been involving youth in every step of the process of decision-making. BYTE seeks to bring about positive change by promoting social consciousness toward youth culture, human rights, the environment — especially climate change — racism, violence, substance abuse, homelessness, spirituality, sexuality and politics.

BYTE offers our youth a chance to unite to strengthen their voice and bring about positive change for the well-being of everyone. BYTE hosts a week of events to celebrate our youth.

Events scheduled this year begin today with a BYTE annual general meeting. On Thursday, there's a barbecue at Porter Creek Secondary, and on Friday the barbecue is at F.H. Collins Secondary.

Saturday night from 7 to 9 p.m. BYTE will help the City of Whitehorse with its grand opening of Chillax'n Lounge for youth at the Canada Games Centre.

Also, the latest issue of *Toxic Blend Youth 'Zine* is available. This do-it-yourself magazine is a venue for young people to express themselves in a creative way through photos, poems and drawings. This is a refreshing document of young Yukon writers and artists who dare to speak their minds.

This week is about awareness — a chance for our youth to learn more about the opportunities and resources available to them and to become more familiar with some of their rights.

Youth Week offers us the opportunity to honour the talents, ideas and abilities of our young people and make a commitment to ensure their voices are heard.

We salute all the volunteer organizations that offer our youth the opportunity to bring positive change into their lives and the world around us.

Young people truly are our future, as are all the grade 11 students from Porter Creek Secondary School and their teacher, Mr. Wes Sullivan, in the gallery today. I'm sure that Mr. Sullivan remembers my attendance at Porter Creek Secondary School.

How we support them now goes a long way toward empowering them to achieve their true potential.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Hardy:** My message might be slightly different from what you just heard. I think the people who spoke before me said very legitimate things to the youth.

We often say that the youth are our future. We were all youths at one time as well. We were all in grade 11 — or some of us were — and some of us didn't make it through grade 11.

Many in the world do not have the opportunities for the education that is offered in Canada.

The challenges that are facing our youth and the youth who are in our gallery today are things we and our ancestors have done to this planet, to the cultures and to the countries.

One of the challenges that face them is war. We have seen an increase in war and what impact it has around this world. We're not sure where it's going — and the violence out there. Famine — many people in this world are now facing serious crises because they can't get enough food for themselves or their children. When I say not enough food, I'm talking about a bowl of rice a day. A bowl of rice is all they're asking for, and they can't even get it for their children in this world today.

This is the world we're leading; this is the world we as elected people are involved in and have to take responsibility for. This is what we're passing on to our youth.

Environmental degradation and climate change are huge issues. Who will we turn to? We have to turn to our youth. You are the future. We are the ones who have not been able to deal with these issues. We have failed our youth, but that doesn't mean we stop. Many of us still think we're kind of young ourselves, but we have to continue working. Part of that work is education; part of that work is passing on things we have learned and the mistakes we have made, to try to indicate that you — our future — are the ones who can make it a better world.

It's not about a week or the acknowledgement of youth; it's about our future. That's what this is really about. That's why we're all here. You are our hope. My children are my hope; children such as yourselves in all the schools, at all ages, are the hope for our future. Please do not make the mistakes we have made, both in our individual lives and our decisions around the world.

Please recognize that we're a global world now. Racism should not exist. We have not been able to defeat it. Famine — children going hungry.

Very briefly now, I want to leave you with one last thing: I read a book a few weeks ago. It's called *Three Cups of Tea*. It's about an American man, a young guy, who went to climb K2. He got lost coming down, walked into a village of 300 or 400 in Pakistan. They had no school. The kids were in the dirt using sticks, trying to write out their lessons, and somebody was volunteering to teach them.

This was only 10 or 12 years ago. He made a promise to build schools for those children. He built schools for \$12,000 in over 50 villages in Pakistan. That is where the Taliban is coming from. That is where war is happening. That is where those villages are being bombed, and those children are learning, and they are growing, and they are having an impact on the future in that area and they are trying to turn it around. That is what you can give them as well. You can work together with all youth around the world to make a change for the better.

**Speaker:** Are there any further tributes?

#### **In recognition of National Mental Health Week**

**Mr. Hardy:** I have another tribute, and this is one that is written out. I rise on behalf of the Legislative Assembly to

pay tribute to National Mental Health Week, May 5 to 11. The Canadian Mental Health Association has declared this week a time for urging employers to take responsibility for the mental health of their employees.

Eighty-nine percent of Canadians say their working environment is increasingly stressful. This results in almost the same percentage reporting sick on an average of six times in the past year. More than 2 million employees in Canada suffer mental illness at any given time. The implications for the economy and the impact on society are overwhelming.

Mental illnesses are complex. They can arise from social, psychological, genetic and biological disturbances. Professionals and the general public are beginning to realize there are connections between mental and physical health. As with all illness, a healthy body is a starting point for prevention of disease. Stress, burnout and depression can lead to more serious illnesses. Depression is the fastest growing category of days lost to the workplace. It is linked to heart disease, diabetes and autoimmune disorders. If workplaces do not address mental health problems, days lost will increase and productivity will decrease, leading to the higher cost of disability and health benefits.

Much can be done in workplaces toward a mentally healthy lifestyle. The Canadian Mental Health Association is asking employers to do more and to make mental health their business. Some of the things that businesses and government workplaces can do include the following: offering flexible hours and changes to work from home; training managers to recognize stress-related illness; supporting work/life balance with stress control programs; eliminating unnecessary or unproductive meetings; communicating far more clearly; allowing staff to control their own priorities. Government would also do well to endorse working toward a national mental health strategy as recommended by the Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology's report, *Out of the Shadows At Last — Transforming Mental Health and Mental Illness and Addiction Services in Canada*.

**Speaker:** Are there any further tributes?  
Introduction of visitors.

## INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

**Hon. Mr. Rouble:** I would ask all members in the Assembly to join me in welcoming the grade 11 class from Porter Creek Secondary School and their teacher, Mr. Wes Sullivan. Welcome.

*Applause*

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

## TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

**Hon. Mr. Rouble:** I rise in the House today to table the Yukon College annual report and financial statements for the 2006-07 year.

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

Reports of committees.

Are there any petitions?

Are there any bills to be introduced?

Are there any notices of motion?

## NOTICES OF MOTION

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

THAT this House urges the federal Department of Canadian Heritage to provide appropriate and timely funding to enable Northern Native Broadcasting Yukon to maintain its programming and to retain its staff; and

THAT a copy of this motion be forwarded to the federal minister responsible for Canadian Heritage.

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

THAT this House urges the Yukon government to send aid through the Canadian International Development Agency to help rebuild Myanmar, formerly known as Burma, from the devastating effects of this past weekend's cyclone.

**Mr. Elias:** I give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Yukon Party government to lobby the federal minister responsible for Canadian Heritage to:

(1) promptly make available the financial resources required for Northern Native Broadcasting Yukon to continue to produce the television programs of *Nedaa* and *Ha'shgoon*, and

(2) ensure that the non-profit society of Northern Native Broadcasting Yukon receives the annual core funding it requires to operate in a consistent and timely manner.

**Mr. Hardy:** I give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Yukon government to follow the Yukon substance abuse action plan by concentrating on the three neglected strategic directions, namely:

(1) harm reduction, by activating the community harm reduction fund and increasing support for young women living in high-risk situations;

(2) prevention and education, by improving alcohol and drug education in Yukon schools;

(3) treatment, by ensuring that all Yukon communities have access to the telehealth addictions counselling service; and

by providing more resources to support communities to develop plans to identify and combat particular factors that contribute to substance abuse in their communities.

## NOTICES OF MOTION FOR THE PRODUCTION OF PAPERS

**Mr. Fairclough:** I give notice of the following motion for the production of papers:

THAT this House do issue an order for the return of the following documents in regard to the most recent contract for the school bus services in Whitehorse and the school bus services in Yukon rural communities:

(1) the request from the contractor to the government to release the contractor from the contract;

(2) the response from the government agreeing to release the contractor from the contract; and

(3) the contract signed between the government and the contractor.

**Speaker:** Are there any further notices of motion? Are there any ministerial statements? This then brings us to Question Period.

## QUESTION PERIOD

### Question re: Education standards

**Mr. Fairclough:** I have a question for the Minister of Education.

In the pan-Canadian assessment program, Prince Edward Island, like Yukon, did not fare well in the education survey either; however, when confronted by the media and questioned, he told reporters that it was a problem and pledged more money to programs. He did not hide. He did not say that the tests were merely an opinion. He did not question the validity of the survey. He accepted responsibility and said he would do better.

The minister knows what it means to be responsible. Will the minister accept that responsibility and tell the House what he proposes to do and when he will do it?

**Hon. Mr. Rouble:** The Yukon government is certainly part of the Council of Ministers of Education. We have participated in this study in the past, unlike other jurisdictions that had their own reasons for not participating. We are studying and analyzing the results of the PCAP, as well as looking at the other indicators that provide us information about Yukon's education system. These include the Yukon achievement tests, the provincial exams and other statistical indicators that we have from Statistics Canada and other sources about the state of education here in the Yukon.

Mr. Speaker, we have many things in our education system to be proud of. We do have other challenges. We will continue to work with all our partners involved in educating Yukon's youth to ensure that Yukon youth are provided with the opportunities that they need to succeed in today's world.

**Mr. Fairclough:** Well, the minister can set the tone right here and now. He can announce today that he will rescind the following teacher cuts. Here is the list: Jack Hulland Elementary School lost one position; Selkirk Elementary School lost a half a position. In Hidden Valley, one teacher is gone. In Porter Creek Secondary School, 2.5 positions are gone; Golden Horn Elementary, one position is gone; Grey Mountain School, .5 of a position is gone; and in Johnson Elementary School in Watson Lake, one teacher is gone. If he did this, it would at least send the right message. How can he say here and now that there will be no cuts in the schools? Can he say that, here and now? Will he do that?

**Hon. Mr. Rouble:** Mr. Speaker, unfortunately the opposition is only putting half of the information, half of the facts and half of the truth on the record.

## Unparliamentary language

**Speaker:** Order please. "Half of the truth" is an indication that somebody may be misleading the House. Honourable member, don't use that terminology.

You have the floor.

**Hon. Mr. Rouble:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will certainly not mislead the House. We know how many teachers there are in the system. We have seen the number grow. We've seen the number of teachers grow; we've seen the number of education assistants grow; we've seen the number of students in our system decline.

The Department of Education has responded — as they do every year — to address pressure points in different communities in different schools. The whole Department of Education is working with the school administrators, with the school councils, as they do every year to work toward allocating our resources. We will continue to work with all involved. As we've heard, Yukon has the highest per capita investment. We have one of the lowest student/teacher ratios anywhere in Canada and we'll continue to make those investments in Yukon's education system.

**Mr. Fairclough:** The minister wanted facts — here are the facts. That is the evidence. It can't be hidden. There has to be more than having more discussions with the minister's many partners. We've discussed, we've consulted and we've reported for years. At some point we have to do something.

Yesterday the minister mentioned other resources that he relies upon such as the Fraser Institute. Here's what they had to say about the Yukon secondary schools. I quote: "The news is not good...Among the Yukon schools, only Vanier Catholic Secondary in Whitehorse comes close to the all-schools' average rating. The other three are consistently and substantially below average."

I want to hear an acknowledgement and a commitment from this minister to bring forth changes.

Will the minister make that commitment?

**Hon. Mr. Rouble:** The member opposite has heard the list of examples in the past many times. We embarked on an education reform project with our partners in education, and that project has brought back many different recommendations about addressing different issues in our education system. We're now working with our partners on the New Horizons project to institute some of these changes. Some of the ones that have already been included are things like the Wilson Reading program, the Reading Recovery program, the Whitehorse Individual Learning Centre, experiential education, and the expansion of other programs.

Teachers are changing the way they teach in the classroom; we're working with our curriculum consultants to ensure our curriculum meets the needs of Yukon students and prepares them for life outside the Yukon. We're certainly not making any changes to reduce the quality of our educational system.

We'll continue to work on all areas and look at innovative and creative solutions, some I'm sure the members opposite will agree with and some I'm sure they'll disagree with. We know that if we continue to do the same thing over and over

again, the same way, we'll get the same results. Yukoners have told us they want to see different results; therefore, we're making changes.

**Question re: Education reform**

**Mr. Fairclough:** Same minister, Mr. Speaker. The education reform project was struck because there were problems in our education system in the Yukon. There would have been no need for such an extensive and expensive study if all was well.

The authors of the report were very clear: there must be a change from a top-down-driven system to a bottom-up model. From this new model of governance would come the inspiration and vision to move our system of education forward. Unfortunately for all Yukoners, the minister and his boss do not share the vision of the reform report. They do not believe Yukoners should have a say in shaping their children's education. They treat the report as if it were some kind of conspiracy to undermine public government.

Why is the minister agreeing with the Premier, or does he believe it's time to catch up with the rest of Canada and reshape the top-down-driven system?

**Hon. Mr. Rouble:** Mr. Speaker, I would encourage the member to listen to debate and to probably read the questions before he comes into the Assembly. If he were in here he would hear about what was going on in our education system today. He would hear about the New Horizons project; he would hear about different initiatives. He would look at things like the Whitehorse Individual Learning Centre or the expansion of distance learning opportunities. He would look at the number of education assistants in our schools. He would look at the teacher/student ratios, which is the lowest in Canada. We have about one teacher for every 11 or 12 students on average throughout our system. That isn't the same in every classroom, and we know that. We know that is the way averages work. But what it does demonstrate is a willingness to involve Yukoners, a willingness to listen, willingness to change and a desire to improve the system and to improve the outcome for all Yukoners.

**Mr. Fairclough:** The minister is full of insults, but no solutions. I want to tell the minister that I have been listening to the member opposite. I am going to quote him from yesterday's Blues. He said this, and I quote: "I'm amazed at how the member opposite sees spending tens or hundreds of thousands of dollars on a new bureaucratic model will help our kids learn. I don't agree with that."

That is coming from that minister, Mr. Speaker. The minister has a problem, and his solution to date has been to cut teachers. His solution is to maintain the same top-down-driven system that excludes Yukoners from having input. His solution is to exclude the new direction from the people having input, and that is a governance model. His solution is to ignore anything and everything that he doesn't agree with. His solution is to maintain command and control — the same old tired Yukon Party position.

The minister needs to be very clear —

**Speaker:** Order please. Ask the question.

**Mr. Fairclough:** Why is there more public debate when the minister has already made up his mind on governance models?

**Hon. Mr. Rouble:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the folks who were involved in the education reform project. There is a lot of good information in there. There is a lot of other information that also needs to be discussed, debated and rated for its merits.

One of the ideas in the education reform initiative is to put a federal employee on a board that would provide recommendations to the Yukon government. We have discussed in this Assembly numerous times the areas of devolution and the responsibilities of provinces and territories. Certainly, putting a federal representative on education in the Yukon is a step backward.

