

Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Tuesday, December 15, 2009 — 1:00 p.m.

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

Prayers

Withdrawal of motions

Speaker: The Chair wishes to inform the House of changes that have been made to the Order Paper. Motion No. 953, standing in the name of the Minister of Justice, has been removed from the Order Paper as the action requested in the motion has been fulfilled. Also Motion No. 975, notice of which was given yesterday by the Member for Lake Laberge, was not placed on today's Notice Paper as it relates to Bill No. 80, which passed this House yesterday.

DAILY ROUTINE

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

Tributes.

TRIBUTES

In remembrance of Richard Godson

Mr. McRobb: It is indeed an honour to rise today in remembrance of Richard Oakley Godson, formerly of Haines Junction. I wish to also recognize the efforts of his family in preparing this tribute.

Richard was born on June 11, 1958, in Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario. His parents raised him and his three siblings at 14 Pretoria Hill in the company of his mentally challenged aunt and Papa, his maternal grandfather. The family owned a camp north of Sault Ste. Marie on a small inland lake named Island Lake. Richard enjoyed summer vacations at the camp where he met his future life companion, Peggy.

The young couple married in 1977 and headed to the Lower Mainland, where Peggy began her post-secondary adventure at Simon Fraser University. They travelled north in the summer of '78 to try their hand at gold mining on Spruce Creek near Atlin, B.C. During this time, the young pair of southern cheechakos discovered the Yukon and knew they would return some day.

After Peggy graduated, they ventured north without any job prospects in their Volkswagen Beetle, reaching Whitehorse in March 1982. They tented at Kookatsoon Lake, waiting for spring thaw, while Richard searched for work and eventually was hired by Northland Beverages. The following winter, they bought a small cabin at Army Beach. Richard realized his options were few without further education, and enrolled in the university transfer program at Yukon College while working at Yukon Explosives.

Shortly after the birth of his son Leigh in 1985, and completing the two-year college program, Richard transferred to UBC for three years to further complete his Bachelor of Education. In August 1988, Richard applied for a teaching position at the St. Elias Community School in Haines Junction. During the

interview, school principal Wolf Riedl discovered Richard could offer music as an extracurricular activity and hired him in a temporary position.

Little did Wolf know at the time how instrumental Richard would become in advancing the musical talent of so many students in Haines Junction and across our territory.

Richard soon began playing with local musicians Boyd Campbell and Geoff Scherer in the 1016 Band. They played at hockey tournaments, special events, house parties, dances, weddings, music festivals, anywhere they were asked.

Following the success of the 1992 June Bug Music Festival in Haines Junction, organizer Enid Tait drafted Richard to help organize the Alsek Music Festival with Wolf Riedl, Geoff Scherer and Louise Breneman. He was a critical and integral part of the popular summer festival that successfully showcased Yukon musical talent for 16 years.

The St. Elias school developed a strong music program during Richard's 21-year tenure. Students from Haines Junction proved year after year they were multi-talented musicians. When students were interested in playing in one of the several after-school bands, Richard would only ask them to show up and try hard.

Students would play several different instruments throughout the performances and demonstrated their comfort in singing solo before audiences. They also had the technical skills to set up and break down the stages and electronic sound systems. They knew exactly what to do and would just jump in and do it. The students loved the music program and their exuberance showed.

Each year, St. Elias Community School bands toured and performed in schools throughout Alaska, northern B.C. and every Yukon community, including Old Crow. These visits made lasting impressions on teachers, students and audiences who were left wondering how it was all possible. Richard also initiated the musical performance by school staff at the annual Christmas concerts. This performance always delighted audiences, as they never knew who would be singing and to what song but could always count on a good laugh or two. It was a great way to start the Christmas break.

Richard's passion for music was re-demonstrated in the design development of the St. Elias Community Centre. He volunteered to review the architectural and acoustic plans for the building's grand hall and contributed suggestions that were adopted into the building plan. He also learned to work with the new sound and light systems and used his knowledge to train others.

Richard volunteered for countless performances in the grand hall, including one of his favourites, the spring variety show which premiered the music classes and several student bands. The students would give their inaugural performance without instruction while Richard quietly operated the sound board. The hall was always standing-room only and many proud parents were often amazed at their children's on-stage talent.

During his time in Haines Junction, Richard contributed in many diverse ways to the community. He represented the St. Elias Community School in the Yukon Teachers Association,

was a member of the Haines Junction Library Board, a founding member of the Alsek Music Festival Society, he volunteered for the Haines Junction Minor Hockey Association, the Silver Sled, the Dakwakada Dancers, the Society for Education and Culture, and Junction Arts and Music. Many community residents have credited Richard for bringing music back to Haines Junction.

To continue his legacy, Richard has left us with his loving wife Peggy, son Leigh, son Geoffrey and daughter Chloe, in addition to the hundreds of students and others whose lives he positively influenced.

His ashes will be scattered throughout the Yukon and, at his request, at Island Lake, Ontario. Celebrations of Life took place at Island Lake and at the St. Elias Community Centre in Haines Junction in September. It was standing-room only as family, friends, students and former colleagues honoured Richard by emembering, sharing, recollecting and listening to musical performances about this very special person.

As a teacher and administrator, Richard reached out and touched many children's lives through his music, caring, compassion and belief that "Teachers save the world one child at a time."

