

**Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Wednesday, May 6, 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.

Are there any tributes?

TRIBUTES

In recognition of Fête Historica Fair

Hon. Mr. Rouble: I rise in this House today in recognition of the 11th annual territorial Fête Historica Fair. Each year schools around the territory host their local Fête Historica Fair. At these fairs students present history projects that feature languages, culture and historic sites. The projects can be reports, displays, performances or multimedia presentation.

It is exciting to see how much enthusiasm and creativity our Yukon students invest in their projects. Students learn from their research and integrate what they have learned in presentations that they share with their friends, school staff and families.

For each participating school, winning projects are selected to participate in the territorial Fête Historica Fair in Whitehorse.

Mr. Speaker, this year, about 85 students from 12 schools from Dawson City, Pelly Crossing, Mayo, Destruction Bay, Haines Justice and Whitehorse will be participating. Four of the students from this regional event will be selected to represent the Yukon at the National Historica Fair and week-long cultural camp this July in Ottawa.

I'd like to recognize the steering committee, the judges, the sponsors, the teachers and the parents, whose hard work is essential to making this event such a success. Most importantly, though, I'd like to recognize the hard work and creativity of all of the students whose projects are a celebration of our Canadian heritage. Thank you.

Mr. Inverarity: I rise today on behalf of both opposition parties to pay tribute to Yukon Historica Fair. This is the 11th annual Historica Fair, which is taking place tomorrow at the Yukon Convention Centre. The fair features winning heritage projects from schools across the territory. There are approximately 85 students from grades 4 to 9 taking part in this year's fair and, as mentioned earlier, students are participating from the communities of Dawson City, Pelly Crossing, Mayo, Destruction Bay and Haines Junction, as well as Whitehorse.

The fair is a learning initiative developed and sponsored by the Historica Foundation to help increase public awareness and interest in our Canadian heritage. Our Yukon students are given an opportunity to explore many aspects of their heritage and their efforts are presented in a public exposition. The students

have a chance to interact with fellow students from across the Yukon. They are interviewed on their projects and volunteer judges evaluate their work.

After the judging results, four students and their projects will be selected to go on to the National Historica Fair taking place in Ottawa from July 7 to 13. I would encourage the public to drop by the Yukon Convention Centre tomorrow and view the many projects and talk to the students.

Opening ceremonies take place Thursday, May 7, from 9:00 a.m. to 9:30 a.m. and the exhibition and judging begins at 9:30 a.m. and runs until 12:00 noon. We would like to offer our congratulations to all of the participants.

Speaker: Are there any further tributes?

Introduction of visitors.

Returns or documents for tabling.

Reports of committees.

Are there any petitions?

Are there any bills to be introduced?

Are there any notices of motion?

NOTICES OF MOTION

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

THAT this House urges the Yukon Party government to use part of the \$150 million budget surplus to stimulate the economy by sufficiently funding the Yukon Housing Corporation's lending programs for:

- (1) home ownership;
- (2) owner-build;
- (3) green mortgage;
- (4) mobile home purchase assistance;
- (5) mobile home relocation;
- (6) R-2000; and
- (7) home completion.

I give notice of the following motion for the production of papers:

THAT this House do issue an order for the return of an up-take summary that fully accounts for all applications and approvals under Yukon Housing Corporation's mortgage lending programs for 2008, 2009 and to date for 2009-10.

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

THAT this House urges the Yukon government to investigate the public interest for and feasibility of creating a Yukon carbon offset fund, either as a stand-alone, not-for-profit organization, or as part of an existing not-for-profit organization, or as one operated at arm's length from the territorial government, so that individuals, corporations and governments can receive credits for investing in Yukon projects that will result in less carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases in the atmosphere than would otherwise occur.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources to consult fully with the public in the development of any policy on independent power production.

Speaker: Are there any further notices of motion?
Statements by ministers.
This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Yukon Hospital Corporation residence

Mr. Mitchell: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to follow up on some questions asked about the Yukon Hospital Corporation's plan to build a new residence.

This new building will cost \$16 million and is being financed with a bank loan. I asked the minister to outline the terms of the loan. How much is being borrowed? How many years and how much interest will be paid? He refused and said to ask the Yukon Hospital Corporation. I wrote the chair of the board of the Yukon Hospital Corporation on February 19 and he has finally responded. He refused to answer the questions and said the public would be made aware of the plans through the semi-annual newsletter.

The minister has given his permission for the Yukon Hospital Corporation to take out these loans. Will he tell the public how much money is being borrowed, for how many years and how much interest is being paid?

Hon. Mr. Hart: With regard to this particular project, it's still a work in progress, as I mentioned previously. Until such time as the project outline and footprint has been identified, the Yukon Hospital Corporation will go forth to the bank with its final plans when they are made.

Mr. Mitchell: The fact that the Hospital Corporation has to go to a bank for financing raises a number of questions for Yukoners. The biggest one is how much interest will they end up paying? It will likely be millions of dollars. This government has made a decision to get the cost of this building off the books of the government. It has done the same thing with the new hospitals in Watson Lake and Dawson City. These three facilities will probably be in the neighbourhood of \$50 million or more when the dust settles.

The minister gives his permission for these loans and then says: it's not my responsibility; go ask the Hospital Corporation. The Hospital Corporation says: read our newsletter. I will table copies of those letters now, Mr. Speaker.

There is no legislative accountability. The minister won't answer and he won't make the Hospital Corporation available to the Legislature this year to answer either. Why is the government refusing to answer these basic questions?

Hon. Mr. Hart: We are allowing the Yukon Hospital Corporation to follow through with its process as decided by its board of directors, who have indicated that this is the mode that they wish to move forward on the development of this facility. Mr. Speaker, this is the board of directors' decision and that is their right within their mandate. That is what they are doing and we are allowing them to take that process in hand.

Mr. Mitchell: We're delegating responsibility here. We're concerned about the complete lack of public accountability for how this money will be spent or even how much money is being spent. A decision has been made by the minister to allow a multi-million dollar loan, yet he won't say for

how much. That debt will not be on the government's books; it will be off the books. The chair of the Hospital Corporation has also refused to disclose how much money was requested or how much interest will be paid. He said the public will be kept informed through a semi-annual newsletter — not good enough, Mr. Speaker; not acceptable; certainly not open, accountable or transparent.

Why is the government refusing to account for this money?

Hon. Mr. Hart: The member opposite has accused this side of not being open and accountable on a regular basis. The member opposite just accused the board of directors of the Yukon Hospital Corporation of not being open and accountable. Those people are selected for that committee. They represent a wide cross-section of Yukoners throughout the Yukon and their main interest is providing acute care for all Yukoners. If that's not accountable, the member opposite should maybe take it up with the board of directors.

With regard to the situation, I would say, as I mentioned before, when the Hospital Corporation is requested to come into the House, I will ask the chair and the CEO of the hospital to come in as witnesses at a future date when a time is necessary for the members opposite to question him.

Question re: Dawson City sewage project

Mr. Inverarity: Mr. Speaker, I have a follow-up question on the proposed Dawson City waste-water facility. I asked the minister yesterday to explain why the Yukon company was disqualified from this contract. In response, the minister said and I quote: "As we move through the process, it will become very, very open on why this process was put in place, what happens and how the process unfolds."

We thought that the government was following the competitive bidding process as outlined in the contracting directives. The government appears to be following some other method of awarding this specific contract, a method that the minister won't talk about.

Why all the secrecy? Is the government following the open and accountable competitive bidding process on this specific contract or some other method that the minister will not disclose?

Hon. Mr. Lang: Mr. Speaker, I will repeat what I said yesterday. This is a partnership between the City of Dawson and the territorial government. This is a very important issue for the City of Dawson. This is a court-driven decision, Mr. Speaker. The process is unfolding; there has been no contract awarded as of today. We are working through it in partnership with the City of Dawson, and we will continue working with our partners in the City of Dawson on the solution to their waste-water problems.

Mr. Speaker, this is court driven. This is very serious for the City of Dawson. We are taking it very seriously. This is being overseen by very high-level engineers, who are working with us, the territorial government, and the City of Dawson to solve this issue. This issue is very important to the City of Dawson.

Mr. Inverarity: It's about contracting, and the minister spoke yesterday about this mysterious process. As he said,

“As it unfolds we will make the community aware of the decision, how the decision was made and why the decision was made.”

The Yukon business community also understands that the government has a normal process for awarding contracts. We are asking these questions because the normal competitive bidding process is not being followed, or so it seems. The government appears to be following some other method for the awarding of a contract, and the best the minister could come up with was, “Let’s wait for the process to unfold and, at the end, it is very self-explanatory.”

Why do we have to wait until the end of the process to find out what’s going on here? Why won’t the minister reveal this self-explanatory process now?

Hon. Mr. Lang: That is what we’re going through. We’re going through a process in awarding a contract — or looking at awarding a contract for the waste-water situation in Dawson City. The City of Dawson and the territorial government are working in partnership with engineers to resolve a very important issue.

I remind the House that this is a court-driven process. We have obligations. We are working with the City of Dawson to resolve their issue, and we’re going to do just that. As I said to the member opposite yesterday, as the process goes forward, if a contract is awarded, there will be a public announcement.

Mr. Inverarity: Well, Mr. Speaker, if the government was following its own contracting directives, none of the secrecy would be necessary. If the government was following its own competitive bidding process, all parties involved would know exactly what’s going on. All parties involved would know how the process worked up front, what decisions were being made, and why. But that’s not what’s happening here in this case. We’re talking about a multi-million dollar infrastructure project. The only competitive bid on this tender was disqualified, and the minister tells us we have to wait until the deal is done and signed before he’ll disclose the details. I’m asking for an explanation on the alternative method this government is using to award specific contracts. Will the minister do that?

Hon. Mr. Lang: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I’ll do nothing of the sort.

The process is ongoing; it’s very very complicated. This is a very large project for the territory and also for the City of Dawson. We take it very seriously and it is unfolding as it will. We are going to fix the Dawson City sewer issue in partnership with the City of Dawson. That’s what we set out to do. That’s what this is all about, Mr. Speaker. This is about the sewer system in Dawson. That’s what we’re talking about. It’s a large investment for the territorial government, a necessary investment for the territorial government and a partnership with the City of Dawson.

Question re: Garbage burning

Mr. Cardiff: So here we are, it’s May 2009, in the pristine Yukon, one of the only places in Canada that continues to burn its trash on a wide-scale basis. Yesterday another report on solid waste was released that looked at various ways to manage solid waste, including open burning in trenches and

burn vessels, transfer stations and landfills, and incineration. The report measures these methods on their relative risks to human health, the environment, the relative carbon footprints and their financial costs.

At the Association of Yukon Communities meeting in Watson Lake a couple of weeks ago, the minister stated that financial cost would be a major factor in determining how we will manage solid waste. When it comes to dealing with Yukon’s solid waste, is the financial cost more important than human health or environmental liabilities?

Hon. Mr. Lang: We have commissioned these studies. The first study, as the member opposite has stated in the House, is out for public review. We’re having public meetings on the issue. I’m looking forward to the emissions study that’s going to be out here very shortly, and certainly we’re going to move forward and resolve the solid-waste issue in the territory.

It’s a very large issue. There isn’t a municipality or area in the Yukon that doesn’t have questions about it, and this government is one of the first governments that has ever taken the time to do an overview and move forward on managing our solid waste into the future.

So we are committed to doing it. These studies are coming out. We are having public meetings, and later in the summer we’ll be moving on an action plan on how we visualize solid waste being managed in the territory.

Mr. Cardiff: The minister didn’t answer the question, so obviously the financial costs are more important than the public health or the environmental liabilities.

The report basically states that the transfer station-to-landfill method creates more greenhouse gases than open burning. To determine this, the report looked at a few factors, including the composition of waste from an audit of the Whitehorse landfill in 1994.

This 15-year-old audit said that five percent of the landfill was composed of newsprint, 28 percent food scraps, five percent glass — items now commonly recycled or composted. So the landfill carbon footprint is overstated due to the lack of sound current data. We wouldn’t put it past the government to try and portray the burning of solid waste as some sort of a climate change initiative.

How does the minister reconcile this lack of sound current data and can he provide assurances to the people that decisions on solid-waste facilities won’t be based on 15-year-old data?

Hon. Mr. Lang: That’s exactly why we commissioned the study, Mr. Speaker — a new one. We’re taking it very seriously. We’re having public meetings. The document is a public document. People like himself and other concerned citizens will have copies. We have an emission study coming out and at that point we’re going to put everything together — the public meetings, the solid-waste overview, the emission overview and the concerns from the public — and we’re going to come up with a decision on how we’re going to manage solid waste into the future for the territory.

Mr. Cardiff: Well, it’s the minister’s own document that he released yesterday that has got the 15-year-old data in it. We think that the burning of garbage must stop. It must stop because it’s a risk to our health and our environment. There’s a

study out there that shows where toxic emissions are landing in residential areas. Our request to see this study was refused.

The reason cited under the ATIPP act was that the government will release it after the Legislative Assembly has closed down for the summer break. It is extremely convenient timing for this minister. The report is done. The minister could release it if he wanted, but he chooses to wait until after the Legislature is adjourned.

Mr. Speaker, this is shameful. The people have a right to know now — not at the minister's convenience — if their homes are in the toxic zone. What is the minister afraid of? Why will he sit on this air emissions report until after the Legislature adjourns so there will be less public scrutiny?

Hon. Mr. Lang: The emission study will be a public document. We are having public meetings. I invite the member opposite to participate. We are going to do something about solid-waste management in the territory and burning is one of the questions. Burning right now in some of our communities is very unhealthy. We have to have a solution, Mr. Speaker. We can't do one-offs like we did in the past. We have got to have a Yukon solution so not one community, but all communities, will be addressed on how solid waste will be managed. That is what we are doing. I look forward to the emission review coming out and I look forward to the end of the public meetings and then we will come out with a master plan on how we will move forward on solid-waste management.

Question re: Water management strategy

Mr. Elias: I have some questions for the Premier. Canada is home to one-fifth of the world's fresh water supply. Having a safe, secure drinking water supply, healthy aquatic ecosystems and reliable water supplies for a sustainable economy is key to Yukon's future quality of life. A comprehensive knowledge of the state of our water regimes at any given time needs research, partnerships and a strategy. Yukon's quality of life and life itself depend on having a healthy and sustainable water supply for the environment, for our communities and for our economic well-being.

Will the Premier start the process of coordinating the development of a comprehensive territorial water management strategy?

Hon. Ms. Taylor: That work is actually underway currently, as we speak. The Department of Environment is leading that initiative. As members opposite ought to be familiar with, water quality and the administration of a number of water management initiatives are housed in a number of various departments. The Department of Environment is undertaking a number of initiatives pertaining to the development of a water strategy framework, which will manage our water resources in a coordinated, proactive way; it will help minimize gaps and overlaps to yield a very highly efficient management system for water.

It will help Yukon respond to pressures on Yukon's water resources, such as the impacts of climate change and others. It will also better enable respective governments and the public to better understand the role and functions of each of the regulatory bodies involved.

So that process is fully underway. It involves a number of departments, and an interdepartmental management group has been formed that is overseeing the strategy as we speak.

Mr. Elias: The reason why I'm asking the Premier is because the Yukon government's responsibility with regard to water spans across five different departments, and I'm talking about a multi-jurisdictional effort here. Some of the goals included in a made-in-Yukon water strategy could include ensuring that each and every Yukoner has access to safe drinking water and that water is a human right. As such, Yukon waters can never be exported in mass quantities out of the Yukon. As well: that our critical aquatic ecosystems are maintained and protected; that we manage our water supply effectively to support sustainable economic development; promote the gathering of data through research, so that Yukoners and our partners have access to the knowledge; and that we must ensure that our partners are empowered, informed and fully engaged in water stewardship in our territory.

