

Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Wednesday, March 25, 2009 — 1:00 p.m.

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

Prayers

DAILY ROUTINE

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

TRIBUTES

In recognition of Nutrition Month

Hon. Mr. Hart: On behalf of the House I pay tribute to Nutrition Month for 2009. I rise today to inform members that March is Nutrition Month across Canada. This year, the dieticians of Canada are focusing on nutrition and healthy eating to support active lifestyles.

Les diététistes jouent un rôle essentiel dans nos vies, qu'on le réalise ou non. Des experts qui travaillent à l'élaboration du Guide alimentaire canadien aux diététistes qui travaillent dans nos hôpitaux, tous ont le même objectif de garder les canadiens et les canadiennes en santé.

In the Yukon, we are blessed with a number of dieticians who work behind the scenes in the extended care facilities, First Nation health centres and health promotion units, all of them guided by the same standard of providing the best information possible to Yukoners.

The Ipsos-Reid study released in February revealed that 85 percent of Canadians felt that their eating habits needed some improvement and that most Canadians agree that when and what they eat can help them get the most out of their physical activity.

Yukoners are among the most active people in Canada. It's important for us to understand how nutrition affects our energy and our health.

One of the ways the Department of Health and Social Services works to promote healthier lifestyles is by promoting healthier nutrition through the Drop the Pop program. Also, this yearly public awareness campaign encourages school-age children and their families to give up sugary pop and drinks in favour of healthier beverages, such as water, milk and 100-percent fruit and vegetable juices.

Cette campagne de sensibilisation annuelle vise à encourager les enfants d'âge scolaire à remplacer les boissons sucrées et les boissons gazeuses par des boissons plus santé, telles que l'eau, le lait, le jus de fruits purs et le jus de légumes.

The Yukon government's commitment to ensuring proper nutrition is so strong that we are consulting with the stakeholders about the content of the nutrition framework for the Yukon. We want to know if we've identified the gaps and the right key priority areas. We expect that this work will be ready for review by early summer. We support these initiatives because good health starts with good nutrition.

Merci. Thank you.

Speaker: Are there any further tributes?
 Introduction of visitors.
 Are there any returns or documents for tabling?
 Are there any reports of committees?
 Are there any petitions?
 Are there any bills to be introduced?

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 71: Introduction and First Reading

Hon. Ms. Horne: I move that Bill No. 71, entitled *Act to Amend the Human Rights Act*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Minister of Justice that Bill No. 71, entitled *Act to Amend the Human Rights Act*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Motion for introduction and first reading of Bill No. 71 agreed to

Bill No. 69: Introduction and First Reading

Hon. Ms. Horne: I move that Bill No. 69, entitled *Miscellaneous Statute Law Amendment Act, 2009*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Minister of Justice that Bill No. 69, entitled *Miscellaneous Statute Law Amendment Act, 2009*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Motion for introduction and first reading of Bill No. 69 agreed to

Bill No. 70: Introduction and First Reading

Hon. Mr. Hart: I move that Bill No. 70, entitled *Child and Youth Advocate Act*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Hon. Minister of Health and Social Services that Bill No. 70, entitled *Child and Youth Advocate Act*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Motion for introduction and first reading of Bill No. 70 agreed to

Bill No. 64: Introduction and First Reading

Hon. Mr. Fentie: I move that Bill No. 64, entitled *Act to Amend the Legislative Assembly Retirement Allowances Act, 2007*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Speaker: It has been moved the by Hon. Premier that Bill No. 64, entitled *Act to Amend the Legislative Assembly Retirement Allowances Act, 2007*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Motion for introduction and first reading of Bill No. 64 agreed to

Bill No. 65: Introduction and First Reading

Hon. Ms. Horne: I move that Bill No. 65, entitled *Act to Amend the Yukon Advisory Council on Women's Issues Act*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Hon. Minister responsible for the Women's Directorate that Bill No. 65, entitled *Act to Amend the Yukon Advisory Council on Women's Issues Act*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Motion for introduction and first reading of Bill No. 65 agreed to

Speaker: Are there any further bills for introduction? Hearing none, are there notices of motion?

NOTICES OF MOTION

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

THAT this House urges the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, in implementing any financial restraint measures, to keep intact its northern broadcasting system, including the AM broadcasting signal, because of the importance of the service to Yukon, Northwest Territories and Nunavut.

I give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to proceed with the implementation of a number of priority initiatives identified in the corrections action plan, some of which include:

(1) the implementation of correctional reform through the ongoing operations of the corrections action plan implementation office;

(2) passage and implementation of the new Yukon *Corrections Act, 2009*, based on principles which provide for the rehabilitation, healing and reintegration of offenders into society;

(3) the construction of a new correctional centre that will reflect the aforementioned principles and be built in conjunction with a new treatment centre that will provide for the development of more rehabilitation programs and services to offenders, separately as well as those in need;

(4) the implementation of the enhanced direct supervision model in the operation of the new correctional centre, including human resource development and training for staff, such as the correctional office living unit training model;

(5) the construction of a women's transition living unit to meet the immediate needs of female inmates;

(6) the operation of therapeutic courts such as the Community Wellness Court and the Domestic Violence Treatment Option Court;

(7) work with First Nation governments, communities and NGOs to provide access to land-based camps/treatment centres for inmates of the Whitehorse Correctional Centre and offenders supervised in the community;

(8) the continued implementation of the five-step FASD action plan;

(9) the continued implementation of the substance abuse action plan, which emphasizes harm reduction, prevention and education, treatment and enforcement; and

(10) the enhancement of the enforcement measures through the continued operation of the *Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act* and the RCMP street crime reduction team.

I give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to amend legislation that will enable the enforcement of handicapped parking zones within the City of Whitehorse.

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

THAT this House urges the Yukon government to ensure, when clearing Yukon highways of snow, that

(1) the entrance to Squatters Road is cleared of snow so as not to impede access to and from the highway, in the interest of safety for people entering and exiting the Alaska Highway and Squatter's Road intersection; and

(2) a policy be developed and implemented for clearing the intersection of Yukon highways with other roads where no other level of government holds responsibility for doing so.

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

THAT this House urges the Minister of Education to work in partnership with the parents of Burwash Landing to immediately set up a working group with them to promote the creation of a school and community cultural centre in Burwash Landing.

Speaker: Are there any further notices of motion?

Hearing none, is there a ministerial statement?

Hearing none, this then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Whitehorse Correctional Centre rebuild

Mr. Mitchell: Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Justice.

In a news release last week, the minister tried to soft-pedal the cost of the new correctional centre. It was going to cost only \$21.6 million, she claimed. It didn't take long for the minister's story to unravel. Her own officials confirmed the cost of the facility will be \$67 million. Under this government's watch, the cost of this facility has more than doubled. When you delay projects for political reasons, costs go up. This is just the latest example of a government that can't seem to get a project done on time and within budget.

Why didn't the minister publicly announce the full cost of this facility? Did she think no one would notice?

Hon. Mr. Lang: Mr. Speaker, I'll address the issue about the money and the construction of the ongoing project — the treatment and correctional institute. There is a \$21.6-million figure for this year, which will be invested on the ground. The members are aware of that, and those are the figures that are there today.

We're working on the transition home as we speak, and we're working on the infrastructure to put a footprint down for the coming two years, so we can have a building up and running in 2011.

Mr. Mitchell: Under this Yukon Party government, which pats itself on the back for good fiscal management, the cost of the new correctional centre has more than doubled from original estimates. So much for managing tax dollars wisely or effectively.

In 2007, the Auditor General of Canada released a report that was very critical of how this government mismanages the construction of new buildings. It is obvious that the government has learned nothing from the report. It continues to make the same mistakes over and over again.

The cost of the new correctional centre has gone from \$25 million to \$67 million under this government. Add in the Watson Lake hospital going from \$5 million to \$25 million, and taxpayers can see how the Yukon Party government has a habit of blowing the budget on these big capital projects. Will the Minister of Justice commit that \$67 million will be the final cost? Or, can we expect millions more in cost overruns?

Hon. Ms. Horne: I reiterate that this new building is a treatment and correctional centre, and it's part of a larger package of correctional reforms that this government is undertaking. I tabled our new *Corrections Act* for debate at this sitting, which is another part of that package of correctional reform. We embarked on a correctional reform process after taking office. We talked to the public; we talked to First Nations; we talked to correctional staff and inmates. Our new building is reflecting that change in the face of corrections and the *Corrections Act*. The facility is a new, generation 3 correctional centre that uses the enhanced direct supervision model. This means that every area where inmates reside, staff will be directly on the floor with them. This is a complete change. We are going to help the inmates reintegrate into the community. This is a plus. Let's not complain about the money that it costs to rehabilitate our inmates.

Mr. Mitchell: Before this minister gets the job done, it will be a fourth generation that will be using the facility. Now we know that the government is sensitive about this topic. They start down the road with a project and then they change their mind. The result? Years of delays and millions of dollars in cost overruns.

The Dawson health centre is another example. Plans were drawn up, meetings were held, hundreds of thousands of dollars of taxpayers' money was spent, and then the project was shelved. Now, four years later, the project has been restarted and the entire cycle is being repeated.

Given the inability of this government to manage projects, we know Yukoners are sceptical about taking this government's word when it comes to the projected cost of new buildings. What assurances can the minister give the House that the new correctional centre will come in at \$67 million?

Hon. Mr. Fentie: Well, Mr. Speaker, what is really wrong with this debate is the fact that the Official Opposition is generations behind where the government and the Yukon is today when it comes to corrections. The Liberals were going to build a warehouse, based on the Barr Ryder report. This government, after engaging with Yukoners through a very extensive process, is building a multi-purpose facility based on correctional reform. For this Leader of the Official Opposition to compare what we are doing to what they were going to do is like comparing an ox cart to the space shuttle.

Mr. Speaker, at least the NDP recognizes the value of rehabilitation and how that will reduce the cost of incarceration over time. That's what we're doing.

Unfortunately, the Official Opposition wants to live generations ago, live in the past. Instead of being part of the solution, they still are the problem.

Question re: Whitehorse Correctional Centre rebuild

Mr. Elias: Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Justice as well.

When this government took office almost seven years ago, Yukon had already made a good start on a new corrections building. Instead of building a new jail, and using that success to build a new justice system, this government stopped that project and embarked on an extensive consultation process. What we have as a result is a new plan for a \$67-million corrections building.

Mr. Speaker, after all this time, we at least have some idea of the one-time construction costs for the new jail. What we don't know yet is what the ongoing operations cost is going to be. Will the minister tell us what the ongoing annual cost for operating the jail is estimated to be?

Hon. Ms. Horne: Yesterday in our budget debate, a Liberal member suggested that if the Liberal building had been built, the recidivism rate would be much lower, or nonexistent.

Mr. Speaker, I can assure this House that what was needed was much more than a new building. What was needed was a new approach to corrections. We undertook correctional reform. Flowing out of the extensive consultations was a correctional plan focused on treatment and programming, and that is exactly what we're delivering.

Mr. Elias: I'll tell you what I can assure this House of, Mr. Speaker: the Liberals were actually going to do something in 2002 and construct a new correctional facility. This Yukon Party government stopped that project. The fact of the matter is that they are warehousing people — for seven years. That's the truth.

I'm going to file the 2002 schematic design for the correctional facility right now, complete with a women's centre, a mental health facility, areas for programming, a spirituality centre, arts and culture, and the list goes on. That's multi-purpose, Mr. Speaker. The facility would have been built for \$24 million.

When the Yukon Party government inherited it, they added \$40 million and said, "Here you go, taxpayers," and added a treatment facility. Good governance? I call that bad politics.

Can the minister tell us what the ongoing annual operational cost for the new jail is expected to be?

Hon. Mr. Fentie: I think the members opposite, especially the Official Opposition, should get their facts straight. Actually, the former Liberal government was spending money redesigning this so-called facility, which was a warehouse, based on the Barr Ryder report, to reduce the costs further. In fact, they were making the "stalls" for warehousing people even smaller.

What we're building is a facility based on correctional reform, and the cost for that is all-inclusive. It's not about warehousing; it's about security; it's about incarceration; it's about treatment; it's about rehabilitation; it's about programming; it's about cultural relativity; it's about a transitional unit for women; it's about reforming the corrections system in Yukon. Why? Because our recidivism rate is unacceptable — well in excess of 80 percent. It has cost the Yukon taxpayer, over

many years, millions and millions of dollars to warehouse people who shouldn't even be in jail in the first place. At the end of the day, the Liberals had a gong show. We've got correctional reform.

Mr. Elias: Over the last seven years — and I'm not sure what the Premier is getting at — this Yukon Party government has been warehousing people and that's a fact. The Liberals would have had something on the ground right now, and people would have been using the facility. Clearly, the minister does not know the answer to this simple question. I'm talking about operation and maintenance here. They have no answers, and the project management of the Premier is self-explanatory over the years. All this minister has accomplished over the seven years is the actual warehousing of people. That's it. That's all they've accomplished — nothing to be proud of, Mr. Speaker. We could have had one by now, like I said, but they stopped it.

Is the minister prepared to share the schematic drawings and any relevant information on the proposed correctional facility so Yukoners can know what the operation and maintenance costs will be? Please, let Yukoners know.

Hon. Mr. Fentie: Actually, the former Liberal government stopped the project themselves, because they were the shortest lived majority government in the history of the Commonwealth of Nations. The Yukon public stopped the project. It threw the Liberal government out of office.

What did we present to the Yukon public when we ran for office? Correctional reform, Mr. Speaker, a new way of doing things, a modern way, bringing Yukon into the 21st century, not from ox carts but to the modern technology of incarceration, rehabilitation, treatment — exactly what Yukoners want.

Even today's courts in the Yukon say clearly there is no mechanism to deal with the situations that we are dealing with in the justice system. That's what this government is doing — dealing with the issues by bringing forward solutions, not a bunch of rhetoric.

Question re: Garbage burning

Mr. Cardiff: Burning garbage releases tonnes of toxins into the air — contaminants linked to many serious health problems in humans, including cancers, thyroid diseases, development and reproductive problems and respiratory diseases. Some communities have expressed concerns with garbage burning and wanted to see this practice stopped.

Yet going through the YESAA process, the Department of Environment varied a number of the recommendations that were made. Communities wanted to end burning garbage. The Department of Environment wanted a strategy to switch to a new method of operation by 2012.

Can the Minister of Environment explain this action to Yukon people, particularly to the people of Carcross, Tagish, Deep Creek, Watson Lake and Ross River, who smell noxious smoke coming from their local solid-waste facilities?

Hon. Ms. Taylor: Just for the record, the Department of Environment has made it a condition of a licence for all our solid-waste facilities to have a plan in place by 2010, in order to phase out the open burning that currently exists in some of our respective facilities. We are adhering to that.

As the member opposite knows, the Department of Community Services is undertaking a solid-waste strategy, which comprises all eight municipalities, unincorporated municipalities, First Nations and many others on the development of a sustainable, viable — financially viable — solid-waste management for the delivery of solid waste in our respective territory.

The Department of Environment is adhering to all the respective regulations, pursuant to the *Environment Act*. We are working with the Department of Community Services on the comprehensive approach to solid-waste management on improvements that have been accruing over the last number of years. We recognize that open burning is not the ideal approach to solid waste, and for that reason we're actually working on a solution.

Mr. Cardiff: More studies, Mr. Speaker. Environment Canada says there has been no air emissions monitoring at any solid-waste facility in Yukon. Still, they estimate that in 2006, burning garbage at Yukon solid-waste facilities released eight tonnes of particulate matter, two tonnes of nitrogen oxides, eight tonnes of volatile organic compounds and 23 tonnes of carbon monoxide.

The air emissions regulations of the *Environment Act* state, "No person shall release or allow the release of any air contaminant to such extent or degree as may cause or be likely to cause irreparable damage to the natural environment; or in the opinion of a health officer cause actual or imminent harm to public health or safety." Have any health officers weighed in with an opinion on whether burning garbage causes actual or imminent harm to public health and safety?

Hon. Mr. Lang: I would like to address this from Community Services. We're working with Environment on it.

This certainly is a huge issue for Yukon, and this afternoon we'll be speaking to it during motion debate on the floor here. I can address that at that time. We are doing our work. We are coming up with a plan. We have had a study done by EBA that's going out now into the communities, so that we can go to work and come up with a final plan here at the end of May or early June. We as a government are committed to move forward on that plan and do exactly what the member opposite is asking us to do. We have got to get control of our solid-waste areas. We have an extensive inventory of them. How do we address it? Hopefully this plan will address that, and this government is committed to resource it and move it forward.