Two years ago, Richard competed on national television in a cadre of English teachers on the CBC contest, *Test the Nation*. Richard savoured the power of words, puns, quotes, crossword puzzles and lyrics and showed his good sense of humour. A couple years ago, he demonstrated these talents in a song he wrote for his wife Peggy. It only had two words: "Yes Dear."

He loved the Yukon and Haines Junction and once wrote a small essay called "Why I Live Where I Do". In it, he said, "My small town gives me almost unlimited access to nature which to me is the most inspiring entertainment there is. I love a good Pink Floyd show, but no concert can compare with floating down a river in the midnight sun, or skiing under the northern lights."

With your indulgence, Mr. Speaker, I invite all members of the Assembly to join me in welcoming to the gallery today, his loving wife, Peggy, his eldest son, Leigh, and his daughter Chloe. Mr. Speaker, his son Geoffrey is away attending post-secondary school. We also have Richard's dear friend and co-workers whom I will introduce. Hopefully I won't miss anybody. We have Elaine Kimball, Val and Bruce Binder, Shari Worsfold, Andy and Millie Hall, Talyce Henkel, Nancy Tanner, Megan Moore, Peter Upton and Peggy's co-workers Sandy Magnuson and Allan Nixon.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I would also like to add this tribute is on behalf of the government side as well.

Mr. Hardy: I rise on behalf of the NDP caucus to tribute a man who will be sadly missed by his family, many friends, colleagues, students — Richard Godson.

Richard and his wife Peggy lived in Haines Junction since 1989 and raised their children — Leigh, Geoffrey and Chloe — there. He was a mainstay of life in the Junction, as he taught and was the vice-principal at the St. Elias Community School. Richard initiated the music program at St. Elias, and this

Christmas will be especially poignant for people in the Junction when the time comes for the annual Christmas concert, which he generally organized and for which he wrote musical plays for the staff to perform at the end of each concert. Seeing the teachers on stage, singing their hearts out, was something that everyone, from students to parents, enjoyed each year, and I hope that tradition continues.

An enthusiastic music teacher, he rejected an academic approach to playing or learning music. To him, music was a fun way to express feelings, and he shared that view with his energy and humour. The school's principal says that Richard was always friendly, firm and fair. In what was truly his vocation, Richard's success was reflected in the excitement and commitment of his students to practice and learn. His approach was to organize small bands that played music children wanted to hear such as rock and roll, rather than a large concert band, and it appealed to them. They toured all over the communities in the Yukon and to some in Alaska and B.C.

Music was not only the focus of Richard's professional life. He played guitar, bass, saxophone, drums and some piano, wrote songs and sang in three or four different bands depending on the availability of other musicians and the events. Many of us have who have travelled to Haines Junction over so many years always to the festivals, especially Alsek, of course — we always saw Richard there. He has been the main organizer and president of the Alsek Music Festival since 1993. He is quoted saying that it was like a catharsis watching the people at the festivals having fun and that made it all worthwhile. Music, he said, was a human thing. It's something everyone should have. He had a quote from Plato on his office wall that summed up his feelings about music: "Music is a moral law. It gives a soul to the universe, wings to the mind, flight to the imagination, a charm to sadness, and life to everything. It is the essence of order and leads to all things that are good."

As well as being completely involved in the music of Haines Junction, Richard was on the library board for 20 years and volunteered for various Yukon community events, including Frostbite, Dawson City Music Festival and the Silver Sled.

He was always proud to represent and be a resident of the community, and he was always true to his principles, Mr. Speaker. He endorsed the NDP in the Yukon openly and without reservation and was a tremendous support to so many people who ran for the NDP throughout the Yukon, as was his family.

Richard's love of life was such that he was planning to return to teaching next year when he believed he would be over his illness. That is not to be, but our memories of this laid back, hospitable and very gracious man will serve us all in the sad time to come. Peace to his soul; peace to his family.

Hon. Mr. Rouble: Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Department of Education, I would also like to rise to pay tribute to Mr. Richard Godson. Mr. Godson was a leader in education throughout the territory. His personal commitment to lifelong learning, his passion for teaching, and his enthusiasm and willingness to try something new will surely be missed by many Yukoners.

Mr. Godson did what many of us strive to do and that is to make a difference in the lives of Yukoners.

I know he will certainly be missed by teachers, by parents, by students and by all Yukoners.

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

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Mr. Fentie: I would ask the House to join me in making welcome a former Yukoner, born right here in Whitehorse, who now serves as the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Justice for the territory of Nunavut, Mr. Keith Peterson. Welcome, Keith.

Applause

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of personal privilege

Speaker: Leader of the Official Opposition, on a point of personal privilege.

Mr. Mitchell: I rise today on a point of personal privilege. In addressing the Premier in Question Period yesterday, I asked about a meeting with ATCO and suggested the meeting had occurred on October 31, 2009. This was based on information provided by the Executive Council Office through a recent access-to-information request.

Late yesterday afternoon, our office received a letter from the ATIPP office advising us they had provided us with incorrect information. Their letter said, in part, "There was a typing error in reporting the date of the meeting in question. The date should read October 31, 2008, not October 31, 2009."

I regret the error and apologize to this House. I have two letters from the ATIPP coordinator for filing about this matter.

Speaker: Are there any returns of documents for tabling?