Will the Premier coordinate the development of a comprehensive territorial water management strategy?

Hon. Ms. Taylor: I will be very pleased to reiterate for the member opposite that this government views water management as a high priority for the Government of Yukon and is in fact working toward an overall Yukon water management framework that involves a number of various departments.

When it comes to water quality, the Department of Environment monitors compliance of water quality standards in licences, provides input to Water Board interventions, participates in hearings as technical experts, and provides detailed environmental assessment project reviews primarily relating to technical issues when it comes to impact on water quality. We operate the Canada-Yukon Water Quality Monitoring Network under a draft agreement with Environment Canada to track water quality trends. We operate a water analysis lab and coordinate external lab water quality analyses. We also conduct water quality assessments and drainage basin studies of watersheds and heritage rivers. We also represent the Government of Yukon on numerous national and interdepartmental committees, including the Canadian Council of Ministers of Environment Water Quality Task Group, a water quality monitoring sub-group, a development committee on municipal waste-water effluent and the Yukon River Watershed Management Working Group. So, Mr. Speaker, our government is doing its part to protect and preserve Yukon's water.

Mr. Elias: Mr. Speaker, the effect of climate change alone has the potential to drastically change the dynamics of our water systems — the effect it has on our communities, our environment and our economies. I will give but one example. Scientific research trends suggest that our glaciers are melting — glaciers that feed spawning grounds for the salmon. No glacial melt equals no spawning salmon grounds in some cases in the future. We have an obligation to future generations of Yukoners to safeguard our water resources and develop a comprehensive framework. We absolutely must recognize that there are limits to the availability of our Yukon water supply.

Will the Premier direct his Cabinet to begin the development of an all-inclusive and comprehensive territorial water management strategy with the federal, First Nation and municipal governments and NGOs?

Hon. Ms. Taylor: That is in fact what this government is doing. We are undertaking work to develop a Yukon water management framework. That project is well underway. Once completed, it will enable Yukon — and I will reiterate for the member opposite — to manage our water resources in a better coordinated, proactive way — an integrated, comprehensive manner.

It will also enable us to minimize the gaps and overlaps to yield a highly efficient management system. It will also help Yukon respond to pressures on Yukon's water resources including that of climate change. It would also help the public as well as others better understand the role and functions of each of the regulatory bodies involved.

Mr. Speaker, that work is certainly well underway. In the meantime, Yukon continues to be involved in a number of collaborations with First Nations, and I refer to a northern and international research river basin study associated with hydrology and climate change. We were also involved in an international climate change study pertaining to the Wolf Creek research basin, a significant project that entails numerous entities. I will again reiterate for the member opposite that we are represented on a number of national interdepartmental committees.

Question re: Addictions treatment

Mr. Elias: Mr. Speaker, if it's the Justice minister's goal to help Yukoners achieve a better quality of life, no matter what state their life may be in, then I challenge the minister to commit to dealing with the alcohol and drug abuse, to protecting the most vulnerable, and to truly making our territory a better place to live.

It's important for Yukoners to have faith in our correctional and treatment systems, Mr. Speaker, but unfortunately, Yukoners are being told to wait for years for better programming, when the fact of the matter is that our citizens need access to better programs now, at our correctional centre, young offenders facilities, residential youth treatment centres, Adult Resource Centre — the list goes on and on. Will the minister commit to improving our system and ensuring that needs are met for all Yukoners requiring any treatment services?

Hon. Ms. Horne: A moot point, but totally irrelevant because we are already doing a lot to point out our Yukon substance abuse action plan. The Yukon substance abuse action plan is a major initiative based on four strategic directions, Mr. Speaker: harm reduction, prevention, treatment and enforcement. We are active in all those areas. Government departments have made major strides to meet these objective and the commitments in the Yukon's substance abuse action plan.

For example, we have a new *Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act*, the new RCMP street crime reduction team, the new program for children who witness violence — or OWLS — the Community Wellness Court, the Domestic Violence Treatment Option Court and substance abuse management programs that are being offered at WCC and throughout the Yukon.

Work is underway to develop a new community resource directory, a position to support the development of capacity-building plans in communities, and the list goes on, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Elias: The minister didn't answer the question. The minister seems to get on her feet and claim that only she is the keeper of the truth. Well, Yukoners are telling me the truth, and I'm going to give her a specific situation. Yukoners have come to me and said that the way we help heal the people in care must change. They have said that we've got to stop watching these kids hurt themselves.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

Speaker: Minister of Justice, on a point of order.

Hon. Ms. Horne: We wonder why we don't have more women in government. This is why — when we have the members opposite talking down to women in this Assembly.

Speaker's ruling

Speaker: There doesn't appear to be a point of order. This is simply a dispute among members.

Mr. Elias: Yukoners have come to me and said that we've got to stop watching these kids hurt themselves. We need better programs and open access to rehabilitation programs. We need the system to stop tying our hands. We need land-based healing programs with life and employment skills. Most importantly we need to be listened to, Mr. Speaker.

Yukoners have been telling this minister that things are wrong and that is not a moot point. Will the minister tell us how many days in the residential youth treatment program that youth continue to show up after having been drinking?

Hon. Ms. Horne: I think the member opposite should be talking to the minister responsible for the youth in Yukon. I can tell you what we're doing at Whitehorse Correctional Centre and in the communities to make Yukon a safer place. As I say, we have many initiatives ongoing for substance abuse. Substance abuse has proven to be the major contributor to people coming into the justice system and Whitehorse Correctional Centre. We are addressing the problem.

Mr. Elias: I really don't care which minister across the floor gets up, but this issue is important, and it needs to get addressed because it comes directly from Yukoners. The youth in this territory who have gone into the government's care need attention now. This is a specific concern that has been brought to my attention from Yukoners who genuinely care about the health and well-being of these youth.

They want to know what programming is in place and that issues within the treatment programs or centres are being dealt with. The government needs to deal with the issues at the treatment centres now, not years down the road, when the new correctional centre is built. Youth are still suffering. They're not getting the assistance they need to get on and stay on the straight and narrow, and they're being brushed aside and not being dealt with.

Will the minister tell us the number of alcohol- and drug-related incidents that have been documented at the residential

youth treatment services and what has been done to deal with these incidents?

Hon. Mr. Hart: We provide several alcohol and addiction programs for youth to assist them with counselling and dealing with residential and other issues and services they need in order to pass over their particular circumstances. We provide counselling through the Many Rivers program and the Second Opinion Society program. We also provide issues through our alcohol program.

We have a program that'll enable youth to go through the process and allow them to obtain the necessary counselling to assist them with their difficulty, whether it's alcohol or whether it's addiction. We are working with all the youth throughout there. We have social workers in our rural areas that'll assist in that area also, in addition to the professional people within our rural areas who can assist in providing that kind of assistance to our youth, especially in our rural areas.

Question re: Peel watershed land use plan

Mr. Cardiff: Mr. Speaker, the *Draft Peel Watershed Land Use Plan* released last month is an impressive document in many ways, and the commissioners tasked with this tough job deserve a lot of credit and thanks for the work that they've done. However, I believe their work was made even harder by a Yukon government policy directive recommending no compensation and no expropriation regarding the existing mineral claims in the conservation zone of the planning area. Why did the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources direct the commission to take compensation and expropriation of existing claims off the table?

Hon. Mr. Cathers: Mr. Speaker, I again would remind the Member for Mount Lorne that the commission's document, the commission's work, is a document that is owned by and belongs to the commission as they do the work set out under chapter 11 of the *Umbrella Final Agreement*.

They have the obligation to develop a draft plan. Once that draft plan comes forward, Yukon citizens once again are very strongly encouraged to provide their input on that plan. With regard to the member's specific question, the member understands, or should understand, that again the process is underway right now. Once the process is concluded, we will review that document.

Mr. Cardiff: The draft plan is out and there is a process. The process — and the minister said this; I believe we've all said it — should be free from political interference, but it appears there was some interference by the government.

I have for filing a report entitled *Analysis of Mineral Claims Issues in the Peel Watershed* written by Joan Kuyek who was formerly with MiningWatch Canada. It's my understanding that the Minister of Tourism and Culture has recently been given a copy of this report. Citing previous reports, it concludes that none of the major claims in the watershed are ever likely to proceed beyond advanced exploration without billions of dollars in investments from governments to develop infrastructure.

Has the minister commissioned his own analysis of what it would cost to buy out existing mineral claims either through

expropriation or compensation in the conservation zone of the Peel watershed?

Hon. Mr. Fentie: The problem for the member of the third party on this matter is, on the one hand, the member is inferring that there should not be political interference in the process and yet, on the other hand, he has just listed in great detail a number of areas where the member wants the government to interfere in. That is the point, Mr. Speaker. The government is not interfering in a duly constituted process that has given rise from the *Umbrella Final Agreement*. The commission has a job to do. They have been mandated to do that job. They are out in the public and living up to that obligation with their draft plan, engaging with the public. When that is done then governments must address their responsibilities and obligations under the *Umbrella Final Agreement* and the land use planning process.

The point is that this government has not and will not interfere in that duly mandated process. The members opposite can't have it both ways. They have to decide whether they would interfere or not.

Mr. Cardiff: The Premier is wrong because, if he would read the draft report, it says right in there that the government gave direction to the commission to take expropriation and compensation off the table, that that wasn't part of what was allowed. All I'm doing is asking why the government did that. I'm not suggesting they interfere politically; I'm suggesting they already have.

Why did the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources direct the commission to take compensation and expropriation of existing claims off the table?

Hon. Mr. Fentie: We are all well aware of the New Democrats' position and view on the mining industry in the Yukon Territory — well aware of that. To suggest that allowing third party interests to not be excluded from a duly mandated process is something this government has not done and will not do. If the NDP chooses to take that position, I'll leave that to the public to judge the New Democrats in this House and in this territory.

We are not going to interfere; we have not interfered in the process. The process has to follow its due course and I would encourage the member of the third party to recognize that interference in these processes has created in the past serious issues. This government came into office and actually cleaned up one of those serious issues — that was Fishing Branch and finally getting that particular initiative to its conclusion and the implementation of a management plan for a very special place in the Yukon.

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

Hon. Mr. Cathers: Mr. Speaker, I would request the unanimous consent of the House to call at this time Motion No. 783, standing in the name of the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin.

Unanimous consent re calling Motion No. 783

Speaker: The Member for Lake Laberge has requested the unanimous consent of the House to call Motion No. 783,

standing in the name of the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin. Are you agreed?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Some Hon. Members: Disagreed.

Speaker: Unanimous consent has been denied.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

Speaker: On a point of order, the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin.

Mr. Elias: I would request the unanimous consent of the House to call for debate Motion No. 783, standing in the name of the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin, following conclusion of the debate on Motion No. 786, standing in the name of the Member for Kluane.

Speaker's ruling

Speaker: Order please. The Hon. Member for Vuntut Gwitchin cannot ask for unanimous consent until the next notice of motion on the Order Paper has been debated and dealt with.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

OPPOSITION PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

MOTIONS OTHER THAN GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

Motion No. 786

Clerk: Motion No. 786, standing in the name of Mr. McRobb.

Speaker: It is moved by the Member for Kluane

THAT this House urges the Government of Canada to provide sufficient resources to allow the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation's Northern Service to continue producing a high standard of service within Yukon.

Mr. McRobb: I would like to begin by expressing appreciation on behalf of the Yukon Liberal Party to all other members of this Assembly for allowing this motion to come forward today, especially given the sizable workload remaining with the budget and other pieces of legislation. It is my intention to be quite brief on this motion, and I thank other members for agreeing to also be concise in their remarks. If not constrained by time limitations, Mr. Speaker, I am sure all members would like to speak at length to this motion about their own experiences and those of their constituents and others regarding the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation.

We look forward to the support of all members today for this motion. It's very important to send a unified message to the Government of Canada about how much Yukoners value the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. That is why we have brought forward this motion today.

The essence of the motion is to urge the federal government to sufficiently fund the CBC's northern service. The CBC's northern service provides broadcast services to Canada's north, which in terms of land mass comprises about 40 percent of our country, Mr. Speaker. Across the north, CBC Radio and Television provides essential communications to our

communities, our sister territories and our nation. Everyone should know by now that CBC is faced with a huge budget shortfall and is being forced to make deep cuts to its services. These budget cuts could easily exceed \$200 million, or about 20 percent of the corporation's entire base allocation.

We know that the cutbacks have already impacted the north. It's my understanding that CBC Yukon has already reduced the number of its casual employees, and there may be more cuts yet to come. We know Yukoners depend on the local service for news, community features, weather reports and emergency situations.

You know, everyone has their own favourite CBC story, and I'd like to share — briefly — my favourite. Back about August 19, 1974, I was returning from Clinton Creek to Whitehorse, and there was an unseasonable snowstorm. Up on the Top of the World Highway, the snow was about two-thirds of a metre deep. By the time I neared Carmacks, I was able to tune in CBC Radio, and there was Christmas music playing. For mid-August, that was quite an unusual event, and that's something I'll never forget.

In speaking earlier today with the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin, he also mentioned the importance of CBC Radio to his upbringing and culture, as it is with several of his constituents.

He recalled that when he was young, his grandmother always stopped the work of the day out on the Old Crow Flats to listen to CBC's request show and the Gwich'in program. These programs are what kept them informed of what was happening in the outside world and how people were doing on the land. It was especially nice for them to hear requests from family and friends. Listening to CBC on short-wave radio or to the programming from the Delta was a daily must for them while out on the land. Later in life, when the member brings his children out on the land to Old Crow Flats, he also stops work for the day and listens to CBC local programming.

There's an example of the importance of how CBC programming provides services to the rural parts of our territory and has a positive effect on our culture, bringing people to a common level of understanding of community events and national news. It has been related to an important thread in the fabric that pulls our nation together.

I think all members could agree on that point.

Now the CBC's northern service provides an essential service. We want to see that service continue unencumbered and unaffected. That is where the Government of Canada has a responsibility, because only it can provide for the Crown corporations. It is obvious that more money is needed to maintain existing services and to avoid deteriorating further the quality of programming across the north. The motion before us today urges the Government of Canada to provide sufficient resources to allow the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation's northern service to continue producing a high standard of service within the Yukon.

Again, Mr. Speaker, I trust all members will support this motion and speak briefly to it so we can progress to other business this afternoon and ultimately send a united message to Ottawa on this important issue.

Thank you.

Hon. Mr. Fentie: Mr. Speaker, though the government side places great credence in the Member for Kluane's view that there's other business to conduct, the government's going to take some time to point out to the Member for Kluane and his caucus that there are definitely some problems with the motion as tabled. But I first want to begin by stating on behalf of the government side the astonishment that we feel that we have put this discussion ahead of access to food for people in northern Canada.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

Speaker: Order please. On the point of order.

Mr. McRobb: On the point of order, Mr. Speaker, the member's referring to another matter other than this motion. It was part of an earlier decision by you today to listen to members on that matter, and now the speaker wishes to speak to it. I would say that part of the discussion should not be allowed here. We should stay with the motion at hand.

Speaker: This speaker being me, or the Member for —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Speaker: Minister of Economic Development, on the point of order.

Hon. Mr. Kenyon: Regarding the Member for Kluane's point of order, we are debating federal funding for programs such as CBC broadcasting in northern communities and the very important provision of food mail to northern communities.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Speaker: On a point of order.