We are going forward. We are working with school councils. We are working to build on their school learning plans. We have opportunities for parents to become involved with their child's education with individual learning assessments. We have opportunities for parents and people in the community to be involved in the school council. Also, we have a wide variety of mechanisms for other people to become involved in education and help shape Yukon's education system.

We recognize that there are challenges in the system. We will work with all involved — with different orders of government, with the Department of Education, with other government departments, with parents and everyone involved in order to increase the quality of education and the outcomes of our educational system.

**Mr. Fairclough:** Well, the minister flip-flops. Yesterday, he said he didn't agree with the government's model. It changes from day to day. The minister yesterday was quite talkative. He said, and I quote: "If the member opposite wants to see grassroots involvement, he should go to a school council meeting and one of the planning sessions to see how parents can get involved and set priorities and issues for their school." The minister must have been referring to the Golden Horn School Council. They have a lot to say to this minister about how he involves grassroots. I have met with that school council.

Part of what this council had to say to this minister is that this is disingenuous — a "d" word I can't use — just downright disheartening and disrespectful. That is what they had to say. Golden Horn has had enough and Yukoners have had enough of this closed-shop, top-down approach. Words are all we get from this minister. Yukoners want action: restore the cuts. Will the minister do that?

**Hon. Mr. Rouble:** Mr. Speaker, let's take a look at the budget. Let's take a look at the amount the Yukon Party government has increased education. It has gone from \$100 million a year to \$130 million a year. The number of teachers has grown; the number of education assistants in our schools has grown. Unfortunately, the number of students in our system has decreased.

Mr. Speaker, we have increased partnerships with the Yukon First Nations programs and partnership unit; we estab-

lished a relationship with the Yukon Association of School Councils, Boards and Committees.

Indeed, Mr. Speaker, the Yukon Association of School Councils, Boards and Committees, a representative of CYFN, and a representative of Yukon College were all on the Premier's hiring committee when it came time to look for a deputy minister. That's being inclusive, starting with what I would argue is the most important position in our education system, save for the teacher in the classroom.

We are continuing the work with all of our partners in education; we recognize there are challenges; we recognize that we'll need to make the necessary investments, which we are doing.

Also, we need to look at programming changes, which are being looked at. We'll work with the teachers in the classroom, with the administrators in the school, with the Department of Education and all of our partners in education to ensure that we have a responsive education system that meets the needs of each child and the community.

**Question re: *Liquor Act* amendments**

**Mr. Hardy:** Under the existing *Yukon Liquor Act*, no one under the age of 19 is allowed to buy or consume alcohol or to enter a licensed premise. But there is one exception. Under section 90(2), a person under the legal drinking age cannot consume alcohol in a licensed dining room or restaurant, in their homes or at a reception. This is permitted as long as a parent, grandparent or legal guardian is present and either provides a drink or gives consent. There is nothing in the existing act or the proposed amendments that sets a minimum age for this provision.

When the act was being reviewed, did the minister not see a need to set a minimum age for kids having a drink with their meal or is he relying on regulations to bring some common sense to this provision?

**Hon. Mr. Kenyon:** The simple answer to that is no, the consultation that was done clearly indicated that parents wanted to be parents — in many discussions. That is a part of the old act, and we're not proposing to change in any way.

**Mr. Hardy:** We can understand allowing families to observe their normal customs of having a glass of wine or beer with a meal; however, under the proposed amendments, there's no such thing as a licensed dining room or restaurant any more. There will be something called "food primary" and "liquor primary" facilities, but even in a food primary facility, there's no requirement to order food in order to get a drink. In other words, a family could sit in a restaurant drinking beer all afternoon, without eating a morsel, and the kids could be drinking with them.

Is the minister willing to entertain new amendments to respect the original intent of section 92, making it mandatory that a meal be served before a child is allowed to consume alcohol in a food primary facility?

**Hon. Mr. Kenyon:** The concept of a food primary is not sitting and drinking all day; the concept is still that there is a requirement for food being available, just not a complete meal. Good social responsibility would require that food be made available at some reasonable level. Again, this will be

covered in regulations and by the policies of the Yukon Liquor Board, as they continue to do their very good work.

**Mr. Hardy:** I don't think the minister knows what he's talking about. There's a related problem I'd like the minister to try to address this time. The new amendments will allow an underaged employee to serve alcohol in a food primary facility. Once again, the act doesn't set a minimum age. What we could see is a 12-year-old serving beer to a table full of people who aren't ordering any food. We could even have kids serving kids or young servers being pressured by their peers to bend the law.

The minister ignored a recommendation from the *Liquor Act* consultations to make it compulsory for anyone serving alcohol to complete the Be a Responsible Server program. Will the minister consider an amendment to make responsible serving training mandatory, especially so that servers under the age of 19 know their rights and responsibilities to refuse to serve someone?

**Hon. Mr. Kenyon:** The member opposite seems to have brought this matter to its most illogical conclusion. The legislation proposed would permit someone working in the kitchen, for instance, to deliver a drink. They may not serve it; they may not pour it; they may not mix it; they may not open the bottle, but they can at least deliver it within those circumstances. This has been looked at very, very carefully.

In terms of the Be A Responsible Server or BARS course, the decision was made that to require that of every single facility was really not reasonable; however, there are always facilities that liquor inspectors would have a concern about. The liquor inspectors have every right and the ability to require that if they feel there is a concern. We leave that with our good liquor inspectors — all five of them, frankly.

**Question re: *Corrections Act* consultations**

**Mr. Hardy:** I have a question for the Minister of Justice instead. Seventy percent of people in the corrections system are of First Nation ancestry. The consultation process on a new correction system has been ongoing since November 2004. There has been a great deal of public and First Nation input. The consultations on the *Child and Family Services Act* also went on for a long, long time and involved a lot of First Nation input. The *Corrections Act* consultations are now entering their final stages with a new act expected this fall.

How does the minister intend to prevent the problems that plagued the *Child and Family Services Act* from reoccurring with the new *Corrections Act*?

**Hon. Ms. Horne:** The consultation is continuing and it is very intense. We travelled through the communities in the Yukon to hear what they would like to see in the act. Their approval is of utmost importance to us. It has been ongoing for over five years at this point. We would hope it will reach a favourable conclusion.

Thank you.

**Mr. Hardy:** No answer. I will try again. There were hundreds of recommendations in the final consultation report in March 2006. There are still serious concerns that many will be ignored by this government, especially after what happened with the *Child and Family Services Act*. Some First Nations are

worried that their views won't be adequately represented in the draft legislation the minister tables this fall.

For one thing, there are five Justice department representatives on the working group and only one representing the Council of Yukon First Nations. The legislative advisory committee responsible for how the draft act is actually written has six members, but doesn't include legal counsel from any of the First Nations.

With this obvious imbalance, how can the minister ensure that the diversity of First Nations' perspectives is fully represented in the final product?

**Hon. Ms. Horne:** The member opposite can be assured that the First Nations have every right to hire their own legal counsel to go through the act, and from what we have heard so far, there have been favourable comments on the consultation.

**Mr. Hardy:** I hope this government is offering to pay some of the costs of legal services, because that is very expensive, as we all know.

Once again, just like the *Child and Family Services Act* mess, the major problem some First Nations have is with timing. Community meetings to discuss the findings from the early rounds of consultation are just getting started, and they are supposed to last until mid-June. That leaves only a few months for the legislative committee, Yukon government and Council of Yukon First Nations to make sure that First Nations' views are properly included in the draft legislation. All this is happening at what is probably the worst time of year to expect First Nations to be involved in meetings.

If First Nations ask the minister to extend the consultation process until they are confident the new act addresses their concerns, or to allow witnesses to appear before all Members of the Legislative Assembly, is she willing to do that or are we going to see a repeat of what happened this spring with the *Child and Family Services Act*?

**Hon. Ms. Horne:** To answer the member opposite, we are already discussing lengthening the consultation period. We will bring it to the Legislature in the spring sitting. We have been putting into the act what we have heard from Yukoners and First Nations.

#### **Question re: Air quality in government buildings**

**Mr. Mitchell:** Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Health and Social Services. A couple of weeks ago, we asked for the reports done on the air quality at the Whitehorse General Hospital. The minister refused to make them public. He said that everything was fine, so don't worry. The minister would not release those reports. He did not even mention a recent inspection report done by Occupational Health and Safety. This report confirms that the hospital was in violation of the Yukon's *Occupational Health and Safety Act* over air quality controls. Why did the minister refuse to release all this information? Did he not think it was important for Yukoners to know that the hospital was violating the *Occupational Health and Safety Act*?

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** The member ought to be aware of the fact that his comments today are not accurately reflecting the debate we had. In fact, I indicated to the member at that

time, and would remind him again today, that air quality reports that are conducted by Occupational Health and Safety are conducted by that body. In the case of the hospital, when they request an air quality report to be done, it is under the Yukon Hospital Corporation Board of Directors. I made available to the member the numbers from the report he was referring to — February of 2006, I believe. As far as a copy of the report goes, for the member to suggest that I refused to make it available does not accurately reflect the facts; in fact, as I reminded the member, this is in the jurisdiction of the Hospital Corporation. I would encourage him to discuss that and bring it up with them. I have passed on his request to the Hospital Corporation for their consideration. I would encourage them to make that report available, if the member or others wish to see it.

The member will not read the report and will not understand it, based on his past representations in this House.

**Mr. Mitchell:** This minister is the minister responsible for both the Yukon Hospital Corporation and the Yukon Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board. We don't have an opportunity to directly question the chair of the Hospital Corporation. The minister said he has looked into the report and he's not worried — it was four-star. He didn't send the report over, so to say that I haven't read it — he hasn't sent it.

The minister's plan seems to be that what people don't know, won't hurt them — except, in this case, it might.

An inspection report done in March of this year confirmed the hospital was in violation of the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* regarding air quality. This affects people who work in the hospital, people who visit the hospital and patients in the hospital. Why did the minister keep this report under wraps? Why did he refuse to share it with the public?

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** Again we have a representation being made by the Leader of the Official Opposition that does not accurately and adequately reflect the facts of the matter. Occupational Health and Safety is run by the Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board, which is an independent, arm's-length board. That board deals with a fund for compensation of injured workers and with occupational health and safety, and they deal with that in accordance with the law. They have the legal responsibility for executing and performance in accordance with that law.

The board, through the chair and the CEO, by law, must appear in the Assembly annually to answer to members. As the member will recall, the chair and the CEO did so earlier this session, in fact.

Again in this area, when a report is conducted by Occupational Health and Safety, if corrective action for air quality or any other measure is required, the administration exercises their responsibility to direct that corrective action be taken, and they do so in all cases. For the member to suggest they're not doing their job is very unfortunate and I would urge him to correct the record.

**Mr. Mitchell:** Well, Mr. Speaker, the minister can blame the chair of the board if he wants, but I don't think that is the right way to answer this. The point is, someone should have made this report public, and he is the minister responsible. Instead, this Yukon Party government hid the report, and they

still refuse to release it. The report confirms the hospital was in violation of the *Occupational Health and Safety Act*. It said workers were suffering as a result.

The minister had two choices when he was informed of the contents of this report. He could have been up front with the public and informed Yukoners about the problem, or he could have hidden the report and hoped that it never became public. Unfortunately, this minister chose the latter.

Why did the minister refuse to make the report public even when I asked him to do so?

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** First of all, the member is speaking of two reports, and secondly the member once again is not accurately reflecting the facts.

With regard to the report of 2006, I informed the member of the relevant numbers from the report informing that the air quality index was given a four-star rating and air cleanliness an absolute score of 100.

With regard to the recent evaluation to which the member is referring, I have not seen a copy of this report and indeed if there are issues with it, I am confident that the Hospital Corporation, contrary to the assertions by the Leader of the Official Opposition, will do their job to take the corrective action required of them by Occupational Health and Safety. I am confident that our qualified and capable staff of both boards will do their job. It is unfortunate the member is suggesting they are not doing so.

#### **Question re: Air quality in government buildings**

**Mr. Mitchell:** I will make the report available for the minister responsible if he can't take the trouble to get it. I believe members of the media found it posted on public bulletin boards.

This recent inspection report done by Occupational Health and Safety confirmed that the hospital was in violation of the Yukon's *Occupational Health and Safety Act* over air quality concerns. The minister hasn't made this report public.

The report gave the hospital several deadlines to improve the situation. Areas of the hospital had to be properly cleaned and the ventilation system had to be improved.

The report indicates, and I quote, "Six of the seven workers are complaining about the adverse affects such as coughing whenever working in this office."

Most of the Occupational, Health and Safety infractions and hazards were ordered to be addressed by April 15. Can this minister tell Yukoners if these deadlines were met and if not, why not?

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** What I find amazing is that the Leader of the Official Opposition does not note the contradiction in his own statements on the floor. The Leader of the Official Opposition said that we're keeping the report secret, and then he said it's posted on several bulletin boards. He should make up his mind — it's either publicly posted or it isn't.

Now, the Leader of the Official Opposition — perhaps as he reads further in his script, he can make up his mind on which it is — but in fact, with regard to any reports of air quality, if they are commissioned by the Hospital Corporation or any other body, they are of course made available to those in

authority in that body, and in this case, Yukon Hospital Corporation.

If they are done by the Occupational Health and Safety Board — and I remind members that any employee in a public workplace or in a private sector workplace can request the Occupational Health and Safety Board to do an evaluation of the safety of their workplace. The qualified staff at Occupational Health and Safety will direct that corrective action be taken, if such is needed. They have the ability to levy penalties on any employer or manager who does not take the action they direct.

**Mr. Mitchell:** Let me point out for the minister what is the contradiction. The minister said a short while ago that he hasn't seen the report, but it is apparently publicly posted. He wants us to go searching in various places to find it. He's supposed to be in charge. He's supposed to know it.

Poor ventilation affects the physical and psychological health of workers. Poor ventilation allows for the accumulation and mixture of hazardous contaminants. The resulting physical effects on workers are harmful. Psychological and other health effects like stress arise when workers know they are constantly exposed to ventilation hazards. This is the situation at the hospital. Six of seven workers in one area have reported feeling ill. The minister tried his best to keep this report from the public. He hasn't released it when he was asked for it in this House.

When was the minister first informed about the contents of this report?

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** Again the Leader of the Official Opposition has a contradiction in his own statements. The member knows he never before asked about this most recent report to which he's referring; he asked about a 2006 report and I gave him the numbers on that.

The member himself said the report is posted on bulletin boards. It was not me who said this report was posted. I did not encourage the member to look at bulletin boards, as he just suggested I did. The member himself said it was on bulletin boards. Clearly, if that is the case, this report is available.

I would remind the member opposite that air quality reports and tests are ongoing in every government workplace and in corporations of the government, like the Yukon Hospital Corporation. Ministers do not see each and every report. If there are issues that require action at the ministerial level, they are brought to our attention by the qualified staff of the departments or of the Hospital Corporation or other corporations, if they are under a corporation.

The member is standing here suggesting that the staff at the Yukon Hospital Corporation, who have the responsibility to comply with the *Occupational Health and Safety Act*, are not following their responsibility. I'm very disappointed the member would do that.