Mr. Cardiff: More delays. The air emissions regulations of the *Environment Act* state, "No person shall release or allow the release of any air contaminant to such extent or degree as may cause or be likely to cause irreparable damage to the natural environment..." I will file some copies of the air emissions permit that was signed off by the Department of Environment for several solid-waste facilities.

Among other things, the permit states that the permittee shall not burn treated wood products or painted wood. At a great many rural solid-waste facilities, there is inadequate staffing and at many there is none at all, without any control over what goes into the open pit or the burning vessels.

We're worried that the inability to monitor and control the situation at solid-waste facilities means that the law is not being respected.

Will the Minister of Environment get a legal opinion as to whether the *Environment Act* and the air emissions regulations are being adhered to with respect to the disposal and burning of solid waste in rural Yukon?

Hon. Mr. Lang: Again, that's exactly what we're doing. We are going to go out and address the solid-waste issue in the territory. I would like to remind the members opposite and Yukon — we're the first government to take this on. We have made a commitment, not only here on the floor of this House, but in the communities, through our community tours, that we will be addressing this issue. With that come finances and resources, so that it can be done in a proper fashion. We are committed to addressing the solid-waste issue throughout the territory.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Speaker: Hon. Premier, on a point of order.

Hon. Mr. Fentie: With pleasure, I'd like to ask the House to join me in making welcome the Chief of the Selkirk First Nation, Chief Darren Isaac.

Applause

Question re: Education standards

Mr. Fairclough: I have a question for the Minister of Education. The minister needs to ensure that students are receiving useful graduation certificates.

The minister should be able to find what it means to be a graduate in the Yukon Territory. He should be able to describe what it entails to be considered a graduate and to be included in the graduation rates for the territory — more specifically, to be included in the 40-percent graduation rates for First Nation students. The graduation certificate should be a useful document, not just one that is framed and hung on the wall. With this certificate, Yukon graduates should be able to go forward with post-secondary education and not worry about whether or not they meet the requirements of a post-secondary institution.

Can the minister tell us what it means to be a graduate in the Yukon?

Hon. Mr. Rouble: That's a great question: what does it mean to be a graduate? A graduate is someone who has made a commitment to their education, has gone to work, done the required work, attended classes, and demonstrated their skills and competencies in the subjects before them.

Being a graduate means making the choices about different courses that one wants to take and the direction in their life. Being a graduate means that you have made a commitment to accomplish a goal and have worked to achieve that. Being a graduate means being prepared for opportunities in the future. That's what being a graduate of a Yukon high school means.

Mr. Fairclough: Well, the minister knows that a graduate is recognized through the awarding of a Yukon secondary school graduation certificate. He also knows that a school completion certificate is provided to recognize the accomplishment of students who have succeeded in meeting the

goals of their educational program, other than graduation, and are specially intended to recognize the accomplishments of students with special needs who complete the goals and objectives as stated in their educational plan.

It needs to be clarified to Yukoners if students who receive this certificate are included in the graduation rates. Can the minister clarify if all Yukon school graduates reported in the graduation rates provided are actually able to proceed directly to post-secondary education without upgrading to meet the post-secondary entry requirements?

Hon. Mr. Rouble: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question from the member opposite.

One of the great lessons that one learns in high school is that there are ramifications from the choices that they make. That's an important lesson that all adolescents need to make. One of the other lessons that they learn is that they have options — options about where they are going to go in life. Yes, Mr. Speaker, we do have different levels of courses or different courses of study. If students are going into an engineering background, of course they need to have strong science and math courses at the highest level.

If they're going into other pursuits — for example, into the arts — they might choose not to take those courses. And yes, there are ramifications from their decisions.

The different universities and colleges throughout North America — I should note that we have over 1,000 Yukon students attending over 100 different universities and colleges across North America. They have their own different standards, expectations and requirements. Students and their parents need to be aware of the requirements in the post-secondary institution and make their decisions in high school accordingly.

Mr. Fairclough: I thought the minister would have a hard time with that question. Without a concrete definition of what a graduate is, it raises serious questions on the reporting of our graduation rates. At the moment, Yukon College offers the access program. This program provides Yukon students with the necessary courses needed to continue on in post-secondary education. The access program also provides the essential programs for students to be prepared for the job market. In other words, it prepares people for life after secondary education. I thought this was the goal of our high school: to prepare people for this.

Apparently Yukon College is being used to clean up the mess of the public school system. Currently the majority of students in the access program are First Nation. This leads me to wonder how many of these students actually have a graduation certificate hanging on their wall.

Can the minister tell us how many of the reported 40 percent First Nation graduates have had to register in the access program at Yukon College?

Hon. Mr. Rouble: Each day the Liberal Party astounds me even more. To refer to the situation in our education system as "cleaning up the mess" is offensive, not only to me as the Minister of Education but to every teacher, educator and everyone involved in Yukon's education system. To say, Mr. Speaker, that a student who had challenges or issues in high school who is returning to school, to college, to further them-

selves is “cleaning up the mess” is offensive to those people. What’s he going to say now? That students going to the Individual Learning Centre — where we have over 100 students returning to their high school courses — that’s just another way of “cleaning up the mess.”

Mr. Speaker, we believe more in the students involved in our system and are putting more into initiatives to help them succeed than the member opposite with his cleaning-up-the-mess attitude.

Question re: Education audit

Mr. Fairclough: The Yukon Party needs to “clean up the mess.” Forty-percent graduation rates for Yukon First Nation students is a mess and the minister ought to know that.

I’d like to carry on with the Minister of Education. I would like to ask him another question.

When you’re travelling a road, it’s good to have a road map. The map not only shows the end destination — I think the minister knows what I’m getting at here. A map points out the end destination and it gives you useful information about the road you’re travelling on. This road map is sadly missing in the Department of Education. It is not even clear as to what the department has been told the end destination or goal is, let alone a plan to achieve it.

If the goal is for more students to graduate and for graduation to be significant, then the department needs a map, a plan to follow to reach that goal. Can the minister tell us if a long-term strategic plan that includes clearly defined directions and measurable goals and objectives is being developed?

Hon. Mr. Rouble: Yes.

Mr. Fairclough: Then the minister ought to read the Auditor General’s report. The government’s own financial administration manual requires that each department have a strategic plan to guide the activities and to facilitate accountability and measuring actual outcomes against plans. Goal setting and result measurements are crucial in determining whether the department is achieving its goal and delivering its mandate under the *Education Act*.

These are very straightforward requirements and ones that this government is not meeting. It’s obvious that without a plan, the government cannot measure the outcomes of the department, period. Without a plan, you do not have any measurements to prove that you are on track to reach your goal.

The minister has spoken of New Horizons, for example, and how the government is full steam ahead on the program. I’m only assuming, but there must be an implementation for New Horizons. Can the minister table a copy of the New Horizons implementation plan?

Hon. Mr. Rouble: Mr. Speaker, I will try to answer one of the most convoluted questions I think the Assembly has a record of hearing.

We recognize that there are significant issues in education in the Yukon. We recognize that there are significant challenges in our classrooms. We’ve gone to work with our partners on education reform. We’ve received the education reform document, and have created an implementation strategy in order to accomplish the themes and recommendations put forward in education reform. For the record, Mr. Speaker, that’s

called New Horizons. That is the continued partnership between the Council of Yukon First Nations and the Government of Yukon to address and remedy many of the issues in education today.

We also recognize that the Auditor General of Canada has said that there are deficiencies in how the Government of Yukon reports information about the performance of students in our education system.

Mr. Speaker, as the deputy minister clearly articulated when she was before the Public Accounts Committee, yes, they are committed to doing that. At that time, she tabled an action plan that clearly indicates to all members here that the government is proceeding with a plan to increase the measurements of students’ performance and reporting that to Yukoners.

Mr. Fairclough: There is no implementation plan, just seven years of bad management under this Yukon Party government.

The minister knows full well that there needs to be a strategic plan. He knows that. It has to be in place. It helps the department focus and it is a tool to use. Having a focused strategic plan would allow for measurable goals and objectives and would allow the department to know where they sit at any time in achieving these goals and objectives. The department needs to have clear, defined direction of where they are headed in order to achieve the favourable results in the end. The minister cannot just promise a plan or to plan a plan. He needs to do something, not five years from now, but right now.

Can the minister provide a specific delivery date for the strategic plan of the Department of Education? Probably not.

Hon. Mr. Rouble: The member and I will have ample opportunity in budget debate to go through the specific objectives of the Department of Education.

In there, I will have a lot of opportunity to sit down and discuss with him the key objectives, more than I have in 90 seconds of responding to a question.

We’ll then discuss how the investments in education relate to these. We’ll look at initiatives, such as the early years transition initiative, which is a program in today’s budget to assist with the identification of issues with early childhood learning. In that budget debate, we’ll talk about how we have over 120 different education assistants and learning assistants in our Yukon schools. We’ll talk about the learning programs we have for our teachers and educators. We’ll talk about the school growth plans and how those initiatives incorporate the views of the community into the operations of the school.

The Department of Education has a clear focus, a clear vision and a clear plan as to how we will go about increasing the educational outcomes for all Yukon students.

Question re: Garbage burning

Mr. Cardiff: While Yukon communities deal with noxious fumes from burning garbage and plead for adequate resources, two successive ministers of this government have said they’ll do nothing but study the problem. Back in November, I asked the Minister of Community Services for an update on the solid-waste management strategy. This was his great master plan that was due October 15. This is what he said in *Hansard*: “The study is expected on my desk before the new

year. We look forward to moving ahead with the recommendations this spring.”

Yesterday in his budget response, the Minister of Community Services said this: “Now, what the plan is, I can’t tell you today.”

Is the minister ready today to tell Yukon people what his plan for cleaning up the shameful way that solid waste is handled at many sites in rural Yukon?

Hon. Mr. Lang: Addressing the member opposite, we are getting the EBA Engineering plan out this month and it should be made open to the public. It’s a blueprint in going forward and how we’re going to manage our solid waste into the future. This is a very important issue for us as a government and, by the way, for Yukoners. I agree with the member opposite: we can’t be burning; we can’t be doing these things around these communities. It isn’t healthy and our commitment is to change that. This is part and parcel of how we’re going to do it.

Mr. Cardiff: It’s too bad the minister has taken his sweet time on this. Now there are two major issues with the waste management in rural Yukon: inadequate resources for community solid-waste facilities and the burning of garbage which releases tonnes of toxins into the air.

The Yukon Conservation Society in their submission to YESAB recommends an immediate end to burning domestic waste at Carcross and Tagish. These facilities are close enough to residents where they may have a negative impact on their health.

These facilities are close enough to residents that they may have a negative impact on their health. These communities are close enough to Whitehorse that they might be turned into transfer stations like those in Marsh Lake and Mount Lorne.

Yesterday, the minister said this: “Mr. Speaker, if you lived in Carcross in that part of the community, you would have an issue too ... In this day and age, to have that kind of management ... is not acceptable”. Nice words — how about some action? Will the minister commit immediately to resourcing Tagish and Carcross solid-waste facilities so that they may be converted from shameful environmental liabilities to sites that those communities can be proud of?

Hon. Mr. Lang: Again, Mr. Speaker, I have to say to the member opposite that this is exactly what we are going to do. The problem we have had in the past is that we can’t one-off. In other words, we have to have a master plan as to how this whole thing is going to unfold or we create the situation we have in Carcross or Deep Creek where we close one operation and it just puts an extra burden on the other communities. So Tagish, Carcross, Deep Creek and all of these communities have to be done in unison, because if we don’t, as the member opposite said, we just create an issue somewhere else.

Solid waste is an issue in all of our communities. Solid waste around the community of Whitehorse is even a bigger issue because there is more of it. This plan, this go-forward plan, we’re committed to fund. As the member opposite talked about resources — anything we do to manage solid waste is going to cost money. We’re committed to go to work and provide the resources to make sure that all of this — Tagish, Car-

cross, Deep Creek, and these other areas — have a manageable solid-waste plan and a site that can be managed by the community or by the territorial government. We have 30-some sites in the territory, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Cardiff: Well, it was this government that created the problem in Carcross and Tagish, because they didn’t treat all communities fairly and equitably. They created transfer stations in Marsh Lake, and that’s what put the pressure on Carcross and Tagish. So we had hoped for change, but instead we got talk that a solid-waste management strategy must come first. The fact is that the burning of garbage is going to continue. The government has said that.

Now, the Premier just tabled his billion-dollar, record-breaking budget. In the budget, there were no significant investments in upgrading the way that we deal with solid waste in the communities. By investing in this kind of community infrastructure, it is a good way to spend money. It provides rural jobs, it diverts waste into recycling, and it eliminates airborne contaminants, thereby protecting the health of people, animals, the water and the pristine nature of the Yukon — the pristine nature that this government likes to market to tourists.

Will the Premier allocate funds to convert the Carcross and Tagish solid-waste facilities into transfer stations during this sitting?

Hon. Mr. Lang: That’s why we targeted Building Canada funds — to do exactly that. We are going to work on the solid-waste issue. But, again, the member opposite forgets about Deep Creek. Deep Creek needs some attention too. Beaver Creek, Mayo — all of these areas have issues with solid waste — Old Crow — all of these communities.

We’re going to put a plan on the ground that works. We’re not going to one-off and find out that Deep Creek is overtaxed any more than we would do with Mount Lorne. We’ve got resources, the Building Canada fund; we’re moving forward with consultation, EBA is coming out — by the beginning of next month, we’ll have that report in front of us. And that’s what we’re going to do — we’re going to address this for a final time, move forward, and get these solid-waste things under some form of management.

Speaker: The time for Question Period has now elapsed. We will proceed to Orders of the Day.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

MOTIONS OTHER THAN GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

Motion No. 677

Clerk: Motion No. 677, standing in the name of Mr. Fairclough.

Speaker: It is moved by the Member for Mayo-Tatchun

THAT this House urges the Yukon government to:

(1) establish performance targets for Yukon students overall and, to the extent possible, for each major student subgroup; and

(2) develop comprehensive action plans to reach these targets.

Mr. Fairclough: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy to speak to the motion that we presented earlier in this sitting. For a very good reason, this motion has come forward, and I would like to lay out some of the reasons why. But I think it's pretty clear to the Yukon government why we're putting this forward. I think the Yukon public has recognized this as an important issue, and so has the Auditor General of Canada, as part of her recommendation to the Yukon government.

Now, what we're asking for is the establishment of performance targets for Yukon students. I know the Minister of Education would have a lot to say about this, and I'm really interested to hear it, because today, in Question Period, I've heard — some of the responses have sort of shocked me in some ways, because if the Minister of Education would pay attention to students after they leave high school and actually track them, then maybe his words would be held higher in this House than they are. But the fact of the matter is that the Auditor General of Canada, in her recommendations, states that the Yukon Department of Education does not track students after they leave high school.

How can you measure your performance from K to 12 if you don't know how well you've done and how well students have done as they leave high school into post-secondary and graduate through that? Those are her words and I'll be bringing up some of the points in the audit later on.

I asked also that performance targets be put in place for each of the major student subgroups. These are words that come straight out of the Auditor General's report, so it should not be a surprise for the minister opposite. As a matter of fact, I would think that government would agree that these things need to happen to develop a comprehensive action plan to reach these targets.

It's not there. If the minister has it, he has hidden it away from the Auditor General, because they couldn't find it. They worked with the department; they used information that was available to them through the department.

Speaker's statement

Speaker: The honourable member making reference to a minister or the government "hiding" something away, I think, will lead to discord, so I ask the member to temper his remarks. Do you understand what I'm saying? Are we agreed?

Mr. Fairclough: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll try a bit better here. I would like to go back, right back to 1970 — in the 1970s — where there was an outcry for action and a plan to be put in place. The Department of Education has all this information. They have it. It came from the Yukon Native Brotherhood, which was adopted into CYI at the time and brought forward as a plan to take action. Those same words that were spoken back then are talked about in the general public today.

Why is this such a big issue today? It's because we have such low graduation rates.

We need to plan; we need long-term plans; we need to have these strategic plans — these master plans — put in place, and the minister and the department can follow them and measure how well they're doing against their plans.

According to the Auditor General, this has not taken place, and I can refer to that throughout her report.

I also want to say to the members opposite — and I'm sure they will agree with this; it's on page 1 of the audit — I'll read it out because we're talking about the success of Yukon and trying to move forward as a whole. "Education is vital to the progress of both individuals and Yukon as a whole. It lays the foundations for success in school, at work, and throughout life and directly benefits the economy, society, and individual quality of life. Well-educated citizens are better able to meet the demands of a modern economy, and are more likely to become productive, healthy, and participating members of society." So the Department of Education, headed by the minister here, needs to look at this in a very serious manner.