Mr. Mitchell: On the point of order, Mr. Speaker, according to Standing Order 19(b), when a member speaks to matters other than the question under discussion, or a motion or amendment the member intends to move, or a question of privilege — this is the motion before us today on private members' day and I believe that other members are trying to get other matters into the debate.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Speaker: On the point of order.

Hon. Mr. Rouble: I'm sorry, Mr. Speaker, but now the Leader of the Liberal Party is imputing motive to members and ascribing motive and reasons in raising a point of order. I would suggest he's out of order in raising a point of order.

Speaker: This is great. Anybody else?

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Speaker's ruling

Speaker: The Chair has consistently allowed a wide, wide range of discussions during motion debate. Now, the honourable members are in fact going to have to police themselves. You each have a responsibility in this House, not only the Chair. Hon. Premier, you have the floor, but keep that in mind, please.

Hon. Mr. Fentie: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I think the issue and putting it in its correct context includes

investments required that are unique, unique to meeting northern challenges. That's the point the government side is making. However, that said, I can assure this House that the government will always side with Yukoners, especially those who live in remote communities where those types of unique investments are required and should be continued in all matters.

Now, back to the Member for Kluane's motion: though the government side takes no issue with the concept of the federal government's investment in CBC, there are definitely some problems with the motion and the government will, in the course of debate this afternoon, point those out and do our best, in hope that there will be cooperation from the Official Opposition, to actually produce a motion and a decision of this Assembly that will be effective in addressing the overall issue.

The first point the government side will make is that, when we in this Assembly decide that we will support an entity like the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation and its needs here in the north, how can we forget the Northern Native Broadcasting Yukon at the same time? That corporation, in broadcasting across the north, has received significant investments from the national government. Should they not be included in this Assembly's position and stand in addressing northern broadcasting in its entirety? I would submit that they should be included.

Furthermore, an inclusion of the CBC — the corporation itself and what it intends to do in its budgetary process — this government has already clearly taken the position that the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation in addressing their budgetary issues and needs should not — should not — through that process compromise the integrity of CBC's broadcasting capacity north of the 60th parallel.

There is going to be a discussion today with regard to this motion. There will be a great deal of input from the government side to make every effort to engage the Official Opposition in improving the motion and positioning this Assembly in a position that it should take — all inclusive.

Now getting to the CBC, there is no question that we recognize not only the need but the value and the contribution the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation has made to northern communities. For those of us who have spent any length of time in the north, we all recognize what the CBC means, whether it be through radio decades ago as one of our only connections to the south and to the world as a form of medium or whether it be the inception of television through the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation — the issues of infrastructure across the north that provided that type of communication for northerners in isolated communities — I think we all shared and lived in that history and where it has brought us to today.

Therefore, supporting the continuance of CBC's capacity in broadcasting and in journalism overall in the north is obviously a prerequisite for any member of this Assembly and for any government north of the 60th parallel. We will be supportive of this overall approach to Canada, but it will include the approach to the corporation itself to appropriately budget their issues to ensure that they are not negatively impacting the north and their broadcasting capacity here.

Now, Mr. Speaker, there is an onus on the corporation, its head office, its board, its CEO — the decision-makers — to

recognize that. And in working with our national government and the Canadian taxpayers, who, by the way, have invested dearly over these many, many decades in the corporation as a public broadcasting corporation, all these matters should be reflected in this Assembly to ensure that we are doing our jobs, Mr. Speaker.

So, it gets me back to why we've come to this juncture. This Assembly could have, this afternoon, done something of great significance in dealing with Canada Post and in dealing with the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. That's exactly the approach the government side was taking. Unfortunately, the Member for Kluane was the one sole dissenting voice.

So Mr. Speaker, the time has come for us to engage constructively on these matters. We, the government side, will. We will be amending this motion. We will be engaging with the members opposite on the motion as tabled and the motion as amended should they chose to cooperate, and then we will move forward. But we, the government, will be addressing the issue of the postal services as it relates to food delivery in isolated communities in northern Canada as well.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I am more than pleased to hear from the members opposite on their views, especially if the Official Opposition could explain why they did not include another broadcasting entity so valuable to the north, the Northern Native Broadcasting corporation itself.

Speaker: Are you prepared for the question?

Mr. Nordick: I was kind of assuming that this was quite important to the Member for Kluane and that somebody else from the Liberal caucus would have gotten up to speak to this motion. But I see we're missing a couple of people, not willing to —

Speaker's statement

Speaker: Order please. The honourable member should know by this point in time not to mention whether or not people are in the House.

The Hon. Member for Klondike has the floor, please.

Mr. Nordick: I meant missing on the debate, Mr. Speaker.

There is no doubt that the CBC North's television and radio shows are of vital importance to the people of the Yukon, especially those outside of Whitehorse. On March 26, the CBC reported that while there may be staffing cuts, the regional director, John Agnew, stated that CBC North's local and TV programming are not affected. "We have no intention of reducing the amount of programming we do," Agnew told CBC News in Yellowknife.

"All the shows that we currently produce, both on radio and television, and right across the North, we're going to maintain all those programs... We're going to have a challenge with how to do this with reduced staff, and we're going to have to figure it out." Those were statements made by Mr. Agnew with regard to this motion.

The CBC's mandate states: "the Canadian Broadcasting system should: (i) serve to safeguard, enrich and strengthen the

cultural, political, social and economic fabric of Canada." It should also "encourage the development of Canadian expression by providing a wide range of programming that reflects Canadian attitudes, opinions, ideas, values and artistic creativity, by displaying Canadian talent in programming and by offering information and analysis concerning Canada and other countries from a Canadian point view.

"The programming provided by the Canadian broadcasting system should be varied and comprehensive, providing a balance of information, enlightenment and entertainment for men, women and children of all ages, interests and tastes."

Mr. Speaker, it should be drawn from local, regional, national and international sources. CBC, along with the territory's other broadcasters, provides these essential services for the people of the Yukon. I know this motion is focused on just one aspect — the CBC — but there are other things that provide significant information in this territory.

Mr. Speaker, I would be remiss on this note not to mention the valuable radio service in my community. CFYT 106.9 is a community radio station operating in Dawson City, Yukon Territory, Canada. I believe they currently broadcast three days a week on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays. The programming schedule grows with the population of Dawson City during the summer season. They provide a wide variety of range of programming representing Dawson's unique population.

In addition to regular programming, CFYT offers special broadcasts of community events, television broadcasts of local events and festivals such as the famous Dawson City Music Festival, and are currently working toward remote broadcasting capabilities.

Mr. Speaker, CFYT radio station is non-profit and community organized. It is run by the Dawson City Community Radio Society, a volunteer board of seven members, 30 volunteers plus, DJs, and countless other volunteers and supporters. I encourage everyone to look at the CFYT.ca Web site. I'd like to take this opportunity to thank the volunteers that are involved in providing this great initiative in my community.

Now, back to the CBC. I will only speak on the CBC, and I'll let my colleagues speak to the needs of the Northern Native Broadcasting services, which the Premier outlined a little bit earlier today.

Mr. Speaker, there are many people in the rural regions of the territory for whom these radio broadcasts are their link to the world. It is how they keep up to date on social, cultural and political events and situations that may affect them on different levels. This could be at local, territorial or even on international levels.

There are a lot of people who rely on the weather reports of the CBC so they can go out and enjoy our natural wonders — the Dempster Highway, Ethel Lake and many other lakes and rivers, Mr. Speaker.

The territory's outdoor sports enthusiasts, who are out in droves during the summer, also use the CBC. Our tourists use the CBC. All these groups rely on the broadcasters in this territory — not just the CBC — to keep them informed also.

Mr. Speaker, many individuals rely on broadcasters for their morning news while eating their breakfast and on their commutes to work. The weekend radio shows, like *Vinyl Café*,

entertain many in the territory while they enjoy an afternoon coffee. I would truly be ashamed if these services were cut.

Mr. Speaker, I will now quote a message from Hubert T. Lacroix, president and CEO of CBC from the CBC Annual Report 2007-08. Mr. Speaker, the president's message was, "This is an exciting time to join CBC/Radio-Canada: so much is changing so quickly in broadcasting and in Canadian society, creating new possibilities for connecting Canadians to one another and to the world. Whenever I'm asked how Canada's national public broadcaster is responding to all this change, I think of a news team I met during a visit to our Vancouver studios. The team had prepared a story on the use of tasers by police in Canada. The journalist was a bilingual Francophone based in British Columbia, the cameraman was a bilingual Anglophone working for Télévision de Radio-Canada in B.C., and the researcher and the Radio producer were Anglophones living in Toronto. Their story would be presented that evening on both our French and English national Television networks; the following morning, it would be adapted for our English and French national Radio, and more in-depth information would be available on our French and English websites as streaming audio and video, and as a podcast – and the story would be picked up by other news organizations around the world."

Mr. Speaker, the president goes on to say, "This is just one of hundreds of examples I could cite of how CBC/Radio-Canada is pooling its strengths and resources to create more and better content — whether it's News, Sports or Entertainment — that we're making available to audiences whenever and however they want it, in more ways than ever."

He also proceeded to say, "This is allowing us to more efficiently and effectively do what Canadian national broadcasters have always done, which is to bring the country together by being the place where the audience can see reflections of their own experience, and experiences of their fellow citizens."

"By presenting the full range of domestic opinions and concerns and a homegrown perspective on international events, we help stimulate debate about the issues that shape society, and thereby enrich the cultural and democratic life of Canadians. We are the only organisation with a mandate to connect St. John's to Lakehead, Winnipeg to Trois-Rivières, Iqaluit to Montréal."

Mr. Speaker, that ranges from Vancouver to Old Crow. The president continued on to say, "What can Canadians expect from the CBC | Radio-Canada in the future? In February 2008, the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage released a report that in its recommendations proposes a compelling answer to this question."

The report, *CBC/Radio-Canada: Defining Distinctiveness in the Changing Media Landscape*, calls for a memorandum of understanding between the government and CBC/Radio-Canada, renewed every seven years, which spells out exactly what services citizens can expect from their national broadcaster, and what level of funding is necessary to provide these services.

So, Mr. Speaker, I want to repeat that. This is a message from the president and CEO of CBC. The report, *CBC/Radio-Canada: Defining Distinctiveness in the Changing Media*

Landscape calls for a memorandum of understanding between the government and CBC/Radio-Canada, renewed every seven years, which spells out exactly what services citizens can expect from their national public broadcaster, and what level of funding is necessary to provide it. Mr. Speaker, such an agreement would give CBC/Radio-Canada the financial stability and certainty required to plan effectively and would make us even more accountable to the government and the public.

We commend the committee for having produced a carefully considered blueprint to the future of public broadcasting in Canada that can be acted upon, and we urge the government to give it a favourable consideration.

Once again, this is a message from the president and CEO of CBC. He wanted to take this opportunity to acknowledge the contributions of his predecessor as president and former CEO, Robert Rabinovitch, whose leadership built a strong organization that is better managed: "These are critical qualities for remaining competitive in very challenging environment. I also want to express my thanks to the Chair and the Board of Directors for the many kinds of support they have given me. After six months in my new job, I am very excited by the opportunities I see for pushing even further in CBC/Radio-Canada's pursuit of excellence. We will set the bar high, striving to be the best in everything we do, from offering the most distinct and high-quality Canadian content available anywhere, to leading innovation in new broadcasting platforms and services. Of course, these are goals that can only be achieved when our employees are fully engaged, and to help ensure this is the case, I've been meeting and talking to as many of these exceptional people as I can".

Mr. Speaker, just so everybody knows this is a message from the president and CEO of CBC.

He went on to say, "For this reason, I've announced my three priorities for the near future: people, programs and pushing forward. With the Union leaders, and with everyone at the Corporation, I've articulated the pressing need to bring more respect..."

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Quorum count

Speaker: Minister of Economic Development, on a point of order.

Hon. Mr. Kenyon: With apologies to the MLA from Klondike, pursuant to Standing Order 3(2), I note that there is no quorum in the House at this point.

Speaker: Order please. According to Standing Order 3(4), actually, if at any time during the sitting of the Assembly the Speaker's attention is drawn to the fact that there does not appear to be a quorum, the Speaker will cause the bells to ring for four minutes, then do a count.

Bells

Speaker: I have shut off the bells and I will do a count. There are 15 members present; the quorum is present. We will now continue debate. The Member for Klondike has the floor.

Mr. Nordick: I see everyone's attention is drawn back on this motion. I would like to take this opportunity to maybe repeat a couple of the highlights from the CEO's message just so everybody is aware what the CEO of CBC stated in the CBC/Radio-Canada Annual Report, 2007-08.

There is one passage which is very important here — it is the last passage and it is what I was about to read. He goes on to say, "For this reason, I've announced my three priorities for the near future: people, programs and pushing forward." Mr. Speaker, one thing we have to realize with our broadcasting corporation in Canada is that it is a national broadcast and funded by the government and it has to take in all aspects of Canadians, but what it can't do is just grow and grow and grow and decrease services. CBC is very important to the north. We need to ensure that the services of the north, and especially north of 60°, are maintained.

So, on that note, I'd like to propose a friendly amendment to this motion. This is one amendment, with a couple more to come today.

Amendment proposed

Mr. Nordick: I move

THAT Motion No. 786 be amended by adding the following after the word "Yukon": "; and urges the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, in implementing any financial restraint measures, to maintain the integrity of its broadcasting services north of 60°."

Speaker: Order please. The motion is in order, and it reads as follows:

THAT Motion No. 786 be amended by adding the following after the word "Yukon": "; and urges the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, in implementing any financial restraint measures, to maintain the integrity of its broadcasting services north of 60°."

On the amendment, Member for Klondike, please.

Mr. Nordick: I don't have much time left in my debate today. I know the members opposite will gladly join in this debate, since it's a high priority for the Member for Kluane, as opposed to other motions that we're trying to debate today.

But on this amendment: it urges the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, in implementing any financial restraint measures, to maintain the integrity of broadcasting north of 60° — not just in the Yukon, but north of 60°. And the key word is "financial restraint." Corporations need to work within the financial parameters given to them. They need to provide quality services with efficiency. This amendment is helping us urge the CBC to work efficiently in providing its high quality services north of 60°.

One thing I'd like to also mention is that I'm not sure if the Member for Kluane thought about other government-funded broadcasting services in the territory. I have one community radio station in my community that's funded by government. Do we not care about them? I do. I'm not sure what the members opposite are saying.

I could add amendment after amendment to include all these, but we don't have enough time today — depending on

how much the members opposite speak on this amendment and future ones — but we might get to that amendment later on today.

So, Mr. Speaker, I'm going to wrap up my comments; I'm going to let my colleagues speak to future amendments with regard to the Northern Native Broadcasting network. This amendment is just focusing on north of 60° and integrity of its broadcasting in north of 60°.

Mr. McRobb: Well, you know, I think the most important thing has already been said about this motion. It's an opportunity for all members to work together to send a united message to Ottawa. We can belabour the sub-points and argue all day about how many angels are dancing on the head of a pin, but the important thing is sending a unified message to Ottawa.

Some of the criticism I heard from the Premier — and I'm quite reluctant to go there, Mr. Speaker, because at the outset I thanked all members for their support for allowing this motion to come forward today, yet there was some poison dropped in the well by the government side on this matter.

There was a positive, inclusive approach that was set out during the presentation of this motion, and I suppose the challenge for us is to stay on the high road and not be lured by those travelling below the high road. Let's leave it at that.

If the government side has constructive amendments, let's hear them. There is no need to debate them all afternoon. Let's have them presented and, if we're fine with them, we could bring it to a vote.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Mr. McRobb: The Member for Copperbelt raises an excellent point, and it's on my mind as well. Why not do them all in one amendment? That is consistent with the past practice of this House and avoids repetitive procedures in here that are all time-consuming.