If there's any report, by the member's own assertion, they've made that available to their employees.

**Mr. Mitchell:** I want to make this very clear for the minister responsible. It's the minister's job to solve problems, not play date games as to what date and which report, or shell games and hope we don't find what's under the other shell.



**Unparliamentary language**

**Speaker:** If memory serves me, we've ruled the shell game terminology out of order. Honourable member, carry on, please.

**Mr. Mitchell:** We're never sure which games the minister is playing.

The report the minister refuses to make public also said this: the dusty condition in the office is causing discomfort and adverse effects on workers, in contravention of the *Occupational Health and Safety Act*. It also said the hospital had no system of recording the timing and location of air quality complaints in the hospital.

These are very serious concerns, concerns this government refused to make public.

Instead of chastising the opposition for raising these questions, the minister should do his job, talk to the chair of the corporation and make sure they're being addressed. When will these concerns be addressed? Does the minister have any other reports on air quality he's refusing to disclose?

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** I will give the member the benefit of the doubt that perhaps someone else wrote his script for him and he didn't read it before he came into the Assembly. That is the best possible excuse the member can have for the contradictions he has made in his own statements in his line of questioning.

The member himself stated that the recent air quality report at the hospital, to which he refers, is posted on several bulletin boards. The member also said that the report is a secret. How can be a secret if it's posted on the bulletin boards? The member needs to make up his mind. This is really quite a silly game that he's playing in this approach.

**Some Hon. Member:** (Inaudible)

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** In answer to the heckling from the member opposite, I have not seen the report, but according to him, he's seen it and it's posted on the bulletin boards.

Again, I remind the member that staff and administration of the Hospital Corporation have the legal obligation under the *Occupational Health and Safety Act*. If they require it to be bumped up to the ministerial level, I am confident that they will exercise their responsibility and make me aware of any assistance that is required from me. Unlike the member opposite, however, I have faith that they have done their jobs.

By the member's own assertion, the report has been made available to employees and posted on bulletin boards. The member needs to get his script and his facts straight.

**Speaker:** Much to our disappointment, the time for Question Period has now elapsed.

**Notice of government private members' business**

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 14.2(7), I wish to identify the motion standing in the name of the government private member to be called for debate on Wednesday, May 7. It is Motion No. 441, standing in the name of the Member for Klondike.

**Speaker:** We will now proceed with Orders of the Day.

**ORDERS OF THE DAY**

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

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

*Motion agreed to*

*Speaker leaves the Chair*

**COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE**

**Chair (Mr. Nordick):** I will now call Committee of the Whole to order. The matter before Committee of the Whole is Bill No. 11, *First Appropriation Act, 2008-09*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

**All Hon. Members:** Agreed.

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

*Recess*

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

**Bill No. 11 — First Appropriation Act, 2008-09 — continued**

**Chair:** The matter before the Committee is Bill No. 11, *First Appropriation Act, 2008-09*, Department of Health and Social Services.

**Department of Health and Social Services — continued**

**Mr. Hardy:** I left off yesterday talking about dental health. There are many questions I have in that area. In this department there are many questions, not just about dental health, but about palliative care, children with disabilities, what is happening with the young offender facilities, children's receiving homes, territorial health access funding, nurse information line, early psychosis intervention and the buildings that we have out there and how they are being used. Are they being used, and what direction we are going in with the hospital and with recruitment of professionals to ensure we have a good health system as well as social assistance rates, welfare and health. This is a huge department, and there are many things to discuss.

What I am going to try to do is group some of my questions for the minister, and if the minister can try to address the questions as best he can, and if he feels he needs a little bit more time to get information back to me he could just indicate that, and I would be quite happy with that type of answer.

Because I left off with dental health, I'll go back to it. I'll be grouping some of the questions around that. Looking at some of the figures, what I said yesterday was the decrease in visitation to rural communities was a concern. Looking at the dentists who are being sent out, that stayed the same, but the

dental therapists have dropped in that area. What is the government's direction and why is that indicated in the budget?

I'll name off about nine questions here, just on this one subject alone. Are dentists in private practice reimbursed for travel and accommodation in rural Yukon? I'm sure they are; I don't think I need a long answer in that regard. What is the number of dentists we're using at the present time? These are all contracts; it's my understanding they're all from private practices. We don't have dentists in a department, so that would be a question. That's more of a question than a statement from me.

We don't have an employed dentist. My understanding is we use private dentists for that service. What is the number of the dentists we are using? Are all the dentists we use from the Yukon? If they're not, what is the reasoning why we would need to get dentists from Outside?

As I've said, travel for dentists is up 17 percent, while for dental therapists it has seemed to remain the same. Is this a deterioration in dental health because the preventive program with therapists has not been very successful? I do know dental therapists are supposed to be doing a fair amount of preventive work, yet we seem to have a substantial increase for dentists themselves.

Do the dentists use the government facilities when in the communities? If so, how are they billed? How do we come to the amount that is billed back to the dentist for the use of the facilities, especially if they're using it for private practice once they're out in the communities?

My question would be: do dentists compensate the government for facility use, if and when they are using private practice? Do they work with the dental therapists in the communities themselves, do they go out with their own assistants, or is there coordination between the dental therapist and the dentist going out together?

Has the children's dental program been evaluated and, if so, is that evaluation available? Would the minister make it available, if so, and if not, would the minister consider an evaluation of the program itself?

My final question: how many dental therapists are there right now, is this a full complement and is this — it's the question I asked yesterday — the same number who were employed a few years ago, or have we seen a decrease or an increase in how many dental therapists we employ?

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** First of all, with regard to questions asked by the Member for Whitehorse Centre — the Leader of the Third Party — yesterday when he was focusing on questions about the numbers of trips in 2007-08 and predicted for 2008-09, versus the 2006-07 actual trips, that was for dental therapists to travel throughout the territory. This is in a large part due to the fact that the program found that it is more efficient to have larger communities served by two therapists working together, which results in fewer trips, but a comparable level of service.

At this point in time, as far as the number of therapists is concerned, no, there has been no decrease in the number of positions that exist. As I indicated to the member opposite, we had a period of time when we had a considerable number of

those positions vacant. They were fully staffed. At this point in time, I don't have the information available — since it is operational in nature — on whether we have any vacancies or it is fully staffed. There is typically some turnover in that area, but at this point in time we have certainly not had vacancies causing operational problems, which we did several years ago. The program is functioning well at this point in time.

As far as dentists are concerned, they are reimbursed for travel, in accordance with an arrangement for their services. They are contracted then to provide those services in rural Yukon. All our dentists are operating in private practice. There are none who are employees of the Yukon government. As far as the numbers of dentists travelling, because it is through contract that can vary, particularly when a practice is contracted. There is some potential that that might result in a different dentist going at a different point in time. It is a bit of a moving target; it can vary from time to time.

As far as the increase in dentist travel, another thing I would make the member aware of, which also relates to the number of dentists we contract for this, is we've had a shortage in the past in the availability of dentists to travel to rural Yukon and still face some challenges in that area. Therefore, to some extent, that is driven based on the availability of dentists to do that travel.

All dentists who provide those services at the current time are from Yukon. At one point in the past, as the member will likely recall from previous debates, we had a contract with a clinic in Hay River, as there were no Yukon dentists who were willing to provide the services to some of the rural communities we wished to have dental services provided to. At this point in time, we do still have challenges in the total availability of dentists. We have been successful in getting more trips from Yukon dentists than was the case several years ago; however, we no longer have the contract with the Hay River practice as they did not wish to continue that. Overall in the Yukon, there is a fairly high demand for dental services, as well as in the Whitehorse area, versus the availability of dentists.

The member was asking if dentists out on the road used government facilities; yes, that is the case. As far as whether they pay the government for it, no, what is standard in contracts — both with dentists and physicians — is if the government is contracting a private practice space from a doctor — which is usually the case when it applies — the standard would be to pay them for those overhead costs as a portion of the contract.

In the case of dentists operating in rural Yukon, we simply do not pay them in the contract for overhead costs they do not incur on the contract. For those portions of overhead that are covered in a government facility, the government simply pays for them directly, rather than paying the dentist to provide those services and allocate overhead as part of that overall contract, then bill them back. It makes far more sense to simply provide the services and contract the dentist for the service they're actually providing.

As far as whether they work on their own or with assistants, sometimes dentists travel with an assistant, sometimes they may be working with a dental therapist, and sometimes a combination of the two might occur.

As far as whether an evaluation report has been done, no, one has not been done. There is of course ongoing programming evaluation, as there is within other areas of the department, on the effectiveness of the program, but there has not been a specific report done in this area.

As I indicated to the member, we can certainly relay to him and others who are interested that the program is working with a higher level of staffing than it was in past years but there are still challenges in this area. There is a national shortage of dental therapists and the competition for the limited number of therapists is fierce. As I indicated before, the department's efforts to recruit dental therapists have been successful through changes in innovations in the recruiting approach, as well as the annual recruitment trips to the National School of Dental Therapy. The Yukon will be hosting a pan-territorial conference for dental therapists this June, which is aimed at raising the profile of the Government of Yukon as an employer of choice, as well as accomplishing the other standard results that are desired from national conferences — the sharing of information and best practices and so forth.

The Yukon children's dental program has been able to achieve its top public health priorities for this past year. This includes completing 92 percent of the sealants and 94 percent of topical fluorides as of April 28, 2008.

I believe that answers the member's questions with regard to the dental program.

**Mr. Hardy:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you to the minister.

I think he addressed some of them. I won't go on at length on this topic. We have a lot to cover. I do appreciate the minister addressing the questions, and hopefully we can continue.

If I have more questions, I'll be asking them probably in the fall, when continuing the debate on this.

I am going to look at some of the other areas as well in Health and Social Services, and then probably move on.

The Thomson Centre — I understand that it's pretty well ready to be used now, and I am trying to make sure that I don't go along the same line of questioning as the Health critic for the Liberals, so that we don't have to duplicate too much. Even though maybe I don't agree necessarily with the questioning, nor even the answers or lack of answers, I don't want to go over and over the same thing, but there might be some repetition here. However, I do understand that the Thomson Centre is pretty well ready to be used now. The concern of course is finding enough nurses, which seems to be epidemic across this country.

One of the suggestions I have heard from people is that this centre could be used for mental health and addictions inpatient care; and it does not necessarily need the nursing staff right there; it is connected to the hospital.

Has that or any other option been considered for the centre itself? Is the minister waiting for the first graduating class of LPNs that is starting this fall to help relieve some of the pressure in the nursing profession to get the Thomson Centre up and running to its full capacity?

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** I thought I noted it yesterday, but perhaps the member hasn't had the opportunity to review *Han-*

*sard* from yesterday, or perhaps I was not sufficiently clear in my wording to answer him. With regard to the Thomson Centre, there is significant capital work that needs to be done. We do know the scope of it; it is a known amount and a known challenge. At this point in time, as I indicated in debate discussion yesterday with the Leader of the Official Opposition, the challenge we are facing there is primarily related to staffing. The member is correct in noting that we are waiting to see the success of the changes that have been made in the staffing model and recruitment incentives for staff at Copper Ridge Place, as well as work being done internally as part of strategic planning and the health care review to ensure that there is a plan and that we can be confident we'll see the opening of that building and actually staff it, rather than opening it and unexpectedly having a staffing problem, as was the case with Copper Ridge.

The LPN program is part of our overall staffing needs and will certainly be helpful in the case of the Thomson Centre. As to whether the Thomson Centre will be open before or after the first class graduates is something that at this point in time I cannot say definitively, but it is my hope that it will be open prior to that first class graduating. The Thomson Centre would likely open, not all at once, but in one or more phases.

In answer to the capital question that I expect the member will ask next — why not just do the capital immediately. We know the capital challenges, we know what needs to be done and we know the approximate length of time it will take to do those upgrades. One of the unexpectedly quick challenges we are now facing is staffing as a result of national shortages.

It was determined that it would be better to leave that until we know that we have an approach to staffing, recruitment and retention that we can be confident will work, rather than allocating what is significant capital dollars. It is about the sequencing of priorities. There is, of course, a myriad of competing potential capital projects in many departments. All of them are important in nature, so rather than allocating millions of dollars toward a project that would potentially sit vacant for some time until the staffing issues are fully addressed, it was Cabinet's determination that the most appropriate course of action would be to utilize those capital dollars elsewhere. At a certain point in time, whether it's later this year or beyond — again, my hope is that it would be late this fiscal year — capital steps can be taken to bring the Thomson Centre back into full operation.

The major issues that remain in need of addressing at the Thomson Centre include upgrades to the heating, ventilation and air circulation system. It is adequate for occupancy in an office context, but there is a higher standard and higher code for a care facility, so some upgrades have to be done. It was not built to an adequate requirement in the first place. As well, there are changes that need to be made to the nurse call system, which again was not quite adequate at that point in time and certainly does not meet modern standards. That is another part of the significant capital cost. The other major capital cost is simply in miscellaneous movable equipment, such as beds, carts and so on, that were stripped from the Thomson Centre

and moved to Copper Ridge Place at that time, in the interest of saving costs and utilizing the mobile equipment.

I hope that has addressed the member's question in that area. As far as mental health and addiction, I know we have discussed this numerous times in the past in this Assembly. In fairness to the member opposite, I have probably not had those discussions with him.

The possibility of using the Thomson Centre for other options, including mental health and addiction services or as a secure unit, had been proposed by some. We had a report done a few years ago by a group called Options Consulting. They reviewed the functional options for Thomson Centre and considered the possible uses, and it was the recommendation of Options Consulting, which we accepted, that Thomson Centre was well laid out — if not quite architecturally sound at that point in time — for continuing care. To renovate it to adequately provide secure units or facilities for mental health or addictions would cost millions of dollars. It would be expensive and then, because the predicted growth in demand for continuing care will require all the beds in Thomson Centre within the next several years, we would be faced with the situation whereby a significant amount of money would be spent on renovating Thomson Centre to address mental health and addiction counselling and services. That would then take away the potential for continuing care beds and there would still be another building required. Therefore, the more effective approach would simply be to either renovate the hospital or build a new building entirely for mental health and addiction services.

Those possible future capital projects are part of the strategic planning that is being done right now by the Hospital Corporation. They're looking at the demand for services, both current and predicted, and they'll be reviewing that and working closely with the Department of Health and Social Services on the strategic planning underway internally there, as well as feeding into the overall health care review being done by the panel that's doing the high-level review of pressures on the health care system.

The simple answer to the member's question is that, to use the Thomson Centre for mental health and addiction services, it would be more expensive in terms of capital projects than to simply build a building, or renovate a building, specifically for those services and use Thomson Centre for the purpose for which it was designed, which is continuing care.

**Mr. Hardy:** That's interesting. The minister touched on Copper Ridge Place. Like I say, there's definitely a repeat of some of the questions, but sometimes you get a little clearer answer the second time around, or maybe it's just the way the question is presented. I do appreciate the minister's willingness to try to address the questions I give, even if I do repeat myself. Or, I don't repeat myself — I'm repeating what someone else has said. I don't necessarily agree with the way they say it sometimes.