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Hon. Mr. Fentie: I have for tabling a newly developed dividend policy for the Yukon Development Corporation.

I also have for tabling the shareholder letter of expectations for 2009-10 for the Yukon Development Corporation, from the minister responsible.

I also have tabling the contribution agreement between the Government of Canada and the Yukon Energy Corporation in regard to the green energy legacy project, the Mayo B project.

Speaker: Are there any further documents for tabling?
Are there any reports of committees?

REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

Mr. Nordick: I have for tabling the 12th report of the Standing Committee on Appointments to Major Government Boards and Committees.

Speaker: Are there any further reports of committees?
Are there any petitions to be presented?

Are there any bills to be introduced?

Are there any notices of motion?

NOTICES OF MOTION

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

THAT this House is of the opinion the Government of Canada should address the many troubling and alarming investments of our retirement dollars the Canada Pension Plan Investment Board has made into war, environmental abuses and human rights violations around the world by:

(1) appointing a labour and civil society representative to the CPPIB;

(2) requiring the CPPIB to adhere to its socially responsible investment policy for proxy voting;

(3) reviewing the composition of the CPPIB to address and resolve conflicts of interest of current board members;

(4) introducing legal and ethical screening legislation so that the CPPIB investments are in compliance with international and domestic laws, as well as existing treaties; and

(5) ending the use of the CPP as a tool for privatizing public services in Canada and internationally.

I give notice notice of the following motion:

THAT this House calls on the Yukon government to create a Yukon climate change investment fund that would:

(1) provide a local, accountable and transparent avenue for government officials and other Yukoners to pay into to offset the damage of air travel, recognizing that it is particularly harmful in terms of generating emissions;

(2) direct funds to support local green projects, including demonstration of projects on alternative energy, local food production, renovating community buildings and other projects that would not otherwise be funded through general government revenue;

(3) be an arm's-length government agency like a Crown corporation; and

(4) be governed by a representative cross-section of Yukoners.

Speaker: Are there further notices of motion?

Hearing none, is there a ministerial statement?

Hearing none, this brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Alaska/Yukon offshore boundaries

Mr. Inverarity: I have a question for the Minister of Highways and Public Works. In 2002 and again in 2006, the Yukon Party promised voters they would resolve a long-standing border issue with our neighbours in Alaska. The Yukon Party was going to ensure that the 141st meridian is recognized as the offshore boundary between Yukon and Alaska.

On December 10, I urged the government to make good on this outstanding commitment and it has been seven years since this government has taken office. Why has nothing been done by the government to make good on this commitment?

Hon. Mr. Lang: Addressing the member opposite's question about the border between Alaska and the Yukon —

the offshore issue — we've been working with the federal government. This is a federal issue. It's between the Government of Canada and United States so it's not Yukon's or Alaska's decision. We've been working with the federal government prodding them to work with their American counterparts to get this issue resolved. I certainly am very much aware of it. This government has communicated with our federal government to put this on a priority list to get this finally resolved after the many years that this has been an issue.

Mr. Inverarity: Mr. Speaker, it's obvious to anyone who has followed the situation that the Government of Yukon has made no progress on this issue in seven years. It was a promise they made to voters. They would ensure that the border dispute was resolved. It's a complicated issue that has been outstanding for many, many years. Of course, the government knew that when it made the promise. The area in dispute is some 20,000 square kilometres. It is rich in history, marine life and natural resources, including oil and gas. The unresolved dispute is on the front burner again because the State of Alaska has recently announced plans to auction oil and gas exploration in the disputed section of the Beaufort Sea.

What has the government done to let Canada and our Alaskan neighbours know that we don't support this encroachment on our sovereignty?

Hon. Mr. Lang: I'll remind the member opposite that it is Canadian sovereignty that we're talking about and we've been working with the Canadian government to resolve the issue. We certainly are aware of the issue with Alaska and the border situation. They have in the past put proposals forward putting gas opportunities across the border and have not accepted them at the end of the day. We're very aware of it; we are in contact with the federal government.

We are trying to get this issue resolved but it's a Canadian sovereignty issue. It's between the Government of Canada — the national government — and the Government of the United States of America. We are working with our government to make sure they get recognition of the issue and get it resolved as quickly as possible, but it is a national issue.

Mr. Inverarity: This government shouldn't make promises it can't keep. Seven years after coming to office, promising to resolve this issue, we've seen a motion from the MLA for Klondike yesterday urging Canada to study building a port off the north coast to promote Canadian sovereignty. After seven years, that is the sum total of this government's efforts — a motion asking us to study building a port. It's obvious this is not a priority for this government; this was just a feel-good promise made in a campaign document.

We're looking for the government to give this the priority it deserves. The State of Alaska is busy carving up the Beaufort Sea and the Yukon government is standing by just issuing motions.

Mr. Speaker, that's not taking action. Will the minister commit to raising the issue with the Government of Canada and with the Government of Alaska?

Hon. Mr. Fentie: Once again, we have the Official Opposition making statements that are very much void of the progress being made in regard to this matter. Let me remind the

Official Opposition that it is just recently that we finally got a national government into office that recognizes what Arctic sovereignty means and why it is a high priority for this nation. We spent many years under a former federal Liberal government whereby the north was simply a dinner guest on the national stage. Today, that is quite different and progress has been made.