The point was made at the outset that the discussion this afternoon would be kept brief; all members were invited to be succinct in their comments; also, Mr. Speaker at the House leaders' meeting this morning, the Official Opposition House Leader — which is me — indicated to the others the Official Opposition would be putting up one speaker and the total time consumed would be about five minutes. I heard consistent feedback from the others and included, with the other motion about the Old Crow food mail program, it was thought at the House leaders' meeting that —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

Speaker: On a point of order, the Member for Klondike.

Mr. Nordick: I do believe that discussing things that happened during the House leaders' meeting isn't really relevant and if the member would like to speak about what happened in House leaders, I'd be willing to do that too.

Speaker's ruling

Speaker: There is no point of order. The Chair has no control over what happens during House leaders' meetings.

Member for Kluane, you have the floor.

Mr. McRobb: Thank you. I'll just continue on. It was felt by the representatives in the room that the entire time to be consumed for debate on both of the motions would be about one hour and the next item of business listed would bring us probably up to about 3:30 p.m. or 4:00 p.m. in the afternoon and we would be requiring other orders of business. There was no mention of a Yukon Party filibuster. This is catching us by surprise; it's rather needless. I would remind all members —

I see the Premier now taking notes. I would remind all members that along with the unified message to Ottawa is attached a copy of the transcript of today's debate, so we should focus on the message we want delivered to Ottawa and refrain from putting extraneous matters on record.

We too want to discuss the motion regarding the food mail program for Old Crow, and our Member for Vuntut Gwitchin will request unanimous consent for that to be debated, following the conclusion of this motion today.

As far as the amendment itself goes, I'm basically fine with it. The wording is a little repetitious and the last symbol in the amendment — the degree symbol — was excluded from discussion.

But aside from that, we're fine with the amendment. We know that no one party in this Assembly has a monopoly on good ideas. We're open and believe in inclusion of good input from all members. We'd be happy to support this amendment. If the government has any others to propose, let's see them, but let's move on to the conclusion of this debate so we can also attend to other important public business.

Again, I do thank all members for supporting this motion being brought forward to debate. We know there are only five days left in this sitting and there's still a lot of other business that has yet to see the light of day on the floor of this Assembly.

Hon. Mr. Fentie: Given the Member for Kluane's point about the public's business — for 27 days the government side has been presenting the public's business. However, we view this motion and the issues related to the motion as tabled by the Member for Kluane and the Official Opposition as indeed part of the public's business, and that's why we're having the debate.

I would refer the Member for Kluane to statements just made.

The member is suggesting that this amendment, which clearly demonstrates there is much more to the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation's fiscal requirements than the public purse. It is the corporation's own fiscal management, the advertisements, how they deal with their budget, and how that reflects north of the 60th parallel. It's not just about the public purse. It's about the corporation itself and how it conducts its business and makes its decisions.

The government side would hardly define that as a sub-point or an extraneous matter. It's critical to the very substance of the discussion brought forward by the Official Opposition and the Member for Kluane. So it includes the fact that the fed-

eral government has a role to play with this amendment. We're including the fact that so does the corporation have a role to play.

What is the fundamental underpinning of the debate itself and the reason why the motion was brought forward? It is about broadcasting in the north, the long service of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, and what the future will hold for our public broadcasting corporation here in the north and indeed here in the Yukon.

Of course the government side wants to see this House move ahead as expeditiously as possible on the matter and present a unified position to the Government of Canada, to the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, and to the public in general, who, to a large degree, have the burden of the cost of the operations of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation.

I think that the amendment as tabled by the Member for Klondike certainly adds to the very context of the motion and the purpose for which the motion was brought forward, and we can, obviously, advance the motion as amended as soon as we get to the vote. But I think it's important that others put on record their views, their position and their ideas about what is one of the most fundamental ingredients of our fabric in the north, and that is the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. I think it's fair to say there are other broadcasting entities that should be included in this discussion, because there are dependencies in many cases on those.

So I will move along and refer the matter now to other members of the House. As amended, the government side certainly feels more comfortable that we're starting to get to the position we should take, which, as the Member for Kluane so aptly put, is the high road.

Mr. Cardiff: It was my intention today — or my hope — that we would be debating the government's \$1.003 billion budget. Today we have chosen to debate a motion about the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation's northern service and the amendment as proposed by the Member for Klondike.

First of all, my intention was to speak briefly to this, and I will attempt to still be brief while speaking to the amendment. I think nobody in the Yukon would deny the importance of CBC — the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation — to the north, whether it's the Yukon or the entire north of 60°, or northern British Columbia, northern Alberta, northern Saskatchewan, or right across Canada. It's a means of communication and we see that among many isolated communities, not just here in the Yukon but across northern Canada.

I see that the amendment speaks to services north of 60°. Well, Dease Lake isn't north of 60°. Good Hope Lake isn't north of 60°. There are vast areas of Ontario, Saskatchewan and Manitoba that aren't north of 60° that rely on CBC as a means of communication for local news, information about local events and coverage thereof.

Local weather is a very important issue. When you're travelling in the north, weather conditions — spring, summer, fall and winter — are very important so you know what's going on out there.

CBC covers issues of great importance to northerners. The other thing is they provide information through the AM signal — which was part of the Member for Klondike's original motion, No. 690, to include the provision of the AM broadcast signal here in the Yukon.

I think that Canadians in general, Yukoners and northerners, place a very high degree of trust in the CBC — in eastern Canada, and Radio-Canada in Quebec — to protect Canadian culture and identity both on radio and on television. I think that there is a concern out there that there could be the possibility for diminished service. The reasons for that, which haven't been mentioned by the government members opposite, are that there is a decline in support of the federal government. That's one of the purposes of the original motion, and the amendment speaks to the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, implementing financial restraint measures to maintain the integrity of its broadcasting services here in the Yukon and north of 60°. I would say it should be in northern Canada.

The reality of the matter is, and I heard the Member for Klondike say that the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation and Crown corporations need to operate within the financial parameters that they're given by their funder — the government. There is an analogy that could be drawn here, that we've been hearing about recently as well, about Crown corporations operating within the parameters of the financial resources they're given — that being the Yukon Housing Corporation and the struggles they're going through by not being given the financial resources to operate within their parameters and provide the services that are needed by Yukoners. But that's an argument for another day and we don't have time here today to debate that. We need to get debating the budget.

There's a graph available that shows the cuts that have been made to the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, going back to 1990. It's pretty much a steady decline. This year the cuts amount to about \$63 million. Those are the financial parameters the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation is faced with, and those are the financial restraint measures they're going to have to deal with.

That's the purpose of sending a united motion to Ottawa, with the transcript attached to it, as was mentioned by the Member for Kluane. We need to send a united message to the federal government, saying that the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation needs to be fully supported; and we're concerned about the financial restraint measures that they may be forced to take because of cuts in federal funding. So that's the purpose of the motion.

I can support the motion, and I can support the amendment. I can support amendments if the government would bring them forward, and we'll look at them. Our intention today was to move through this quickly, get the motion debated and get the message sent to Ottawa, so we can talk about the budget. We're just about through the legislative sitting, and we need to try to be more effective in the use of our time.

I won't say any more. I think I've covered all the points that needed to be covered for this debate. I look forward to voting on the amendment and the motion.

Hon. Mr. Kenyon: On the amendment, certainly, the CBC and its cuts or financial problems, et cetera, and the effect on the broadcasting services north of 60°, I understand and, to a large part, agree with the Member for Mount Lorne, although I think we're in the Yukon Legislature, so Dease Lake, Good Hope Lake and any others are not necessarily part of the debate, but I know the thought, and I do agree with that.

The problem here, of course, is that with the growing number of alternatives that people, that Canadians, have in terms of getting their information and getting their weather reports, getting their news, getting whatever, has certainly diminished, in many people's eyes — the usefulness of an organization or a broadcasting entity like CBC.

But I think what most Canadians forget is that when you come into the far north, especially when you get far enough north that you look at the satellite dishes and realize that they're pointing into the ground, and in many areas, don't get a number of the different services, those options are severely limited, and the CBC is an option that becomes much more realistic and important. And of course, much more important are the other northern broadcasting options, such as the Northern Native Broadcasting, not only in giving the information to the people in the north, but communicating the northern message to those in the south.

I always wonder that, in my travels, if I'm in a Canadian hotel, I get a wide range of American channels. If I'm in an American hotel, I don't get anything. I mean, you're lucky if you get CBC, and you certainly don't get any other Canadian alternatives.

We need to get Canada's message out and the northern message out to Canadians, because, of course, most of Canada is in a little 100-mile strip along the U.S. border.

We want to look at — and that is the importance of this amendment — all of the various things that will be involved in the things that I say. I think the Member for Kluane's heart was in the right place in making that motion. I still in my mind am not sure at all why he voted against his own caucus colleague for a second motion on financial restraints to the food mail program that are incredibly important to northerners. I think part of that too — and to my amazement — is the fact that the Liberal leader so far has refused to enter the debate in support of either of the members.

I do have to feel very gratified that he did enter the debate a few moments ago — if only off-microphone and off-camera and in the background — but at least he is trying, I suppose.

With those comments, Mr. Speaker, the government certainly supports this motion as amended and looks forward to continuing debate and looking at this motion to broaden it in such a way that it is much more meaningful.

My only parting comment is that I believe the Member for Kluane, when he was up on the amendment a moment ago, said that it was his intention — or it was the Official Opposition's intention — to request unanimous consent to debate the food mail motion after this one and, certainly without asking for a ruling from the Chair, if memory serves, that would be out of order — that it's now into another day, and that's very unfortunate.

Mr. Mitchell: Well, I've listened with great interest to the motion brought forward and the presentation to it made by the Member for Kluane and also to the members opposite and the Member for Mount Lorne, who have spoken to the amendment.

I think the original motion was well-intended but, in speaking to the amendment, I have no problem if members feel that it adds clarification, because it still speaks to maintaining the integrity of its broadcasting services north of 60°.

You know, Mr. Speaker, I'm not certain that Canadians living far south in larger cities understand just how important the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation service is to rural Canadians, and that pretty much includes all of Yukon. I know in rural Yukon, people refer to Whitehorse as the city, but anywhere else this would be considered pretty rural.

I know in living just south of the 60th parallel in the early 1970s, the CBC was the only broadcast medium we had available. There was no Internet; we didn't have television; and the private networks were difficult to listen to. It took a fair bit of ingenuity, and long antennas, to pick up any other service. But the CBC had a strong signal on 570 — an AM signal — and we could listen to it. It provided all kinds of information.

Culturally it provided the information that binds us together as a nation and reminds us, even up here in the north, that we are part of that nation. We listen to the CBC when we listen to national, provincial and territorial election results — that is how we learn them, over the radio. We didn't have television. It was the northern service that provided us with that information.

There are some voices and some of those voices are still in Yukon, Mr. Speaker — I think of Janet Patterson, who is now a spokesperson for the Yukon Energy Corporation, and I think of a former member of this Assembly, Pam Buckway.

These were broadcasters and we paid tribute just last week to Ron McFadyen for his service on the CBC and CKRW. These were the voices that brought us information. It was also important to learn of emergency information; day-to-day weather came from the CBC. Friends of mine who were on traplines — and when I visited them on traplines — would get information from the CBC, from battery-powered radios. That would be sometimes lifesaving information in terms of potential changes in weather patterns.

We learned about washouts of the Alaska Highway, which is the physical tie that connects us to southern Canada, from the CBC and what would be done about them. We learned about forest fires. So it provided us with culture, it provided us with essential information and it provided us with emergency information.

Hockey games — we didn't have the luxury of live television in those days — came through the CBC. I think most members probably know that when you're driving down the highway, you can still pick up the CBC broadcasts at one end of your dial in your vehicle radios and still listen to the audio of the television broadcast.

Later on, when I became a private pilot, many was the time flying in the north when I would turn the ADF — the automatic

direction finder — to the CBC, because it wasn't going to do me any good for navigating if I wasn't near a signal.

But we would fly along listening to the CBC. That was the entertainment and the information package in the aircraft, because you couldn't always reach flight services. Sometimes you weren't at an altitude when you're in mountains where you could actually talk to anybody else, but you could hear the CBC.

So, I think, as northerners, that we all know how important it is. I think that the amendment that focuses on maintaining the integrity of the broadcasting services north of 60° does nothing to diminish the motion, so I thank the Member from Klondike for the friendly amendment. I'd like to reiterate that we do want to get on to other matters. The members opposite made mention of the other motion. We would have liked to have had the opportunity to debate two motions today. We don't see why they're focused on a particular order. We think they're both important. They both speak to Yukon issues.

I think it's also important to note, Mr. Speaker, for the record, that this is opposition motion day and I think that it's important that opposition members on opposition motion day should actually, on that one day every two weeks, get to determine the order of debate and what the topics of debate will be. If the government is simply going to use their ability to seek consent on any given day to change the order, there isn't much opportunity left for opposition members to have their voice on the record on issues they think are important.

So with that, I would urge the government to be expeditious. If they have other amendments, which they keep referring to — they have very able staff upstairs, no doubt. We certainly don't want to drown in amendments all afternoon long, but rather, we think that if there's something else that the government feels the Member for Klondike has missed, they should be able to incorporate them into one amendment. Let's get this through. Let's show a united voice from this Assembly and move on to other important matters.

Thank you.

Hon. Ms. Taylor: Mr. Speaker, it has been a very interesting and intriguing debate over the last little while. I would like to thank, though, members of the Assembly for bringing forward this motion, and would also like to thank the Member for Klondike for bringing forward the amendment to the motion that we are currently debating.

At the risk of sounding repetitive, which I would also like to take issue with — I believe it was the Member for Kluane who claimed, you know, try and avoid being repetitive — I have to say that it's each and every one of our jobs to be able to speak to matters of importance to our constituents.

It is certainly every right of mine; likewise, it is every right of every other individual in this Assembly to be able to speak to the issue. So I may perhaps sound repetitive, but I have just as many important words to be able to put forward as the Member for Kluane and other members in the Assembly.

When I refer to CBC North — I just refer to my lifetime in the Yukon, having been born and raised in the Yukon, and in Watson Lake in particular. I swear to God, some of the first

noise that I became accustomed to — some of the first sounds or some of the first words were from CBC. In our household, that was the thing that came on first thing in the morning, at 6:00 in the morning. I knew it was my father's wake-up call, but it was also an opportunity to become up to speed on weather events, on the newscast, even on the ski reports from around the territory, to local coming events and community events. CBC has really played a very important role in all of our lives, and it has evolved, to be sure.

I have been in the Yukon, I am proud to say, for more than 40 years and CBC North, in particular, has evolved over the years. I have to say that in some respects it has grown but in other respects the programming has also diminished, to be sure. It is unfortunate that we as Yukoners have to unite at these times to discuss the funding reductions and also priority decisions but it is important to put our voices on record. I know the very importance that CBC North has played in all of our lives — in my life, in my family's lifetime and certainly that of the lives of Yukoners at large. It doesn't matter which community we may come from, CBC has played a very vital role in really being able to broadcast our history, who we are and what makes us so proud to call the Yukon and the north, Canada's north, our home.

I have to say that the north has a very emerging importance to the world right now. I can't say this enough. Having just returned from a meeting of the foreign affairs ministers in Norway — it was a ministerial meeting of the Arctic Council representing all the Arctic countries that surround the Arctic Ocean. It was very intriguing for me to be able to witness firsthand alongside the other two premiers from the other two territories the very importance of the north and all that is transpiring in the north — primarily attributed to climate change and all the challenges that come with that, including the opening of our waterways and what that means for marine vessels, shipping assessments, our environment, resource development — and what does that mean for our indigenous peoples of the north, worldwide, and, of course, all others who reside in the north.