I would like a clarification here. My understanding from talking to a lot of people is that the building now is structurally sound. The indication he gave was that the HVAC system and the communication system — the call system for the nurses —

as well as the pros and cons of turning the building into something other than it was originally designed for, that the costs — that possibly it may be cheaper to build a new building or make renovations to the hospital or whatever. We don't need to go into that. I heard that fairly clearly. I just want to know at what stage is the Thomson Centre? If it's just the HVAC system, if it's structurally sound now, it would not take much. Once a decision is made or when the staffing problems can be addressed, would it not take long then to be able to address the outstanding issues? That building could be up and in full use in a fairly short period of time, if we can address the staffing issues.

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** In answer to the member's question, that is correct. In fact, the building is now deemed to be structurally sound, and the remaining work is of a nature that has significant costs, but the member is correct in guessing that it is something that has a predicted timeline associated with it. It should not take a significant amount of time to complete those repairs, noting of course that any changes to the HVAC system and the nurse call system, et cetera, do take some time, as with any construction and renovation project. But it is interior work, with the exception of a few minor issues such as doors that may need to be upgraded or replaced, which still needs to be done. There are no issues with the building envelope, as they refer to it. It is now deemed to be structurally sound.

But again, ye, the member is correct. The question right now is primarily ensuring that (a) we are able to staff the Thomson Centre and (b) we are confident we are going to be able to continue to keep it staffed. That work is being done internally as part of the evaluation going on through the strategic plan and as part of the health care review. We will be reporting back late in this calendar year, which would lead to the hoped-for outcome that once we receive that report we would see a position whereby decisions are made and timelines are announced for reopening the Thomson Centre.

**Mr. Hardy:** The minister touched on Copper Ridge Place in a couple of his previous answers. I guess I won't go over all the questions again around Copper Ridge Place, but just based on a priority level, if we get any new nurses would Copper Ridge Place be the priority rather than the Thomson Centre? Is that the priority right now within the department? Is Copper Ridge Place first over Thomson Centre, based on staffing issues that both of them face?

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** I am not sure if this is the direction the member was wishing to go with this, or perhaps I am misunderstanding what he is asking. We don't put one building at a higher priority than another. They are both facilities that we hope to have up and running, but at this point in time Copper Ridge Place is the one in which we have clients and residents. Having that wing that we had opened for a short time before we had a reduction in staffing levels — priority number one would be to get that wing back up and running. It is hoped that by early summer, if the staffing the department believes and hopes it will have in place in terms of new recruitment comes to be, then we will be able to reopen that 12-bed wing. Thomson Centre then is the next step.

The Thomson Centre then is the next facility on Continuing Care's radar screen and that of course is to address the demand that we will be facing very shortly — an increase in the number of people needing such a facility — and of course in fact we are dealing with that to some extent right now, but the Thomson Centre is the next building on the horizon. I hope that has answered the member's question.

**Mr. Hardy:** Yes, Mr. Chair, I believe it does. My question very simply: what is the priority in the department, not necessarily around buildings but needs? A wing at Copper Ridge Place had to be shut down because of staffing issues. I just wanted it confirmed that as soon as that can be addressed, the staffing issues will be addressed at Copper Ridge Place. The building is there, the facilities are there, everything is in place — by my understanding. We need to get that up and running. We don't want to find that that stays shut and that staffing issues somewhere else are being addressed immediately over that.

My understanding is the minister did say "priority number one", of course, and I agree with that.

A lot of questions have been asked around the hospital, and a lot have been asked in this sitting already.

I do have questions but, looking at them, I think I am going to move on. I think some of them I already asked. Some of them definitely can be asked but will not be answered, such questions concerning the contract negotiations and stuff like that. My long history in that area knows what the answer would be and knows exactly what I would say too, so I am not going to spend any time on that area.

Questions around the hospital of course involve auxiliaries and flexibility and all that. I just put them on record, but I think they have been asked already and debated quite a bit, so I am not going to go there.

The children's receiving home is something that we have asked a lot about over the last while. My understanding of some of the things in that area — and I could be wrong — is that there is a report on remediation or replacement of it. If the report is finished or out, I have not seen it. It could be my fault, as I said, but I am not the critic for this department, but if not, what is anticipated, and when would it be available?

My concern is about the separating of girls and boys, and finding a new home, and is there an interim plan around that?

My understanding is that the KDFN has offered space for a receiving home. Has the minister been able to respond to that?

I guess those would be the questions I have in that area for now.

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** Yes, I think that the member noted in the earlier part of this last question about Copper Ridge Place — the simple answer is yes. The first area of priority for new nurses and LPNs hired would be to go to the area we have positions created that are, in some cases, vacant. That is Copper Ridge Place, where staff is needed to run the last 12-bed wing.

With regard to the Hospital Corporation, the member is correct. As he noted, of course I cannot comment on contract negotiations. As far as staffing at the hospital and the mention of the use of auxiliary on-call staff versus other types of posi-

tions, again those are matters that are currently being reviewed by the Hospital Corporation. As the member will be aware, the CEO who was hired late last year is part of the ongoing work and strategic planning, which includes working with managers and staff to discuss the appropriateness of their current staffing model. They share the common goal that we have, which is ensuring the hospital operates effectively and that the manner in which it engages and works with staff is as effective as possible in meeting not only the needs of patients and hospital operations, but also the needs and interests of the employees. It is to make the hospital a good workplace and a choice that is competitive nationally in terms of being a good place to work, and to deliver effective care to patients.

As far as the children's receiving home, the report to which the member referred has not quite been finalized. Work is ongoing right now with the department and with Property Management Agency to look at the issues at the receiving home and to bring forward a report, including options and recommendations, for Cabinet consideration on repairing or replacing the children's receiving home. Beyond that, it would be premature for me to comment to the member opposite or speculate on any detail this might mean. However, suffice it to say that regarding the issues around mould and asbestos, we are assured by Environmental Health and those who have expertise in that area that as long as those areas are not disturbed, they do not provide any risk to the staff or the children in the receiving home. They are matters that should prudently be addressed.

Also, as the member will be aware, there are issues in terms of the layout of the receiving home, et cetera, which at some point in time would require either repair and renovation or the building will simply be replaced with a new one that would better serve the needs.

I hope that has answered the member's question.

**Mr. Hardy:** Some of them. I'll move on. I won't go back to that one.

The VictimLINK information line seems to have had problems reaching clients. What is being done around this? My understanding is part of it was lack of communications. What is actually being done with this program right at the moment?

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** The VictimLINK program is actually under the Department of Justice, so I would direct the member to ask the minister his questions. I don't have any information to provide him with about VictimLINK.

**Mr. Hardy:** I thank the minister for that. It is not a problem. I will direct my questions in that area.

Early psychosis intervention — this is for youth in schools from my understanding and, from the pamphlet *Reality Rules!* it appears to be for information only with present contacts listed. Is there anything new as far as counselling, treatment or intervention being done right now or planned in this area?

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** Yes, the early psychosis intervention approach is part of a new project that has been started under the territorial health access fund. I can't recall what year we kicked it off but the work is developing right now. It was last year when we commenced the project.

The early psychosis intervention program is being developed right now to do things, including increasing the capacity

of clinical staff to be up-to-date with knowledge, policy development, clinical interventions and increased capacity with clients and their families to engage in mutual aid and support for each other. As part of the development of this early psychosis program and increased support and early intervention, the pamphlet to which the member is referring would be to increase public awareness that there are new services in place.

As the member will be aware, one of the reasons for developing the program is that there has been a demand in the past and a feeling that this area was not as well served as it could be. The supports and changes we have made in mental health include contracting a second full-time psychiatrist, the youth clinician based out of Whitehorse, and the change that I referred to earlier that came out of information we had received from the *Children's Act* consultation, in part, that being to set up a structure for children who need residential and therapeutic treatment outside the territory.

Previously, if a child was in the care and custody of the government and the director of family and children's services, they could receive such treatment if they needed it but parents were not able to access that treatment for their child if their child was not in the care and custody of the director, even if a psychiatrist has diagnosed a need for it.

So we have, as I indicated before, made that change and put that program in place. If a psychiatrist's diagnosis notes a need for such services, which do occur in a rare but significant number of cases, there is the ability for parents, by choice through the mental health branch, to arrange for such services to be provided. This, to date, has occurred in at least one case. As much as we regret that such a service is necessary, we are pleased to have been able to make the change to make this available to parents whose child is in need of such services.

**Mr. Hardy:** I thank the minister for that.

Palliative care has been in the news in the last day. The minister has referred to it in the last couple of days, as well as today during tributes. I just have a couple of questions in that area. Will the care be covered under the YHCIP? Hospice is coordinating palliative care in rural Yukon using education services now available, such as health centres and home care. Is this overloading the services that we already have — for instance, the nursing services? Is there other support for them? We do know how much strain there already is on the nurses in the rural areas. I am just wondering if we are using volunteers in that area. Have we offered other services, help or support in this extremely sensitive and difficult time for people?

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** The services in this new palliative care program are under the continuing care branch, not under insured health. It's a program that's available to the public; it's not on a fee basis, if that's what the member is asking. It is a service that's made available.

In reference to community care providers, such as nurses and other front-line providers, what I can inform the member — I think he may be misunderstanding or questioning at least what this is doing — the intent is not to have these front-line providers such as nurses in communities take on more of a load than they were before. A key part of the program is supporting them in dealing with what they already face.

If someone is facing their own death or facing the loss of a family member in rural Yukon, quite commonly they would go to the nurses at the nursing station. One of the key objectives of this program is to assist these service providers, because they are trained in health care.

Palliative care is a specialized area and it is a very great challenge. The situation occurs that the same people who are drawn to provide these services and assistance to those dealing with end-of-life issues tend to be driven by their compassion, by their caring, by their desire to help. As a result, because they care, they are also often very deeply affected by those challenges.

The palliative care program will help these front-line service providers, including community nurses, who have to assist someone dealing with end-of-life issues, with determining how they can cope themselves. If a person cannot remain healthy and functioning — if they are too emotionally burdened by the challenges that the person coming to them for help is facing — it makes it difficult for them to provide the help to that person and to others and makes it very difficult for them to function in their own lives and with their families.

The palliative care program provides people with information on coping techniques, strategies and appropriate approaches that have been tested in other jurisdictions and helps individuals cope with the challenges they may face at the end of life due to an illness, or helps a family member or friend deal with that.

I hope that has made it clear to the member. The objective here is not to ask those front-line staff to take on more load but to help them effectively deal with the load they currently face and help them effectively deal with providing services to somebody who has need of them. A nurse, for example, would typically be trained in matters related to nursing, and palliative care, and end-of-life techniques and services, et cetera, are not something that are typically part of that curriculum and education. This is aimed at helping them effectively deal with those matters.

**Mr. Hardy:** Children with disabilities program — this is new, I believe. Could the minister give me the definition that is used for "disability"? For instance, does it include autism, mental and emotional problems and FASD? What does it offer? What stats do we have at this point on the number of disabled children?

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** There's not a simple answer to the member opposite on exactly what a disability is, because it can vary. One part of the program is to provide increased resources for clinical assessment and professional and multidisciplinary teams to work together on determining the appropriate therapies for the child, and work with the family to do so.

The member is correct; it is a new program. It was an election commitment we made in this area, and the key objective is to assist families in caring for their disabled child, particularly those with severe disabilities, in the home environment, and to support the development of that child and the ability of that child to function effectively in the world, and to continue to grow their abilities.

Significant parts of the program are based on Alberta's program. We've borrowed from that in large part, but the key part of this is building on the services we made available to parents of autistic children, and the support we provided to Autism Yukon for involving those parents in choosing the appropriate therapies for their child. A key part of this was expanding on the service we implemented in the last mandate, making it available to all children with disabilities and expanding the support beyond that which was previously provided to autistic children.

As well, the total amount that we have increased in this fiscal year is now at \$436,000. There were some services in place, but a new program has been formed and new costs are estimated at \$436,000 for this fiscal year, which includes two new positions: a social worker for children with disabilities and an administrative assistant.

There is funding for contracted supportive contribution agreements with professionals in this area, but — as the member can see from that number — that \$436,000 will still go a long way in assisting parents in choosing the therapies appropriate for their children.

I would also inform the member that we officially launched the program on April 1, but there is some development being done. We have received some feedback from some of the organizations, including Autism Yukon and the Learning Disabilities Association of Yukon and foster parents. I know I am missing a couple, but there were several that had jointly signed a letter to me expressing some desire to collaborate further on discussion of the program. That is something that will be occurring. We will be working with these organizations and with individual parents to ensure that the program that was officially launched April 1 is in fact implemented in a way that does meet their needs. It is deliberately planned that, over this first year of official operation, there will be some modifications to the program based on working with these NGOs and with parents directly on assessing the needs of their children and how to best support that.

**Mr. Hardy:** I thank the minister for giving me some information around this new program. It's definitely one we support. We applaud the government for moving forward on this.

I will just ask four quick questions about the young offenders facility. What are the numbers of young offenders in the facility currently? What are the numbers on average? Answers to both those questions would be nice. What is the gender breakdown? How many are girls or boys? Generally, on average, how long are they in the facility? What follow-up help is given once they leave the young offenders facility?

If the minister has that information right now, that's great; if not, I would be quite happy to have him send something over to me in the next while.

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** The number of youth in the young offenders facility is an answer I don't have in front of me. The member had asked the typical length of stay; I don't have that with me, either. As far as the current occupancy, as of April 2008, the number of total youth was four. That number in-

cludes three youth from the previous month and one new admission. At that point in time, all of the youth were male.

I have a list from over the past year, which I doubt the member wants me to relay fully at this point in time, but I will give him some numbers: in April 2007, there were nine youth in custody — six males, three females; in May 2007, there were 10 — seven males, three females; in June 2007, also 10 — seven males, three females; same for July 2007; for August 2007, the number was seven — four males, three females; in September, the number was eight — five males, three females; in October, the number was six, all males; November 2007, there were eight — six males, two females; in December 2007, there were three males; January 2008, there were seven, again all males; in February 2008, there were five, again all males; in March 2008, there were seven — six males, one female. Again, the number for April was four, all male.

I think that addresses the member's question with the exception of the length of stay, which again I don't have directly with me, but the member can get a sense of that from the statistics from the past year.

**Mr. Hardy:** Thank you for those numbers. What is the capacity of the building? How many was it built to house?

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** Mr. Chair, I don't have the number in front of me and I can't recall off the top of my head. It is a question I haven't addressed for some time. I will get back to the member on the number for that rather than taking what I think would be an accurate guess. For expenditures in this area, though — which, to an extent, are supported by youth criminal justice renewal through the federal Department of Justice. We are obligated by the youth justice program to provide these services. The amount of the expenditure in this area is \$4,005,000 for this year.

**Mr. Hardy:** Family services and child protection services — 60 percent of the families served in family services and 62 percent of the families served in child protection services are one-parent families. Is there any difference in approach compared to a two-parent family in how we deal with it?