Furthermore, under the devolution transfer agreement, we are working with Canada on a management agreement and relationship when it comes to the offshore resources like oil and gas. There is progress being made there. We commend the Member for Klondike for his visionary motion about the future in regard to a possible port in the area, but furthermore we have to look to our pan-northern vision for Arctic sovereignty and the continuing efforts we are making on building healthy, sustainable communities in the north. It is all part of the progress that this Yukon Party government has made.

Question re: Offenders released into the communities

Mr. Inverarity: I have a question now for the Justice minister. We understand that there is a protocol for notifying the public when a high risk offender is released into the community. It seems reasonable that this protocol be public information. It seems reasonable that Yukoners would want to know how and when they will be informed of potential problems moving into their neighbourhood. It also seems reasonable that the government would want the protocol to be well understood by Yukoners, so it seems quite unreasonable that this government would want to keep this information secret, but it seems to be the situation.

So, for the record, will the minister explain to Yukoners what this protocol actually is for high risk offenders?

Hon. Ms. Horne: I actually have in my hand here for tabling the *Community Notification of High Risk Offenders Protocol* for Yukon, which I will present here.

The Yukon established the community notification of high risk offenders protocol in January 2006. I can assure the members opposite this is not a secret in Yukon; it has been utilized many times. As a matter of fact, the committee has met eight times since its inception in 2006. In four of those cases there has been community notification of high risk offenders who go to the communities.

Mr. Inverarity: A quiet rural neighbourhood within the City of Whitehorse has been surprised to find out that their new neighbour is a convicted child molester with a high risk to re-offend. If this protocol was in fact followed, then we have to question the effectiveness of this particular protocol, and I thank the minister for actually tabling the protocol.

The Department of Justice is aware of the situation. They also know there are potential problems, and the RCMP probation services are fully aware of what's at stake here. It's the residents who seem to have been kept in the dark in this particular situation, and it's the children who are at risk.

Why were the residents not informed about this individual moving into their neighbourhood?

Hon. Ms. Horne: I can't speak on specific matters about a case that's before the courts at present, but offenders

who are released back into the community on probation are often subject to very strict regulations, designed to reduce their risk of re-offending. Our probation officers monitor offenders in the community by assessing the risk. An offender who lives in a stable environment is less likely to offend again.

For certain kinds of offenders, including sex offenders, other considerations are looked at as to where the offender will reside. These may include proximity to schools, to playgrounds, establishments where alcohol is served, and so on. Our probation officers will also review the residence issued during the probationary period; they report several times. Any member of the public, the Department of Justice, Yukon Health and Social Services, and the federal Department of Justice can make a complaint to the RCMP about the offender. The committee will consider whether that offender's name and the community should be made public, but it is open to any member of the public. This has been public knowledge since 2006.

Mr. Inverarity: The public has to know that the offender is actually in the community before they actually can lodge a complaint or file a question regarding notification. Mr. Speaker, the Yukon is a great place to raise your children, unless of course you have a convicted pedophile with a high risk to re-offend quietly living next door. Yukoners don't want to believe that this is happening, but it is. Yukoners are caring people and perhaps more forgiving than they should be on such occasions. Yukon's social justice system is intent on helping offenders reintegrate into society. There are exceptions, however. A convicted pedophile with a high risk to re-offend has quietly moved into a Whitehorse neighbourhood. Local residents are concerned for their children's safety and well-being. Is the minister aware of this situation, and what is she going to do to address their concern?

Hon. Ms. Horne: As I said earlier, I cannot make comments on specific matters that may be before the courts right now. In Canada, we have the strictest regulations on sex offenders, like many other countries, and it's taken very seriously. At the territorial level, our government has committed to protecting the rights of children by having strong legislation, such as the new *Children's Act*, where there are positive duties to report child abuse. In addition, our government has been very active in reforming our correctional system to ensure the safety of the public is paramount.

As the new *Corrections Act* states — as well as establishing accountability to the offenders and duties for them to participate in programming, which will reduce the risk to the communities — we also have revised and updated our community notification protocol, which gives a government the vehicle to do a public notification of dangerous or high risk offenders. We are taking care of our communities. We are ensuring a safer Yukon for Yukoners. We are taking care of our children.

Question re: Yukon Liquor Corporation calendar

Mr. Hardy: The Yukon Liquor Corporation is once again selling teddy bears for a good cause. It is not the most comfortable idea for some people mixing a child's cuddly toy with the grim realities of drinking alcohol in the territory, but now the corporation has outdone itself. Now it is giving out a free desk calendar with photos of teddy bears in various poses.

On the back of the photos are recipes for cocktails — some of them with three ounces of liquor in each drink. Now a couple of the photos actually have the teddy bears sitting with liquor bottles. Can the minister responsible for the Yukon Liquor Corporation explain to the House what message he is trying to convey with this kind of advertising?

Hon. Mr. Kenyon: In regard to the teddy bear program, I would remind the member opposite that has been going for some 10 years. For those who aren't familiar with it, basically you buy one teddy bear and a second teddy bear duplicate is distributed to needy children. Many people simply buy the teddy bear and put it back in the pot. We actually distribute more than what we have sold.

Most of the calendars and drink booklets that we do produce are produced on non-alcoholic drinks. I am not familiar with the document that member opposite refers to, and I will take a look at it.