I have to say that it is just a reminder to me that we need to be present at these forums and that we need to ensure that our voices are heard. In order to do that, we need to have a very strong voice. Of course, that voice is articulated through our public broadcaster, CBC.

CBC is certainly not the only broadcaster in the north. Reference was also made to Northern Native Broadcasting Yukon. Others have played a very important role and continue to play an important role in influencing that voice in the north.

My point is to say that when it comes to radio broadcast, when it comes to television broadcast — particularly north of 60° — it effectively provides a very important voice. It brings issues of emerging importance to northerners and also from northerners to southerners. I think it's very important to continue to have that dialogue, to continue to have that effective connection with other communities and other northern areas.

Communication of course is very important to the social fabric of our territory. We just have to take a look at the significant events that CBC has been able to broadcast over the

many years — significant events to the north's development. I won't even reflect on any of them, because I could spend many more minutes than what I already have allotted to talking about significant events that have evolved that have significantly contributed to the development and evolution of the territory.

But I just wanted to make that point, that when it does come to the north, we have to assure ourselves that we are present, that we do continue to have a strong voice, and that we do remain connected with the rest of the world. The CBC has been able to do that through radio and television shows, and of course broadcast of newsworthy events, but it's also a voice for bringing forward our culture and bringing that alive, in terms of music, in terms of artistic performances, and so forth. It has been very effective in being able to bring alive the north and reflect the emerging importance of the north to the rest of the country and to the evolution of our country.

This is not the first time that reductions to this particular area have been considered, and I have to say that it's really important for us to take the opportunity to unite on occasions such as this and to speak to the very importance of CBC North and the Northern Native Broadcasting Yukon as well. They have also been subjected to recent federal reductions, and I think that's important to put that forward as well. We need to continue to keep those top of mind and to continue to raise those concerns. I've certainly raised concerns and articulated that to the federal Department of Canadian Heritage and I'll continue to do my part at all times and certainly when they are most appropriate.

So again, I would just like to thank the members opposite and the members of the government for their collaboration. It looks as though we will be able to present a united motion to the Government of Canada and certainly to those working in the field and those who contribute to the programming and services that are being delivered day in and day out by CBC.

Thank you.

Mr. Fairclough: Mr. Speaker, I'm going to be short in my comments to the amendment as it was presented by the Member for Klondike.

We brought forward a motion to bring a united voice to Ottawa, and that's what we want to do. I have to say that the amendment brought forward has to have been thought out in the last couple of days by the Yukon Party as making improvements to the motion. I have read through it; I don't disagree with it, and I think we in the Official Opposition here do agree with the amendment, and we'd like to move forward.

The thought of making the motion better than what it is — I can't say that we feel any differently or that it weakened the motion at all. So we agree, and we'd like to take a united voice forward. We agree with the amendment brought forward.

Hon. Mr. Cathers: I want to thank the Member for Klondike for bringing forward this amendment. I think it's important to note, first of all, in this motion referring to the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation's northern service, it's something that, first and foremost, we need to recognize — as I think most, if not all, members of this Assembly do, and I

would think most Yukoners do — that Canadians from coast to coast need to ask this question as well: what is the reason that the CBC exists and has public funding?

Mr. Speaker, the rationale for the CBC receiving \$1.1 billion in public funding every year is that the CBC is to provide programming that is culturally relevant to Canada, and programming in regional areas where it's not necessarily economic and attractive for private companies to get into the area, or particularly in those areas. The core part of the CBC's whole reason for existing and being funded publicly is to provide the services in rural areas of Canada.

I would point out as well that technology has improved since the early days of the CBC. The challenges of setting up a national radio network were much more significant during CBC's inception than they are today, but the network was set up; the transmitters were set up.

Now, the CBC, as I referenced the public funding — a key part of the amendment, of course, Mr. Speaker, “urges the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, in implementing any financial restraint measures, to maintain the integrity of its broadcasting services north of 60°.”

The CBC is not exclusively funded by the public; it does receive advertising funding. It does operate in many ways as a normal corporation would, as a normal television/radio corporation would in providing those services. But it does receive \$1.1 billion in funding from the taxpayers, from the public purse. Why does it receive that funding whereas CTV and others that are not Crown corporations do not? What is the rationale? Again, Mr. Speaker, I can only reiterate that my understanding is that the key mandate and key reason for the CBC's existence and that significant public funding has been that they are to provide the culturally relevant and regional programming that other broadcasters might not choose to do.

CBC has been an important means of communication, an important way — in rural areas of the territory and in rural areas of Canada, north of 60°, but not just north of 60° — sometimes CBC is the only radio station, the only TV station, that's available. Of course the TV range is and always has been much more limited than that of radio.

But we see here today — recognizing that the CBC, as any broadcasting corporation, faces challenges in today's economic conditions due to a decline in advertising, recognizing that every corporation will always have its challenges in a day and age when our technology has improved from what it was 50 years ago, for example, when the CBC was able to provide services to regions of Canada, to provide services in communities to now see the day where the CBC, in attempting to implement financial restraints, is talking about cutting out its AM service, cutting out regions of the Yukon, cutting out Yukon citizens who will now no longer receive CBC services.

Mr. Speaker, I have to ask them for the justification of it. I think all Canadians — and certainly the federal government and the committee on — I believe it is called the Committee on Canadian Heritage — but the parliamentary committee dealing with this should be asking the tough questions. All parties should be asking that tough question of the CBC and why 50 years ago they were able to provide services to rural areas and

now they are saying that they have to move to FM and cut out the AM service. Frankly, Mr. Speaker, I don't think that our federal parliamentarians should allow them to do that.

In referencing sufficient resources — of course a key part is that there is a question when you have a broadcaster like the CBC that is providing services that may not be economical to do so.

Thus, in receiving \$1.1 billion in public funding to allow them to provide those services there is, of course, the question of what resources are sufficient. I note that — and I give the mover of the original motion credit for doing that — that it does not specify what “sufficient resources” are, nor does the amendment specify what those are, because that should properly be left to the federal government and to the parliamentary committee dealing with these issues to ask those questions and to evaluate those needs.

But what I want to stand here today on the amendment and do is note that, first, CBC — the question is related to their service. It's not just about funding from the public purse. They do have an obligation to fulfill their mandate to provide that culturally relevant programming and not simply go, as they have been criticized for doing, and purchasing some of the American programming. The accusation has certainly been made by some that there is an increasing trend to move away from Canadian programming.

They should not simply move to the most economical ways of providing services in rural areas and cutting out radio services to those areas, based upon the justification of someone sitting in a building in downtown Toronto — it doesn't warrant providing those services. In their view, rural areas of the Yukon may not be worth serving if it costs a little more money.

Again, 50 years ago, it could be done. A key part of the mandate of the CBC is that regional service.

So, Mr. Speaker, again, I won't be too long on this amendment, but I would again emphasize the point that I think our federal parliamentarians from all parties need to ensure that the CBC, as a publicly funded corporation and as a Crown corporation, is effectively utilizing the public funding it is provided, that it is fulfilling its mandate to provide that culturally relevant and regional programming for which it receives significant public funding, and, thirdly, they should also be evaluating the reasonable and appropriate needs of the CBC for public funding in determining what level that should be.

The debate should not be about more — the argument being made that there should simply be more public funding. Perhaps there should be more public funding. That's a question, again, for federal parliamentarians to evaluate and again I urge them to do it in the context of ensuring that the CBC is being accountable for that in excess of a billion dollars of taxpayers' money that it receives — that they are using it to fulfill their mandate to provide culturally relevant and regional programming.

I urge all federal parliamentarians to do everything in their power to ensure that the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation is not allowed to back away from its mandate to provide services to rural regions of Canada.

Thank you.

Hon. Mr. Lang: Mr. Speaker, I certainly would like to thank the Member for Klondike for bringing this amendment forward. I think the importance about CBC is why the CBC was created in the first place. CBC was created by the federal government for communications across this vast country and, of course, in those days when it was originally put together it was built around the prairies and northern Canada. It was built around small pockets of people in a large area, so it was servicing Canadians in remote areas and that's what CBC's mandate was to do. Of course, as time progressed, the cities evolved into what they are today and the private arm of communication has certainly taken a big part of CBC's piece of the pie in our bigger centres.

It has shrunk, because of the competition out there and because of the nature of the business. As the Member for Lake Laberge was talking about, it is important that we look at CBC's mandate and with this amendment it focuses on north of 60°. I understand the Member for Mount Lorne was talking about northern B.C. and other areas and certainly they are important too.

In the north — north of 60° — we have the issue which was the same issue when CBC was created in that we have a large land mass and small population. Of course, the population is throughout the north in pockets. CBC has the responsibility and the mandate to supply the communication. We have all talked this afternoon about the importance of CBC and whether it is an individual in a trapline cabin looking at weather, whether it is an aviator out there looking for information, or whether there are issues about emergencies unfolding in our smaller communities, they certainly utilize the CBC for those services.

As we look at the management of the resources that the federal government allocates to CBC — the debate there is — as the Member for Lake Laberge says — with the federal government, how that money is allotted and the amount of money. I don't think we should get into a debate on that issue today. But it certainly is an issue for us here in the House and for all Yukoners on what the CBC does, the service they supply and really, the necessity of that service.

As the other members have talked about, we don't really see the comments coming out of southern Canada on the necessity of CBC. In other words, our big communities — whether it's Toronto, Vancouver, Regina, all our cities in the southern provinces — have alternative communication facilities they utilize. So the importance today of the CBC has dwindled in essence, as we look at the competition and the market share and all the things that people debate now, whether it is CTV or CBC.

I would like to stand here and support this amendment.

CBC started here after the Second World War. The first radio station in the Whitehorse area was a volunteer radio station that was put together. It was run out of the airport at the Air Force area, but it was all Yukoners volunteering to work at that station — people like Jim Light, Terry Delaney and other names that Yukoners have known over the years. They volunteered their time to work at the radio station.

The same went for other communities. Dawson City had a radio station that was originally run, pre-war, by the army and then of course volunteers and Dawsonites who were concerned about communication and concerned about having availability of radio. Watson Lake had the same system, which was based at the airport and it had a radio station there for that specific area. When CBC came to Yukon, it acquired all of these assets, the volunteers in Watson Lake and the Dawson area, and it was expanded to take in Mayo and our other communities.

As you see today, the CBC is throughout the north, throughout the Yukon, and of course, if you look at the Northwest Territories and Nunavut, CBC plays a big part in the communication process in that area. So we can all see the importance of the investment north of 60°. Also, if we were to look at this from the point of view of necessity, it is very necessary to have CBC north of 60° being funded and managed at a level that will do the job that it's mandated to do. Certainly I don't want to diminish the fact that the CBC is across Canada, but the urgency of their place in the fabric of our northern communities is very important.

So when we look at this motion, and hopefully, as we work through it this afternoon, we can vote on this and send a unanimous voice down to Ottawa, to CBC, to make sure that we're not forgotten in any of the decisions. I think that by having this motion brought forward and passed and sent south, sent to CBC, that this could be part and parcel of the decision that's made by CBC when they look at how they're going to manage their budgets — and certainly don't want to see where we as northerners will suffer because of budget cuts, because this is a very necessary arm of government — because the government funds CBC. So the urgency of being part and parcel of that decision is very, very important.

You can't imagine what these communities in the territory were like 40 and 50 years ago, when we only had CBC. CBC was the radio station that communicated with us as Yukoners, and certainly, whether it was an emergency or whether it was Terry Delaney doing an overview of the August 17 events in Dawson City, all the other individuals — Ron McFadyen and all the individuals — who worked over the years with CBC also became a big part of our communities.

As you can see, most of the individuals who worked for CBC in the north became part of our community and the fabric that is inside our community. Again, it's very, very important that this motion was brought forward. Again, I would like to thank the MLA for Klondike for putting forward this amendment because I think the urgency of north of 60° and our territory — that we are not forgotten and that we don't get unfairly treated through any decision that's made down south on a budgetary question with CBC.

Mr. Speaker, I know there are many other individuals here in the House who would like to comment on this. The Member for Kluane felt that the urgency of this was such that this thing should somehow be passed in a matter of urgency. I think it's important to have dialogue; I think every member in this House should have the opportunity to stand up, represent their constituents and discuss motions that are brought forward. This is

an important motion and this has to be something that we are kept aware of.

CBC has done a great job over many, many years in very, very trying times — whether it's in Yellowknife, Whitehorse and now of course in Iqaluit — all of these northern communities depend on CBC and still depend on CBC to bring the news to them, to bring the facts of their community to them, to entertain them, to also, as I said before, be part of situations in our community, whether it's an emergency like Rock Creek in Dawson City with the flood or whether it's a forest fire situation, which we've had over the years. CBC has always been there and represented us and also informed us.

When the powers that be in CBC decide to make adjustments to their budget, again it's not for me to discuss in here or decide whether CBC, the billion dollars or whatever the figure is, is enough or not enough. What I'm saying to CBC is, whatever they do, it has to be a fair and level playing field and the urgency of their presence north of 60° is very important. That in itself, because of the nature of our communities and of our territory and also the massive piece of real estate that the Yukon, Northwest Territories and north of 60° includes, our communities need that communication; they need the expertise of the CBC; we need that fabric of the corporation, which becomes part of our fabric. As the Member for Lake Laberge was talking about, the cultural component and all of those things that CBC brings to our community have made our communities better, Mr. Speaker. I don't want to have anything diminish that over the next period of time as they fight this economic downturn in Canada and the rest of the world.

I agree with the Member for Klondike and thank him again for bringing this amendment forward. I look forward to the debate this afternoon from other members here in the House and I look forward to moving forward on this motion and I recommend the motion to the floor and to the House.

Speaker: Are you prepared for the question on the amendment?

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. Elias: Agree.

Mr. Fairclough: Agree.

Mr. Inverarity: Agree.

Mr. Cardiff: Agree.

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

Speaker: The yeas have it. I declare the amendment agreed to.

Amendment to Motion No. 786 agreed to

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

Hon. Ms. Horne: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for beautiful Kluane for bringing this motion forward, and the Member for Klondike for his friendly amendment. I would like to add my voice to this amended motion and reiterate those who appreciate the value and importance of CBC and Northern Native Broadcasting Yukon.

However, I noticed that Northern Native Broadcasting Yukon is missing from this motion.

Amendment proposed

Hon. Ms. Horne: I move

THAT Motion No. 786 be amended after the word "service" where it first appears by adding the words: "and Northern Native Broadcasting Yukon".

This is very important.

Speaker: The amendment is in order. It has been moved by the Hon. Minister of Justice:

THAT Motion No. 786 be amended after the word "service" where it first appears by adding the words: "and Northern Native Broadcasting Yukon".

Minister of Justice, you've got about 19 minutes left, please.

Hon. Ms. Horne: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As I prepared for today, I was reminded of the role CBC and Northern Native Broadcasting Yukon have played in Canada's north and my life. We talk about the importance of CBC, and I would like to share with this Assembly some of the things that make the CBC important and special to northerners.

As mentioned by others in this House, I remember the crackling of CBC news broadcasts as my father prepared breakfast for us. In 1942, the CBC carried special broadcasts that included the opening of the Alaska Highway to the entire country. In 1951, *Hockey Night in Canada* began broadcasting. I think all of us know the opening bars to Canada's unofficial national anthem, which was heard in all homes throughout the north. I still catch myself humming it. In 1960, we had the opening of the CBC short wave service to the high Arctic. In 1972, the Anik A satellite was launched. CBC rented three channels for radio and television network distribution. I think we are all happy that happened as that was the year of the Canada-Russia hockey series. I think Paul Henderson's goal is one that we all remember. These are the events that help bring Canadians together and bond us as a country. CBC has done just that. Regardless of whether we are from the east, west or the north, we are all Canadians and we are all cheering for the same team: CBC.