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** Regardless of whether it is a one- or two-parent family, the approach varies based on each case, so it is not something I can give the member. If he is looking for a comparative example, I think the answer is that there really isn't any differentiation made between one- or two-parent families. The approach is based upon the needs of each particular case.

**Mr. Hardy:** Are there any stats on how many children are in the care of extended family members?

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** I don't have those numbers with me, and I'm not certain if we do have them either.

One thing I want to emphasize is that one of the components of the new *Child and Family Services Act* is that we believe that the changes made in this legislation will assist in helping children be placed with extended family. Of course, in the past, although a court could decide to place a child with extended family, there was no legislative requirement for a child to be placed with extended family as the first consideration if they had to be placed into foster care.

The new legislation, which was passed earlier in this sitting, does place a requirement for extended family to be considered first for placement and secondly, if that extended family is not available or not appropriate — and willing members are available — then the child's cultural community would be considered next for foster placement. That includes adoptive purposes as well.

**Mr. Hardy:** Thank you.

I only have a few more questions right now and I appreciate the answers I'm getting. I have to say debate is going quite well. I'm very pleased with this.

Children in care — of course, population in care and custody of the department was 3.5 percent of the Yukon population. Has there been any comparison with other jurisdictions? Are we at the top on a percentage basis in care and custody? Are we on average?

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** Mr. Chair, as far as numbers compared to other jurisdiction, it does vary. There is a fairly significant rate, as the member is aware. The north has had problems in the past with disproportionate representation in the area of family violence, et cetera. Of course, any number is too high in this area. That's why, through a number of approaches, including but not limited to the new *Child and Family Services Act*, we hope to assist in reducing the numbers that are affected.

Other approaches include, of course, the substance abuse action plan, domestic violence treatment option and community court. There are a number of approaches that are being taken through many departments to try to help families become healthier. We are trying, through the new *Child and Family Services Act*, to reduce the level of intervention that is necessary and focus more on cooperative planning, discussions with community and family involvement — involvement of extended family, et cetera — and an increased focus on attempting to return children home as soon as it is safe to do so. If it is not safe for them to return home, whenever possible and safe for the child, we need to still continue that contact with both their immediate and extended family.

The simple answer to the member's question is that I don't have an exact statistical comparison, but I believe — and I'm sure the member would agree — that the numbers we are facing in this area are too high. We certainly hope that a number of the measures that have been taken will see some reduction over time and see healthier communities develop.

**Mr. Hardy:** I just have a couple more questions, which are really a little bit more related to finances, recoveries and transfer payments.

I know we have asked many questions around social assistance rates, and the minister has indicated that they will be increased, and of course we are waiting to see or hear that, and we hope it's a benefit to the people out there. I won't belabour that point, but there are of course a lot of other questions.

I do know that the critic for the Official Opposition wants to ask more questions, and I want to ensure that he has the time to do that, so I am just going to touch on a couple of financial ones here. The minister will correct me if I am wrong, but on page 11-46, from DIAND, child welfare and Yukon child benefit amount to \$8.23 million. It seems to work out to about

\$47,860 per First Nation child in care. I think I put the wrong number down.

Anyway, how much of that percentage is directly used by and for the child, and what portion is allocated toward administration?

And my other question: social services recovery from DIAND is projected upwards to 99 percent. Could the minister tell me why — from \$202,000 to \$402,000?

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** Before answering the member's last question, there is one thing that I would like to say in reference to the previous question. I should make the member aware that as far as reducing the number of children who are in care, et cetera, one of the programs that we have been in the process of expanding is the healthy families program. That is one of the areas that is a priority, through increased funding to childcare.

It is aimed at assisting at-risk families and works in partnership with public health nurses and health family support workers to provide in-home assistance and education through regular home visits to support families in being the best parents possible for their infants so the infants receive the care and stimulation crucial to long-term well-being and healthy development.

It is primarily focused on at-risk families but is also available to others in terms of advice and assistance. This year it is in the process of being expanded to Dawson. The member may have seen an ad recently in the paper for a healthy families support worker. I should make the member aware that the statistics under the healthy families program on page 11-16 don't reflect Dawson City; they reflect the Whitehorse numbers. The decision to expand the program to healthy families through the funding available in our childcare programs in this fiscal year was made after the date of the printing of the statistics page in the budget. There will be some expansion in Dawson City but I don't have the exact statistics for that. Those numbers are hard to assess in the first year of a program. It is being expanded to Dawson, and other communities are being looked at.

The aim of course is to assist families, particularly at-risk families, in healthy behaviours and in keeping their children healthy. It is done by reducing FASD in part and also helping parents engage in behaviours both prior to and after the birth of their child that are in the best interests of the child. In particular, that's not consuming alcohol while pregnant and not engaging in substance abuse and, after the birth of the child, engaging in healthy parenting, which includes not drinking alcohol to excess or having unhealthy family environments.

Then moving to the member's question about the Yukon child benefit recoverable from social services, the recovery related to YCB through DIAND. The member was asking about whether it goes to support the child or support administration. The funding is used to support the child, of course. Any supports for children in the care of the government are assisted in programming and supports far exceeding the amount of the Yukon child benefit. The child's best interests are addressed through department programs and the issue of the arrangement with DIAND is largely a bookkeeping exercise. Of course, the source in the last fiscal year was \$675,000 and it is estimated to be the same for this fiscal year.



As far as the social services amount related to collectibles from DIAND for 2007-08, the member will see the 2008-09 number and the 2006-07 number are very similar. The amount in 2007-08 was due to an adjustment dealing with collectibles and services and so it's a reduction in that area for the books. It's not a change in the overall level of services, et cetera. It's simply to do with the amount of funding based on prior-year issues that occurred in 2007-08.

**Mr. Hardy:** I will just put these two together and that probably should finish me up for now.

On page 11-48, there's the kids recreation fund and again, I have the same line of questioning. I'm looking at the actual for 2006-07 which was \$260,000; 2007-08 was forecast at \$200,000 and the estimate for this year is \$200,000. That's a drop from the actual of 2006-07. Can the minister explain that?

In the line, "Food for Learning", there's a prediction in the forecast of 2007-08 up to \$92,000 and the estimate for this year is \$42,000, which is back to what it was at 2006-07.

If the minister can explain that to me as well, I would appreciate it.

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** First of all, with regard to the kids recreation fund, it used to be at a previous level of \$60,000 a year. We did increase it significantly to \$260,000 in 2006-07. There were two things about that: prior to that, as we announced, there was increased support put into place in the lead-up to the Canada Winter Games; and the second factor, dealing with a reduction in the amount allocated, is that even in that year with the increased activity, the money was not all spent. So, \$200,000 is a reflection of what is believed to be needed in that area in this fiscal year.

With regard to Food for Learning, the amount in 2006-07 was increased in 2007-08. At this point in time, the number related for this fiscal year is a contribution agreement of \$92,000. This is simply to do with timing of the Management Board minutes on the topic. The number in front of the member would create an inaccurate impression. I understand why he is asking the question. We gave a \$50,000 increase to annual funding last year. That has carried forward. The actuals for this year at this point in time are predicted to be \$92,000, as per the contribution agreement, which I signed with Food for Learning this year. It is intended to carry forward at that level for the foreseeable future.

**Mr. Hardy:** I just want to thank the minister for responding to my questions. I will let the debate be carried on by the critic from the Official Opposition.

**Mr. Mitchell:** I did ask the bulk of my questions yesterday and in many cases — but not all — the minister had answers.

I think I am just going to ask a couple of questions this afternoon. I was going to save some for line-by-line, but if we can do it all in general debate, then we can just clear the lines.

Yesterday I asked the minister about providing examples of the new rate structure beyond the changes in terms of allowable percentages of work and the length of time that people on SA can go back to work, and the minister did not have that information with him yesterday, but he committed to getting back to us with it.

I am wondering if the minister brought that information with him today. Could he provide those examples of the increases for single parents, parents of one child, parents of two children and so forth?

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** With regard to social assistance, the overall average increase for food, clothing, shelter and incidentals is 26 percent. That represents the average increase, and it does get very complex, of course, in the details of a parent with one child, two children, three children, four children, two parents, et cetera. But that's the number that gives the member the average, which it is close to in most categories — an increase of an average of 26 percent in food, clothing, shelter and incidentals, when factored against the last level.

Also, with regard to the pioneer utility grant that I mentioned yesterday, I'm going to provide further information today. This is in regard, of course, to what steps are being taken to assist seniors and assist them in remaining in their own homes.

The pioneer utility grant in 2003-04 was \$625 per year; it was increased last year to \$890 — so that's an increase of \$265 plus change between 2003-04 and 2007-08. It will increase again for this fiscal year, because we have indexed it to inflation, but the amount will not be confirmed until October. It is expected to be roughly \$911 versus, again, the previous level in 2003-04 of \$625.

**Mr. Mitchell:** I thank the minister for coming forward today prepared with the answers to those questions and I thank the officials for providing that information expeditiously to the minister. Perhaps I will ask just one follow-up question. Can the minister tell us whether the amount he has described as an average, is that the mean — averaging all people, regardless of whether they have six children or no children in coming to an average amount — or is that the median level being the amount that is the halfway point between the low and top end? I would like to know which this represents.

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** It represents the average and it does vary in some categories, based on the assessment of officials of the actual needs in those areas. The rough calculation, particularly shelter as an example — there is a change in need of the size of the dwelling based on the number of children, et cetera. In simple terms it is roughly 26 percent for those areas and that does not vary widely in any of the family types. It is a standard and it is average, not median.

**Mr. Mitchell:** I thank the minister for that. I would normally ask this question in line-by-line, but I don't want to have to go through all the lines. I will draw the minister's attention under Health and Social Services, continuing care, capital expenditures, page 11-7. I have a couple of questions here regarding the health centres. Under prior years' projects 2007-08, it showed a forecast of \$60,000; 2008-09 shows an estimate of zero. The minister I believe in his opening remarks or in response to one of my questions yesterday explained that the \$60,000 was an amount that had not actually been spent; it had been forecast for planning studies on a health care centre for Dawson and it was expected to be revoted in the current year.

I am wondering if the minister can tell us how much has been spent to date on the proposed Dawson facility — that is,

all the planning monies, because it is only planning; I don't think anything else has occurred — that has been spent to date or voted to date on the Dawson facility?

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** I don't have in front of me the amount spent on planning for the Dawson health care facility under my predecessor. The amount that was spent in 2007-08 was roughly \$20,000, which related to planning. That is related to the steps to which I referred earlier in debate, preparatory to what will occur later in this year when my officials and I will be sitting down — including the MLA for Klondike — with the constituents in Dawson City, including particularly the doctors and nurses and community members. We will discuss what is proposed in terms of the next steps for moving forward and the vision for exactly what the project will be doing.

As the member will recall, there was planning work that occurred under my predecessor, the former Minister of Health and Social Services, that resulted in an overall schematic plan that, based on the review we received from health professionals and others, did not meet the needs they saw in that community. There was, therefore, a need to go back to the drawing table and take a look at different options.

Mr. Chair, I have just had a note handed to me that might relate to the member's question and relates to a question asked by the Leader of the Third Party. Since I have it with me, I will answer it now. The capacity of the young offenders facility is a maximum of 14 young people.

**Mr. Mitchell:** Well, perhaps the minister could commit here on the floor of the House to provide me with an answer to that question on all the funds expended on the planning for a health centre or a multi-level health care facility in Dawson to date under his immediate predecessor, the acting minister and the previous minister. If he will make that commitment, we will move on. We just want to have the accurate figures, so that if we ever raise them in questions, the minister can't say that the member is inaccurate. We will have his figures, then we will know we will be accurate, Mr. Chair. Again, we are just striving for excellence here.

On the health centre in Watson Lake, I believe we've seen the figure where, in prior years, there was \$4.1 million expended on this facility. In the current budget, there is \$6.95 million, for a total of just over \$11 million. Can the minister tell us to what level it's anticipated that this funds the completion of this project? For example, the Minister of Justice has floated a figure of \$32 million for construction of a new correctional centre, but we've heard that doesn't necessarily include the demolition of the existing structure, the fit-out and other items. Can the minister tell us if this just over \$11 million is planned to include all that's required to have the new facility in Watson Lake fully operational, with beds in it, et cetera, with all equipment operating, or will additional funds be required, either in this fiscal year or the ensuing fiscal year to complete this project?

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** First of all, with regard to Dawson City and the project there, I would point out two things. First, the amount spent on previous planning of the facility, because the project has been significantly changed, might create — in some ways, I know the member would wish to blend the two

together, but it might be more accurate, since we went back to the drawing table for the concept, not to consider those previous expenditures beyond what was spent in the last fiscal year. I have no problem providing the member with the figures on that later by way of a letter. I simply do not have those numbers at my fingertips at this point in time.

With regard to Watson Lake and the health centre project that has been underway, the cost to date, as of the last update I had, was \$4.4 million. As I mentioned earlier, there was a very significant change in size, and that is the result of the way the project was designed, which allowed for and encouraged public input based on discussions with seniors and considerations made during the project. There was a very significant change in the scope of the project versus what had originally been expected. It changed from an original expectation of a footprint of roughly 5,480 square feet to a current square footage of 25,000 plus a 2,000 square foot service building — so a change roughly five-fold in the total size of the facility.

The cost of things such as beds is not included in that. The budget is for capital works so, yes, because of beds and other matters, there will be some additional costs for the facility.

As I've indicated before in the House, there ought to be some announcements regarding this facility coming in the not-too-distant future. At that point in time, it will provide more clarity to the member and others as far as what the facility will be able to do and the timelines expected for having it in operation. I'm sure the member is eager to hear it now. Unfortunately, it would be premature for me to make any announcements today and I cannot do so, but I look forward to making that announcement in the not-too-distant future. I'm sure the member will have some comments at that point in time and I'm hopeful they'll be positive.

**Mr. Mitchell:** We certainly respond to positive announcements and positive comments.

I'll just seek a little bit of clarification. The minister has indicated \$4.4 million spent on the Watson Lake facility to date. I'm presuming he means prior to the current budget year and is not including money expended in the month of April.

So, is he saying \$4.4 million, plus \$6.95 million budgeted for this year, for a total of \$11.35 million? Is that how he's describing it — \$4.4 million in prior years \$6.95 million this year?

I will accept the minister's explanation that certain items such as beds are not considered capital expenditures. They will be in addition to, but will this amount include demolition of any previous structure that's no longer needed, and the work that needs to be done to complete the combination of the health care facility with the hospital facility? Or will there be additional funds required to integrate all of this?

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** Well, with any capital projects, I am always hesitant to say that there will never be any more capital costs, because as the member is well aware, I am sure, from his experience in real estate and debate in other matters, capital costs can fluctuate, particularly in an environment such as we have of increased costs for structural steel and the high cost of labour. There can be increased costs; however, at this point in time, the last update I had of actual expenditures to

date was \$4.4 million of costs in Watson Lake. That was at the last date my briefing note was updated. It would have been updated last month, so the actual amount versus the amount budgeted for this year may include some of the amount budgeted for this year. I am not clear on that.