Mr. Hardy: Mr. Speaker, I have a couple right here if he wants to take a look at it. It is teddy bears with Yukon Hooch and some beer surrounding them. This is insane.

This territory continues to have the highest rate of alcohol consumption in Canada. We spend much more on alcohol than anywhere else and we have one of the highest rates of criminal offences due to alcohol. There is no doubt the two statistics are related.

The minister ignores that terrible fact and softens the image of drinking with teddy bears. Very little is being done by this government to prevent the violent destruction of families and individuals from excess consumption of alcohol.

Will the minister consider spending the same amount on advertising the prevention of substance abuse that he is spending on encouraging liquor consumption? That's what these ads are doing.

Hon. Mr. Kenyon: In regard to the financial matters, I would not be prepared to reduce what this government puts into substance abuse and the substance abuse action plan, which is much more than the amounts the member lists. I have to correct the record: again, the Yukon does not have the highest consumption. In fact, studies show our consumption is basically the same as anywhere else.

What it does reflect is that, in a jurisdiction of 34,000 and an influx of 300,000 tourists, the figures get skewed. You cannot take the dollar value of the consumption and put that into 34,000. It simply does not work.

Other studies show the consumption in the Yukon is exactly the same, and that is definitely produced by a variety of independent sources. I've tabled those in the House repetitively. I invite the member opposite to go back and look at those, or I would be happy to table them again. But to take the dollar value and claim that that is equivalent to consumption in a jurisdiction of 34,000, with 300,000 tourists, is simply inaccurate.

Mr. Hardy: Mr. Speaker, I have a picture here of teddy bears and booze. That's not something I want to show my grandchild. This is ridiculous. Now, there are dozens of non-governmental organizations in Yukon struggling with the effects of over-consumption of alcohol in our population. The

transition homes, the shelters, the food bank, the family counselling and support organizations are all doing the government's job. They attempt to educate the public, to salvage families, to keep people alive and relatively healthy, but they are struggling financially. They can't do what needs to be done effectively.

The Yukon Liquor Corporation estimates a seven-percent increase in revenues this year, to \$10 million. About \$3.5 million of that will be brought in by the liquor tax. Will the minister recommend to the liquor board that the amount that is brought in for liquor tax be automatically forwarded to those NGOs that are doing the job of the government and treating the effects of liquor over-consumption?

Hon. Mr. Kenyon: Again, the member opposite has his statistics wrong. Certainly, alcohol is a problem here. This government has put in a great deal of programming for substance abuse, et cetera. But to illustrate my point that a jurisdiction of 30,000 and taking the tourists of 300,000 and claiming that the statistics are valid — I took a look at the shipping records for Town of the City of Dawson. During the summer, in rough numbers, 270,000 pounds, twice a week; during Christmas — at best, the consumption would be higher — it drops to 70. In fact, it drops significantly lower into the 50s range in October and November when the tourists aren't there and it isn't a festive season. Our consumption is the same as any other jurisdiction.

We have a very active social responsibility committee within the Liquor Corporation. For the member opposite, I will take a look at his complaint, but that certainly does not negate the incredibly good work that social responsibility group within the Liquor Corporation does.

Question re: Local area planning

Mr. Cathers: In the past few years, there have been a number of spot land applications near Fox Lake, especially near the south end. A number of my constituents asked the government to begin a local area planning process for the south Fox Lake area so that development is balanced with their desire to protect green space and trails used for business and recreational purposes.

Earlier this year, Energy, Mines and Resources approached First Nations to fulfill the obligation to notify them before starting local area planning. Following that, the department planned to work with residents to begin developing a local area plan. Will the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources please update me on the status of this file and when my constituents can expect the public process to develop a south Fox Lake local area plan to begin?

Hon. Mr. Lang: The south Fox Lake is a candidate and we are working on it but we are in the process, as the member opposite said, where we are meeting with the First Nations and land departments on a discussion basis for a local area planning process. It is the start of it and hopefully by the end of next summer we will be working with the community to see where we can go.

Mr. Cathers: I appreciate the minister's answer and I also encourage him to take a second look at the timelines.

Originally, it was expected that this would be able to begin later this year and that work could begin with local residents.

I would like to ask the minister about the status to two sets of draft zoning regulations. Regulations for Deep Creek have been in draft form for a few years and land planning branch intended to do consultation this fall to find out if they need to be revised or updated.

As well, in keeping with a commitment made by branch staff at the start of developing the regulations, they intended to ask residents if the regulations should be proceeded with at all.

Second, the Ibex Valley local advisory council proposed an amendment to its zoning regulations that would allow owners of larger residential lots to subdivide. This change was supported by a majority of my constituents who provided their views to the Ibex LAC.

Will the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources please tell me the current status of these two files?

Hon. Mr. Lang: On the Deep Creek zoning regulations, the First Nation consultation is now complete, so we can move forward for one last public meeting. The community residents in Deep Creek can view the zoning regulations after which they will be moved forward for a decision. That's moving ahead. The meeting is expected in February or March of this coming year.

The rezoning after the spot land application was delayed in Ibex Valley — the department has finalized the report that deals with the request of the Hamlet of Ibex Valley to allow for subdivision of rural residential property, and a decision will be made by March 2010.

Mr. Cathers: On April 1 of this year, land planning branch was transferred to Energy, Mines and Resources to centralize management of Yukon lands. This move was intended to provide Yukoners with one convenient location to undertake lands-related business and make it easier for staff to work collaboratively. A key objective was to enhance the ability of the Yukon government to deliver effective and timely land services to Yukon citizens.