The whole issue of putting comprehensive action plans in place, performance targets and so on was handed to the minister through the *Education Act* review. All this public consultation did take place, and it was laid out. We need to have these in place. We need to have an action plan. We need to start looking forward and tracking how well we're doing in the Department of Education. Ultimately, it's the children in the end who are affected by this and society as a whole. They put those in place. They put those recommendations in place. If the minister would like to review some of those recommendations, he can look at them in the education reform project report. It's right at the end. They did include the recommendations of the *Education Act* review. It's in there.

I bring this up for a reason, Mr. Speaker. The *Education Act* review had this set out. The education reform was given direction as much as they could. They were ringing alarm bells, and it wasn't heard by the minister at all. So did the Auditor General. She rang it good and loud. Like I said before, the minister slept through it.

What it takes is recognizing that we have a problem here. If the minister doesn't recognize it, then we aren't going to move forward. Once he recognizes that he needs to fix it.

What does it take to do that? Well, it takes leadership to do it, and we're going question, again, the leadership of the minister, because he has been given all of the direction, the tools, to be successful here. It took commitment and hard work to do it and so far, in my view, the minister hasn't done that. It takes leadership and leadership right now is the problem.

My first question of this sitting was to ask the Premier to replace this minister with someone with some drive and interest in getting the job done right.

Now, these graduation rates are a result of this poor leadership. The minister needs to take on these challenges. There needs to be some design change here, Mr. Speaker, and the public has been saying it over and over. When they went through the *Education Act* review they told government this. When they went through the education reform project, through another extensive consultation, they told government this. Do you know, I thought for a moment there that the public had the interest of the minister when it came to governance, for example.

In this House the minister wanted to go and examine that model. But guess what? It was pulled off the table by the Pre-

mier and it is in letter form, signed by the minister, also, that they were not even going to look at that and examine that. The minister can check his files, his signature is on that. So, Mr. Speaker, that says a lot in itself. You see, there is a leadership problem here. We've got to take on these challenges.

We are urging this government to put these performance targets in place. We are urging them to develop comprehensive action plans. We are urging them like the alarm bells that went off when the Auditor General produced her report. I'm going to go through that a bit later also.

What we had instead here, in my view, was a minister who thought he knew better. And why do I say that? Because I see this minister micromanaging the department when the direction was: "Let's make a change, and let's put the decisions and have the direction of the administration of our schools into the hands of community people." Isn't that a nice thought? I mean, people have been talking about it. First Nation people have been talking about this since 1973, and before that.

Besides, this direction, in 1973, when it came from the Yukon Native Brotherhood, came from students. They gave that direction to the Yukon Native Brotherhood. That whole direction came through Council of Yukon First Nations and Council of Yukon First Nations to this date. These are the same things that are being talked about. I'm going to refer to them as I go through this.

I'm interested to hear what government has to say, by the way, on this motion. I'm sure they've got to agree with me and not take the opportunity to hijack this motion and change it significantly, to where it's not recognizable any more. I ask them not to do that and, really, agree with it.

The Auditor General says we should be doing that. The public has been saying we should do that, and we should. It just takes leadership. If the minister continues to micromanage, we won't get there.

We also know that even setting the targets alone won't solve the problem; we know that. Now we know that this system has been driven by the minister who is, in my view, over his head. Once again, he is taking the marching orders from the Premier who knows only one thing: that he will never allow Yukoners to have a real say in their children's education.

Mr. Speaker, when we talked about the education reform project, the *Education Act* — which, by the way, was mandatory to review every 10 years, but it hasn't happened under the Yukon Party government for seven years so far. We need to make amendments to the act. What the Yukon Party did was to raise expectations by bringing forward the education reform project.

It raised expectations. We're going to have a better system in place; things are going to turn around. What happened with this whole project? And this is the sad part: the Yukon Party basically shelved the education project because it had some major things in there that could change the system in the Yukon for the good, in our view. And that's putting the control into Yukoners' and parents' hands.

Now we said the Department of Education, the minister, needed to stop planning, reviewing, consulting with people on this whole issue. We've gone from *Education Act* review, un-

der the Yukon Party, to the education reform project, to New Horizons, and when we look at the budget speech for New Horizons, they talk about a multi-year plan for New Horizons. It'll go in multi-year stages; it won't happen right away.

We feel that the fix to this problem is to change the way in which governments direct the department. We feel that a system should be developed from the bottom up. That's what the governance model that was in the education reform project talked about. I can refer the minister to the page where it shows a diagram about how things would change. It would take away some powers from the minister. Maybe that's the problem here. If it is, the Yukon Party should just say it straight out.

The *Education Act* suggested under section 1(16) of the act that school boards be established and the education reform project recommended another model. The point is that we need to develop a system where Yukoners — all Yukoners — have a voice in determining what the education system for our children would look like. First Nation children are approximately 25 percent of the student population. They must be represented at the table.

That was recognized even in the recommendations of the *Education Act* review. It was recommendation 100, and it is about school boards and a proposed change: "That duties of school boards be changed to Boards of Education and read as follows, should the Board of Education model be instituted."

Now, I can go through the whole thing, Mr. Speaker, and there is quite a bit of it, if the minister hasn't gone through it himself. "116. (1) A Board of Education shall

"(a) select staff, including principals and teachers, for hiring, dismissal, discipline, transfer, promotion, and demotion subject to this act and any applicable collective agreement

"(b) provide educational programs, including locally developed courses, for its students as required by this act..."

This is one area that I know the minister could respond to because I know that some work was done by the department.

"(c) establish policies for the administration, management and operation of its schools

"(d) maintain, repair, furnish, and keep in good order all of its real and personal property

"(e) provide suitable and necessary equipment and supplies for schools operated by it, including locally approved instructional materials."

This is recommendation 100 in the *Education Act* review which is also in the back of the *Education Reform Project Final Report*. Right at the back there are recommendations.

I'm going to read another one because when I talk about leadership and the fact that the direction was already given to the minister, to the department, to the government — that should have been taken seriously.

The other recommendation is 120, and I could go through quite a few of them for the minister if he would like.

The way the act read was, "The *Education Act* allows for a school board in each community and several in Whitehorse.

"The establishment of a school board is currently optional and the school council or a community group must initiate the process." Now, the proposed change was to include language in

the *Education Act* that mandates up to three boards of education as governance structure.

This is the *Education Act* review recommendation as governance structures: specifically, a Yukon francophone Board of Education, Yukon Catholic separate Board of Education and Yukon public Board of Education — not that the education reform project agreed fully with this, but the concept was there. And the minister could have taken that and moved it forward, but did not.

Now, it says here — and we're going to come back to this time and time again. And the minister knows that this is important, too. Part of it is clarification: "One of the key themes of the *Education Act*, and a dominating principle during its development, is the importance of public participation. The Act was premised on the idea that school governance would move quite rapidly from school committees (the existing model at the time) through school councils to school boards."

It says here — and this is just a reminder that the *Education Act* review started in 2000 and was completed in 2004. The majority of it took place between 2002 and 2004. This was the *Education Act* review. It was not the amendments, just the review that happened. It says here that a new governance model for public schools in the Yukon is needed. I think it's becoming clear that all this direction was given to the minister and to this government, and they just didn't act upon it. As a result, we get a really damning report from the Auditor General of the Department of Education under this minister. It's awful. I can go through some of this for the minister just to remind him of what is not there and what is needed. I will do that.

Now, the education reform project report, which the minister must go through constantly to help him give direction — I hope he would be doing that; perhaps if he did, we would be in a different direction today. You have to remember, we have seven years of Yukon Party government here, and the Auditor General cited the years in which the department was examined, and all of it was under the Yukon Party's direction.

"A new education governance model is needed, one that will support lifelong learning. Any education governance structure has to be based on partner involvement and community empowerment." When the minister gets up to speak, I'd like to hear what his thoughts are on that line.

"Any discussion of governance that does not address these goals will fall short of the demands heard during initial consultations and previous other community consultations and reports."

This has come from the education reform project report. That direction was given. "In order to be effective and inclusive, the education system has to include a range of partners..." — we probably will hear this from the minister too — "...organizations and elected officials whose sole intent is to provide the best educational service possible." I have said this before, but I think the minister needs to hear this again and again and again: the new governance structure proposed in the education reform project is intended to be a "bottom-up, participatory model that is open to input from a broad range of groups and individuals. It will allow the educational system to be more effective, more inclusive and more responsive to the

concerns of all its partners, including First Nation communities."

There was a document called *Indian Control of Indian Education* in 1972. It states, "The premise of First Nation people reclaiming the 'right to direct education,' of their children." — it goes that far back. "This reflects two well-recognized educational principles: parental responsibility and local control of education" — local control of education.

I think it is the public that should set the direction for the department. All following documents right up to the education reform project recognize that. It was shelved and now the minister is taking on this New Horizons project to only implement some of the recommendations from the education reform project.

Let me continue. The report further states that, "if integration for Indians is to have any positive meaning, it must be related to the opportunity for parental participation in the educational decision-making process." That is on page 7 of that document.

"The landmark document *Together Today for Our Children Tomorrow* (Yukon Native Brotherhood 1973) clearly delineated the position of Yukon First Nations respecting education." And it says this — and this is really important too — "We do not want separate schools for Indians, but, unless the present ones are going to meet our need, we will be forced to take another look at separate Indian schools." This was way back in 1973. Again, this direction that was given at the time was given by students to the Yukon Native Brotherhood. I happen to know one of those students who gave some of this direction.

It was important to know. Tough times were felt back then.

Will this minister act upon that? I'm sure that we're going to have some fancy words said.

Today, the call for a separate First Nation school is as big and as important as it was some 34 years ago. The same concerns, the same issues were raised with members of the current education reform project team during the preconsultation meetings and in discussions with First Nation members and leaders.

There are several reasons for this. The minister must wonder, well, why am I going on and on and on about this? Well, you know, we've been asking questions of the minister in this House about the very poor percentage rates of First Nation graduates in the territory — the fact that this government does not track the students after they leave high school. The Auditor General said that; I don't know if the minister agrees with it or not, and we'll probably hear reasons other than that.

Like I said, there are reasons why First Nations are saying this — the level of frustration that First Nation people have about the education system in general.

The minister and his own department have produced a report stating that this is what the graduation rates are, when the communities and the First Nations know that this is not the case. It is not the case, and that is frustrating. When the numbers are that low, it means that the system is failing them. It takes leadership to get out of that and put us back at least to the Canadian average, which has graduation rates of 75 percent. Even the non-native population has not reached that here in the

territory. We are falling behind. We are last when compared to all the provinces. We are last.

When we bring up these serious questions in this House, it should not be taken lightly by the minister. Some seriousness needs to be put into it and into finding ways to move ahead. That's why we brought this motion forward. We think it's important for the government to do this. It shouldn't be a hard one to follow. Every other department puts plans in place and they're measured against that on how well they've done. We haven't done this in Education.

I wanted to just go on about the reasons why the First Nations are calling for perhaps going their own way. Definitely what we've been raising in this House is one reason why — the disparity between the First Nation and non-First Nation student achievements. We need to find new ways of doing things to get those marks up, to get the percentage higher of our students graduating.

The lack of a culturally relevant curriculum — I know there is a movement in the department on this front. It might be named a little differently, but they call it “locally developed curriculum” and a lot of it has First Nation culture behind it. Some schools are moving ahead and a lot of people like them.

There are some really good ones that are being used, and could be used in the future, but we need to establish it in how we do things here in the territory. After all, First Nations are at least 25 percent of the population. And another reason why they're putting this forward is “the lack of opportunity for meaningful involvement in the delivery of an educational program”...“the perceived and actual systemic barriers within the education system,” and “the slow pace of progress toward acceptable measures of control.”

You go back to all the paperwork that was done through the education reform project — it could have been written right out of there.

Now I know that First Nations have issued numerous other studies, recommendations and demands related to the need for a governance structure that respects the fundamental right of First Nations, and the right to be consulted and involved in educational decisions that affect them. They've put that out; they've asked them. They want the minister to hear it.

The real difficult part of this whole thing is that we can spend millions of dollars on this study — the education reform project — and what the Premier did was a shame. He said that governance was not even on the table for discussion. When that happened, the minister just falls in line with the Premier. He took all that hard work and moved it away. Now, how does the Yukon Party government get around that? Do we try to implement some of the governance structure somehow? Can we develop a new strategy — maybe New Horizons? New Horizons has taken some of the recommendations from the education reform project and tried to implement it and, by the way, governance is not part of that. It is a recommendation, but it's not a recommendation that has been taken forward by New Horizons.

Now, is the minister is thinking, well, why has this really been put forward? Who really talked and gave direction with this education reform project? It was all Yukoners, and the de-

sire for a new educational governance structure was not limited to First Nations.

The authors of the 1990 *Education Act* and the legislatures of the day recognized the need for legislation that would allow for significant input by parents, communities and partners into decisions that affect Yukon students. That was 1990 when the *Education Act* was developed.

Without this recognition, legislation would not be as forward-thinking as it is. Here are some interesting parts for those who are interested in this. When the current *Education Act* was introduced in 1990, it was hailed by many out there as a progressive piece of legislation, since it set the stage for grassroots community involvement. This was in 1990.

An example of this can be found in the publication *Understanding Canadian Schools: An Introduction to Educational Administration*, and I will quote from that: “The Yukon, with the passing of the 1990 *Education Act*, has perhaps gone further than any other jurisdiction to decentralize and democratize its educational system, and to establish a broad base for the local participation in, and control over, schools”

That was quite the statement back then, and when people do talk about how progressive that was, how involved that was for the general public to be involved in our education system, it was quite the event.

“In the document *Renewing the Partnership: Draft Recommendations (Education Act Review 2001)* the *Education Act* Review Committee stated that a new governance model for public schools in the Yukon was needed...” I think I referred to that a few times. It's on pages 70 and 71.

“Much of the *Education Act* is based on the concept of school board governance, although after nearly 20 years only one small board exists.”

The current government model does not adequately provide for a true partnership with the people it affects.

Now, although it was forward-looking and progressive, parents still feel powerless in the current governance model. The school council structure has not provided an adequate level of involvement for them in shaping the kind of school they want for their children. I think we hear that every time we go to communities and talk with students and parents.

First Nation people are frustrated because their children are less successful in school than non-First Nation students. They want to be a part of the decision-making process to make sure that their children will do better. Now, First Nation parents are also not satisfied with the curriculum.

The partnership that was envisioned in the creation of the *Education Act* has really not survived implementation. The concept of a school board in every community and several boards in Whitehorse has failed to meet the test of public interest. Through the *Education Act* review and the education reform project, that has been said over and over again.

During 2002 to 2004, when the *Education Act* review was happening, “it became apparent that there was a general perception that school councils lack authority and are subservient to the school's administration and the Department of Education. Because of this perception, many people were reluctant to involve themselves in school councils.” Not that it necessarily

would have been that way, but that was the perception that people had.

As to policy development, “Locally elected school boards, councils and committees should be involved in the development and approval of all public school policies. They should also assume responsibility for the development and approval of local school policies in the following areas: policies and procedures regarding attendance and truancy; policies and procedures regarding students’ attendance during extreme weather conditions; policy and procedures regarding a student code of behaviour and student suspension and expulsion; community use of school buildings and equipment; length of school day, lunch break, and recesses, in keeping with the provisions of the *Education Act* and its requirements” — of course.

“Provisions for religious instruction for students.” These are what they feel they should be involved with.

“Implementation of new programs and activities; development and/or review of all policies, guidelines or procedures; hours of instruction for aboriginal languages; field trip participant selection and adherence to curriculum; and other areas as agreed to through discussions with the Department of Education or with the Minister of Education through Section 9 of the *Education Act*.”

Mr. Speaker, it becomes really frustrating to learn where we have headed over the last number of years — how successful we have been in producing graduates from our schools.

If we were and we had long-term strategic plans in place there would be no need to bring forward a motion like this at all. The minister may say that they are working on it and they are developing a plan; that we will establish performance targets for our students and for these major student subgroups. When I’m talking about subgroups, I’m talking about First Nation students, for example, or develop these action plans. He may say that or the minister may talk about New Horizons.

The thing is, when you go back to the community and you talk to parents out there, right now, with all of this brought forward by the Auditor General and the questions being asked in this House, they are frustrated to know that government is not willing to take these steps, as it was recommended to them by the Auditor General. Instead, when these strong words do come out, it’s dismissed by the government. We’ve seen it several times when the Auditor General brings a report back that is a bit damning of government; it ends up — it’s only her opinion.

It’s unfortunate that we have gone to that. I don’t know if I really know of any other government that would even go down that road. Why not take on the challenge of the recommendations that were produced by the Auditor General? Why not do that?