Again, I would remind the member that the budgeted amount is the budgeted amount. At this point in time, it might be higher or lower. I can't make that prediction on the floor here today.

**Mr. Mitchell:** We do know that it can be higher or lower. Generally speaking, it has been higher, but we won't presume to guess that. We certainly don't want to ask the minister to make any premature enunciations.

Just as a point of clarification, the minister has committed by letter, I believe, to provide me with an analysis or update on the amounts of money spent in planning stages over time on the Dawson facility. He also indicated that, while I might disagree, it might be more accurate to simply talk about the amounts spent since the facility entered into a redesign, since the design has changed. I would request that the minister include all amounts, because this is one of those disagreements between members, Mr. Chair, where he might prefer it didn't include all amounts and we might think it's all relevant. I don't want to get into a historical debate, but I don't recall a whole lot of public announcements by health care professionals criticizing the previous designs; rather, it was the previous minister that brought forward the opinion that the design was faulty.

What we would like is simply a straightforward accounting, since the project was announced several years ago, of the two health care centres. How much has been spent on the Dawson one? Then, if we were to ask questions on it, I am sure the minister will elucidate his reasons for why some numbers are more relevant than others.

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

I see from the level of words we are using that we appear to be entering debate more related to the Department of Education, but I would certainly elucidate that information to the member once I have it within my grasp, as the matter does require some work. We will undertake to get that information, but again, we will of course have a bit of a dispute on this. There was a change in the approach being taken to the Dawson project that basically required going back to the drawing board, and we could debate the work that occurred and the money that was spent on the previous design and whether that is part of the existing project or not — since this one essentially takes the same basic needs that were seen by my predecessor as needing to be addressed, and takes a bit of a different approach to doing so.

However, the long and the short of it, and the ultimate outcome is, that the plan is to move forward to build an excellent facility for the people of Dawson City and the Klondike region, and a project that will stand the Yukon citizens of that area in good stead for many years to come and ensure that their health care and long-term needs are met for the foreseeable future.

Mr. Chair, if the member asked another question — that might have covered it. I think that was all he asked.

**Mr. Mitchell:** As the member says, we will no doubt have future debates over the meaning of numbers, but I appreciate his commitment to provide us with the numbers. At this time, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, I request the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all lines in Vote 15, Department of Health and Social Services, cleared or carried, as required.

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

**Chair:** Mr. Mitchell has requested the unanimous consent of the Committee to deem all lines in Vote 15, Department of Health and Social Services, cleared or carried, as required. Is there unanimous consent?

**All Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**Chair:** Unanimous consent has been granted.

***On Operation and Maintenance Expenditures***

***Total Operation and Maintenance Expenditures in the amount of \$209,209,000 agreed to***

***On Capital Expenditures***

***Total Capital Expenditures in the amount of \$11,131,000 agreed to***

***Department of Health and Social Services agreed to***

**Chair:** Before we proceed to Executive Council Office, 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.

The matter before the Committee is the Executive Council Office.

**Executive Council Office**

**Hon. Mr. Fentie:** I am pleased to introduce the Executive Council Office budget for 2008-09. The Executive Council Office budget forecasts overall operational and maintenance spending of \$24,018,000 and capital expenditures of \$761,000.

The proposed budget will allow the Executive Council Office to achieve several key initiatives. These include the following: building a corporate capacity development strategy and facilitating solutions to First Nation capacity development requests; working with First Nations in Canada, through the intergovernmental and Yukon forums to advance opportunities on shared priorities; implementation and assessment of the current northern strategy; implementation of land claim agreements and working with First Nations to promote a new federal mandate to facilitate the negotiation and ratification of new implementation agreements; leading the Yukon government participation in the five-year YESAA review; negotiating and signing intergovernmental accords with B.C. and Alberta to ensure continued collaboration on matters of common interest; working with our northern partners as outlined in the northern

vision strategy; and, implementing a five-year Yukon government corporate Web site strategic plan to improve information available on-line.

This list is not exhaustive but is given as a representation of the very broad scope of activities and responsibilities that the Executive Council Office has been tasked with for the coming year.

On the O&M side, as members are aware, the budget for Executive Council Office includes monies for several areas where activities are undertaken by other departments across government and by First Nations. The total of these corporate funds in operation and maintenance is \$9,048,000, representing 38 percent of the total O&M expenditure.

On the land claims front, the budget allocation for land claims and implementation secretariat is \$7,405,000. This represents 31 percent of the total budget for the Executive Council Office.

The planned expenditures confirm this government's commitment to working closely with First Nations by funding key personnel within the Yukon government who are delivering activities to support implementation of the final land claim and self-government agreements.

When it comes to governance liaison and capacity development, the 2008-09 budget continues to build on the work started last year with the creation of the governance liaison and capacity development branch within Executive Council Office. This year's budget allocation will see an overall funding increase of 38 percent for this branch. This increase is directly related to project funding for the two northern strategy projects undertaken directly by the branch.

The northern strategy has a total of \$4,715,000 allocated for northern strategy trust funded projects in 2008-09 — a significant increase over last year's levels. Approximately 25 percent of this amount is dedicated for new projects, while the remainder is allocated to multi-year projects approved in the two previous northern strategy intakes. A wide range of projects have been funded under this program, including environmental, cultural, educational, and social initiatives within First Nations across the Yukon.

The Youth Directorate will continue to fund almost \$500,000 worth of programs directed at youth in the Yukon. Eighty percent of the Youth Directorate O&M budget directly supports programs and organizations that work with our youth.

The budget includes \$330,000 in direct funding to youth organizations such as Bringing Youth Toward Equality, the Whitehorse Youth Centre Society, and the Youth of Today Society.

In addition, \$102,000 has been allocated to the youth investment fund, which recognizes the value of community-driven initiatives aimed at addressing the needs of Yukon youth.

As well, the francophone youth organization Comité Espoir Jeunesse — I'm hoping I'm doing justice to that pronunciation — will receive a contribution of \$25,000 to support their activities focusing on youth in our active and very vibrant francophone community.

The Yukon Bureau of Statistics will see a 32-percent increase in their allotment this year, for a total of \$1,246,000. This will allow the bureau to complete, among other activities, the business survey and social economic indicators project. This is a major project that will provide statistical indicators that can be used to support the provision of information critical to meeting our YESAA obligations.

Mr. Chair, this concludes the overview of the O&M component of the 2008-09 budget for the Executive Council Office. I will now provide a brief description of the capital component of the budget.

The Executive Council Office capital budget of \$761,000 is being directed toward four principal areas: \$290,000 under governance liaison and capacity development for various projects supporting First Nations, including the Yukon Forum; \$200,000 under the Youth Directorate to support the winter activities program, administered through Crime Prevention Yukon. This program provides funding directly to community organizations to provide leadership and program activities to youth in each of our communities.

There is \$157,000 under the land claims and implementation secretariat for specific implementation projects across government departments; \$114,000 under corporate services for computer upgrades, enhancements and updates to the development assessment report tracking system, known as DART; and recoverable funding to support the development of a Web portal to deliver social economic indicator data in response to YESAA proponent information requests.

With these brief comments, I look forward to answering any questions the members may have on the 2008-09 budget for the Executive Council Office.

**Mr. Mitchell:** I thank the minister for his opening remarks. En anglais et aussi en français — I'd like to thank the officials for the information we received during the briefings. It's always helpful to have some information going into budget debate. I would also like to thank them for the work they do throughout the year.

I don't have that many questions for the minister on this. I think it's fairly straightforward, but I do have a few. Perhaps we'll start with internal audits. We understand from the briefing that internal audits into pharmacare, the *Environment Act*, contracting and lotteries are all underway. Could we get a commitment from the minister that, once these reports have been completed and presented to Cabinet, and they are finalized, they will all be made public in a timely way so we don't see the delay, like we did last year to the audit on contributions, but rather that we have them made public in a reasonable amount of time?

**Hon. Mr. Fentie:** This is an example of the emphasis that this government places in ensuring we are achieving results and that we are managing appropriately within all the guidelines what it is we must do. Internal audits are functions that contribute to that particular area.

All information, by the way, is made public; it is posted, in fact. I think this is the first government that has ever taken that step for full disclosure on these matters. It is posted on the government Web site and once work is complete on any particular

audit within the corporate structure of government, within a reasonable time, all matters with respect to any particular audit will be posted on the Web site for public consumption.

**Mr. Mitchell:** I certainly appreciate the advertisement on public disclosure that we heard from the minister. It is just the commitment for timely posting that we have asked for.

Let us move on to the nine-year review. I asked one question in general debate the other day, and I think the minister indicated he was encouraged by the progress that was being made in the nine-year review. Obviously something that occurred is what encouraged the minister. Does the minister have any more details in terms of federal government indication that they understand their obligation to provide adequate funding for First Nations? The nine-year review is intended to address this and make sure the program funding and the words in the treaties committed to is in fact the amount of funding that is received. If the minister could give us an update on that it would be helpful.

**Hon. Mr. Fentie:** Mr. Chair, this particular area is very important, given the status of land claims and self-government here in Yukon. Yukon is, frankly, quite far advanced when we compare ourselves to other jurisdictions.

That said, these agreements are fundamental in accordance with the federal government's addressing their fiduciary responsibility. We are but one of three parties — First Nation governments, the Yukon government and the federal government — who are at the table. The nine-year review is specific to the first seven First Nations that have signed off. It is an obligation in the land claim implementation process that this review take place.

There has been extensive work done to date and it has been a collaboration, which is one reason why we're quite encouraged. It has not been unilateral by the federal government. There is willingness by the federal government and the minister, in an intergovernmental approach with Canada, to advance this process so that a new federal mandate for implementation is constructed as expeditiously as possible. It delves into two main areas: fiscal issues of implementation when it comes to the final self-government agreements, as well as areas of policy that the federal government has in place. An example of that is on-reserve/off-reserve policy and any other matters that may appear to be — or in a realistic manner — for whatever reasons, impeding implementation.

So those are the two main general areas. Of course, there is a tremendous amount of detail that goes with these. I leave that to the working group. We have a joint working group with First Nations that is producing a great deal here, and progress is being made.

Also, there is a work being conducted — I don't think it's concluded yet, but it is an important part of this — on the gross expenditure base — otherwise known as the GEB. This is also critical for further insight into the fiscal capacity challenges of implementing the land claims.

So what we're at now, as far as progress is concerned, is concluding the gross expenditure base work for that understanding and insight to develop a workplan — and the federal government's willingness to allow for a workplan to be devel-

oped in an intergovernmental approach is another encouraging part — and the target for us to address progress to date on this work, in a discussion with the federal minister, is August of this year. We will hold an intergovernmental forum and we hope at that time — this might be a little ambitious — that we will be tabling a lot of the work in conjunction with proceeding with an implementation mandate development for the federal government when it comes to the final agreements and self-government agreements here in Yukon.

**Mr. Mitchell:** I thank the minister for those details. I may be wrong on this being the area, but I will ask the question. I am sure the minister will correct me.

Within the nine-year review, is part of this a discussion of responsibilities for the Government of Canada in terms of providing funding, should any First Nation move to draw down any of the responsibilities, such as child and family services or education, under section 17? Is that part of what is being worked on? If so, is there progress? I know that the position of Yukon in the past, and certainly that of First Nations, has been somewhat different from the position that Canada has held — which would be a position that would make it very difficult for the funding to be adequate. Have those particular areas been directly addressed?

**Hon. Mr. Fentie:** I am not sure what position the member is referring to, because the member is reflecting on what we call the PSTA process — the programs and services transfer agreement. That is a negotiated process, whereby the Yukon government is a party at the table, along with Canada and whichever specific First Nation has formally exercised this particular component of their agreements.

I don't think we have actually gotten to a point where we understand exactly the outcomes. There are some formal notifications that come in each and every year, but we must go through that process of negotiating the PSTA. What I can say, and maybe this is what the member is referring to, that does not end or preclude the need or obligation and responsibility of the Yukon government to provide the same public programs and services in whatever area is being addressed through a PSTA. We as public government still are obligated to ensure that there is a public education system and a public childcare system, as examples. We do have some results of success already where we have negotiated tax-sharing room with First Nations whereby Canada, Yukon and First Nation governments agreed to that process. There has been extensive work in the administration of justice area to date where some of the First Nations who have finalized have been working diligently in that particular area.

It is what I would call a very complex, complicated process and, given the importance of these particular programs or services that would be delivered directly to their citizens by First Nation governments, I think we can all understand why we need to get into these negotiation-type processes to make sure that it is being done right.

We also have the opportunity — for example, the Yukon *Oil and Gas Act* is one — for common regimes where the same law could apply to Crown and selected land. I think YOGA is a prime example, where that particular legislative mechanism is

acceptable to be applied on all lands in the Yukon, as it was envisioned. We will be going through other processes like successor legislation. Our intent always is to try to create common regimes but never to the extent where we would compromise what has been negotiated in the final agreements. Those areas are absolute that First Nations have in ensuring that they were protecting their interests and the interest of their citizens, and it has been agreed that they have the option to negotiate and occupy these particular authorities.

**Mr. Mitchell:** Indeed, the minister was right in anticipating where I was going with that. I recognize that the PSTA negotiation process is its own process, but I didn't know if any of that also fell under the umbrella of the nine-year review. I think what I heard is that they are two separate processes, although they may be occurring concurrently, and that's fine.

Can the minister provide us with an update on the Fitch report on land claims? The last we heard, the Yukon government had still not seen it, and we understand that an order-in-council was passed, extending the land withdrawal for unsettled land claims by five years. Can the minister provide us with any more information on his work with the federal minister, Minister Strahl, to move this process along and, in particular, the three incomplete land claims, for which there is currently no mandate in Yukon? They have been perhaps more frequently referred to in the recent past, sometimes in negative ways, when it comes to potential pipelines. It's important to all Yukoners to see progress on these land claims.

**Hon. Mr. Fentie:** Well, the Fitch report itself was a decision made by a federal minister. The minister's envoy has attended, on a number of occasions, in Yukon and has had meetings and discussions, including with Yukon, for input from all concerned. As far as I know today, there is no finality yet to that process. No statement has been delivered by the federal minister. So I can only assume then that we have not concluded yet.

We are hoping that there will be a conclusion to that in the very near future, and that the report will be made available. Whatever is the outcome of that report — vis-à-vis recommendations, for example — we will hear about it.

Our position here in Yukon is to be consistent and to conclude the unfinished business in the territory.

We have three First Nations yet to conclude. The member mentioned the OICs of interim protection. Well, in good faith, the Yukon government has extended those protections, because those selections were made under the land claim negotiation process within the parameters of the *Umbrella Final Agreement*, and we thought that it was critical that we ensured ongoing protection, as we work through concluding the unfinished claims here in the territory.

It would be essential, frankly, to make sure that those components are still in place, as they were duly negotiated and agreed to — initialled off, if you will.