My question to the minister relates to rezoning for individual land applications, particularly rezoning the finalized spot land applications that have gone through the YESAA process and been approved.

Several of my constituents have been waiting on rezoning for years, in some cases dating back to 2006. What is the status of efforts to clear the backlog of rezoning applications and improve government's ability to process these types of files in a more timely manner in the future?

Hon. Mr. Lang: The spot applications — if we were to look at the Grizzly Valley issue, there was a public meeting on November 5 to discuss an agricultural land application, and a report is being prepared, which will be forwarded for a decision by February 2010. Hopefully that will be finalized.

Question re: Education action plan

Mr. Elias: We're approaching a year since the Auditor General of Canada released the report, entitled *Public schools and Advanced Education, Yukon Department of Education*. In her report, the Auditor General made 13 recommendations regarding how the Department of Education and Yukon College

might usefully address several issues identified in the report. The department and the college accepted all these recommendations.

One issue from the report was that the department does not regularly analyze relevant data to identify, report and address critical gaps in student performance. From the recommendations on this issue, the department committed to having a three-year assessment framework implementation plan ready by fall of 2009. Can the minister provide the House with this assessment framework implementation plan?

Hon. Mr. Rouble: The Department of Education had a very thorough audit done by the Auditor General of Canada that was released last year, and the recommendations were accepted by a variety of different agencies involved. Also, the Department of Education appeared before this Assembly, before the Public Accounts Committee, where they tabled their response to the Auditor General and their intention of how to continue to respond to the variety of different issues that were raised throughout the report. There has been significant progress made on different issues, such as reporting structures and communication structures, and processes involving planning and involvement of others. Further information from the Department of Education will continue to come forward in addition to a recent public meeting that was held last spring and another annual report type of meeting that will be held in a couple of months. Additionally, there will be other information forthcoming from the Department of Education.

Mr. Elias: I did ask the Education minister to actually table the assessment framework implementation plan, and he didn't answer the question. Yukoners are concerned about this Auditor General's report. Now in further review of the Auditor General's report, we see another issue in regard to performance analysis that needs to be addressed. The report says, "The Department is unable to demonstrate that it successfully prepares students to make an effective transition from high school to post-secondary education, which includes training in trades. The Department does not track the progress of its students to post-secondary education." The report recommended that "Yukon College should report on the progress of the students registered in its Developmental Studies program to help assess the program's success." From this the college committed to putting forward an appropriate action plan. Can the minister report on the timeline for the development and implementation of this action plan?

Hon. Mr. Rouble: Earlier in our budget debate on the supplementary budget for the Department of Education, we had a very thorough discussion on the Yukon student information system. Significant information was put on the floor during that debate, and I would encourage the member to go back to those discussions.

The Government of Yukon has made a significant investment in putting together a student information system that is modelled on the British Columbia system that is going into place right now in all our schools, where student data is being included in this electronic database. Additionally, we are going to do a post-secondary survey of Yukon students to chart their progress after they have graduated to look at how often they

enter into the world of work or the world of post-secondary education and the types of programs that are being undertaken by Yukon students.

Mr. Speaker, we have over 1,300 Yukon students who take advantage of the Yukon grant to attend over 100 different post-secondary institutions across North America. There are some very good indicators coming out of the Department of Education now. I also look forward to providing Yukoners with much more information about the progress of Yukon students and our wonderful education system as the information becomes available.

Question re: Mayo B project

Mr. McRobb: We know the Premier is fond of saying he's "building Yukon's energy future" and for backup, he points to his government's infrastructure projects. Unfortunately, those projects don't do much to strengthen his argument. Yukoners now know this government has mismanaged the Carmacks-Stewart transmission line to the tune of \$38 million. The cost for the project has more than doubled, and this government still hasn't explained who's going to pay for the overruns. The Mayo B hydro project is another big question mark. The federal government has kicked in \$71 million to cover half the estimated cost, yet this government hasn't identified who's picking up the rest of the tab.

Can the Premier now identify the source funding by amount for Mayo B?

Hon. Mr. Fentie: I thought we were on a positive trend with the point of privilege the Leader of the Official Opposition rose on today. The government side found that to be a clear example of recognition by the Official Opposition that they've been bringing forward incorrect information.

Once again, the Member for Kluane has made incorrect statements. Does the member not recognize that the Carmacks-Pelly connector on the main grid, along with the connection to the Minto — or Capstone — mine is already done and in service? What's the member talking about — who's paying for the overage? It's paid for; the project is paid for, including some \$7 million from a private corporation — a demonstration of partnership — exactly what we've been building in this territory. Let me remind the member opposite that so too is the Mayo B project a partnership. It's a partnership between the federal government and the Yukon Energy Corporation, and I've just tabled the contribution agreement for the member opposite's information. Hopefully, that'll help the members to correct their incorrect statements.

Mr. McRobb: By law the Yukon government cannot go into an accumulated deficit. Doing so would force an election — although Yukoners would dearly love an early opportunity to hold this Yukon Party government accountable at the polls, it is doubtful the Premier would be accommodating them. What does this government do instead? Well, it transfers unfunded capital projects to Crown corporations and tells them to borrow the money, allowing this government to still squeak out a surplus. That's why the Hospital Corporation must borrow money to build hospitals in Dawson City and Watson Lake. That's why Yukoners will be paying interest on those loans long after this government is gone.