Could the minister answer this, when it comes to the gap in First Nation graduates versus non-First Nation graduates: why is there one? Why is there a gap there? I’d like to hear what the minister has to say about that and what could we do about it.

What could we do about that gap? Can we measure it somehow, could we put a plan in place to try to close this gap and could we focus on doing better in the Yukon? Can we do that? Can the minister do that? Can he give that direction? It’s

not about our educators and it’s not about the administration of the school. Right now, they work with what they have with the tools they have. It is seeking direction from the minister. There is a promise year after year of some changes to the *Education Act* and making improvements was what people wanted, and they still haven’t got it.

Now, we know that change needs to happen in the classroom. We know that the employer must provide ongoing PD. When a worker needs to take an upgrade on, say, a new piece of equipment, he or she is not expected to travel out of the territory and leave their families behind, on their own time, secure a place at their own expense and pay for their training at their own expense.

Why should teachers do that here in the Yukon?

I asked the minister what, in his view, a graduation certificate means. The reality is that many of our graduates, when they leave high school and enter post-secondary education — whether here in the territory, Alberta, B.C. or wherever they go — they are constantly faced with the fact that they need to take some upgrading. Even those students who seem to have done well in school have been faced with this.

In Yukon College, sometimes even with a graduation certificate, you still had to take developmental studies, which is one that you take before college prep, with a high school diploma in your hand. That tells me that the system that we have here today is failing people. Now, this doesn’t happen to all students; I realize that. But it’s great for those who can continue on and do not have to worry about whether or not they meet the requirements because what they were taught, and the fact that they were given a diploma wasn’t good enough.

That is a real, real frustration out there with parents. They want their kids to succeed. Doesn’t the government want them to succeed? And if there is a problem, fix it. For those who are struggling through that system, fix it.

We do not need more planning, or planning a plan, and going on and doing reviews. I say that because I was so frustrated with the minister, after the raised expectations with the education reform project — like it was going to go ahead, and we were going to complete this thing, and we were going to make things better for the Yukon, we went ahead yet another step.

I wouldn’t say “forward” or anything — but it was another step. Without implementing and putting in place this direction by the general public, we don’t move ahead as fast as we would like to.

If that was questioned by the minister, I would say, why are we the last when it comes to graduation rates when compared to the rest of the provinces across Canada? The provinces across —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Mr. Fairclough: No, I said “provinces” — we’re last in place.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Mr. Fairclough: The minister is questioning how we compare to the other two territories but we should not be — our percentage of graduates should not be any less than what is being produced in the provinces.

I think the average rate is about 75 percent — across Canada, and some of them are quite a bit higher than that.

Then I go back to this report that the minister produced through the Department of Education and we have a 40-percent graduation rate for First Nation students, as identified by the Auditor General, but the minister in his report said that it was 89 percent.

It is because they use these kinds of words: students with potential to graduate. So anyone who is looking and reading the report from the Department of Education would think, “Wow, we’re doing well.” But when you dig into it, then you see where the problem might be.

The Auditor General says they examined whether the department plans and delivers its programs in a way that helps Yukon children achieve success in elementary and secondary school and make a successful transition to further education. I also read out why the Auditor General, at least — and most of the public and we here — feel this is important. I did say that education is vital to the progress of both individuals and the Yukon as a whole. Well-educated citizens are better able to meet the demands of a modern economy and are more likely to become productive, healthy and participating members of society.

I know the members can’t disagree with that; they can’t disagree. If this is really important, then this would move right up on the priority list of the Yukon Party government.

Here’s what the Auditor General said, what we found: “The Department does not regularly analyze relevant data to identify, report, and address critical gaps in student performance.”

And it says here, “For example, data from Statistics Canada shows that for the period ended 2005–06, Yukon had the third lowest five-year average graduation rate in Canada, and the Department’s own data indicates there is a large gap in graduation rates between First Nations students and other Yukon students. The Department has developed no comprehensive action plans, including targets, to address the underlying causes.”

They haven’t done that; they haven’t developed it. That is what the Auditor General is saying. So we bring forward a motion asking for the establishment of performance targets for Yukon students. We ask to develop a comprehensive plan. The Auditor General recognized this.

Here’s another one, and this one must ring in the minister’s ears day after day, because these are words put on paper by someone who is pretty respected out there in the Canadian public: “The department is unable to demonstrate that it successfully prepares students to make an effective transition from high school to post-secondary education, which includes training in trades.”

I asked in the motion for an action plan — a comprehensive action plan. I asked that the department — this government — set targets for students overall. I asked them for that. Who else identified this? The Auditor General: “The department has neither a human resource plan nor a staffing needs profile in place, even though student enrolment has declined 8

percent over the past five years while the number of teachers increased by 4 percent...”

Here’s another one: “The Department has no long-term master plan to ensure that it is managing school facilities effectively and preparing for significant challenges, such as the number of schools that are aging and in need of repair.” There are no plans in place for that.

Here’s another one: “The Department does not have a long-term strategic plan for managing challenges such as aging schools and declining enrolment... Nor does it have a risk-management plan to formally identify each risk that could impede its achievement of objectives — for example, demographic change and the impact of land claims settlements — and how the Department plans to manage the risk.”

Despite what the minister might say on this, his own department — and even the college — agrees with the Auditor General’s recommendations. They agree with it.

We talked about the bottom-up approach in this governance model. The bottom-up approach and community involvement is what we would like to see. It says here, “It is important to note that the Yukon Department of Education has more direct control over elements of education than departments of Education in other provinces have.”

Well, I think I know some of the reasons why. There are a lot of school boards in other provinces, but we talk about change here. We know that it is a top-down system. The minister is on top, and we’d like to see a change to a bottom-up approach. That is what the public has said in the past and how they would like to achieve that.

Somewhere in my books here — there’s so much to look at here.

I know the minister’s going to say, “Well, you know, the government and the Council of Yukon First Nations have jointly created the education reform project.” Well, in February 2008, after three years of consultation, the education reform project produced a report, like we said in the House earlier, which covered some 35 issues and 207 recommendations. That’s a lot of direction for a government.. They wanted some change, and in consultation with department officials, the Auditor General did say that the department was trying to follow through on some of the recommendations through New Horizons. That was noted in there.

It’s a frustrating issue coming from a small community. Here’s another one put forward by the Auditor General: “We expected the Department to be able to identify performance indicators and measure performance results for both Yukon students as a whole and for major student sub-groups, such as First Nations students”. That is what they expected to happen.

If we had a higher graduation rate out of high school and more students were able to access post-secondary education, perhaps this would be reflected in the percentage of aboriginal employees in the Yukon government. It might be reflected there. Right now, in Yukon, First Nations are just over 25 percent of the population. That should be reflected by government employees. What we have there is about 14 percent. There is lots of climbing to do. There are lots of directions this government could take to make things better.

Now, there are lots of interesting things in regard to the testing results. I don't really want to go through that. I know that section 27 from the Auditor General's audit of the Department of Education clearly states the graduation rates.

Earlier the Leader of the Official Opposition identified the minister who actually set targets out there and said he would resign if he couldn't meet them. We are asking this minister to set some targets. We're not even asking him to resign — just to set them and put them out there — not to resign if he doesn't reach it, but these could be his own words. We are asking him to resign because of the poor performance.

It says here, "In addition, the Department does not set a target graduation rate for Yukon students as a whole or for significant sub-groups, such as First Nations students."

The department doesn't do that. So how could you say you achieved your goal, if you can't set these target rates? This is what the motion we put before us today is asking this minister to do, and this government to do.

Frustrating, isn't it? This goes on year after year, seven years under the Yukon Party government.

It says here, "For example" — it's under 28 — "the graduation rates for other relevant jurisdictions in Canada could be used to establish a target graduation rate for Yukon." It says Canada has a 75 percent five-year average graduation rate, while Yukon is at 63 percent. It says that's the third lowest in Canada, and if the minister wants, we're ahead of the Northwest Territories and Nunavut. But we are compared to Alberta quite often, and Alberta is not all that well, either. It's at 67 percent, where New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island is at 83 percent. We're at 63 percent. This is the average — native and non-native graduates — 63 percent.

Why can't the minister just say, "We're going to do that. We're going to set these targets. We're going to put it in place. We're going to make some improvements here." It hasn't come from the minister yet today. Maybe some new direction by the Premier will be reflected in the minister's words.

I want to read this one to the Minister of Education. These are words that will never go away, and he probably thinks about night after night after night. It's the last word of that paragraph. It's paragraph 31 in the Auditor General's report. Listen to this — and I brought it up before because this is the book I was referring to.

This is the book I was referring to. It's called *Annual Report, 2007-08 Academic Year*. It's the Department of Education's annual report. This is what the Auditor General said about that report. She's a pretty important person here, Mr. Speaker.

"We noted that the graduation rates published in the Department's Annual Report are expressed as percentages of the potential to graduate." I think I mentioned this. That's what they use: the potential to graduate. "We calculated a five-year average potential to graduate based on the data in the Department's Annual Report. This produced a five-year graduation average of 92 percent for Yukon students as a whole and 89 percent for First Nations students. This is significantly higher than the actual graduation rates based on data in the Department's Student Information Management System (58 percent

for Yukon students as a whole..." — 58 percent, says the Auditor General — "...and 40 percent for First Nations students), making the rates published in the Department's Annual Report misleading." And they are.

As a parent, you pick this up and you think all is going well by reading these percentages — that all is going well. "...the Department does not have an established basis for assessing progress." Now it says here that "...the Department follows the BC Ministry of Education policy, which states that, in order to graduate, students are required to write five standardized BCPE tests: Language Arts 10, Science 10, Math 10, Language Arts 12, and either Social Studies 11 or Social Studies 12. Because those who do not write these required exams cannot receive a graduation diploma..."

I don't know if I need to go on too much further on this. I'd like to hear what the members opposite have to say on this.

Here's one that I had brought up before, and I will bring it back to the minister's attention. It is section 48 of the Auditor General's report: "Coordination with Yukon College. While the Department does not track students after they have left the public school system, we found that, in 2006-07, according to the College's data, 32 percent of full-time Yukon College students were registered in Developmental Studies. Students register in Developmental Studies if they: lack basic literacy and numeracy skills ..." I think the Minister of Education might understand why I ask the question today. They may be registered if they: "... did not complete high school; or need to upgrade their education to access post-secondary education and training." I asked the minister in the motion to establish some performance targets and to develop an action plan.

In all of the responses, I didn't hear him say that they are trying to work things out even with Yukon College. The recommendation from the Auditor General was that, "The Department of Education needs to coordinate their efforts with Yukon College to identify and, to the extent possible, address the root causes that lead to a lack of student readiness for the shift between high school and post-secondary education."

They need to do that. Let's set some targets. Let this be part of the performance targets — work with the college. Put together an action plan.

I know that the programs at the college have changed — the name of it anyway. "Yukon College should report on the progress of the students registered in its Developmental Studies program to help assess the program's success."

In the recommendations they say that the department should develop a comprehensive strategy for managing community training funds.

It goes on and on and on.

I want to finish up soon, but I wanted to bring the issue of governance to the minister's attention again. In the education reform project report, on page 1.11, it talks about the proposed structure. It says this — and maybe this is proving my point, "The existing education system is perceived as hierarchical and resistant to community input. The governance structure proposed here ... would allow government to become more responsive to the wishes of the larger educational community. The structure would have the following characteristics: facili-

tating a broad community input in education; providing First Nations representation; shifting many decisions away from the Department of Education.”

Is the minister resistant to that proposed structure — that that’s what it would do? It says right on the bottom of this education reform project report, on page 1.11, “The governance structure proposed here is intended to build a more collaborative relationship among education partners, broaden participation in the education system and increase First Nations involvement. It is designed to better meet the needs of students and to make educational decision-making more transparent and more participatory.” That’s what it says.

And page 1.13 of that report shows the structure. And I’m not sure of the later models — whether they have changed that particular structure. So, what’s wrong with that?

What is wrong with putting the decisions into the hands of Yukoners, parents and communities? It’s a different kind of system, that’s what it is.

I wanted to read another one to the minister here; I just have to find it. Here’s part of the problem when you don’t have targets and plans in place. This is under section 80, page 21: “Although school plans are prepared annually, we found that the Department reviews the plans on an ad hoc basis. It did not review any school plans in the 2007–08 fiscal year and, in the 2006–07 fiscal year, it reviewed only 8 of the 28 school plans that were prepared. The Department provides limited feedback to schools, school boards, and school councils.”

I’m going to finish up and leave it to the minister to respond to this motion. I wanted to finish up with some of the conclusions of the Auditor General. I think these are the ones that ring loudly out there in the general public. “The Yukon Department of Education could not demonstrate to us that it effectively delivers public school programs to Yukon children. We found that while the Department has established two key performance indicators and in some cases has measured and reported gaps in performance, they do not specify how large a gap in performance must be to warrant corrective action. We also found that, in most cases, they have not adequately analyzed root causes, prepared action plans, or taken corrective measures to help close the gaps.”

Those are the findings of the Auditor General with the help of the department. With all of this, I would think that the Yukon Party government would not have any reason not to support the motion.

I’ve said these ones before but I’ll just sum it up and read out, under clause 110 of the Auditor General’s report, that the department does not track students’ progress after they leave the public school system to determine whether its transition programs and supports are successful. Do you see why we’re getting at all of this? I think it’s sinking in; I think the Yukon Party is understanding this.

If we don’t track them, how can we say our programs and the support we gave our students in high school are successful?

“As a result, the Department cannot demonstrate that it successfully prepares young adults to pursue further education.” Interesting, isn’t it? “The Department does not incorporate adequate strategic planning in delivering education.”

When I read this, sometimes I just couldn’t believe the findings of the Auditor General. They’re powerful.

Now if the minister is not coming out and making a ministerial statement, saying that this is what he and the department are going to be doing over the next year or two years, then we will be forced to come to the Legislature with motions to try and direct government to do that. It is very difficult to get these things done. I am hoping that the minister does not change this motion to make it read differently and scoot away from the intent of the motion.

It says, “The Department does not incorporate adequate strategic planning in delivering education. It does not have a long-term strategic plan or formal integrated risk management process in place ... The Department does not have a long-term master plan in place to ensure it is effectively managing school facilities ... We found that the Department has neither a comprehensive human resources plan nor a staffing needs profile in place”. So the question: is there a lot of work to do here? Do we need to drive up the percentage rates in the Yukon Territory?

Of course, the answer is yes, to both of them. We’ve got a lot of work here. The minister has a lot of work here, and I’m hoping that the Premier doesn’t hold him back on this, because Yukon and the public are looking for leadership in this minister. They’re looking for that, and if the minister wants to demonstrate that he has leadership, and can lead and make changes in the Department of Education, then he’s going to have to come up with some plans to follow through with the recommendations of the Auditor General, and he’s going to have to bring that percentage of graduation rates up from where it is. He’s going to have to get tough in caucus and in Cabinet about that, because I don’t believe that he had full control over this matter; otherwise, I think we would have gone ahead, because he was part of the education reform project team and has put his name to letters stating that these are some of the things that they are going to do.

So, Mr. Speaker, I’m going to wrap this up and ask that the government supports this and does not make changes to this motion. Let’s go forward. It can’t be that hard for the minister to give that direction to say, yes, let’s have some performance targets for Yukon students overall and let’s develop a comprehensive action plan to reach these targets. Others have done it. Why can’t the minister? Across Canada they’ve done it. Why can’t the minister? Why can’t this government, too? Let’s put together some performance targets and let’s put together an action plan to reach these targets.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Mr. Rouble: It’s an honour and a pleasure to rise here today on private members’ day so that we can continue the history of productive work in this Assembly. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the motion that has been brought forward by the member representing the Liberal Party.

The debate today was very interesting and engaging, and I appreciate his comments regarding establishing performance targets for Yukon students overall, to the extent possible for

each major sub-group, and developing comprehensive action plans to reach those targets.

Also, the member opposite's comments seemed to be far ranging on many aspects of education. I look forward to other opportunities in the future, where we can debate some of the specific initiatives that he has identified. For example, if the member opposite wishes the government to adopt the governance model brought forward in the education reform document, I would urge him to table a motion, calling on the government to do that.

That would clearly demonstrate, even more than the member opposite's comments and his leader's comments, their support for that governance model. It's important to hear what their position on that actually is.

Also, it was very interesting to hear some of the debate, which sounded an awful lot like the hearing that the Public Accounts Committee had regarding this report from the Auditor General, which the member opposite referred to several times. It's unfortunate that he did not participate or, I believe, attend that hearing, where he would have heard many of the responses to the issues that he brought forward.