In 1973, we had the first live TV broadcast to the north via Anik A satellite. Five years later, in 1978, we had the first TV production facilities in the north, which were located in Yellowknife. Mr. Speaker, some commentators have observed that CBC is a modern version of what the Canadian Pacific Railway was to Confederation. It is a way of linking and connecting Canadians to one another. The CBC has long been a stronghold of the north. Often it was the only news source in our remote communities. CBC was almost considered family. We waited for news of our relatives and friends through the request programs. Edith Josie and her endearing *Here Are the News* went directly to the hearts of all northerners and the rest of the world for that matter.

Here in Whitehorse we have CBC Whitehorse, which provides radio services. In Yellowknife, CBC has English television and radio services. CBC also has radio stations in Inuvik as well as Iqaluit and Rankin Inlet in Nunavut.

Mr. Speaker, on a personal note, my mother used to go on the radio on Saturday mornings on a TransCanada program and tell stories — mostly Tlingit legends. Even though I was physically far away from her, I felt a closeness through CBC. I felt connected to her through CBC. CBC was indeed family to many of us.

I can also think of different events in our communities over the years that I have felt a part of because I heard it on the radio. The other day we paid tribute to Mr. McFadyen, and as I listened to the tributes I thought back to some of the important moments in Yukon's history that this wonderful gentleman must have covered. I think that we can all agree about the importance of the CBC.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to talk for a few minutes about the challenges I see ahead for CBC in the north. The reality is that, given our small population, our large area of coverage and the increased costs of doing business in the north, the per capita costs may be higher than in southern Canada.

One of the major concerns I have as a Yukoner and as a rural MLA is that when budget pressures are present, like they are these days, that the CBC's senior management will cut those programs and services that are furthest away from their offices. I am hopeful that they will recognize the importance of the northern service and will provide sufficient resources to allow the CBC to continue producing a high standard of service within the Yukon.

Indeed, Mr. Speaker, I would like to see the CBC maintain the integrity of our services north of 60° and also that of the Northern Native Broadcasting Yukon. I thank this House for supporting this motion.

Mr. McRobb: First of all, I would like to thank the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin for bringing forward this amendment today. I think it does reflect a demographic of Yukon society of particular importance and stature within the territory's media world. However, I'm not sure if this is the best approach — to include NNBY in what was specifically a motion on the CBC. I feel it would have been better treated independently and separately from this motion. It certainly is sig-

nificant enough to be as deserving as today's motion on a stand-alone basis.

Another factor worth consideration, Mr. Speaker, was that if we go back to the Yukon Party's motion on the CBC that was accompanied by the news release at the outset of this spring sitting, there was no mention made of NNBY in either of those documents. So it begs the question, why is it so suddenly urgent now?

That said, our concerns aren't significant enough to make us vote against this amendment. Consistent with my earlier comments, we're open to improvements. But again, we draw members' attention to the time that is being spent on today's motion, and I feel the central message of urging the federal government to support CBC North is becoming diluted. As we all know, this entire transcript will be sent to the federal government. Aren't we better trying to keep it as concise as possible?

Hon. Mr. Hart: I would like to also speak on this motion. Mr. Speaker, I will try to keep my comments basically directed toward the Northern Native Broadcasting amendment portion of the motion. I believe all of my fellow colleagues and the members opposite have already discussed the values of CBC in the north to them and I would like to add mine traditionally, also.

There was a very famous day in 1963 when I watched TV — CBC, I might add — when Mr. John F. Kennedy was shot. That is my recollection, in front of Christy's Flowers, where their TV was in the window.

On the Northern Native Broadcasting Yukon, I feel I have to basically disagree with the member opposite regarding this issue. Many of the staff of CBC are utilized in Northern Native Broadcasting.

I think that we have to work with them. I think Northern Native Broadcasting has been very important for the Yukon. I think their cuts have been just as hard coming as CBC. I think it's very important that we look at providing them with assistance in their process, because they are cut and these are issues that are affecting all Yukoners, along with those receiving CBC. They do provide us with a local content, a different flavour of local content, and they also provide us with a cultural aspect with regard to the Yukon. I look forward to many of their issues with regard to the Northern Native Broadcasting. Thus, Mr. Speaker, I will keep my comments short. I would just like to say that I'm in favour of the amendment and look forward to the vote on this particular situation.

Hon. Mr. Kenyon: On the amendment, I certainly agree with other speakers today. My first exposure really was almost 40 years ago — over 40 years ago, actually — to CBC and then as the Northern Native Broadcasting came in to add to that matrix. When I was first commuting from down South, I used to joke that living at Marsh Lake, at Judas Creek, and the beautiful Southern Lakes, we got two radio stations and two TV stations and that was on and off. That was your choice.

APTN has been a very welcome addition on the air and of course now, with the advent of satellites and everything else, it has expanded quite dramatically.

I think people down south don't have any concept or have little concept of what impact broadcasting information has on northern communities. That was brought very firmly home to me when, after all of my joking about the two stations on and off, when I left Toronto permanently, I was presented with a music-quality, short-wave receiver so that I could get Radio Moscow and such and get the music from there. I was joking but evidently nobody got the joke.

It is important to the economy of the Yukon and that's something that I don't think people quite put together. Programming that comes out of Whitehorse, and a good example is the Yukon film incentive program, which includes the location incentive program, the film development fund, film production fund, film training fund and the filmmakers fund. There were a number of projects, I believe five projects last year, in the location incentive. Three projects were approved under the Yukon film development fund, one approved under the Yukon film development production fund, four projects were approved under the Yukon filmmakers fund, and four projects were approved under the Yukon film training initiative.

To bring that firmly into the amendment, as a good example, the Yukon company, Sun Rock Productions, began work now on season two of a live action animation series, called *Anash and the Legacy of the Sun-Rock*. Season one has already been filmed up here. It's already "in the can", so to speak, and has been broadcast on APTN and Northern Native Broadcasting Yukon. It has been broadcast several times and will be broadcast in the future, and we're really looking forward to season two.

The Yukon Film Society and Northern Film and Video Industry Association are completing comprehensive training programs for Yukon filmmakers and crew members, and a lot of this will come through Northern Native Broadcasting Yukon and their efforts — and many others too.

In 2008-09, the capital budget for this program was \$760,000. So we're getting our people prepared for careers potentially — certainly, in contributory careers and for jobs within the film and sound industry, which will be directly related to the north's ability to broadcast this and directly related to that.

So that is one example of some of the things that have a great impact on the north. We still have our challenges in the north, of course, we still get our weather from Kelowna much to the chagrin of many people, although they certainly got it right last week — no doubt about that.

I certainly support the addition of Northern Native Broadcasting and any of the incentives of the federal government — the various incentives that impact on the Yukon. That can be anything from CBC and APTN to the food mail program. I would just like to put on the record, Mr. Speaker, that we are very pleased — and I am very pleased — to finally have a Senator as a representative in Ottawa to try to keep this matter in the minds of our federal government. To that point, Mr.

Speaker, I certainly support the motion and would like to give others on the other side, who I see are just bouncing, an opportunity to speak to this amendment.

Mr. Fairclough: On the amendment, Mr. Speaker, I thank the members across the way for their words on this amendment.

Again, the Yukon Party has been well aware of our motion and looked at it and saw ways of making improvements over the last two days, and really felt that this was going to improve the motion. So I'll take it at face value, Mr. Speaker, that this is going to improve the motion as it was presented by the Member for Kluane.

I do not believe, however, that there was a cutback to the Northern Native Broadcasting Yukon funding by the federal government, so it kind of moved away from the CBC to others, and I expect more amendments from the members opposite to include more radio stations that have been funded through the federal government. So, if anything, Mr. Speaker, we would agree with the member opposite's amendment, and we look forward to the vote.

Hon. Mr. Lang: I'm just going to be short on this amendment that the Minister of Justice brought forward. I'd like to thank her for doing it.

I think that to leave out the Northern Native Broadcasting component to this motion would be a mistake. I think that any time we can highlight what we do in the territory — and certainly the Northern Native Broadcasting has been a big part of our fabric in the communication world in the territory for a long time. This will bring it forward.

Understanding CBC — and of course with the amendment the Member for Klondike brought forward — and the urgency of looking at north of 60° as a separate issue from the south, we are different in many, many ways. The individuals in the House here today have talked about how we are different and how the need is here for the CBC to do the job that they've done over the many years. We can stand up here and talk all day about the importance of CBC and of course what they did in the past, and the success of CBC.

Mr. Speaker, I would certainly support this new amendment. I think it's very, very important that we highlight the Northern Native Broadcasting. It is a publicly funded communication arm and very important to the First Nations in the territory. A lot of the communication, whether it's in Old Crow, northern Yukon or throughout the Yukon, Northern Native Broadcasting has become part and parcel of the lives of Yukoners.

In moving forward, I would just like to comment a few words on that. I certainly will support this amendment brought forward by the Minister of Justice and look forward to the rest of the afternoon.

Speaker: Are you prepared for the question on the amendment?

Some Hon. Member: 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. Elias: Agree.

Mr. Fairclough: Agree.

Mr. Inverarity: Agree.

Mr. Cardiff: Agree.

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

Speaker: The yeas have it. I declare the amendment agreed to.

Amendment to Motion No. 786 agreed to

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

Hon. Mr. Rouble: Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of this motion. I'll be very brief on it. I appreciate the amendments that have been put forward that certainly strengthened this. I think we've heard numerous times all of our comments and thoughts on CBC. I've noted in the past that the CBC is often like listening to your favourite uncle — you might not always agree with it, but you always find it interesting and it is part of the family. I also appreciate Northern Native Broadcasting Yukon being included in this amendment, as they also play an important role in communications in our territory.

Mr. Speaker, it does need to go on record today, though, a couple of comments regarding Wednesdays. We have seen some very different approaches to dealing with private members' days over the last couple of weeks. We saw the NDP put forward a very constructive motion regarding education, wherein they made some constructive comments and suggestions for improvements, and expressed some areas of concern. The Yukon Party recognized the importance of debating the budget, and the Member for Klondike decided to put aside his date of calling a motion in order that the budget could be debated. And then we see the Liberal approach and what they recognized as being their number one priority. Now, Mr. Speaker, we have heard from the Liberal leader, who has reminded us that, yes, this is opposition motion day, and they choose what is important, and yes, Mr. Speaker, the Liberal Party has demonstrated what their priorities are.

Mr. Speaker, I support the amendment and the motion, and would encourage all members to support it, and also to communicate that to their counterparts in the federal government in

order that we may provide for continued support and great service from the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, not only here in the Yukon, but also throughout Canada.

Hon. Mr. Kenyon: To sort of reflect on at least the one statement that I'd made before, I've been involved with the CBC now for a number of years and it's an interesting concept — the whole idea of CBC and what it does. It tells Canadian stories, and it reflects on Canadian reality and the diversity of our country. It informs Canadians — news, weather, sports and everything else. It supports Canadian art and culture, and that's something that can so easily get lost in the satellite TV of today and satellite radio. It tends to build bridges among Canadians, and that's a big thing — among regions, between regions, and between two linguistic communities. And actually, a lot further than two linguistic communities — many linguistic communities.

You can tune in around 5:00 in the morning and there is a show in Korean. I've stumbled on to shows — often in the middle of the night, but they're there, and we have all sorts of facilities to be able to tape and such. You can go into everything from Lithuanian to Greek to — it's probably on there somewhere, in terms of bringing these communities together, but bringing them all together in a Canadian context.

I worked with a friend for many years who always objected to being called a Portuguese Canadian. He was vehemently, by his own admission, a Canadian of Portuguese extraction, and he was very set to that difference.

CBC has been around for awhile. It was started in 1936 and the news service in 1941. By 1952, the Canadian TV network called CBC was beginning operations, and by 1966, it went to colour. Actually, black and white are two colours, I suppose, but it went to full colour and quite a bit different. That's a pretty fair response time.

I can remember, a long time ago, my father was involved with radio and the early days of television. Some of my earliest memories are of having this little, tiny, round screen. Again, you had your choice — it was on or it was off. There wasn't much there. I can remember debating, as a family, for years as to whether or not we would get a colour TV because we wanted to make sure that the technology was going to be around for awhile. Take a look at a plasma TV today and see the difference on that.

The CRTC, or the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission, was established in 1968 as a regulatory body. Prior to that, in the States, there was the Federal Communications Commission, or the FCC. Originally in 1977, CBC put the first broadcast facilities into the House of Commons in Ottawa.

They also introduced into Canadian television programs closed captioning in 1981. I have to admit that we have everything in our home set to closed captioning for reasons that a lot of people understand, and I probably frustrate a lot of people in hotels when I set hotel televisions to receive everything in closed captioning. It's a very valuable addition to Canadian television.

In 1984, they started as a stereo network and 24-hour broadcasting and supplemental cable distribution. Again, maybe the cable was the start of the demise of broadcasts, but it was another way to get the word out. In 1986, the 50th anniversary was commemorated by a commemorative postage stamp, which hopefully we'll get to, with some cooperation from the Member for Kluane, to talk about its use on food mail.

In 1995, CBC was granted a licence to operate a new digital audio music service — they went digital. With all these changes, the Canadian public would look at the change in technology and start wondering how people will make that transition. Of course, making that transition takes on a whole new meaning in the north, with perhaps more limited resources — simply buying a TV takes on new meanings when you live in a small fly-in community — Old Crow, Pangnirtung, Cambridge Bay, whatever.

The same discussion was held for a long time with the changeover, again going back to closed captioning, when all televisions had to be capable of closed captioning — would everyone adapt? Well, somehow they did. Then the Minister of Canadian Heritage announced five years of stable funding for the CBC in 1997. That is now starting to fall apart, and that's something we're very concerned about here in the north.

I can remember in my former capacity, so to speak, we were travelling around to a number of different small mushers, sometimes in the communities, sometimes well into the bush. I remember being way the heck off the road on what could be best generously described as a goat path, into a little sod-roofed cabin and finding a satellite dish on top of the cabin — the generator way out in the bush and cords running in for power.

I remember saying to the fellow that this was quite the shock to find this. His comment was just smiling and saying, "Ain't gonna watch more CBC." The funny thing was when we got into the cabin, what he was watching was CBC on satellite. So it speaks to the programming; it speaks again to everything I talk about being the glue of Canada.

It provides services in both of Canada's official languages. When I first came to Whitehorse and lived in what was then a community — more of a bedroom community now but a little bit remote in those times — I ran into a friend who had come from Quebec. He came to move to Whitehorse a little bit by accident and he didn't realize when he got here that he didn't speak English. At that point in time, there weren't a lot of French services. He learned English by watching French language CBC occasionally, but mostly English language CBC and a dictionary. That's how he learned how to speak English.

So altogether, the CBC operates two television networks, four radio networks, cable television, international short-wave radio service, and a commercial-free audio service. It operates somewhere in the range of 100 television stations across Canada.

But to understand the role that CBC plays in Canada, it's really important to understand the three uniquely Canadian issues that have always played major roles. First of all, Canada is a country with a huge land mass and a relatively low population distributed unevenly — boy, doesn't that sound like the Yukon, Mr. Speaker? I always like to joke in my travels that

Yukon is more moose than people — about eight caribou per person and a grizzly bear for every family of five. Put that into perspective with a land mass that is roughly 5.8 percent of the land mass of the second largest country in the world. People all over the world can't quite understand that many of us can walk out our door and walk 400 miles and never cross a road or a trail. But, in many of those areas, Mr. Speaker, I bet you could turn on a little battery-operated radio and probably get CBC and that's its value to the whole thing.