However, we don't dictate the timing to the federal minister. That's between the federal department, the minister and the envoy, as appointed. But we would, as always — and have in the past — and will continue to encourage the federal minister and the federal government to move as quickly as possible, get

a new mandate ready, and let's get back to the table to conclude.

**Mr. Mitchell:** The northern strategy funding — there had been announcements over time, from time to time, and news releases on various projects.

I am wondering if the minister could just provide us here with a summary in terms of \$4.715 million. I believe that it has been indicated that some of these are second-year funding for round 2 project approvals; some are estimated funding for third-year funding for round 1 projects, and estimated funding for the first-year round 3 projects.

Also, in terms of the northern strategy in general, this \$40 million that started flowing back in 2006-07 — 2008-09 is the last year of the three years in the initial announcement.

Can the minister provide us with an update on what happens next?

He has no doubt been meeting with the Prime Minister, or with the INAC minister, and having these discussions over time. Are the feds committing in any way to come up with more money? We know that there has been ongoing discussion with Ottawa, so we are just looking for whatever information the minister feels he can provide at this time to update us on the process on a go-forward basis.

**Hon. Mr. Fentie:** I think there are a number of areas I have to cover in regard to this question.

First off, let's deal with the dollar value. The \$4.715 million allocated for the northern strategy is done so through a joint process with First Nations. We have set this up to have a joint working group — let's call it a "review committee" — that reviews all incoming projects and gets us to the stage where there are recommended projects, as deemed eligible and meeting all the criteria. We have to remember the federal government has ensured there were seven goals or objectives within the northern strategy that we must meet, so all projects are measured on their merit as they relate to the federal government's conditions and requirements.

Once done, the projects come forward to a Yukon Forum and they are given sanction. Once that has happened, the funding starts to flow. For the \$4.715 million, \$3.54 million is dedicated for multi-year projects for which the Executive Council Office has responsibility and are approved in 2006-07 and 2007-08. This allocation represents a portion of these projects' expenses that are estimated to be incurred during this coming fiscal year 2008-09.

I also want to make note here that every one of the projects that have been deemed eligible and have received commitment for the funding are public. They've been announced; the information is easily accessed. Every project has been made public.

In all cases, the projects for which Executive Council Office has funding responsibility are projects developed by First Nations as the sole proponent. There are a number of projects where First Nations are the sole receptor or proponent of the funding, while public government represents the broader public in projects that come forward for the broader public.

The other \$1.174 million is for northern strategy projects that are expected to be approved in the third intake of 2008-09. Many of the new projects approved this year will be led by

other departments — I think that is understandable — but the Executive Council Office is still very much involved.

I will just quickly run through a number of the projects. Actually, I will give the member a breakdown of how this has worked. There are a number of joint Yukon and First Nation proposals that have come forward for 2007. There are 18 proposals that were joint proposals that came forward, which totalled \$8,868,733. This is 18 projects, all joint. The number of First Nation-only projects to date, as of 2007 — we don't have a final accounting for 2008 — were 17, and those totalled \$4,232,826 of First Nation-only projects. The number of Yukon-only proposals was four. That totalled \$2,715,862. The 18 joint, 17 First Nation-only and the four Yukon government-only proposals have all been approved. There is a total of 39 projects, if I can call them that, with an expenditure of \$15,817,421.

I will list the names of the First Nations that have directly received assistance or fiscal resources through the northern strategy: Ta'an Kwäch'än Council, the First Nation of Na Cho Nyäk Dun, Little Salmon-Carmacks First Nation, Kwanlin Dun First Nation, Ross River Dena Council, Champagne and Aishihik First Nations, Carcross-Tagish First Nation, there is a number for the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in First Nation and also for the Liard First Nation.

The government has tried very hard, along with Canada, to ensure an approach here that was addressing those objectives and conditions as laid out by Canada. We tried to ensure that First Nations were directly receiving joint investments, as I have listed. There is also a requirement that we address, as public government, other proposals that come forward on behalf of the broader public. We will continue now with this process.

I believe the third round for the northern strategy will be in the fall. The issue of the northern strategy itself is in a trust agreement that was put in place, and it has a sunset date. If I can take the members back, I think they will recall that on the pan-northern basis upon which this was developed, the three territories have been very clear that we see this as an ongoing initiative between ourselves in the north and the federal government. We want to make sure that the federal government recognizes that we want to include our pan-northern vision for the north. There are a number of things we are working on.

Our approach, however, specific to Yukon, has been to allow us to demonstrate accountability, to allow us to demonstrate the merits and the positive aspects as to why this is such a good mechanism for Yukon and the north, and then to allow us to make the business case on our continuance. That is exactly how we are approaching this.

**Mr. Mitchell:** I am wondering if the minister can update us on the timing of his next anticipated meetings with the Prime Minister and his next planned meeting with the Governor of Alaska.

**Hon. Mr. Fentie:** We have no planned meetings for either. In many cases, the Prime Minister calls the meeting. However, we do from time to time request meetings and recently, in February, we had a large contingent in Ottawa, including First Nation chiefs and me. We met with a number of ministers and I met with the Prime Minister. We greatly appre-

ciated how the federal ministers and the Prime Minister accommodated us. It is not something that we pursue on a regular basis. When we have what I would call a reasonable presentation to make to the Prime Minister, for example on accountability for the northern strategy, then we will request an audience.

It's the same with other federal ministers. It depends on the issue and the circumstances we're dealing with.

As far as the Governor of Alaska, our recent meeting in Anchorage was to sign off our accord. We discussed a number of things, including a joint process with respect to climate change we may embark on. I can tell you that the Alaskans are very, very concerned about the impacts of global warming and what they're trying to deal with. They see good reason for us to collaborate in some of the areas, which might even include the University of Alaska. We have no formal date or time for our next meeting.

Our accord is signed off, and our relationship is a positive and constructive one. We made sure that the Alaskans, once again, heard clearly and understood what our position is with respect to the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, and we also talked about the possibility of looking into the harvest management strategy or plan for the herd itself and, because the herd crosses borders, the participation of Alaska in that regard.

Once again, there is an interest for Alaska to work with the Department of Environment on trying to get a modern or updated count of the herd itself.

**Mr. Mitchell:** This next one is just a standard request. We recently — I think it was yesterday or the day before; I guess it was yesterday; there was no day before — tabled in the House the report on travel expenses of members of the Yukon Legislative Assembly.

Of course, that doesn't actually include ministerial travel, which is separated out from that. Can the minister provide us with a breakdown of ministerial travel, by minister and by department?

**Hon. Mr. Fentie:** I can give the member opposite some numbers here. This is for the period of April 1, 2007, to January 31, 2008. \$223,262 has been allocated or spent to date on ministerial travel. That includes ministers and staff, of course. We need handlers if we go somewhere. It's important that we bring the appropriate staff along, as always. The breakdown is as follows: out-of-Yukon travel — which is always of particular interest — is \$158,131.77; in-territory travel is \$65,129.66; for the aforementioned, the total rounded off is \$223,262.

Let me go through some past years. In 2005-06, in-territory travel was \$58,917; in 2006-07, \$16,726; in 2007-08, \$65,130, rounded off. Outside travel: 2005-06, \$161,577; 2006-07, \$148,344; 2007-08, \$158,132. In general terms, that covers the amount of travel overall. That breaks down by ministers and that is information that is quite detailed. I can recite it but I think the relative numbers are the amounts we've spent to date, effective January 31, 2008.

**Mr. Mitchell:** A couple of points: first of all, I want to be certain we're talking apples to apples, not apples to oranges. The minister referred to several prior years. I'm not certain if those were also 10-month portions, that being April 1 to Janu-

ary 31. I see the official nodding those were amounts for a full year.

We look forward to having the appropriate comparable amount, the amount through March 31, at the minister's earliest convenience, because otherwise the comparison becomes irrelevant, really.

Secondly, I'm not going to ask the minister to recite the details of every hotel bill for every minister, but I would appreciate hearing the minister commit to actually providing us with the total breakdown by trip, pertaining to whichever conference or meeting per minister for the year, so that we actually know which minister has travelled to which meetings or jurisdictions for what purposes. Total amounts would be fine per minister. If the Premier is able to send us the information, providing it to us — if not today, then even in a few days — that's what we're looking for. It has been asked for and received in past years, so I don't think there's anything unusual here.

I did notice the official seemed very bemused at the thought of having to handle the minister or travelling as a handler, but the minister did correct that and say that what he really needed was sage counsel, as opposed to handling.

**Some Hon. Member:** (Inaudible)

**Mr. Mitchell:** I think the minister just said — well, no, the member hasn't travelled with the minister. But perhaps when we all go to Washington together to ensure that the President and Congress understand Yukon's position on maintaining the sanctity of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, then I'll have that experience. If the minister would like to suggest that I would be his handler, I'll have that experience. So, it will be interesting.

I think the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin relishes being a fly on the wall for that trip.

**Some Hon. Member:** (Inaudible)

**Mr. Mitchell:** In any case, can the minister give us an update — because he's also the Environment minister — on any discussions that he may have had with perhaps fruitful results regarding the — I recognize the pun or humour in this question — Dawson sewage disposal system and the court order, in terms of the possibility of getting funding assistance to address this through various federal programs?

**Hon. Mr. Fentie:** As we all know, recent developments are such that, through a referendum in the community, a project that was intended to address what is a court-ordered issue was not accepted favourably by the citizens of Dawson.

That said, this referendum and its outcome have standing under the Yukon *Municipal Act*, so that has to be cleared up now. Of course, we would be trying to get that clarity in the courts.

Secondly, we know that the federal standards are coming forward. We are the host jurisdiction this year for the Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment, which includes Minister Baird, the federal minister.

We need some clarity around the standards that are coming forward, too, because under the circumstances, the City of Dawson will be treated dramatically differently from any other community in Canada, under the same circumstances — any

other community in Canada the size of Dawson. We want clarity on that, as we should seek.

Of course, the investment to deal with this particular infrastructure requirement is going to take place. It includes the possibility of Canada and Yukon's involvement. It is based on a commitment through the fiscal restructuring for Dawson that we are not going to encumber Dawson with something they cannot afford as a community, because the tax base — the ratepayer — must be able to deal with the ongoing operation and maintenance in that regard.

I personally have heard Minister Baird state clearly to other Canadian environment ministers that the federal government has infrastructure money on the table and that's the type of infrastructure that will be funded but it's not limited to that type of infrastructure — the Building Canada fund, for example, could be dedicated too.

There are some questions that we need to ask. I can tell you that we will be proceeding with dealing with the sewage issue, but we will do so with clarity, with understanding and in the best interests of the citizens of Dawson.

**Mr. Mitchell:** The minister in his opening remarks made reference to the five-year YESAA review process. I recently attended the Association of Yukon Communities annual meeting in beautiful Kluane in Haines Junction, where there was some concern expressed by at least one civic leader regarding the existing process in terms of information and getting into the draft screening reports — information that the community felt they had provided.

Has the minister held discussions with his colleague, the Minister of Community Services, to make sure that in the five-year YESAA review these types of concerns that are being expressed, specifically by municipal leaders, will be addressed?

**Hon. Mr. Fentie:** Mr. Chair, this is an obligation. We are bound to review this legislation and how it works here in Yukon in this period. That is what we are doing. We do have some history now that we can use as a measurement. We are aware of concerns but we are also aware of the positives. Therefore, our objective with municipalities, First Nation governments, stakeholders and Yukoners in general is to make this particular assessment process even better.

I want to inform the House that we are more and more these days hearing from proponents that the Yukon is becoming a much more attractive place for assessment of projects than other jurisdictions comparable to Yukon. I find that to be very positive and I think it speaks volumes of what was intended originally through land claims and the development of this kind of process. It is a Yukon-made assessment process that does something very unique, and that is to add or include the social components of projects through that assessment.

I think we have to at this stage come to some conclusions: we do have a workable process; there are some problems; and our objective is to go through the five-year review and improve the YESAA process overall in the best interests of Yukon.

**Mr. Mitchell:** I certainly concur with the minister that the Yukon does benefit from having the common process that has flowed out of land claims — the YESAA process — that does joint screening and recommendations, although of course



it always remains the responsibility of the respective governments to make decisions based on those screening reports.

Finally, I know that the Leader of the Third Party wants to get into this debate. We touched on this when I asked questions about the Fitch report on land claims. Again, going back to the three unsettled land claims, aside from the issue of the long-awaited Fitch report, is there any other update from the Yukon's perspective in terms of Yukon's discussions with the three First Nations as to any other progress that may have been made toward moving forward with those land claims, or are we simply waiting for the Fitch report and the federal minister to make a decision?

**Hon. Mr. Fentie:** The short answer is that, without a federal mandate to negotiate or conclude it, this is impossible. We have to work with the First Nations. Unfortunately, in this circumstance, the Yukon government must work with these three First Nations as *Indian Act* bands. The mechanisms that govern them predominantly arise from the *Indian Act*. That is why we're so focused on getting this process going again.

The dramatic improvement that First Nations experience today, given the land claims and self-government agreements that are in place — and I can tell members that there are many examples of progress being made in First Nation communities that speak volumes about getting out from under the *Indian Act* and taking on responsibilities and decision-making for First Nation citizens through their own governance structure. There are a number of communities that we can look to by way of example. I think that the Vuntut Gwitchin is a shining example of progress being made in self-government and the implementation of their claim. As well, this goes beyond the bounds of governance and into economic development and other areas of structure that, under the *Indian Act*, would not have ever been possible.

We clearly feel that it's time for the federal government to bring forward that new mandate. Let's conclude the unfinished business so that the Yukon, border to border, is whole in its governance model, with self-governing First Nations in place — all 14 — with public government in place, with devolution in hand, and let's continue to take our rightful place in the federation under that model.

It's interesting to note — I believe there are 22 land claims concluded in Canada; 11 of those claims are here in the Yukon. I think that's a very important point here, when you consider what's going on nationally. Here, in this particular part of the country, 50 percent of all settlements are within our borders. It speaks volumes to our model of governance.

**Mr. Mitchell:** I do concur with the minister's view of the importance of settling all 14, although the pace of the settlements — although 11 have been settled — seems to have slowed down somewhat in recent years.

I have other questions but I think, considering we don't have too many days remaining in this sitting, I'll just thank the minister and officials for providing the information today and allow other members to enter into debate.

**Mr. Hardy:** It's always interesting to hear debate and not argument — to hear positions put forward without personal attacks.

However, I just want to pick up where the questions left off. Many of the questions we're interested in have already been asked and answered, and I thank the minister for answering them. I'd also like to thank the departments for the briefing they gave, where they clarified some of the budget items.

But picking up on land claims, as the minister has indicated, there are 22 in Canada and 11 of them are in the Yukon. That's 50 percent. It's a long history and, we all know, a long fight by the First Nations for their rights. It's definitely not over. There are three still outstanding.

What would be the outstanding issues, other than the fact that this current government doesn't seem to be that eager to engage with the three First Nations who still haven't settled? What would be — on a territorial perspective — the stumbling blocks that are holding it up?