Also, Mr. Speaker, it would have been appropriate, too, for the members of the Liberal Party to have shared with the member opposite a copy of the implementation plan that the Department of Education tabled during that hearing, which was a response to the issues and details how these items will be acted upon.

Mr. Speaker, the member opposite has called for an action for which the government has already committed itself.

I guess we can continue on with this debate and if the members opposite would additionally, in the future, like to call us to do something that we've already committed to doing, well then I'm sure we can accommodate them in those debates as well.

Mr. Speaker, I appreciate that the member opposite had a significant amount of latitude in his discussion, and I hope that you will grant me the same bit of room to have a full discussion regarding education while being specific to the motion at hand.

Mr. Speaker, at a recent New Horizons summit, our partners and stakeholders in education attended a meeting here in Whitehorse a couple of weeks ago. During the meeting we held two different panel discussions. One was involving youth currently in our education system and another one, Mr. Speaker, was including representatives from some of our stakeholder and partner organizations.

These included representation from groups such as teachers, the Catholic community, the francophone community, Yukon First Nation government representation and post-secondary education.

The topic of their panel was, what is the purpose of education? After hearing their thoughts and opinions, it was very interesting to hear the different comments from all of them. During that, I was reminded of two very important questions in education. One is something I am sure every parent has heard and the other, I'm sure, is one that we as legislators have heard from individuals on the street. The first one, Mr. Speaker, is that typical six- or nine- or eight- or 12-year-old who says,

"Why do I have to go to school?" The other one is from that more aggressive taxpayer on the street who stops us and says, "Well, I don't have kids in school, why do I have to pay for an education system?" Those are two fundamental questions in education. Why do I have to go to school and why do we need to pay for a public education system?

When I asked my mother the question: why do I have to go to school? — I must confess I repeatedly asked that question — she often reminded me that I needed to go to school so that I could grow up and lead a meaningful life. I would stop her and say, "What does that mean, to lead a meaningful life? She would say, "Well, you need to figure out what that means for you. You need to learn how to communicate, how to think, how to work with others, how to comprehend information, how to analyze it, how to share it with other people, and you need to find out what's important for you so you can lead a satisfying life, so you can find your own path."

Mr. Speaker, as we all know, different people are different and we will have different goals and expectations throughout our lives and careers.

The other responsibility of education is more on a macro level, and that is the overall purpose of education, the necessity of education, for the whole community. We need to develop students and young people in our society who grow up to have the skills, competencies, characteristics, and values that they need to participate in our community, our democracy, economy, and social and cultural aspects as well.

We have a joint responsibility as all members of society to work together to develop our young people. Mr. Speaker, we need people in our community who have a diverse background of skills and capabilities. When we talk about what type of employment training is needed in the territory, I often refer people to the "yellow pages of opportunity". When one opens the Yellow Pages in the Yukon and sees the different employers who are out there — I should also include the blue pages in this — but that's what we need; we need people with the skills, backgrounds and capabilities of all of those functions, whether they be carpenters or plumbers or body-shop operators, or people working in restaurants — you name it, Mr. Speaker, the list goes on. It's as extensive as the Yellow Pages.

We also have a responsibility to our young people to develop them to grow up to be fine, upstanding citizens in our community who participate fully in our community and in our democratic process. Mr. Speaker, we certainly have a large responsibility, and a strong moral purpose in education, and it is a very broad and extensive one.

Now I should also note, Mr. Speaker, that the education system is not solely and 100-percent responsible for teaching every child everything he or she ever needs to know ever. Students and our children will learn from their parents, their family, their community and yes, from the television, and yes, from life on the streets. There are other aspects in our society that have a role in teaching them, whether that's a coach, a social group leader or a religious or cultural leader in their community as well. We all have a variety of different roles to play. Students will continue to learn from a variety of different methods.

As well, Mr. Speaker, we all recognize that learning is not something that only happens between the hours of 9:00 in the morning and 3:30 in the afternoon. No, it continues all day, and it continues throughout our whole lifetime.

The Department of Education and educators in the Yukon recognize the significant responsibility and recognize the desires and the wishes of our community, and Yukon's educators are up to this challenge. They are up to the challenge of working with all of Yukon youth in order to help them become the best that they can be.

We will also call upon our other partners in the development of Yukon students, families, extended families, community groups, governments and not-for-profit organizations. As we're always reminded, it does take a community to raise a child, and other organizations play a significant role in an individual's development.

Now, we recognize that there are some incredible successes in Yukon's education system. Currently, we have over 1,000 students receiving the Yukon student grant to attend over 110 different post-secondary institutions across Canada. That's in addition to the students going to Yukon College. But they also have a tendency to go to many of the centres of excellence for their field of study across North America, and that's a great characteristic.

I think that Yukon students, if they're going to go on to a field of study, will often choose the best place for them to go, and that's exciting. What's even more exciting for me is seeing those young people come back to our community to continue to call it home, and we're seeing that happen more and more.

We also know that we have many other successes in education. Recently, Statistics Canada released its analysis on post-secondary education participation. It found, Mr. Speaker, that over half of Yukon's population over 15 had a post-secondary accreditation of some form in 2006 — the highest such proportion in Canada.

That is a great statistic too. Part of that means, Mr. Speaker, that many students are making use of Yukon College, whether it is here in Whitehorse or in our communities or taking additional programs through other jurisdictions or from distance learning. That is a great statistic. Yes, Mr. Speaker, that is influenced by the people who chose to move to Yukon and call it home, but it also speaks well for Yukon students who continue on with lifelong learning and continue their post-secondary education.

Mr. Speaker, another statistic that I would like to share with the members opposite is the numbers in our apprentice programs right now. Members are quite aware of the numerous red seal and apprentice programs that are offered here in Yukon or are assisted by the advanced education branch so students can take their programs and training Outside.

Currently, Mr. Speaker, we have 440 Yukoners enrolled in apprentice programs. That is the highest number ever. Mr. Speaker, 20 percent of those are First Nation people and 10 percent of those are women. Are those numbers high enough? No, they are not, but they are the highest ever for rates of participation. We are seeing some significant increases in post-secondary education participation, especially with apprentice-

ships. We are seeing greater involvement by people of First Nation ancestry in these programs and we are also seeing ever-increasing participation by women in non-traditional occupations. These are some of the successes that we are seeing in our education system.

It isn't all about academics either or preparing people for the labour force. Mr. Speaker, we have to recognize that, well, we had two Olympians from the Yukon. For a jurisdiction of our size to have that kind of representation is terrific. Coming up at this year's international skills competition where Canada is sending a team of five to compete against the best from other countries around the world, there will be one Yukoner representing Canada. It was with no small amount of joy that in a recent Canadian Council of Ministers of Education conference, I asked around the table, "Which jurisdiction is sending people to the international skills competition. Who has some of the best apprentices in Canada? Who other than Ontario and Quebec are sending people?"

Everyone just looked around and said, "Not me, not me."

I was very proud to say that Yukon was sending a participant to the international skills competition. We also know we did very well at the recent Canadian Skills Competition. This is due in part to the dedication of many of our teachers in our programs, and organizations like Skills Canada Yukon. The work that Dan and his crew do there is incredible with skills groups throughout the territory.

While I'm mentioning groups, I should also mention YWITT, Yukon Women in Trades and Technology. They do a great job of encouraging girls and young women to be involved in non-traditional trades, whether they're trades or now in technology. There was a recent workshop done for young ladies that made young women more aware of careers in science, technology, mathematics and engineering, and was very well-received by young ladies at the conference at the Westmark — excuse me, the Gold Rush; I'm corrected by the Member for Mount Lorne who was also in attendance.

But it's great to see that those are some of the opportunities out there.

When I also look at the successes in Yukon, I look not just at employment — which is at a very low level here in the territory — but also at the diversification of the economy. We have over 50 professional musicians who have produced a CD in the last five years. What a great indicator of success for our arts community. There are 50 professional musicians who have produced a professional CD in the last five years. I think that number is too low. We all know about the professional artists and performers also in our community. Education is more than just preparing people to do well on a calculus exam; it's about preparing people for a quality of life and preparing people to respond to needs and concerns in our community.

That being said, Mr. Speaker, we also know that we have some other challenges at the other end of the spectrum. We know that students are disengaging from high school, or even earlier, far too often. That is a very troublesome reality in our community.

Mr. Speaker, we know that there are a variety of reasons for that, and they are as individual as the individuals them-

selves. What we can do, Mr. Speaker, is, number one, try not to let that happen in the first place, by engaging with them at a very early age and overcoming educational challenges that they might have as early as possible; by creating an engaging curriculum, so that it keeps them interested and responds to their individual learning styles, one that involves their community and their culture to further keep them engaged and wanting to come to school; to work with the community to ensure that the timetable for school, and the time when school is operating, fits with the needs in the community. Our different school councils already have that ability to be flexible with that.

We've also seen adaptations in our education system such as the Teen Parent Centre, to address issues where those students in school are having children, and to help them stay in school to continue their education. Also, we've seen programs to help re-engage students, to bring them back into school once they've left — programs like the Individual Learning Centre, which does a great job of helping students that, for whatever reason — and there's a multitude of them — have left our high school system, re-engaged and finished off their high school diploma.

Mr. Speaker, the challenges that students face are as different and diverse as the individuals themselves and that is where we have to make the difference — with each and every individual student.

Mr. Speaker, upon taking office in 2002, we recognized that there were significant challenges in education, especially considering the turmoil left in this system after the problems with the previous Liberal government and their *Education Act* review. Mr. Speaker, the process of reviewing the legislation, as was required by the current *Education Act*, had been started by the NDP government even earlier. They had some success with their conversations in education discussion groups. I think these were a good mechanism for bringing parents and people concerned about education — our partners and stakeholders together to address issues in education.

It became apparent during the *Education Act* review when they received over 7,000 comments from thousands of Yukoners that there were issues other than those pertaining to the act that were a concern to people.

The majority of the concerns brought forward did not have to do with the act itself, but were broader to education. And, as someone who has chaired a successful review of legislation, I fully appreciate the challenge of separating legislative issues from non-legislative issues.

What this told us was that there were other challenges in our current education system, rather than those specifically to do with the legislation. We currently have a very enabling *Education Act*, but there were literally thousands of other concerns. The member opposite talked about some of the enabling components of our legislation now — those being the powers of the school council, the ability of a school board to form, the variety of different structures that could have been created in there, but specifically it's very enabling about the role of a school council.

I should note that the member opposite commented that it was expected to be a quick transition from school committees

to school councils. For members opposite, I will make them aware that the Kluane School Committee has formally changed now to become Kluane Lake School Council.

Again, I applaud that organization for taking the next step in community governance by becoming a school council. The Department of Education is very much looking forward to working with them in order to address their issues in their school.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we recognize that these issues needed to be addressed. The Yukon Party went to work on addressing these needs. The Education minister of the day met with every school council in the territory, had discussions with them, conducted a community needs assessment and responded to those needs. Members opposite will remember that there was a \$1-million budget for that, where we were able to go out and address many of the issues that had been of long-standing concern to some of these school councils and to address some of the needs right there in their community. It was also an opportunity for the minister to discuss with them how additional issues in education could be addressed.

We then started the education reform initiative with the goal of improving the educational outcomes of Yukoners, especially those of First Nation ancestry. Mr. Speaker, this was done in partnership with the Council of Yukon First Nations. In November of 2006, when I became the Minister of Education, we continued the project. The Chair of the Chiefs Committee on Education and the Chief of the Liard First Nation and I committed ourselves to working together to provide a direction to the education reform team.

Then, Mr. Speaker, in early 2008, due to the hard work of the education reform team, they presented us with their final report, which was presented to the public. There were many good initiatives brought forward in the education reform document. In fact, I believe the member opposite used the number of 208 as the number of recommendations that were in there. I remember one day very early on after it had been presented, I gave the document to someone interested in the education system and they said to me, "Do you really expect me to read this whole thing?" because it is a significant document that is about two and one-half centimetres in thickness and is not what one would call a "light read."

So we knew that there would be some challenges involved in making everyone aware of all of the issues in going through it. However, at that time, the two chiefs and I were very committed to going forward and seeing the issues and concerns brought forward addressed. We sat down with our respective organizations — with the Department of Education, with the Council of Yukon First Nations — and had our officials go to work on it.

They said that we could break this into themes and we can look at implementation plans and we can look at how we can continue to work together and involve our partners in education in addressing these issues. That, Mr. Speaker, is one of the key things that was demonstrated in the education reform document. People want to have additional involvement in the process and the decision making. It wasn't expected to be, "Here's the document. Adopt everything and it will all be rosy." No,

Mr. Speaker, one of the key recommendations is that we needed to continue to involve Yukoners in decisions regarding Yukon's education system.

Mr. Speaker, the working group then looked at the themes — these being curriculum, professional growth, collaboration, lifelong learning, information and assessment systems, and First Nation culture and language. We started to work together on our implementation of this.

Mr. Speaker, New Horizons is not a new process. New Horizons is the implementation of education reform. New Horizons is the continued dedication of the Government of Yukon and the Council of Yukon First Nations and others to work together to address and improve educational outcomes for all students.

Mr. Speaker, I should say that, while there are 208 recommendations in the education reform document, some of them are contradictory in nature. Some of them I've found to be very specific, or even prescriptive, in how they go about addressing an issue. I think what will be important is addressing the theme there.

When I talk about being contradictory, there is one example where the governance model calls for the elimination of all school boards, but then the creation of one large school board, involving a multitude of people, and another recommendation calls for the creation of a First Nations-only school board to run a First Nations high school.

Now, I don't want to go into specifics on each and every one of the recommendations, but that one in particular, Mr. Speaker, I do not endorse. Personally, I want to see an education system in Yukon that is inclusive of all students and that brings students of First Nation ancestry and students of non-First Nation ancestry all into our programs. So, Mr. Speaker, I can't simply stand up and say I agree with everything in the education reform document, because frankly, I don't.

There are some very excellent things in there. There is a tremendous amount of hard work done by the members of the education reform project team but I think there are other ways of working to accomplish the same interest and intent, other than what's in there, and I'm committed to working with our partners in education to go forward and address them.

New Horizons, as I've said, is a continuation of the working group between the Yukon government and the Council of Yukon First Nations to further define the collective interests and goals of all Yukoners by moving forward with the New Horizons project.

The words "New Horizons" were chosen to describe the implementation phase in transforming education. They represent a shared belief in positive and solution-based approaches to change, identifying and celebrating current strengths, building on strength to improve in areas where we are weak, valuing the importance of lifelong learning and embracing the idea that learning is a holistic process that occurs in many places throughout life and is transmitted through various individuals, technologies and experience, celebrating and enhancing our partnership within education and our commitment to the future and a living, long-term commitment to looking toward the horizons and the dawning of a new day.

Mr. Speaker, I've been asked numerous times: when are you going to be done in reforming education?

The simple answer to that is: I hope never. I hope and fully expect that educators and our education system will continue to evolve, reform and change and to continue to be responsive to the needs of our citizens as their needs change. Education is different from what it was 20 years ago, 40 years ago or 60 years ago. I expect that in 20, 40 and 60 years from now, it will be different again. That is one of the commitments that we will make: to continue to change and improve the system in order to better meet the needs of all Yukoners now and into the future.

Now, since the spring of 2008, the project team co-chairs, which include the Deputy Minister of Education and an education person from the Council of Yukon First Nations, met with several partners in education, upon request, to provide briefings on the New Horizons project concepts and goals. The co-chairs also sought and accepted feedback on the education reform final report. Presentations were made to — and this is not in any particular order — the Carcross-Tagish First Nation, the Yukon Teachers Association executive committee, secondary school planning committee, Pan-Canadian Literacy Forum, school councils conference, Association of Yukon School Administrators, continuing education liaison coordinators and education support workers group — commonly referred to as the CELCs — Yukon College senior management team, Yukon First Nation Education Advisory Committee, Yukon Chiefs Committee on Education, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, Yukon Public Service Commission, the New Democratic Party and the Council of Yukon First Nations leadership.

The opportunities for briefings from these people was made and the invitation to have a briefing with these people was made to many groups. They were certainly willing to sit down, whether it be with a First Nation government or a particular political party that chose not to be briefed on this issue. These people were certainly willing to talk with all Yukoners about how we were going forward with making the implementation of the New Horizons, which is addressing the concerns brought forward in the education reform project.

We saw the launch of New Horizons in June 2008 — just out of interest, I should note it was barely over a year ago that the education reform document was actually tabled. I am amazed at the amount of work that has gone on and involvement that has happened since then and some of the changes.