Again, how much will this government be authorizing Yukon Development Corporation to borrow to complete the Mayo B project?

Hon. Mr. Fentie: The member's assertions of passing off projects to our Crown corporations are once again incorrect.

In fact, the gentleman sitting beside the Member for Kluane, the Leader of the Official Opposition, is the chair of the Public Accounts Committee. Surely, the Leader of the Official Opposition, the member's colleague, can explain to him what consolidated statements are and what, in fact, is in the public accounts. It's all the fiscal or financial information of the Yukon government.

So, again, the Member for Kluane is incorrect. We believe strongly that all our Crown corporations work within their mandate. They should be part of the partnership we're building here, and for seven years, that effort in building partnerships has provided great success for the Yukon. All we have to do is look around.

Mr. McRobb: Well, another question unanswered. What's this government hiding? Here is some of what Yukoners know about this government so far: one, its energy projects are twice as expensive as promised; two, its hospital projects suffer from skyrocketing over-costs; three, when the government can't afford to finish projects, they're shifted to Crown corporations that are told to borrow the money; and four, then this government finds some excuse to prevent these corporations from being accountable in this Assembly. Some open, accountable and fiscally responsible government this is, Mr. Speaker.

Can the Premier tell us how much the corporation must borrow to make up for this government's bad planning?

Hon. Mr. Fentie: Now the Member for Kluane has decided to take on the Yukon Utilities Board with his statements of cost overruns on the Carmacks-to-Pelly line. The Yukon Utilities Board has clearly ruled that the investments and expenditures were prudently incurred, so too has the Yukon Energy Corporation Board approved these projects and their expenditures.

But let's look at some facts of what this government's partnership-building has accomplished. When we came into office, when the last Liberal government was in office in this territory, the population in 2002 was some 30,000. Today it's over 34,000, a record level of population. Our labour force was a mere 14,000. Today, after seven years of building partnerships and our style of management, 17,600 people are in our labour force.

When we came into office, after that last debacle of the Liberal government, 13,000 people in September 2002 were employed; today, under the Yukon Party government's management, leadership and partnership building, 16,500 people are employed.

Mr. Speaker, let's go on. Retail sales, 2002, under the former Liberal government was \$265 million. Today, under the Yukon Party it is \$336 million. That's our style of management.

Speaker: The time for Question Period has now elapsed.

Notice of government private members' business

Mr. Nordick: Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 14.2(7), I would like to identify the items standing in the name of government private members to be called on Wednesday, December 16, 2009. They are Motion No. 842, standing in the name of the Member for McIntyre-Takhini, and Motion No. 970, standing in the name of the Member for McIntyre-Takhini.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

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

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

Motion agreed to

Speaker leaves the Chair

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Chair (Mr. Nordick): Order please. Committee of the Whole will now come to order. The matter before the Committee is Bill No. 17, *Second Appropriation Act, 2009-10*, Department of Health and Social Services. Do members wish to have a brief recess?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

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

Bill No. 17 — *Second Appropriation Act, 2009-10* — continued

Chair: The matter before the Committee is Bill No. 17, *Second Appropriation, 2009-10*. We will now proceed with Vote 15, Department of Health and Social Services, and continue with general debate.

Department of Health and Social Services — *continued*

Mr. Mitchell: I believe when we left off yesterday, we were talking about a number of the buildings the department was working on. We had been talking about the Thomson Centre, as well as the Watson Lake hospital and the Dawson hospital. I did notice that, although we weren't able to get an estimate from the minister yesterday regarding the range of costs the minister anticipated might be involved with the Thomson Centre, I did notice that this morning on the radio, on CBC, the minister said it would be somewhere between \$5 million and \$6 million. So I guess we have an answer to our ques-

tion now. Perhaps when the minister is next on his feet, he can indicate if that is an anticipated total cost or if that's just the cost to get the first pod of 19 beds open that he refers to. So the minister is taking notes, and that would be the question we have for him.

Going back to the health centres in general, I also asked yesterday about the difficulties that had been identified in the original RFP for a consultant regarding Watson Lake. I wonder if the minister can provide me with some greater detail of answers as to what was found in terms of the possible needs to jackhammer out some of the cement floor to accommodate a change in plumbing and drainage for the new use of what was a multi-level care facility and is now going to be a hospital — also, possible need to change entranceways to accommodate admitting and emergency admitting.

Also, possible costs for relocation of kitchen, whether it was determined that the doorways in this building need to be enlarged, which was one of the questions raised in the initial RFP for tender for a report by an architectural firm, as we are facing already in the Thomson Centre — whether that's also the case in Watson Lake. That is a series of questions on that.

While I'm on my feet and we're talking about health centres whose purposes are changing, I would like to ask some questions about the Dawson Health Centre.

First of all, if the minister has any updates in his conversations with the Hospital Corporation, since we're not hearing directly from them during this sitting regarding the cost of the new building there — how it will be financed and whether there is any infrastructure funding as part of the cost to financing of this building.