**Hon. Mr. Fentie:** I don't want to speculate, but without a federal mandate to negotiate, we won't know what stumbling blocks there may or may not be, or what we can actually address and find a solution or resolution to.

We need a federal mandate to get back to the table to negotiate. Without dialogue, without negotiation, these matters are pure speculation in nature. They can be variables; they can change at any given time under any circumstance. What we need is a federal mandate to get back to the table. That's number one.

Secondly, I would offer this to the Leader of the Third Party: I don't think it is a fact that this government is not eager to conclude. I say that because it is the federal government that decided to try this approach with a special envoy to try to delve into the issues — perceived or otherwise — to see if there is a way to get a new mandate and get back to concluding the land claims here in the Yukon.

We'll have to wait for the minister to present to us publicly what the minister intends to do. I want to repeat and emphasize Yukon's government position: the time has come for a new mandate and the time has come to conclude the unfinished business in Yukon; that is a must.

**Mr. Hardy:** Could the minister tell me what the special envoy is? I'm in the dark about it.

**Hon. Mr. Fentie:** The special envoy was an individual appointed by former Minister Prentice — the minister responsible for the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development — specifically mandated to look into the issues with respect to the three unsettled claims in the Yukon: White River First Nation, Ross River Dena Council and the Liard First Nation. We await the envoy's report and the outcomes and whatever recommendations the minister may be proceeding with.

**Mr. Hardy:** That was a couple of years ago. To date, the territorial government hasn't been informed about the outcome of that envoy and what the issues are that need to be addressed.

**Hon. Mr. Fentie:** To date, the government has been given somewhat of an update on the process, but it's not done. Until it's done, the federal minister will not comment. The federal minister has not gone public. I would assume the report is not yet complete in its entirety and, until that happens, the fed-

eral minister won't be coming forward with any recommendations, if there are any.

We're suggesting we should be a little more expeditious in our approach and, in any conversation I have with the now Minister of DIAND, the message is the same: we need to get on with this and conclude the unfinished business.

**Mr. Hardy:** I don't want to belabour the fact. I understand what the minister is saying. It's not encouraging that the territorial government hasn't been included in the special envoy. It's my understanding that if they don't know what the special envoy discussed, then they weren't included. I don't find that encouraging because ultimately decisions made from that will have an impact upon the settlement of the claims and all people of the territory.

Has the minister had any discussions with the three First Nation leaders in regard to their impression of the special envoy and indications of whether they felt it had merit in trying to move forward and getting the federal government to strike a mandate to settle these?

**Hon. Mr. Fentie:** Mr. Chair, I have to make a point: it's not the case that the Yukon government and Yukon First Nations have not been involved with the envoy; we all provided input. In fact, that was the express purpose of the envoy's travel to the Yukon on a couple of occasions, to seek that input. This is not the government that gave the mandate to the envoy. The envoy is under contract to the federal government and must report back to the federal minister. We are awaiting that report back to the federal minister.

There has been a tremendous amount of input by the Yukon government and each First Nation whose claim is not settled. He went directly to each one, and I believe the envoy also went directly to CYFN — or at least had discussions with CYFN — to get an insight into the land claims here overall.

I think there has been extensive work ongoing here. This is very important, and I think that we have to allow the envoy and the federal minister to get to that point where there is a conclusion to this process, and the minister announcing — or at least informing us — what the intentions are of the federal government.

**Mr. Hardy:** Has the minister been in discussion with other provincial ministers or leaders in regard to settlement of land claims in their areas? Have the provincial and territorial governments looked at the Yukon model as a model they wish to duplicate?

**Hon. Mr. Fentie:** I can't speak for other jurisdictions. We have to understand there are some differences too with treaty First Nations and provinces; there are those instruments that are still in effect. There have also been other negotiations, such as with the Nisga'a, for example, where a form of governance — certainly not to the extent that Yukon First Nations have achieved, but a form of governance — has been put in place through an agreement.

I can say that the federal government is serious about this model and what possibilities, by way of example to Canada, this model could produce. We heard that loud and clear during our visit in February with a number of federal ministers. There is a view taking shape that the Yukon may certainly have a

governance model that might be of great importance, going forward across the country.

I would also submit that any federal minister for the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development must have literally hundreds of processes going on at any given time with First Nations across the country, whether they be on reserve, representative groups, the Inuvialuit and their claim — the issues in Nunavut, where a territory and land claim are married, so to speak. It is a land claim that is an umbrella over Nunavut. The negotiation there with the Inuit was critical.

But there are also all kinds of other issues and processes that are ongoing. We want to keep ours focused with the federal minister to the unfinished business and the settlement of the final three First Nations — both their final agreements and self-government agreements here in Yukon.

**Mr. Hardy:** Cross-boundary claims — where are we at with any type? Where did we leave off — maybe I should put it that way — where did we leave off in those discussions? Because, of course, it did involve British Columbia; maybe the minister can inform me if it touched into Alberta and N.W.T.

I seem to remember that there were discussions with British Columbia. Where did we leave off on that, and have there been any discussions — not on a federal level, but on a province or territory level, or provinces — regarding cross-boundary claims?

**Hon. Mr. Fentie:** Yes, this government has had discussions with the Government of British Columbia in that regard, but there is little progress being made on transboundary claims. We all know that Yukon is obligated to address those claims, as registered. So, too, is the federal government. We have not had any indication from the federal government on pursuing the transboundary issues at this time for Yukon.

I also want to make the point that Yukon is in a position where we must recognize that the conclusion of our internal claims is critical and should take priority. This is not to diminish our obligations regarding transboundary issues, of course, but there are a number of overlapping issues here. It's paramount that we internally conclude the claims here, so that we have the mosaic, if you will, on the land base of Yukon, and it's clear. The transboundary issues are laid out in the *Umbrella Final Agreement* in the chapters relating to transboundary, of course. We are ready, willing and able to pursue transboundary settlements but, again, we are waiting for the federal government for, first, a mandate for the three unsettled claims in Yukon and, second, what the federal government's intentions are — along with other governments like British Columbia — on transboundary issues.

**Mr. Hardy:** I stand to be corrected on this, but I get the impression that the minister feels that the claims can be settled without transboundary negotiations. Maybe I am misunderstanding. Is he saying that we could actually settle the agreements without dealing with the transboundary claims at the same time? Is that what the minister is saying?

**Hon. Mr. Fentie:** We already have. There are already settlements internal to Yukon without conclusion of transboundary claims. Teslin Tlingit Council and Carcross-Tagish First Nation have transboundary claims. The Tahltan have

transboundary issues. There are settlements in north Yukon with the Tetlit Gwich'in on the transboundary issue.

If the member is referring to the southeast Yukon, of course there have been negotiations right to the point where all land quantum has been fulfilled, in terms of selections that have been initialled-off by negotiators some time ago. In fact, we are interim protecting that entire land base. There isn't a transboundary settlement as yet, but we recognize our obligations as defined under the *Umbrella Final Agreement* and are prepared to pursue transboundary negotiations at any time, but we certainly can't do it by ourselves.

We need an indication from other governments, like the federal government, of what their intentions are. I did state that a number one priority for us always is concluding the internal claims. We have three left and we want those done so that all 14 First Nations within Yukon borders have a settlement. Indeed, there are transboundary issues internally, overlap issues among First Nations, and there is a portion of the *Umbrella Final Agreement* that speaks to that and how those issues are to be dealt with. The transboundary issues are still there; however, I think we understand clearly what our obligations are and we await other governments to pursue meeting their obligations.

**Mr. Hardy:** I understand that there are transboundary issues. I just want to make sure in the language that was spoken previous to that that it wasn't a separate process, because I hadn't got the indication that it could be done separately. I'm glad the minister cleared that up for me.

To my understanding, the aboriginal language directorate has shifted more directly over to the First Nations. I've heard the explanation and that's fine. I'm just curious if all the employees of the directorate have been offered jobs elsewhere within the Yukon government or did some have to lose their positions?

**Hon. Mr. Fentie:** First, this whole process was based on an agreement whereby fiscal resources would flow through the Yukon government to individual First Nations, based on proposals that come forward. The First Nations themselves decided that they want to occupy this area and work bilaterally with Canada. Of course, there is that option available to First Nations, and that necessitated the situation we're in.

The employee I know of has been given other work within the corporate structure. One employee has already been given work within the corporate structure outside of the directorate. I don't think there is going to be a directorate any more under the circumstances. It's over, because we no longer are the flow-through mechanism for this particular initiative. It's now directly involving First Nations and the federal government.

**Mr. Hardy:** For my own information, how many employees actually work under this? Were both of them offered other positions or moved with the transfer?

**Hon. Mr. Fentie:** There were two employees. One has another job; the other is still there. It's a personnel matter and I leave that to that process. I know that one employee has been transferred or decided to take on another position within the corporate structure. The second one is still involved in a personnel process.

**Mr. Hardy:** Yes, I know what happens when you ask questions around that, so I won't go down that line.

Questions on the Executive Council Office internal audit — I believe the minister has already answered them. The questions have been asked, so I won't spend any time on that either.

The Bureau of Statistics — there is an increase there. Why is there an increase and are there any plans to direct the bureau to look at different measures of our societal well-being using the general progress indicator? Just as a reminder, the minister and I used to sit together many years ago, and this is a question that was asked those many, many years ago about the general progress indicator as a measurement, instead of the one we use now. The minister might remember the debate we had around that, because we did have it as a motion and a debate. Once again, it comes back.

If the minister could answer my question, I'd appreciate it.

**Hon. Mr. Fentie:** Well, on the increase, it's specific to the business survey and socio-economic indicators project. As I stated in my opening remarks, that will also make a contribution to YESAA by providing that very important information.

I also want to make the point that the Bureau of Statistics in Yukon does a lot of work. One of the areas that is critical is the undercount when it comes to the census and the work our statistical people in our branch have done to ensure that the census from Canada is in fact relating to the population as it exists at that time. The Bureau of Statistics has done yeoman's work, has incurred yeoman's duty, in getting those figures.

It has been very positive for the Yukon and our fiscal relationship with Canada. But of course there are many other stats that are produced: the unemployment stats, the GDP stats, the inflation stat, the breakdown of our workforce — and the list goes on and on. I am sure the member is well aware of all those statistics.

I have over time come to have a great respect for the individuals in the stats branch, because they get that information in hand as quickly as they do. I am very impressed, as I am sure others are.

So it's a very critical component of the department, or the ECO function. The Executive Council Office, being the overseeing department for the corporate structure of government, requires a very efficient and well-rounded statistics branch, which we are very fortunate to have.

**Mr. Hardy:** I want to thank the minister for informing me all about the Bureau of Statistics. That was not the question I asked.

I do have to concur with him that I am very much impressed with our bureau here. I am also always quite appreciative of the information we get on many of the statistics they produce, and the range they are covering — and it seems they are also expanding the range, and that's the information that we all need to have in order to do our job better. So I consider them enablers for us to be a little bit more able to debate with some knowledge.

But the question I did ask — and it could be construed in any way you want — is very simple: has the bureau, or has there been a direction, or would there be any plans to direct the bureau, to look at different measures of our societal well-

being? I used the GPI, the general progress indicator, and it's not unknown in the world; it's used and some people feel it's a better reflection than the one we presently use.

If not, has anyone in the bureau put forward any ideas around incorporating some of the approaches for the general progress indicator?

**Hon. Mr. Fentie:** At this time, I don't believe so, but let me go into some of the detail in relation to the Bureau of Statistics. I just want to recite what I would call its overall mandate. This might help the member with his question.

The mandate goes on to include that the Bureau of Statistics work in collaboration with national, provincial and territorial governments, departments and agencies on statistical and research projects and methodology. That says to me that methodology is open for discussion at any given time among all these governments and agencies. Whether that means we get into a general progress indicator assessment, I can't say to the member at this time that this is going to happen.

It also says to collect and provide national, provincial and territorial statistical information. I think that the work here is quite extensive. It includes nine permanent FTEs for this activity. We haven't grown in number, even though we've taken on the business survey and socio-economic indicator project. The staffing is the same as the previous budget.

I can break that down so that the member understands how the investment happens.

The personnel costs in this area total \$1,147,000, of which \$371,000 is recoverable from Canada. I think we have to repeat this — \$1,147,000 is allocated for personnel costs, of which only \$371,000 is deemed recoverable from Canada. On the operating side, there is \$99,000 for operations, of which only \$29,000 is recoverable from Canada. There are no transfer payments in this activity.

What this says to me is that the Yukon government places a great emphasis on the Bureau of Statistics, given the breakdown and/or portion of investment for fiscal requirement that we undertake versus what we get from Canada overall. Again, I go back to the mandate.

The Bureau of Statistics is mandated to collaborate with the national, provincial and other territorial governments. I think these statistics are always important, depending on the circumstances and the time that we require them. I believe that it is fair to say that, when we developed our business case, which we presented to Ottawa and resulted in a new and much-improved fiscal relationship, our statistics branch had a lot of input in that regard, of course — especially on the undercount, as I stated earlier, when we deal with the census.

We can't allow a census to be done here without ensuring that the census is indeed as close to reality as possible, because our obligation and responsibility is to deliver programs and services to the Yukon public. Of course, that includes a fiscal relationship with Canada, as with any other jurisdiction. We rely a great deal on the branch.

The member is asking about general progress indicators. Well, I look at a number of areas of data that have been collected and I would define those as general progress indicators if

you compare some of the statistics of today to the statistics we had under the former Liberal government.

Let's look at 10- to 13-percent unemployment. Today it's four to five percent, and I think that's a general progress indicator. Let's look at our fiscal capacity — \$500 million to \$900 million. That's a general progress indicator.

Let's look at our growing population. That's another general progress indicator that we have available through our statistical data we collect. But if there is a specific mechanism that is defined as a general progress indicator — I'm sure under this mandate that includes methodology — there may be some instance of going forward or something like that that may take place. I can't predict or predetermine what that might be.

But I think overall, the key to the issue here — with this particular area of the Executive Council Office — is the important role it plays on behalf of the government structure overall and indeed the situation the Yukon may find itself in from time to time.

These statistics and access to that information is very important. If it wasn't there, we would be somewhat limited in our options on how we can interrelate with our federal government, our sister territorial governments, the provincial governments and other agencies when we have to interact. That information is critical for our engagement and involvement with other orders of government.

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

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

*Motion agreed to*

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

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

*Motion agreed to*

*Speaker resumes the Chair*

**Speaker:** I now call the House to order.

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

#### **Chair's report**

**Mr. Nordick:** Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 11, entitled *First Appropriation Act, 2008-09*, and directed me to report progress on it.

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

**Some Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**Speaker:** I declare the report carried.

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

*The House adjourned at 5:30 p.m.*

**The following Sessional Paper was tabled May 6, 2008:**

08-1-74

Yukon College 2006/2007 Annual Report and audited Financial Statements (dated October 26, 2007) prepared by the Office of the Auditor General of Canada (Rouble)