This includes the launch of the New Horizons project which was launched on June 9, at Vanier Catholic Secondary School and webcast to Faro, Dawson City and Old Crow. The purpose of the launch was to update First Nations and other education partners on post-education reform project developments and to introduce the New Horizons project. As part of the launch, participants were introduced to the appreciative inquiry model, which is an approach used to facilitate organizational and systemic change that has been used successfully in small and large change projects with hundreds of organizations worldwide.

Also, Mr. Speaker, on April 30, May 1 and May 2, the appreciative inquiry model was introduced with a First Nation language meeting to bring the Yukon First Nation Education

Advisory Committee together with other partner groups interested in First Nation languages.

In May of 2008, Mr. Speaker, we held a Yukon dialogue on resiliency. Members will recall that resiliency and assistance with making transitions was a key theme in the education reform document. This dialogue was held on May 30 at the High Country Inn and included 70 community partners.

The dialogue was focused on current research and the factors that support resiliency in youth.

We then went on to develop the community engagement process in spring and summer of 2008, where the New Horizons team adapted the appreciative inquiry process to address the specific needs and concerns of Yukoners. This community engagement model is being proposed for piloting in 2008-09. Upon successful completion of the pilot sites, the community engagement model will be introduced to additional communities.

Other initiatives in addition to the community engagement process include the leadership program development, the secondary facilities programming review, the school growth planning — which is an opportunity for people in a community to have greater input into the operations and goals and visions for our community school, the labour market framework — unfortunately, this was an initiative that was started by this government that was not captured in the historic audit done by the Auditor General. The labour market framework will provide additional information and direction on our long-term training strategy, our immigration strategy, our data collection strategy and other initiatives regarding our labour market initiatives; resiliency dialogue, which I discussed; the literacy planning, which I'm sure members are all aware of initiatives going on there; and First Nation languages work.

Also, Mr. Speaker, I should make members opposite aware of additional initiatives that have been recently undertaken. Some of the other new accomplishments that have happened since fall 2008 include the First Nations programs and partnerships unit, and the development of their strategic action plan, entitled *Helping Students Succeed*. This was done in conjunction with the Yukon First Nation Education Advisory Committee, and again, it is a strategic action plan. The committee has membership from 13 First Nations, with Kwanlin Dun First Nation receiving information from these meetings. So, Mr. Speaker, if the Liberal Education critic does not have a copy of the Yukon First Nation Education Advisory Committee strategic action plan, entitled *Helping Students Succeed*, I would be pleased to provide him one, or if the Member for Mount Lorne — I see he is the only one present who has asked for a copy of it, so I shall send him one.

Mr. Speaker, the Department of Education, along with its partners in education, continues to move forward in the implementation of New Horizons. The department is compiling a literacy and assessment framework that will align with the needs of all students, and focus on student growth and achievement.

The early years transition initiative will target pre-kindergarten to grade 3 students, starting in February 2010, by identifying learning vulnerabilities using early development

instruments. That is an initiative that is currently up for debate and, hopefully, for support from the opposition in our current budget.

As I mentioned, a successful education summit was held in March, in partnership with the Council of Yukon First Nations, to exchange information with stakeholders on strategic directions being carried out under New Horizons.

The secondary program stakeholder advisory committee is overseeing the secondary school programming process and work teams. Members opposite will also recognize that there is \$400,000 in the current budget, which I am requesting their support for, for the replacement of F.H. Collins Secondary School. This group will certainly play a role with that project.

A leadership program is underway to ensure that there is a trained and available pool of formal and informal leaders to facilitate the transformation in education and respond to a looming retirement gap. In other words, this means preparing our Yukon teachers for roles as principals and vice-principals. I was very excited to see the very strong support for this program and encouragement of many, many Yukon teachers. I believe that there were over 60 who wanted to become involved with the leadership program. Mr. Speaker, this speaks very well to preparing Yukon teachers for their role as Yukon administrators, so that they will continue to provide a significant leadership role in their schools and their communities.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the member opposite also commented about wanting to see more opportunities where teachers could continue their learning here in Yukon. I am pleased to announce that a master's degree in leadership program has been developed in partnership with Yukon College and the University of Northern British Columbia. This master of education program, with a specialty in leadership, will begin in August 2009. I am very encouraged by that program and I wish all students a lot of success in continuing on with their education in a masters in leadership program.

The school growth planning process that engages school councils, boards and First Nations in developing learning plans has also begun. A community engagement process designed by the New Horizons project team will be posted in two communities in the fall of 2009. The appreciative inquiry process has been designed to facilitate broad community involvement to address community issues related to lifelong learning and capacity building.

Mr. Speaker, to ensure that students have a voice and have an opportunity to apprise the Minister of Education of issues of concern to them, I have formally created a student advisory council and I expected this to be something that continues on into the future after my tenure in politics is done, in hopes that this will be a long-standing method whereby the Minister of Education will be made aware by students of issues relating to students.

The Student Advisory Council is being established to provide a leadership forum for students to offer their perspectives about the Yukon school system to the Minister of Education. I look forward to meeting with this group. We hope that it will be about three times a year — whether it is in person or via video conferencing or maybe even twittering on BlackBerrys.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in order to support better planning and accountability, Education has developed a comprehensive strategic plan for tracking and monitoring data to support evidence-based goal settings. This will assist in providing increased flexibility in student programming, particularly in rural areas, providing more effective and timely reporting.

Members will see an investment in the budget for the BCeSIS — I hope I have that acronym correct. That's the British Columbia enterprise student information system. And we will be implementing that program here in the Yukon to provide longer term tracking of student success in order to provide many pieces of information that we can use to improve the quality of education here in the territory.

Also, we're implementing the Yukon educational leadership program as part of a larger initiative that will help to increase the number of Yukon First Nation leaders in education at various levels, such as principals, vice-principals and within the Department of Education and within First Nation governments. The program is not limited to First Nation candidates, but 12 of the 55 applicants are of First Nation ancestry.

Also, I'd like to share with members that the Yukon government has partnered with the Champagne and Aishihik First Nations to introduce a new program to enhance curriculum with Southern Tutchone language and culture in the St. Elias Community School in Haines Junction. The Champagne and Aishihik First Nations Southern Tutchone bicultural program will be in effect for four years and will include all students in the schools, not just First Nation students.

On this topic, I would also like to thank the Carcross-Tagish First Nation government for their development of Carcross and Tagish First Nation curriculum materials.

The Carcross-Tagish First Nation government has made a significant investment in education and has provided the teachers and administrators at the Ghùch Tlâ community school in Carcross with significant resources to use to ensure that important concepts and cultural concepts are passed on to children going to school in that community.

I should also note that there is the \$400,000 for the F.H. Collins Secondary School replacement in the current budget. Additional educational accomplishments that have happened as part of the Yukon Party tenure in government include the school replacement in Carmacks. The new school opened in September 2007 and I know that has been a great accomplishment in that community. The community has really warmly embraced the new school and indeed it is becoming part of the fabric of the community.

I mentioned earlier the community needs assessment where the Minister of Education visited with all school councils in order to identify and address many of their specific needs.

As Minister of Education, I have also had the opportunity and privilege to visit all Yukon schools. I am very impressed with each and every school. It's very interesting to see the differences and similarities between the schools. They are all unique in their own way. I know, having met the administrators and teachers there, they are all very much committed to their students and to the community they are in.

We have also seen the elders in the school program launched. This program involves First Nation elders who are hired to be involved in the day-to-day operations of the school and to help ensure that school issues are dealt with promptly and appropriately from a First Nation cultural perspective.

On this note, I would like to pass along my thanks specifically to the Teslin Tlingit First Nation. This is a First Nation that has recognized the value of this program and gone so far as to make their own contribution to this program to ensure that there is a gender balance in the elders in the school program. I applaud them for their continued involvement and investment in the students' education in the school in Teslin.

We have seen experiential learning enhancements and cultural camps. Members opposite have heard of or have even been to feasts relating to things like a bison hunt, and I know that several schools have been involved in programs like this.

There have been enhancements to First Nation language instruction; there has been the creation of the First Nations programs and partnerships unit. The public schools branch created a new eight-person unit to ensure that the perspectives and views of Yukon First Nations are reflected in curriculum initiatives and programs. We've seen some of the changes there; for example, the grade 5 social studies course and the grade 10 history course on First Nations governance. They've also had involvement with the First Nation Education Advisory Committee and in other aspects of curriculum development throughout the Department of Education.

We've seen support for First Voices, an aboriginal language archive and Web-based teaching and resource tool to assist communities in the preservation and revitalization of their language with sound, images and videos.

A very important initiative that is having a significant impact on early childhood education is the move by this government to full day kindergarten. Full day kindergarten students have a balance of teacher-directed instruction and child-focused activities for an entire school day to provide for an enriched learning experience at a key age.

Mr. Speaker, this is just one the areas of enhancement to early childhood education that the Department of Education and the Department of Health and Social Services have incorporated into our programming.

We have seen the introduction of the home tutor program. The home tutor program is designed to fit the needs of the individual as determined by a tutoring committee consisting of a local principal, a school council representative, a member of the local First Nation. Home tutors typically go to a student's home and assist with school work. Mr. Speaker, this is a neat program. I wish more students would use it. This is one of those situations where we have a good program that is out there but we do need the uptake of students because they are the ones who will benefit from the program.

I discussed earlier the creation of the Individual Learning Centre, which is in downtown Whitehorse and designed to help youth who have disengaged — or as some prefer to say, "dropped out of school" — to help them re-engage in learning. It is a flexible environment that encourages academically capable students to complete high school. Mr. Speaker, this is a

great opportunity if the student only has to go back to pick up one or two courses. They can go in there and do it in a very flexible format.

It is a shame, Mr. Speaker, to see a student not receive a high school diploma because they are lacking one, two or three courses. Obviously there is the opportunity to take more than that at the Individual Learning Centre, but it does offer that focus and opportunity to re-engage and pick up the necessary credits to graduate.

We have also seen the expansion and enhancement of individual education plans. The member opposite wanted to talk about how we go from being the top down to more the bottom up. Mr. Speaker, I believe that starts with the student. We have to work to meet the requirement that the students has — to engage the student for their particular learning style, for example. We've got to have a student-centred education system. Once we have focused on the student and his or her outcomes, we can work then with the parents, the teachers and the student. Then we have the opportunity to go broader and look at the community, the school and the school council. Then we can build that up through the school growth planning process. Mr. Speaker, if the member opposite really wants to build from the ground up, that's where I think we've got the best chance of succeeding.

We've also seen programs with intensive French-enhanced and late-French immersion. There have been renovations at the Porter Creek Secondary School.

There has been the secondary school planning committee, which has reviewed secondary programs and facilities in the Whitehorse area with the intention of creating a secondary school system that will address current needs, while providing the flexibility for continuous improvement and the ability to respond to demographic needs.

There has been significant enhancement of substance abuse action plans and prevention programs that are school-based education and prevention programs aimed at both alcohol and other drug use. These are things like the Second Step programs or even the canines for safer schools program in Porter Creek.

Video conferencing technology — 10 Yukon schools now are connected by video conferencing, which allows school personnel to attend meetings, attend professional development events and access department support from their own communities. This cuts down on the cost and time away from school and community. We've also seen enhancements of other programs, such as the Wilson Reading program or the Reading Recovery program.

These are just some of the initiatives going on in Education and I have, well, about four more pages of other initiatives. But those are some of the highlights that have been happening in recent — well, the majority of them that I read off were since the fall of 2008 and the other initiatives are initiatives that the government, under the Yukon Party banner, has created.

Mr. Speaker, it is unfortunate that we won't see these results captured until the next Auditor General's report in which, as the Auditor General commented to me, they expected to see many changes because of the programs that we had recently

started that did not meet with their time criteria to be included in their evaluation.

The audit was obviously an important process for the Department of Education to go through. It was a healthy process. As I have said before, the Department of Education does believe in a constant evolution, that education reform is not something that will just happen once, stop and be over and done with, but know that it's a long-term process. Part of that process is constantly examining your position, looking at it, especially from an outside perspective, and looking at how we can improve our position, make changes and ultimately make changes to improve things for the future.

Mr. Speaker, the audit was a healthy experience to go through. I do appreciate that the chair of the Public Accounts Committee did clarify something that he said had become apparent — that the issue from an audit perspective is that the Yukon Department of Education could not demonstrate that it effectively delivered public school programs to Yukon children, that that doesn't mean that it isn't effectively delivering public school programs in many, many cases, if not to all Yukon children; but rather that there wasn't information that allowed measurable quantitative analysis to take place.

We recognize that we do need to improve the metrics that are used to evaluate student performance. We also recognize that we have a responsibility to increase the outcomes for all students. So let me make this clear for members opposite: we will continue to make steps to increase the educational outcomes of students, and we will also increase steps to better report on the outcomes. So there is a commitment to do both — to increase the outcomes and to do a better job of reporting what those outcomes actually are.

Now, recognize the Department of Education is constantly improving. I've certainly seen many changes in my tenure as Minister of Education over the last two and a half years. I've been incredibly impressed by the dedication of Yukon's teachers and educators and the staff in the Department of Education. They are constantly committed to increasing the opportunities for Yukon students and to seeing our kids do well.

When the Department of Education senior officials came before the Public Accounts Committee, they also came with an implementation plan. This was an implementation plan that was responding to the issues brought forward by the Auditor General, and they presented a concrete plan and a commitment as to how they would respond to the issues raised.

With regard to performance targets for the education sub-groups, the Department of Education stated that the department has completed a review of other jurisdictions. As a next step, the department will identify assessment indicators that will become part of a K to 12 assessment framework, a three-year implementation plan and a professional development plan. They went on to discuss the student information plan, and committed that their timeline for full implementation of the new student information system would be the fall of 2012.

With regard to reviewing the data on an annual basis and to developing action plans to address gaps, which this motion speaks to, the department has already committed that the department will prepare action plans that summarize findings of

performance measures, identify gaps in achievement and include strategies to address these gaps.

The Department of Education has committed one step further than what the member opposite has called for. The department has stated in its action plan, which was tabled in this Assembly, that these findings will be included in the department's annual report that is tabled in the Legislative Assembly each fall.

Again, I was — well, if the Liberal Party would like to put forward motions calling for the government to do something they have already committed to do, I would certainly agree with that. I will certainly agree with the motion that is tabled before us now because the department has already committed to doing this.

In the action plan, the department went on to say that the department will continue discussions with Yukon College and the Yukon Bureau of Statistics toward the design and implementation of a graduate exit survey that will attract the educational experience of Yukon grant and student training allowance recipients. This survey will generate the database, based on age, place of residency and post-secondary education. So that's in regard to tracking post-secondary student progress.

With regard to coordinating with Yukon College and student readiness, the Department of Education has committed to implement — over the short, medium and long-term — the recommendations in the *One Vision, Multiple Pathways* report. As an immediate response, the department will develop a comprehensive implementation strategy to define priorities, costs and timelines associated with the tasks in that report.

The department will be working with the college to ensure that graduating high school students have the opportunity to meet the entry needs as defined by Yukon College. The action plan goes on to say the department will develop and implement a labour market framework to replace the Yukon training strategy and the strategy, along with its subsidiary strategies, will form the basis of allocations to the community training funds or its successor. As I mentioned, that's currently an initiative that's underway, but unfortunately was not grasped in the time frame that the Auditor General used.

The Department of Education will utilize a revised contribution agreement format that includes an effective evaluation component. All agencies will be funded using this new format. The department will review the monitoring system to ensure compliance with the new contribution agreement.

Mr. Speaker, I don't need to recite everything in the implementation plan. If members opposite have a copy of it, they can read it. If not, I would urge them to talk to their colleague, who is a member of the Public Accounts Committee and would have received a copy of this implementation plan.

The Government of Yukon is committed to increasing the educational outcomes for Yukon students, and we are committed to increasing our measurement tools and tracking tools with regard to this. I will say a word about targets now, Mr. Speaker. These targets, in order to be of any value, have to be based on reality. They have to be based on what is achievable, and I will say again that no target we ever set will be satisfactory. We will constantly need to improve, but even if we say that we

want to maintain or see the same or comparable level of graduation as provinces — I won't say "territories", because as the members opposite know, the Yukon has a higher graduation rate than the other territories — that will still never be high enough. We will always need to raise the bar for that.

We have two significant goals in education across this country and that is to reduce the performance gap between those who are performing and those who are not and then to raise the bar of performance overall for all students. In other words, Mr. Speaker, to help those students who aren't doing well to do better and for those students who are doing well to do even better — to raise that bar and that educational attainment level for all students.