With Canada, with the majority living in the south within 100 miles of the United States border, it's much the same situation. Most of those people can turn on their radio and television and they can get any one of 10 or perhaps hundreds of stations, and that was a huge challenge in the 1930s and 1940s when CBC started.

Most of the large cities that did have any kind of radio or television coverage basically could mostly or only pick up U.S. stations. Most of Canada's northern remote communities were separated by distance, mountains, tundra in some cases, and hostile weather conditions for a few months of the year, as we all know. As a result, Canada has always tried to develop a communications structure that would bring these people together in both official languages.

I know very firmly having taken French in high school but having no real reason to use it, I have retained very little. I know enough French so I don't have to keep turning the cans around in the grocery store and not much more. I have met a lot of people from Quebec who feel much the same way. You have to be using the English. Well, here is a chance to do that. For instance, in Whitehorse there is a vibrant French community. There is French language television. There is French language radio. There are all of these things that come together. CBC's French language services plays a huge role in that, so that you do have an ability to get fluent in the other official language.

It is an additional problem, again, when you get into some of Canada's northern areas — many aboriginal people speak no English or French. CBC has made a bit of programming in aboriginal languages and Northern Native Broadcasting comes in to help fill this void and that is why it is very important to keep that involved in that. It is a chance for people who aren't speakers of those languages to listen to them and to get used to the sounds and to develop their skills.

Canada has always struggled to maintain its own identity with our larger neighbour to the north — with the United States. We only have to look at the television with Bob and Doug McKenzie and concepts of what people think Canadians are and what Canadians do. Having originally, many years ago, come from the United States, I go back now to visit friends and relatives to find that they don't have the slightest idea of anything about Canada. I have had a few really strange experiences with that. One was taking a course at the Walter Reed Army Medical Centre in Washington and stopping on a pretty blazing hot morning at a stoplight and having a car pull up with some guys in the next car. They signalled me to turn the window down. They sort of looked out and said, "Ontario, man. Where is the tag from?" First of all I had to go back to my roots and culture and realize that tag means licence plate. I said, "It's

Ontario.” They thought about it for a minute and he leaned out again and said, “Where’s that, man?” And I said that it was Ontario — it’s Canada. He thought about it and nodded and leaned out again and said, “Where’s that, man?” I told him that it was just north of Buffalo. Then he said, “Okay, thanks.” That was his concept of Canada.

Now in that same area, guess what? You can get CBC. You can listen to some of the CBC shows and you understand that some of the callers are from Pennsylvania, they are from Ohio, they are from Massachusetts and now that is the one thing where the satellite has come in: they are from all over the world. I think CKRW being on satellite now will occasionally have requests called in from some of the most obscure places in the world and it is pretty incredible.

It is the CBC that brings this together and it brings not only Canadian culture into the States and to other areas but it also brings in the bulk of Canada into northern communities. You feel more like you are part of this country. Again, so many people down south just don’t have a concept of what that glue is that brings the country together and how important it is to fund that.

Historically the first licensed radio station — I think this goes back even in the south, before the Member for Porter Creek Centre’s comment — the Marconi station, XWA, started experimental broadcasts in 1919. There were a number of local stations that popped up after that, but they were in larger cities. They weren’t in smaller communities at all. There was really very little national programming or anything like that.

East to west it was still a long walk, and the problem in terms of frequencies was, wherever you went on the band, you stumbled into American and, in some cases, Mexican, stations. It was a chronic problem. It wasn’t until later that really the Canadian radio *Broadcasting Act* was passed and established the Canadian Radio Broadcasting Commission. After that, they began acquiring more radio stations, branching out officially into both languages and eventually CBC was created under the new *Broadcasting Act* of 1936.

The idea was to be publicly owned but modelled along the lines of private corporations. Yes, Mr. Speaker, we can imagine all the problems that entails — not an easy task by any means. The idea of ownership on that has been a challenge and it continues to be a challenge for CBC and so many other organizations. In travelling to China, and people talking about the so-called “state-owned enterprises,” it gets rather funny when you look at all the bail-out packages right now to car manufacturers — and there’s probably a few in there involving broadcasts — these are rapidly becoming our own “state-owned enterprises.” There is sometimes not a heck of a lot of difference.

As the CBC grew, it got a bit experimental. It basically of course was interrupted by the war. There was a time in there that the growth didn’t really go too far. The CBC news service was established in 1941 to bring regional programming to the country and to bring news of the war back into Canada. It was a bit more lasting; it was a bit more international. It started winning a number of awards and really starting to spread its wings.

When I did my time — so to speak — in Toronto — I tell people I did 20 years in Toronto and I managed to escape dur-

ing the Rae regime — I tended to get to know an awful lot of CBC types, and part of my background is that I was a commercial radio announcer for three years — not for the CBC or any affiliate, but for the Mutual Broadcasting System, MBS. So I tended to get to know some of the radio types.

I remember the first tour I got of the CBC studios in Toronto, and walking in and having their senior producer/director from the national news walk in laughing and look down at a couple of technicians and say, “Well, are we breaking or fixing today?” It seemed to be always under construction, and it’s the nature of the business with radio. But you don’t realize, again, the effect that that has on people, and on the number of people you forget when you’re sitting — in my experience, you’re sitting at six in the morning, signing on, in what could be best described as a little shack in a cornfield in central Indiana, and suddenly realize that your little opening lines are being monitored by 90,000 people in a four-state radius, or that you’re doing station breaks during a football game and realize that you’re broadcasting on, in one case, four 50,000-watt clear channel stations up and down the coast of California.

I relay some of these stories to just relate to the House the effect that a radio station — and the programming of that radio station — can have on a community, on the north, and on bringing people together. You are always sort of pushed into realizing that just when you think you’ve got a problem, you find out that somebody on the other side of the country or several countries away have the same problem. What you think of as something that is uniquely Canadian, you find it really is, because northern Labrador has the same problem or Pangnirtung has the same problem. We really have to preserve this as a culture and we have to convince the federal government of the need of supporting CBC and APTN and Northern Native Broadcasting Yukon.

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. Elias: Agree.

Mr. Fairclough: Agree.

Mr. Inverarity: Agree.

Mr. Cardiff: Agree.

Clerk: Mr. Speaker, the results are 15 yea, nil nay.

Speaker: I declare the motion, as amended, carried.
Motion No. 786 agreed to as amended

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

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

Speaker: Order please. On a point of order.

Mr. Elias: I request the unanimous consent of the House to call at this time Motion No. 783, standing in the name of the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin.

Unanimous consent re calling Motion No. 783

Speaker: Is there unanimous consent of the House to call Motion No. 783, standing in the name of the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin?

Some Hon. Members: Disagreed.

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Speaker: There is not unanimous consent.

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

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

Motion agreed to

Speaker leaves the Chair

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Chair (Mr. Nordick): Order please. Committee of the Whole will now come to order. The matter before the Committee is Bill No. 15, *First Appropriation Act, 2009-10*, Public Service Commission. Do members wish a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

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

Bill No. 15 — *First Appropriation Act, 2009-10* — continued

Public Service Commission

Chair: The matter before the Committee is Bill No. 15, *First Appropriation Act, 2009-10*, Public Service Commission, Vote 10.

Hon. Mr. Rouble: I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak to the Public Service Commission's operation and maintenance and capital budget for the 2009-10 fiscal year. Before I begin my very comprehensive speech, I would like thank the Public Service Commissioner and her staff for the

work and dedication that they demonstrate in fulfilling their duties and responsibilities.

Working with the Public Service Commission is certainly an honour and a privilege, and I would again just like to express my thanks for the very good work that they do, and the significant efforts that they have put into assisting to prepare this budget that is tabled before us.

Mr. Chair, under the *Public Service Act*, the Public Service Commission acts as the employer on behalf of the Government of Yukon, and provides human resources direction, advice and support services to departments and employees. The Public Service Commissioner may delegate staffing authority within the Public Service Commission and to deputy ministers in other departments. The Public Service Commission is responsible for working with departments to uphold delegation agreements, such as those that delegate hiring decisions from the Public Service Commissioner to deputy ministers, and the key staffing principles of merit and employment equity. In this role, the Public Service Commission manages the processes governing recruitment, classification, and employee compensation; provides data analysis and assistance to departments; delivers strategic human resources services; delivers training and development programs; delivers harassment prevention education and investigation programming and provides conflict resolution services; manages labour relation functions, including negotiating collective agreements; provides workforce planning information analysis; represents public service planning and corporate human resource policy, communications development and implementation; and provides corporate health and safety services.

I will now provide an overview of both budgets and then provide more detail on each area. As members will appreciate, the Public Service Commission is not a very capital-intensive department and, as such, our budget reflects that. The 2009-10 capital budget of \$50,000 is a reduction of \$33,000 from the 2008-09 budget year. This budget provides for the replacement of obsolete and failing computers for an updated network and cabling in the computer training lab in the staff development branch.

Next is the operation and maintenance budget for the Public Service Commission. This budget is estimated at \$36,051,000 — an overall increase of 22 percent, or \$6,526,000. In fact, Mr. Chair, this is a return to usual levels after the 2008-09 forecast, which included a one-time reduction of \$6,176,000 in employee future benefits.

Most of the remaining \$350,000 increase in 2009-10 is due to wage adjustment amounts as negotiated during collective bargaining.

I'd like to take a bit more time to provide more details on the Public Service Commission's O&M budget and to outline some of the work that the commission carries out. There are seven branches in the Public Service Commission. O&M dollar amounts in this budget cover all of these branches, as well as the workers' compensation fund and employee future benefits accounting. Aside from other details, branch budgets also reflect changes for negotiated wage agreement amounts and corporate offsets required to meet emerging issues.

The finance and administration branch shows an increase of \$59,000, or 10 percent, which is related to wage levels of the current staff complement. These changes are for negotiated wage adjustments, changes to wages when positions are reclassified, and when there is staff turnover.

The corporate human resource services branch has decreased by \$143,000, or four percent, due to a one-time amount in the 2008-09 budget. The largest amount was a \$200,000 revote for the recruitment incentive program, which is offset by current year requirements for wage adjustments and corporate offsets to meet emerging issues.

The employee compensation branch shows an increase of \$48,000, or three percent. These are changes to current staff wage levels. The staff relations branch shows an increase of \$109,000, or nine percent, in its budget. This covers a negotiated wage change and an additional budget for a two-year term position to support increased workloads during bargaining over the next two years.

The human resource management systems branch budget has increased by \$17,000, or three percent, due to negotiated changes in wage levels and to increases in the staff complement.

The policy, planning and communications branch budget has an increase of \$29,000, or three percent, primarily due to a change in staffing and negotiated wage levels.

The staff development branch budget shows an increase of \$71,000, or two percent, to provide for the changes to staffing and negotiated wage levels. The budget for this branch also includes \$341,000 for the second year of the corporate substance abuse program for employees, as well as the second year of a two-year contract totalling \$113,000 to develop a corporate health and safety management system.

Besides branch budget responsibilities and collective agreement adjustments, the Public Service Commission budget covers two significant non-discretionary areas of corporate responsibility. These are the workers' compensation fund and employee future benefits.

On the workers' compensation fund, Mr. Chair, I want to note that through the Public Service Commission, the Yukon government pays assessment premiums to the workers' compensation fund to provide coverage for all government employees who suffer work-related injuries. This is a legislative requirement under the *Yukon Workers' Compensation Act*. This budget shows an increase of \$160,000, or three percent, based on negotiated changes to wage levels. The premium rates are unchanged from 2008 at \$2.14 per \$100 earned. Effective January 2009, the maximum earning level was increased by \$2,742 to \$76,842 from \$74,100.

The second significant corporate non-discretionary expense in the Public Service Commission budget is future employee benefit liabilities for leave, termination, pension and retirement benefits. Employee future benefits budget shows an increase of \$6,176,000, or 55 percent. This is a return to scheduled budget levels based on actuarial evaluations. During 2008-09, \$6,176,000 was returned from the liability fund for the non-pension post-retirement benefits following a change in benefit cost-sharing for extended health care premiums for retired pub-

lic servants. An updated rate-sharing change was implemented on a go-forward basis, effective May 1, 2008, which requires retirees with fewer years of service at retirement to pay a larger share of premiums.

Employee future benefits cover employee termination benefits liability, non-pension post-retirement benefits liability, and the employer's pension plan contributions related to employee pension buybacks and transfers.

The employee termination benefits liability is the accounting of the government's liability to pay out earned leave and severance benefits when employees terminate or retire. Each year, the Public Service Commission adjusts the balance of the account to pay out departments for employees who have terminated or retired and to reflect changes to the actuarial liability based on the actuaries estimate. At March 31, 2008, the estimated liability was approximately \$55 million.

The government's liability for non-pension post-retirement benefits liability includes the government's future liability for extended health and life insurance for eligible retirees and for employees who will retire in the future. This is a required change in accounting practice that started in January 2005. Again, amounts are determined by actuarial estimates. At March 31, 2008, this amounted to close to \$28 million. Again, the premium rate-sharing change in 2008 made it possible to reduce this liability by \$8 million.

Finally, Mr. Chair, I want to comment on the pensionable service buybacks, specifically the employer share of pensions contributed related to employee buybacks, past pensionable services and transfers. This buyback arises when employees elect to buy past service with the Yukon government or to transfer service within the plan from other employers.

The federal Treasury Board has ruled that the employer must match the elected payments and rates that the board determines. The total Public Service Commission budget for buybacks and transfers is estimated at about \$3.2 million for 2009. Again, Mr. Chair, all these initiatives are corporate and non-discretionary expenses; they cover employees in all departments as well as retirees.

The Public Service Commission is also the corporate lead on programs managed through the investing in public service — IPS — framework. One IPS initiative in particular benefits Yukon post-secondary graduates starting out on their careers — that's the GradCorps internship program. 2009 is the fifth year that this program has run. Since 2005, 25 interns have been employed by the Yukon government. Seventeen proposals were approved and advertised for the 2009 intake.

The management development program was conducted as a pilot last year and is recruiting for the fall of 2009. The supervisory success program, the management development program and the Yukon Government Leadership Forum — also known as YGLF — are other examples of employee development and retention that are extremely popular with employees. The management development program is another initiative that is in place to develop leaders within the Yukon public service. Recruiting for the 2009 intake this fall is already underway.

The government is also supporting the strategic human resource management graduate certificate program. This program was developed in conjunction with Royal Roads University, after human resource directors in the government identified a need to develop the next generation of human resource practitioners. Qualified human resource professionals are becoming increasingly more difficult for organizations to hire, and our staff who have undertaken this program of study have indicated they are very appreciative of this opportunity to study at home to achieve a graduate-level certification.

The Public Service Commission has also implemented a rotational assignment program as another succession management initiative. In this program, employees are selected to undertake various assignments over a specified period of time to help them become more familiar with work areas other than their own. Again, employees have said that they appreciate this opportunity to grow professionally in the public service.

Mr. Chair, all of these initiatives fall within the *Investing in Public Service — Serving Yukon People* framework. I want to note that we can look forward to the third annual IPS report card being released during Yukon Public Service Week this coming June.

Mr. Chair, I draw your attention to these initiatives as a demonstration of what the public service is doing to address succession management. We hear a lot about an anticipated bulge in retirements, but I am struck by some interesting workforce statistics in our public service. In the fiscal year 2007-08, 239 permanent employees retired or resigned from the government. This is a separation rate of just over seven percent. The accepted standard in our industry is between five and eight percent. We also note that in our workforce, there is no single predictor of when people will retire. Some retirements are based on age, but with no mandatory age of retirement in Yukon, we can extrapolate that there are other considerations — whether they be financial, family, length of employment, or other considerations — that also weigh into the decision about when a person will retire.