Because, Mr. Speaker, while it might have been acceptable 50 years ago to have a grade 8 education — and that was enough to prepare one for life — we all know that the times have changed since then. We all know that we have to make a commitment to lifelong learning and to constantly and continually upgrade our skills. Even if we were to achieve an increase of 50 percent of one demographic of our track statistics, that still wouldn't be enough.

So there is a note of caution for when we do set targets. Yes, I agree that they are important to set and that they will allow us to measure and monitor our impact and our changes, but we will constantly strive to raise those targets and to increase educational opportunities for all students and all Yukoners.

Mr. Speaker, the government is committed to implementing the motion. We have already committed to doing that. The government will fully support this motion. I would encourage all members to support the motion. I see no reason to put a friendly amendment in there, Mr. Speaker. We can simply adopt it as presented by the Member for Mayo-Tatchun. I believe that I have explained many of the different initiatives and steps that we will be taking to implement changes in the Department of Education. I would encourage all members to support this motion and I should also comment that we are in full support of it. There will be no other speakers from the government side on this. There are two other motions on our schedule for today that would be excellent to debate. I think that there are also some very positive comments that we can all make on those motions. I would encourage members to quickly pass this motion, so that we can continue the work of the Assembly and address the additional motions that are before us.

Thank you very much for your time.

Mr. Cardiff: It's with great pleasure that I rise today to address Motion No. 677, about a very important issue — something that's very important in all our lives. I know that I don't have the luxury of the time that the previous two speakers had to address all of these issues, so I'll try to be brief.

The latitude with which the motion was dealt with is refreshing, and I'd also like to take a broader view of education, rather than just try to simply impose a measuring system on it. I believe that education reflects the state of the society we live in. So I'd like to briefly take a look at Canadian society.

Currently, we're in the midst of several crises, whether it's an economic crisis or whether it's conflicts abroad. We have Canadians in Afghanistan in a conflict situation, and we have them in other areas where there is conflict and they're in peacekeeping situations.

We look at the economic crisis and what that has done.

Consumerism has led us as individuals, and as an economy, into debt situations. People are concerned about their jobs. They're concerned about their pensions. The rich have gotten extremely rich, in some instances. People are revolting about that, in some places, about the amount of money that some people get, despite their poor performance. And unfortunately the poor are left to struggle harder than ever to feed themselves and to keep a roof over their heads. We have concerns about housing. The Minister of Health and Social Services was talking today about nutrition, and the need for good nutrition.

We have concerns about climate change. We know it's here. We can't all agree what we need to do about it, while it's undermining our way of life faster than some of us can cope, depending on where we live. The sea level is rising, permafrost is melting. These are all concerns that we have as a society.

Illicit drugs are the basis of an underground economy that creates havoc. It creates havoc. It creates random shootings by gangs and leaves us with a generation, as well, of drug-dependent adults.

In most families, Mr. Speaker, both parents are working. This affects the children who are in our education system. A lot of times they don't have that interaction time with their family. Because of the crises and the fast-paced society that we live in, families are breaking up — divorces end 50 percent of marriages nowadays.

This is not the picture that our parents had of our lives. When I was growing up, it is not the way I remember growing up. Yes there were crises and there were concerns, but the society that we lived in — a lot of times both parents weren't working.

It is not the picture that we want for our children and no wonder they are having problems with a school system that reflects that picture.

Paulo Freire, the godfather of adult education, said that all education is a political act. In other words, society reinvents itself through education of its young, therefore preserving the status quo. Those in power subconsciously design and support systems that keep them in power. The doctors' and the lawyers' sons and daughters are doing fine in our education system unless they have some serious learning disability. They have the supports at home and in the community to give them the opportunities that are not available to children who live in poverty, who come from families who are illiterate, who have sub-standard housing, and who don't get the proper nutrition. It is not just the education system that needs to change, Mr. Speaker. I think society's priorities need to change.

So what do we do about that?

I don't know that there is anybody in this Legislature who is ready to mount a social revolution today, but we can begin

with a revolution of the school system with several positive moves.

In two recent motions that we read into the *Hansard* just the other day, we suggested making improvements to the education system by expanding and enhancing programs that have already proven to be successful. We'd like to see those changes made, especially in rural Yukon, where the need seems to be the greatest.

There are other things as well that can be done, but these programs could be expanded and enhanced while we are setting performance targets and measuring them, and we should be measuring them. We should be measuring some of the priorities and the change that's needed in society as well.

Experiential learning programs, such as music, art and drama, ACES, OPES — the experiential programs that are presently available in Whitehorse, should be expanded. They should be made available to students outside of Whitehorse

Many of these programs are, a lot of times, designed for the best students. A lot of the times, it's students from more privileged backgrounds who end up there, because there are costs associated with these programs. The goals of these programs shouldn't just be academic. There should be goals that are social, as well as emotional, in these programs.

The minister mentioned after-school tutoring programs. If you look in the budget, there is a reduction in funding for after-school tutoring in this area, and it needs an evaluation. We need to train more community tutors.

Literacy and support for literacy — building that capacity in our communities, building that capacity in our society and, most importantly, building that capacity in our families, because it's the families that we need to engage. We need to engage families in the education system.

They need to be able to help their children with their education. Families need to take responsibility for their children as well, and the role they play in education.

It's interesting that when you look at some of the literacy statistics that the literacy statistics look pretty good for the Yukon. If you look in Whitehorse, the statistics are good. But if you look in rural communities and in First Nation communities, literacy is a concern and it is a big problem.

One of the things that I wonder about is whether or not that skewing of literacy statistics in communities is also reflected in the graduation rates that the Auditor General points out — the graduation rate of 58 percent for students as a whole and 40 percent for First Nations — if somehow that's related to problems that we have in communities, related to nutrition, related to substance abuse, related to housing issues that need to be corrected.

It's about public health. Students who are not healthy or don't have the supports, who have poor housing or poor nutrition, have a hard time achieving the results that they need in order to be successful in the education system.

The leaders in education innovation fund — I mentioned this to the minister the other day — is a good initiative. It's a new initiative. There is \$75,000 divided by 30 schools, which doesn't go a long way. We need innovation in education. When we look at the teachers that we have in the education system

here in the Yukon, we have some of the best teachers in the country. They are some of the most innovative teachers in the country. With a little more support, they could probably do more.

The Individual Learning Centre program — it's great that students can go back to school and complete their high school education, but we need to make that available in rural Yukon as well.

In the education reform project there is a study talked about that's being done, and we'd like to know what's being done about recommendations for reviewing secondary school rates of success in rural Yukon and evaluating alternative types of programs in rural Yukon.

Secondary education in rural Yukon isn't available in all communities. Those students don't have a lot of the support mechanisms that they have in their families and their community. That contributes to the success rate as well.

Projects and programs like the Whole Child project support at-risk children and their families. That's an excellent program. It involves families, it involves volunteers in the school system.

The food for learning program, the dental therapy program — if children have nutritional problems, they have a hard time concentrating and doing their school work.

First Nation cultural and language programs — the minister mentioned a number of projects that are underway — the curriculum in Carcross. He mentioned some things that were going on in Teslin and in Haines Junction with the Champagne and Aishihik First Nations. We need to ensure that more of these activities are happening and that the good work that's being done is being shared with other communities where possible.

Counselling — ensure that there are adequate counsellors in all schools. We need to have more education about substance abuse. We need to deal with issues around truancy and disengagement, as the minister described it. Other options would be summer school and after-school programming, skills training at a high school level, more options for students.

One of the other things that I would like to briefly talk about is the length of the school year.

I received this from a retired teacher and it is about how much time students actually spend in school. If you look at other countries and other jurisdictions, in some other countries students spend a lot more time in the education system than they do here.

Basically, when you break it down — you have 365 days — you are supposing that these kids are getting nine hours of sleep per night; there are 15 waking hours. So in one year, that is roughly 5,500 hours — assuming there are about 187 days in school, then that equates to 935 hours in class. That is about 17 percent of waking hours in class over one calendar year. Now, is that enough or isn't it?

The teachers are working hard now, but if we aren't achieving the results — if students aren't getting what they need from the education system — do we need more support for them? Maybe the school year should be longer. I know I've heard from some teachers that they seem to be focused on en-

suring that they're delivering the curriculum and that there is little time for other things, other than ensuring that they're delivering the curriculum that they're supposed to deliver.

I think the important thing is that we need to not just set targets — as the motion says — for Yukon students overall, but we need to look at involving families and communities and set targets for that — for the involvement of communities, for the involvement of families, for the involvement of elders in our education system. Maybe that could be a pilot project that the minister would like to take on. Teachers could be encouraged and trained to involve parents and the community in curriculum and in the delivery of programming, assisting and supporting students in their endeavours. That would lead to greater student success.

The formal collaboration with other departments by the Department of Education would also help when it comes to students at risk, such as the Department of Health and Social Services, and could lead to more productive solutions to family and community problems.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, we need not only establish performance targets for Yukon students and measure them, as stated in the motion; we need to take action on the problems as we see them now, not unlike some of the other things that this government is faced with. We need to take action now. We need to expand on some of the good things that are happening, look at some of the good ideas that are out there and improve education for all Yukoners, regardless of which community they are from.

I look forward to voting in favour of this motion.

Mr. Mitchell: I'm very pleased to speak to Motion No. 677, brought forward by my colleague, the Member for Mayo-Tatchun. I'm pleased because it is an extremely important motion, but I'm sad that we even have to spend a single day in this House discussing something that this government should have accomplished long ago.

Let me read Motion No. 677 aloud: "THAT this House urges the Yukon government to: (1) establish performance targets for Yukon students overall and, to the extent possible, for each major student subgroup and; (2) develop comprehensive action plans to reach these targets."

Now, this is a very straightforward and clear motion, but credit must go where credit is due. The wording of this motion comes directly from page 32 of the report of the Auditor General of Canada to the Yukon Legislative Assembly. It comprises the first and fourth bullets of recommendation 39 of the Auditor General's report. So we know that all members of this Legislative Assembly must want to support this motion.

After all, the department, in their response to the Auditor General's report, agreed with the recommendation. They've indicated that they'll be reviewing a new data collection and student information system to assist them in tracking performance data. They're in the process, they say, of developing a K to 12 assessment framework. That's in their response to that recommendation, and in fact the minister noted that this afternoon in his remarks.

So the problem, Mr. Deputy Speaker, does not rest with the educators or the officials. We know that they're well-intentioned. We've heard them tell us that they want to see Yukon students succeed. So where is the holdup? Where is the bottleneck leading to such delay? That is what Yukoners want to know.

The Yukon Party was elected to government in October 2002. They were sworn in the following month. They were re-elected in October 2006. They have been in office for almost six and a half years. They had been in office over six years when the Auditor General presented her report. In that time, we have seen senior officials come and go. Teachers have come into the system; others have taken their retirement and moved on. Thousands of students have moved through the system and some — many — have graduated, but not near enough according to the Auditor General's report, which covers the period of time that almost exactly coincides with this government's time in office.

It examines the period including the fiscal years 2001-02 to 2007-08. Only the first year of that period was fully under the watch of another government.

What did the Auditor General find? Well, first, let us look at the overall measure of success, and that has to be the graduation rate.

The Auditor General, on page 9 of her report, provided a chart of the graduation rates in Yukon and all provinces and territories in Canada as a whole. Yukon's five-year graduation rate through 2005-06 is the third lowest in Canada with an overall graduation rate of 63 percent over those five years — worse than every other province and only higher than the other two territories.

On page 10, there is another chart. This one compares departmental graduation rates over a six-year average. It starts in 2002-03 — a school year that commenced just a month before this government was elected. It ends with the 2007-08 school year. In the first year shown in the chart, the Yukon overall graduation rate was 56 percent. Mr. Speaker, after six years, it is 57 percent — a mere one-percent improvement over six years.

The six-year average was 58 percent. The real shocker, Mr. Speaker, is that the department, under this minister's watch, was calculating and publishing this rate as 92 percent. I quote, "This is significantly higher than the actual graduation rates based on data in the Department's Student Information Management System (58 percent for Yukon students as a whole and 40 percent for First Nations students), making the rates published in the Department's Annual Report misleading". This was said by the Auditor General of Canada. The minister oversaw a department that presented First Nation students' graduation rate as 89 percent. The Auditor General found it to be, in fact, 40 percent — a 40-percent graduation rate for First Nation students or, to put it bluntly, a 60-percent failure rate. Mr. Speaker, that is absolutely shocking. It is outrageous and unacceptable.

What has this minister done? Well, he has blamed previous governments, telling us that this system of misleading the accounting of figures came into effect, and I quote: "... for some

reason, in the 1990s". That is from Question Period. Who was in charge back then? Why, it was the Yukon Party. The minister and his colleagues love to name former governments by political stripe when it suits them.

They love to identify things they believe went wrong under the NDP or Liberal supervision. Well, Mr. Speaker, this one starts and finishes under the Yukon Party. Is it the minister's fault? Is it the minister's actions or lack thereof that have led to this? What did the Auditor General say? Well, here is what she said in paragraph 6 on page 3 of her report, "It is important to note that the Yukon Department of Education has more direct control over elements of education than departments of Education in other provinces have. The Yukon Department of Education is directly responsible for schools and the employment of teachers; in provinces, these responsibilities belong to the school boards."

In Yukon, there is one school board, the francophone school board. What do they think? They are taking this government to court because it is frustrating their ability to direct the expenditures and programming they know they need to employ in order to see their students succeed.

First Nations are talking about drawing down education because they are so upset over the lack of success that is occurring in educating their citizens. They took this minister at his word when he said, "Trust us. Give us a chance. We're going to do great things with education reform." The process started by the former Education minister was specifically focused on addressing the lack of success of First Nation students. What did this minister do when he took command? Did he move forward expeditiously to implement any of the 207 recommendations of that report? No, Mr. Speaker, he embarked on another process, another partnership with his education partners to consider implementing, "some of the recommendations."

Mr. Speaker, six classes of Yukon students have graduated, or failed to graduate, under their watch. A seventh will soon reach the June graduation dates. The overall graduation rate has moved up one percent. The First Nations graduation rate has moved up three percent. Those are the facts, based on the Auditor General's report.

What did we hear this week in Question Period? We heard the minister trying to blame the students. This afternoon, we heard the minister tell us the students and their parents need to examine the choices they are making, the decisions they are making. On Monday of this week, the minister said, "I should note that we're not going to simply grant people a high school diploma. That has to be earned. It's going to take the involvement of the student to achieve that goal."

Mr. Speaker, we heard in the public hearings on the Auditor General's report to the Department of Education that the officials are deeply concerned. They want to do better. They know they need to do better. In fact, as the minister has now twice pointed out, the Public Accounts Committee recognized that, and I acknowledged that in my closing remarks.

The minister likes to quote them. I said the Yukon Department of Education could not demonstrate that it effectively delivered public school programs to Yukon children.

Yes, as the minister gleefully read out in the Assembly, speaking as the chair of the Public Accounts Committee, I said,

“I don’t think it was meant as a criticism of the job that people are doing, but rather of the difficulty from an audit perspective of making the determination based on the information available.”

Yes, Mr. Speaker, the Public Accounts Committee recognized that the Auditor General could not even determine whether the programs were being effectively delivered; and, yes, the Public Accounts Committee did not lay the blame at the feet of educators.

The minister hasn’t been rushing to quote what I said on the previous page of the hearings, Mr. Speaker. I’m sure that was just an oversight while he was busy cutting and pasting from the public hearings, so I’ll read it into the record this afternoon. From page 27 of the public hearings, I said, “Paragraph 31 goes back to this issue of graduation rates, and we have had some discussion about it. I have to say that, for some years, I have been among those who have felt that the methodology used in reporting graduation rates in Yukon has been misleading, as the Auditor General described it, in that if you were starting with those students who have made it to grade 12 and have the potential to graduate and have taken the course work to that point, you have already got a pretty select sample.

“I want to commend the officials who are here today for having previously recognized that. I noted when we received the annual report in the Legislative Assembly that you were revisiting that. However, I just want to note — and I think you actually touched on it, Assistant Deputy Minister, with one of your responses — that even with the two different methods, the Statistics Canada method versus the method that had been used in Yukon, we’re still measuring something starting from a particular point.”

I stated on that same page, “Now, I would hope that whatever methodology is adopted focuses on all children, not simply those who enter in grade 9, versus grade 12 — that overall view. When I got this report, like many people, I was fairly shocked to see that the Auditor General was using numbers that they derived from the department’s own information. It provided these rates that only 58 percent of Yukon students as a whole and only 40 percent of First Nation students in the Yukon are in fact graduating.

“Regardless of how this compares with the territories or the provinces, I don’t think any of us, yourselves included, would consider this to be acceptable.”