For example, Mr. Chair, as of December 2008, there were 51 employees over the age of 65 in the Yukon government and in the 2007-08 fiscal year, 70 of the people who retired were younger than 60.

Finally in this area, Mr. Chair, I want to note that the retirement trends in the Yukon government have been steady over the last five years and went from 2.0 to 2.6 percent of the workforce retiring at a range of ages and years of service.

Mr. Chair, as of December 31, 2008, there were 4,675 employees in the Yukon government workforce. The average length of service is 7.6 years. Also, as of December 31, 2008, 14 percent of employees responding to the workforce census stated that they are aboriginal. According to the 2006 Canadian Census, aboriginal people represent 21 percent of the population age 25 to 64. Of the respondents who identified as aboriginal, 56 percent say they are from a Yukon First Nation.

Mr. Chair, in 2008-09 there were 17 First Nation Training Corps positions in nine departments and corporations.

In 2008-09, three First Nation Training Corps participants participated in their training. One was retained by the Yukon

government, one was hired by a First Nation government and one is receiving higher level training in the Yukon government.

Temporary assignment agreements are also signed between Yukon government and Yukon First Nation governments. There were three new temporary assignments in 2008. Temporary assignments are a good way to introduce Yukon First Nation people to the Yukon public service. Likewise, they provide an opportunity for Yukon government employees to come to a better understanding of the processes involved in Yukon First Nation governments.

Mr. Chair, the Aboriginal Employees Forum — or AEF — is another initiative that supports the government's goal to attract aboriginal people to the Yukon public service and to retain them as long-term employees. This initiative has been in place since 2007. The Aboriginal Employees Forum provides an opportunity for aboriginal employees in the Yukon government to network, learn about organizational values, have a culturally pertinent support system and connect with aboriginal role models within the organization.

The Aboriginal Employees Forum added an aboriginal component to National Public Service Week in 2008 by including carvers from the Sundog carving program and performances of traditional First Nation drumming and songs at the Whitehorse barbeque, which was sponsored by the Public Service Commission.

Most recently, the AEF steering committee has been working with the harassment prevention office to develop a support person pilot project for aboriginal employees having difficulties in the workplace. This pilot project will run from April 1, 2009 to March 31, 2010.

Mr. Chair, I am also pleased to be able to say that the Public Service Commission will be undertaking renewed steps to engage First Nations with final agreements and representative public service planned discussions in the upcoming months.

Mr. Chair, I only have a couple of other pages of notes; however, I see that my time has expired.

Mr. Fairclough: I thank the minister for his opening comments. They are in detail and actually took care of some of my questions that I was about to ask. I thank him for that.

I don't have a whole lot of questions in this department. I tried to follow the minister's opening remarks, but I would still like clarity to the amount of money that changes with the employee future benefits.

We've had over \$16 million in 2007-08, and we've gone down to \$11 million and back up. I'm just wondering why the fluctuation. I've heard some of the rationale behind what the minister is saying. I would just like some clarity on that and what that amount really means.

Hon. Mr. Rouble: I do have a couple of additional opening comments, but I'll address the member's question first.

The employee future benefits budget shows an increase of \$6,176,000. This is a return to scheduled budget levels based on actuarial evaluations. During the previous year, there were some changes made to the issue of employee benefits. This was a discussion and negotiation process that was conducted through the Joint Management Committee. What we saw here, Mr. Chair, was a change to the liability fund for the non-

pension post-retirement benefits following a change in benefit costs-sharing for extended health care premiums for retired public servants. So there was an agreed-to change in this process that created a reduction of expenditures in the previous year. We are now returning to what one would expect to be a normal expenditure for this area. Does that clear up the member's question?

Mr. Fairclough: I thank the minister for that.

It's returning to normal, and I'm just wondering about the fluctuation in the amount of monies received from year to year. We've gone from \$16 million to \$11 million, and now to \$17 million — or close to that. I understand what the member is saying. Is this direction as a result of recommendations that have come from the Auditor General?

Hon. Mr. Rouble: These came from recommendations from the Joint Management Committee. This was not, to my knowledge, impacted by the Auditor General. This was a case where, through the Joint Management Committee, which does look at issues regarding these types of benefits, discussions were made. The projections are now based on our best actuarial estimates. Would the member opposite like me to continue with the opening statement, or is there another question on this issue?

Mr. Fairclough: In the minister's opening comments, he talked about the number of government employees and the percentage of 14 percent aboriginal and 56 percent of that being from Yukon First Nations.

I know that the government is probably not totally satisfied with that and would like to see those numbers increase. I would like to know how much higher we are in regard to FTEs this year than we were last year and the year before. Is it a steady growth?

Hon. Mr. Rouble: Mr. Chair, I would characterize it as the member did. The government responds to the needs in the community. The Public Service Commission responds to the priorities of government and ensures that positions are staffed appropriately and that the needs in the community are being met. I believe we have seen an increase of a little bit more than a one-percent growth in the number of employees working for the Government of Yukon — sorry, 1.2 percent. Mr. Chair, we have a change from 4,574 employees to 4,629.

Mr. Fairclough: I'd like to thank the minister for that information. I had a few questions that the minister already answered. I have one more with regard to the computer investigation that took place awhile back. Now that's over and done with and improvements have been put in place for Yukon government employees. I would like to know how closely government computers are monitored now.

Hon. Mr. Rouble: As the member is aware, there are guidelines in place regarding computer use and their appropriate use in the workplace. When new hires are brought on board with the government, they are made aware of that policy, that practice, and many of the other guidelines, policies and practices that we have in the public service.

New hires are also asked to agree to the terms, so there's a formal process of going through what the expectations are. This is not an issue where there is, as the member characterized it,

ongoing monitoring. This is addressed like other issues in the workplace, where if there is an issue brought to the attention of the employer, we have a responsibility to look into addressing those issues. So it's not something that has any kind of extraordinary involvement.

Additionally, there are regular updates that go out, other communications tools such as *The Sluice II*, other information in-service types of things to ensure that people know about expectations and what the appropriate practices in the workplace are.

Mr. Fairclough: I thank the minister for that answer. There are a few people who have been calling about that, and I'll forward the minister's answers to them.

On page 14-11 of the O&M, in the stats, it says that effective January 19, 2009, the federal government would resume the responsibility for the service for the requests for estimates of the cost to buy back services. That has normally been around \$500,000 — \$501,000 was last year. I'm just wondering if the minister can explain that a little more clearly.

Hon. Mr. Rouble: I appreciate the member's comments regarding the computer use guidelines. I would encourage him — if he has people who want more information about it, they can review the guidelines on-line through the government's Internet Web site. They can also talk to their supervisors if they have issues with workplace harassment. They can contact the workplace harassment prevention coordinator to find out information there or utilize the services of some of our conflict-resolution people, should they feel uncomfortable with any issue that is in the workplace.

With the question regarding buyback of time, there has been a change of the practice. In past years, the Government of Yukon has done this calculation. However, the federal government has centralized this type of service so now when there is this type of calculation to be done, the federal government is providing the calculation. Their superannuation directorate will now provide all estimates.

Mr. Fairclough: I thank the minister for his answers and I will pass it on to the third party for their questions. Thank you.

Hon. Mr. Rouble: I just have a couple of other notes here that I would like to share with members opposite. I trust it anticipates a couple of their questions and will provide some information without the need to go into some of the Q&A on this.

The Public Service Commission also provides services to people with disabilities who are seeking work in the Yukon public service as well accommodation services to help employees who are injured or become ill to return to work.

In other areas, the Public Service Commissioner's daily work includes providing compensation services, information management planning and services, data analysis, research and policy and communications delivery.

Mr. Chair, I would just like to conclude the opening remarks by saying that I believe that, given its significant corporate financial responsibilities and its corporate role in major policy initiatives, human resource services, planning, training and development, compensation and staff relations, the Public

Service Commission manages its budget extremely well on behalf of the government and on behalf of Yukon people.

I would like to hear any questions or comments from the New Democratic Party.

Mr. Cardiff: I have a number of questions, some of which, as mentioned, have already been answered in the minister's opening remarks or asked by the Member for Mayo-Tatchun.

I'd like to just go back a few days here, while everybody's memory is fresh on this subject, and ask a question that I asked, and the minister wasn't able to provide an answer the other day. I'm hoping that he can today. That was a question I asked on April 30, and it's about a recent court case. There was supposed to be a new policy about accommodating employees with mental disabilities, and that was supposed to be in place by 2007, apparently, and it's now 2009. All the public service policies that we can find addressing the accommodation of employees with mental disabilities are dated from 1994 and 2004. So I'm wondering if the minister has any information about how this particular policy development is progressing, why we appear to be two years behind in the development of this policy, and how soon they expect to have it ready.

Hon. Mr. Rouble: This government is committed to accommodating employees with disabilities in our workplace. I think there are numerous examples where one can see our dedication and our commitment and living up to our responsibility in this area. The member opposite has heard me mention in the past the workplace diversity office and some of the work that it does.

I appreciate the member's question. This was regarding policy 3.59, which is entitled "Accommodating Employees With Disabilities" and it was developed in August of 2004. It outlines the purpose, principles, roles, responsibilities, options and limitations involved in accommodation. This policy applies to all Yukon government employees. There was a corporate-wide review of the disability management program completed in 2007 by Aon Consulting.

This was a corporate-wide review of the disability management program for the Yukon government. This review looked at examining the Yukon government's processes and philosophies for managing disability, examined the government's specialized corporate disability services and interviewed third party service providers and assessed their disability services.

The findings and their recommendations were shared with deputies, human resources personnel and Public Service Commission personnel in the Government of Yukon. The next steps involved in this, as this is an emerging issue that we are significantly working through, will involve examining and testing and ultimately approving the recommendations, recognizing that we need to develop these in a Yukon context and in a Yukon government context — developing and implementing a corporate disability management program and examining all resource requirements for the program.

Mr. Chair, the Public Service Commission is taking this issue very seriously. It is working through the issue not only in-

ternally but also with external service providers and an external consultant who has significant expertise in this area.

We are making the changes in practice in order to address this issue and are taking steps to come to the formal conclusions of the process so that they can ultimately be entrenched in our workplace standards.

Mr. Cardiff: Does the minister have a timeline for when this work is going to be completed?

Hon. Mr. Rouble: We have a senior-level committee established, including deputy ministers and HR professionals, that have this as part of their work plan. They are expected to work on that through this next fiscal year. It will not be something, though, that will wait until the final product is done before we see improvements or changes. For example, the health and safety unit of employees in the Public Service Commission staff development branch have prepared a desk manual that outlines accommodation processes for employees, so information is already being made available to all departments within the Government of Yukon as to how to provide accommodation processes for employees. We're continuing to work on this issue and continuing to make changes on a very regular basis.

Mr. Cardiff: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I thank the minister for the answer.

I'd like to ask the minister, as he talked about a high-level deputy minister committee — I'm just wondering, because this does involve employees, if any of this work is going to the Joint Management Committee as well, and what their participation in this process might be.

Hon. Mr. Rouble: Mr. Chair, much of this work is as a result of a direction from the Joint Management Committee. As one would expect, a multitude of issues are discussed with this committee. One of their concerns was, of course, how the Government of Yukon responds to this very significant issue. So they did provide direction to look at this issue. Currently the membership that is working on it includes deputies, Human Resources and Public Service Commission personnel. It is a senior-level group. It is regularly updating to the Joint Management Committee. We continue to look at how we can best assist people — those with disabilities, those with workplace incapacities or injuries and how we can work with them to best assist in their return to work strategy, which was an issue with the Joint Management Committee as it related to long-term disability.

It's an issue that we are taking quite seriously, are taking steps to address the issues and keeping appropriate other bodies and committees involved in the progress that's being made on the issue.

Mr. Cardiff: I thank the minister and the officials for the answers. It's refreshing to have a conversation like this and actually get some answers and learn more about what the processes are and policies that are being worked on.

I'd like to ask the minister another question on an issue that has come up recently. Everyone recognizes a basic right guaranteed to all Canadians is that they have the right to join a union and benefit from that organization and the benefits it provides with regard to collective bargaining, wages and bene-

fits and job protection. But there is a group of employees who work for the government who are not able to do that.

There are actually a few of them, but one group in particular is the teachers on call. It's my understanding that it would require amendments to either the *Public Service Labour Relations Act* or the teachers' staff relations act, and I'm wondering whether or not any work is being done in this regard, or what assurances the minister can provide that these employees will be granted the right to join the union.

Hon. Mr. Rouble: Mr. Chair, the Member for Mount Lorne has raised another issue that is certainly emerging in not only this jurisdiction but also jurisdictions across Canada.

Our current legislation states that membership in our bargaining units is open to employees, and the Government of Yukon has a couple of different situations where we have people who provide short-term or one-time type of employment situations where there isn't the expectation or commitment of an ongoing employer-employee relationship. Some of these situations include substitute teachers.

Also being responsible for Education, I recognize the importance and value that substitute teachers play in our community. These are people who are called upon sometimes at a moment's notice to come in and provide coverage when a teacher is not able to be in the classroom. In many instances these are very short-term types of situations: one day here, two days there. It doesn't create that type of ongoing employment relationship. There are very different situations. There are people who provide one or two days a year — especially in some of our communities — and each year they then have to go and be put on the list of people who would be ready and willing to be substitute teachers.

We also have a couple of other issues with other positions, such as casuals or emergency firefighters. For example, if there is a wildland fire and we are in an emergency situation, there are instances where people become emergency firefighters.

Again, these are issues where there isn't an ongoing employer-employee type of relationship. This is an issue that is emerging, and the government is certainly reviewing and looking at the issues and how they interrelate in their implications.

Again, it's also recently that we saw the discussion the Yukon Teachers Association bargaining unit had on this. This is a case of wanting to make sure that people are aware of the situation as to what's going on. This is an emerging issue that government is working to address. I do want to state, though, for the member opposite that even though these people are not part of a bargaining unit, there is still appropriate remuneration and fair remuneration provided from the Government of Yukon to these people while they are in a temporary situation with the government.

I appreciate that the member has raised this with me before. It is an emerging issue and not only the Public Service Commission and the Department of Education are reviewing this issue, but others in the government as well.

Mr. Cardiff: Mr. Chair, I have many more questions that I would like to ask the minister, so maybe I will put one on record and hopefully we'll have an opportunity tomorrow to ask these questions.

I would like to ask the minister what response the government has and what improvements they have made to improve employee moral and to respond to the criticisms of employees who have participated in the employee engagement survey, and how the government or the department would evaluate the success of the measures that they have taken to improve that situation.

If the minister has time to respond, that would be great.

Hon. Mr. Rouble: Mr. Chair, the Government of Yukon takes very seriously the issue of the employee engagement survey. That's indeed why we have conducted it. I will just share the number — 138 — which was the number of points that were recently provided in a —

Chair: Order please. Seeing the time, the Chair will rise and report progress.

Speaker resumes the Chair

Speaker: I will now call the House to order.

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

Chair's report

Chair: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 15, *First Appropriation Act, 2009-10*, and directed me to report progress on it.

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

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Speaker: I declared the report carried. The time being 5:30 p.m., this House now stands adjourned until 1:00 p.m. tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 5:32 p.m.

The following document was filed May 6, 2009:

09-1-94

New Residence on the hospital campus, construction of: letter (dated April 30, 2009) to Mr. Mitchell, MLA, Copperbelt form Craig Tuton, Chair, Yukon Hospital Corporation Board of Trustees (Mitchell)