Mr. Speaker, it is certainly unfortunate that the minister didn’t choose to read those words out during Question Period. He seems to have overlooked that statement. That statement wasn’t from the concluding remarks on behalf of the entire Committee. That is what I said when I had the opportunity to add my own questions and my own thoughts during the hearing.

Last Thursday and again on Monday, I asked this minister to set target graduation rates. If you don’t know where you’re going, as the Minister of Economic Development has often told us, it is not likely you will get there. In the case of this minister’s portfolio, you won’t even be able to determine where you are and whether or not you have arrived. Targets are like a road

map, Mr. Speaker; they show you the way and record your progress en route.

The minister has said he wants to see 100 percent of students succeed. That’s admirable — so do we all. But without targets, this government has seen only a one-percent improvement over six years overall. They have seen a three-percent improvement between year 1 and year 6 in the First Nation rate. At that pace, we will be a long time on this path before we come even close to our destination. That’s why we suggested that this minister do what proved successful in the U.K. He should set a target and back it up. Perhaps then he will be motivated to succeed on behalf of Yukon students.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Education, when he spoke to this motion, indicated that he couldn’t accept the education reform report’s recommendations in their entirety. He noted some perceived inconsistencies among the recommendations. Well, we aren’t asking the minister to accept every single recommendation exactly as written. We understand that there are two different kinds of recommendations included in the report: those which came out of the *Education Act* review and those specifically made as a result of the education reform process. What we are asking is that the minister not spend years cherry-picking from among the recommendations, which would dramatically alter the holistic approach of the education reform report.

I want to turn to a few of the recommendations in the time I have remaining. The first deals with the *Education Act* review and the act itself. On page 7.56, recommendation 120, the proposed change says — this is from the *Education Act* review itself, not the reform project, although they’ve included those — “Include language in the *Education Act* that mandates up to three boards of Education as governance structures, specifically: Yukon Francophone Board of Education; Yukon Catholic (Separate) Board of Education; and Yukon Public Board of Education.”

The clarification they provided is: “One of the key themes of the *Education Act*, and a dominating principle during its development, is the importance of public participation. The *Act* was premised on the idea that school governance would move quite rapidly from school committees (the existing model at the time) through school councils to school boards. Although there is now only one small board in existence, the *Act* was designed as if the system operates under a board structure. This creates a serious disconnect in the public school system.

“A new governance model for public schools in the Yukon is needed. The current governance model does not adequately provide for a true partnership with all the people that are affected by this very large department. Parents have felt powerless in the current system.”

The second is on page 1.7 of the report, and it’s the proposed governance structure, which the minister likes to say we, in the Official Opposition, want to support. He is in fact wrong: we have always stated that we support cooperative governance, not co-governance. Let’s see what the paper says: “In order to be effective and inclusive the education system has to include a range of partners, organizations and elected officials whose sole intent is to provide the best educational service possible.

The new governance structure proposed here is intended to be a bottom-up, participatory model that is open to input from a broad range of groups and individuals.”

If the minister doesn't like the plan specifically as put forward in the education reform project, if he doesn't want that specific governance model, we're fine with that. What we want to see is this as an example. We'll ask the minister to put forward another model that encompasses the principles of a bottom-up inclusive system — we'll support it.

So it doesn't have to be exactly as laid out in this report, but it needs to be participatory and it needs to be inclusive.

And finally — and there isn't much time remaining, Mr. Speaker — on page 3.15, the report actually addresses the francophone school board, the Commission scolaire francophone du Yukon, and it says that, under the *Education Act*, “the powers and obligations of a school board are clearly described.” “The *Act* describes the role of the Minister, parents, students, school councils, school committees, and school boards. It defines a School Board as ‘a board of trustees of an education area established under this Act.’”

Now, I know the minister has a copy of this. I'm not going to read out all the details, but they're empowered to select staff, including principals and teachers, for hiring, discipline, dismissal, promotion, et cetera; establish policies, develop and maintain policies, purchasing and renting school premises and staff residences, and it says, “although CSFY is a school board as described in the *Education Act* and is fully prepared to meet its mandate, it has not been able to do so.” So, they also have said that they are frustrated in trying to do so.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to use the rest of my time, but I'm going to end now so that the Member for Mayo-Tatchun can conclude his remarks and we can vote on this motion. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: If the honourable member speaks, he will close debate. Does any other member wish to be heard?

Mr. Fairclough: I will be brief on this. I would like to thank the speakers — the Minister of Education for supporting the motion put forward, which is Motion No. 677. I would like to thank the New Democrats for their support on this. I think that this gives direction to the minister and it's following the recommendations made by the Auditor General. It is good direction and it is something that needs to happen. I look forward to the vote. In brief, I would thank all for their comments and their support.

What we can expect, I guess, shortly down the road, is direction from the minister that they will be establishing performance targets for Yukon students overall and developing a comprehensive action plan to reach these targets. That is what I look forward to and that is what Yukoners look forward to. We want to see it produced by the Minister of Education and the Department of Education. Thank you.

Speaker: Are you prepared for the question?

Some Hon. Members: Division.

Division

Speaker: Division has been called.

Bells

Speaker: Mr. Clerk, please poll the House.

Hon. Mr. Fentie: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Cathers: Agree.

Hon. Ms. Taylor: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Kenyon: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Rouble: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Lang: Agree.

Hon. Ms. Horne: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Hart: Agree.

Mr. Nordick: Agree.

Mr. Mitchell: Agree.

Mr. McRobb: Agree.

Mr. Fairclough: Agree.

Mr. Inverarity: Agree.

Mr. Cardiff: Agree.

Clerk: Mr. Speaker, the results are 14 yea, nil nay.

Speaker: The yeas have it. I declare the motion carried.

Motion No. 677 agreed to

Motion No. 497

Clerk: Motion No. 497, standing in the name of Mr. Cardiff.

Speaker: It is moved by the Member for Mount Lorne THAT this House urges the Yukon government, through collaboration of the Departments of Environment, Community Services, and Finance, to develop a Yukon-wide comprehensive strategy for waste disposal by the end of the 2008-09 fiscal year that includes:

(1) the principles of the Three R's: reduce, reuse, and recycle, in that order of priority;

(2) composting as a necessary component of waste management;

(3) strengthening of air emission regulations to ensure standards and monitoring are complied with;

(4) the cessation of burning at community solid-waste facilities;

(5) the establishment of a Yukon-wide recycling council that is funded by government;

(6) the equitable funding of all community solid-waste facilities;

(7) funding to receive and process non-refundable recyclables in Whitehorse from other communities;

(8) funding for the transportation of non-refundable recyclables;

(9) an increase in the refundable deposit for beverage containers; and

(10) expanding the types of recyclable products for refunds.

Mr. Cardiff: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As time is short today, I am going to defer the many notes that I have on this subject. But I do have a few words to say. I understand that the

government will support this with a minor amendment and I trust that the Official Opposition will, as well.

When we introduced this motion last year, it was in response to the government putting out a request for proposals on a Yukon-wide solid-waste strategy. It was after many years of raising this issue with the government — in Marsh Lake, Carcross, Tagish and Deep Creek. To clarify for the minister from earlier today, I wasn't suggesting that we forget about Deep Creek. Deep Creek already has — or had — a transfer station. I hope that is still the case.

It was so frustrating that we had this suggestion for a new Yukon Party slogan, which was "Imagine tomorrow if you hadn't postponed today what you should have done yesterday". That's the attitude that I think makes us glad today to see a change, because we had some very positive signs given to us today. That's why we brought this motion forward.

We came up with 10 points that we felt needed to be included in that strategy, and I'm pleased today that the government has indicated it could support this strategy. We think that it's an environmental issue; we think that it's a health issue; and we think that it's an economic issue. By staffing rural facilities, by making those improvements in the infrastructure, both the on-the-ground infrastructure on the solid-waste sites and in the human and the social infrastructure in communities, it ensures the health of the community, the health of the people who live in that community, that they have jobs that are meaningful, that actually contribute to the health of their community and do something positive for their community. So that's why we brought this motion forward.

We heard today the minister give some information during Question Period. The minister said that he's committed to releasing the strategy on solid-waste management by the end of this month, I believe he said, and that there would be a final plan by the end of May. We look forward to that.

We look forward to seeing what it is that the consultant puts forward by the end of this month, and seeing what it is that they're proposing and what they're proposing to take out to the communities. I guess it's better late than never. I know that the consultation was — and people were frustrated in the communities last fall, because the RFP laid out that there would be community consultation last fall. It was right in the request for proposals, so better late than never.

I look forward to seeing some positive movement on this. I also look forward to hearing from the minister responsible for Environment about the legal opinion I requested several weeks ago.

I think both ministers sounded positive about ending the burning of garbage, because there is no control on what goes into those burning vessels or into those pits — that's how we end up with the noxious smoke — because there's no monitoring of what goes in the facility. There is nobody there to direct people on where to put the waste they have. Consequently, we end up with painted or treated wood, or we end up with car batteries, or we end up with plastics in those burning vessels or in the open pit burning that's done in Carcross.

The other positive thing, I think, is that the minister talked about accessing the Building Canada fund to make these im-

provements to our solid-waste facilities. That's a positive step too, because it is going to take some money to upgrade the facilities, bring them on-line, to turn some of these facilities into transfer stations and to think about options for regional solid-waste management. The City of Whitehorse, when I attended — and I know the Minister of Health and Social Services attended too — that meeting about the city's capital budget, was supportive of transfer stations and of transferring solid waste from areas outside of Whitehorse to their facility. There's a lot that needs to happen with that. We need diversion, as well, which is about reducing, reusing and recycling.

I am very pleased. The one thing I need to hear from the government is that they will not only invest in the on-the-ground infrastructure. What I would like to see is a commitment from this government that they will invest in the human infrastructure, in the social infrastructure that will create economic stimulus and put people on the ground, ensuring that our solid waste is managed appropriately. People need to be directed as to where to put the various types of solid waste that they have and that items that come to these facilities are either available for reuse or recycling and that there is education about reduction of obtaining things that we don't really need.

I think there needs to be some education and some initiatives around buying things and buying products for government as well — especially with government. Government can lead the way with environmentally sound procurement policies where there is a reduction in packaging, so that we're not having to deal with all that excess packaging.

I know that time is short. I'm very pleased with the indication that the government will support this, with a minor amendment. And we'll be watching. We're not letting the government off the hook. They're indicating their support for this motion, but we'll be watching. We'll be watching for action, as will people in communities like Tagish, Carcross, Mount Lorne, Watson Lake, Ross River, Deep Creek, Pelly Crossing, Old Crow — all of these communities have a vested interest. Every community has a vested interest.

So we'll be watching, and we want to see action that's taken quickly, once the strategy is released, to improve the facilities, to improve health and safety, and to improve the environment. We hope that the strategy and the actions that come from it will address all 10 points that we've raised in this motion.

So I look forward to hearing from the Minister of Community Services, as well as the Official Opposition.

Hon. Mr. Lang: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member opposite, the Member for Mount Lorne. We have, of course, discussed this in Question Period today — the question about the management of solid waste.

Of course, we have committed to do exactly what the member opposite has put in this motion.

I would like to correct the statement about the study coming out here next month. This will be the EBA Engineering overview for the government that will be coming out next month. That is step one. That is completed. The next step is that EBA has to go to work and examine potential exposure

risks. That is all part of it. That will move ahead as we go through this consultation period which is starting — there are timelines out there for how this is going to unfold — but that will start almost immediately. When that consultation is done, we're looking at completing it at the end of May or June. Then we will compile them and then go forward with our go-forward plan.

The member opposite, in his motion, covered the basics that I think all Yukoners want to look at, whether we are in the City of Whitehorse or we are looking at any other community that has to manage their solid waste. This would be something that we have to resolve as a government and, of course, as a society.

In our conversation about the motion as we see it, I would like to make a friendly amendment, Mr. Speaker.

Amendment proposed

Hon. Mr. Lang: The friendly amendment would read:

THAT Motion No. 497 be amended by deleting the words, “by the end of the 2008-09 fiscal year” and replacing them with the words, “within the fiscal year 2009-10”.

It is more realistic for us to work within that timeline.

Speaker: The amendment is in order. It is moved by the Minister of Community Services:

THAT Motion No. 497 be amended by deleting the words “by the end of the 2008-09 fiscal year” and replacing them with the words “within the fiscal year 2009-10”.

Hon. Mr. Lang: I'll be short in my response to the amendment. I would like to remind the House and, of course, Yukon that we are the first government to tackle this. This is a lot larger issue than we thought when we first went out. But, as we all know, as we move through our communities and we see the management and the levels of management of solid waste, something has to be done.

So, Mr. Speaker, in closing, I'd like to thank the House. I look forward to working with the community to resolve this issue finally — once and for all — so that we can live in the healthy, pristine setting that I think we all came to the Yukon to enjoy.

So, thank you.

Amendment to Motion No. 497 agreed to

Speaker: Is there any debate on the main motion as amended?

Mr. Inverarity: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll be brief — as we say, as time is of the essence here.

We will be supporting this motion. However, the only comment that I would like to add — while I would like to talk on each one of these particular items, because they are all important — but the one I would like to bring to members' attention is (8), “funding for the transportation of non-refundable recyclables.” Specifically, I'd like to bring the attention of members to e-waste. It has been an issue that I've been involved with for a number of years. Transportation is always a

very, very big issue with this regard, and I would like to support that funding be guaranteed for the transfer of electronic waste among the other disposables.

However, it's not just about moving it south; it's also about having it taken care of when it does go south, and I would encourage, as we go through Committee, and different forums, that we keep in mind that we also have to take care of it once it has gone out.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: If the member speaks, he will close debate. Does any other member wish to be heard?

Mr. Cardiff: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the cooperation from all members of the Legislature this afternoon. I have to say I'm not entirely thrilled that this is the way that it's going but I recognize that when I read the motion into the record it was some time ago, and the goal that I had set for myself and the goal I had hoped the government would adhere to was to have something in place by, in this case, next week — because we're debating the motion now and the end of the 2008-09 fiscal year is next week.

What the government has done with this amendment is they have basically granted themselves a year to achieve something that I believe should be achievable sooner than that. I will support the motion. I'm happy that at least the government — that through the efforts of groups and communities like Carcross and Tagish, like Marsh Lake — I remember one of the first issues around solid-waste management that actually came to my attention came from Deep Creek and the fact that there was burning happening at the solid-waste facility in Deep Creek.

That was quite some time ago. That was shortly after I was first elected in 2002. We have seen progress but we need to see more progress. I understand the need for a strategy and I understand the need to move forward and to have a plan. But there is one thing that is happening, Mr. Speaker, that everyone in this Legislature can agree with. The minister agreed today that solid waste can't happen any longer because it is harmful to the environment and harmful to the health of communities. It is harmful to the wildlife and it is not good for surface water or ground water. So we need to put an end to that. It is my hope that the Minister of Environment is going to get that legal opinion and find out that, in fact, the government has to stop the burning of solid waste because they have no alternative but to do it because that is what the law says.

That is what the emissions permit says. That is what the emissions regulations under the *Environment Act* say — you can't be burning these products and meet the air emissions regulations. While I am willing to grant the government a year's grace to come up with a solid-waste management strategy, it is guaranteed that I will be watching. Communities are going to be watching. We want to see an end to the burning of solid waste. I will vote for the motion as amended. The motion as it stands is unreasonable at this point in time. The minister has taken this long to get this far. There is no way that he could

possibly get to where we need to be by next week. We will grant him that grace, but I hope he sees the light.

He seems to understand that burning solid waste is not healthy. It is not healthy for our environment and it is not healthy for people. I hope that they will move forward more quickly on that than they do with the strategy.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to speak today. I look forward to voting on this motion.

Speaker: Are you prepared for the question on the motion as amended?

Some Hon. Members: Division.

Division

Speaker: Division has been called.

Mr. Clerk, please poll the House.

Hon. Mr. Fentie: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Cathers: Agree.

Hon. Ms. Taylor: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Kenyon: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Rouble: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Lang: Agree.

Hon. Ms. Horne: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Hart: Agree.

Mr. Nordick: Agree.

Mr. Mitchell: Agree.

Mr. McRobb: Agree.

Mr. Inverarity: Agree.

Mr. Cardiff: Agree.

Clerk: Mr. Speaker, the results are 13 yeas, nil nays.

Speaker: The yeas have it. I declare the motion carried as amended.

Motion No. 497 agreed to as amended

Hon. Mr. Cathers: I move that the House do now adjourn.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Government House Leader that the House do now adjourn.

Motion agreed to

Speaker: This House now stands adjourned until 1:00 p.m. tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 5:28 p.m.

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