I ask that because at public meetings in Dawson, there was reference made to needing to build this building within a certain time frame in order to qualify for infrastructure funding. We recognize that this is being passed off to the Yukon Hospital Corporation, but we have no vehicle or method through which to ask the Hospital Corporation right now whether they are qualifying for infrastructure funding. I would presume that since the funding is funding that's made available to public government and to First Nation governments, although this is a Crown corporation, the government has to in some way authorize application for infrastructure funding. How much funding has been applied for as part of infrastructure funding from Canada? Finally, I will roll them all up into one series of answers and then I'll go back after the ones that the minister perhaps doesn't get to.

Regarding the location for that health centre, the minister has said during Question Period that there was consultation done on the location and that the city council had accepted this location on behalf of Dawson residents, yet there were over 260 residents who signed a petition stating they did not feel they were adequately consulted and did not want the building to be located at that particular location in Minto Park.

Maybe the minister can address that because, although it is the Yukon Hospital Corporation that is managing the project, the land in question belongs to the Government of Yukon. The Government of Yukon is transferring the land to the Hospital

Corporation; therefore, it is a Government of Yukon decision to make that land available for those purposes.

Thank you, Mr. Chair. I've asked a number of questions and I look forward to the minister's responses.

Hon. Mr. Hart: I thank the member opposite for taking just the right amount of time for the camera. I will continue to carry on and be brief and try to respond to many of the questions he did ask.

With regard to Watson Lake, I will say the Health department did transfer the organization with regard to that particular facility to the Highways and Public Works department.

They were looking after that particular building, but I would like to try to maybe answer some of the questions because I am reasonably aware of some of the issues with regard to Watson Lake. Yes, there are going to have to be some adjustments. I did mention previously this issue with regard to structural improvements for seismic. Those have been identified. Those are identified in the RFP from Kobayashi & Zedda Architects. They are also identified by the Outside consultant from Vancouver.

In addition, Mr. Chair, there were some issues with regard to the floor level and the ceiling height that had to be adjusted. Again, those are items that were felt could be easily mitigated in the existing shell. One of the other major issues that had to be looked at was the EMS ramp for the hospital. There have been several configurations of that particular entity to the Watson Lake hospital. It is still under review as to what is going to be the best model for the hospital. Obviously the current situation is fairly difficult, and the new facility will still have to have some improvements made to ensure that the ambulance can come up to the hospital and the patients can be brought in quite safely.

So, yes, there will have to be some adjustments made to that facility to accommodate the ambulance. That is currently underway.

In addition, the RFP for Watson Lake is out, and the planning process and the design are well underway. Once those are complete, mitigation for all these issues will be identified and brought forth to the Hospital Corporation for review. At that time we will be in a position to look at a little more refined cost with regard to the Watson Lake facility.

In regard to the Dawson health facility, we are working with the Hospital Corporation on this particular site. With regard to the facility, I'll maybe remind the member opposite that there are very few spots available in the City of Dawson for a footprint of the size that will be required for the hospital.

In any case the two remaining options belong to the government also. However, one of the options for the government has already been spoken for by Yukon Housing Corporation and that process is going to be underway. They have to get moving on their project also. We have received a letter from the City of Dawson, and we've received confirmation from the councillors and mayor in the City of Dawson on several occasions that this location for the new facility has been acceptable.

Now, I am also aware that, yes, there were 260 residents, or so, who signed the petition. I understand quite a few of them may not have been residents, but I also know that there were

well over 200 letters sent that approved of the location for the hospital. One of the main issues with regard to its current location is for the addition, at a later date — once the hospital is complete — of the construction of the replacement for McDonald Lodge. One of the main reasons we picked that location is so that we can share some of the facilities of the hospital, ensuring that we can maximize the mechanical, the heating, the laundry and those facilities. We want to maximize the use and ensure that both facilities can be run efficiently. Thus, once the hospital is built, the dismantling of the current clinic will take place, and we will commence the building of McDonald Lodge on that location. And that is one of the main reasons for this particular location.

As I stated, there were several previous consultations with the city on this issue. We have letters from the mayor and council, indicating their acceptance of this particular facility. We've gone out of our way to assist the city with the moving of the playground. We are also looking at only occupying the area that currently has the playground in it. So, yes, we're anxious to get started. Again, the RFP is already out for this particular facility. It's a different firm from the one in Watson Lake.

Again, we will be looking forward to seeing what that information provides and the Hospital Corporation will be looking at what its needs are. They did have a consultant go up and review the situation there and give them parameters as to what is going to be needed for Dawson City. We look forward to that review and we look forward to the estimates that are coming out of Dawson City.

Mr. Mitchell: I did mention there were a couple of things that perhaps the minister might miss and I would come back to them. He did identify a number of the issues with the Watson Lake hospital. I'm not sure — he did not respond regarding the possibility of having to jackhammer out portions of the cement. He made reference to the bringing it up to seismic adjustments, but what about the pad to accommodate plumbing changes for relocating of kitchens and other areas? The minister indicated that the cost estimates would be better known once the RFP was out and responses had come in. I'm wondering if the minister has a ballpark estimate of the items that have been identified to date that have to be remedied, or do I perhaps have to listen to the CBC tomorrow morning to hear that estimate?

There's also the issue of infrastructure funding for the Dawson project — the minister didn't respond to that question. Is there time-limited infrastructure funding? This was apparently relayed by the Yukon Hospital Corporation to the citizens of Dawson. Could the minister elaborate on what amount of infrastructure funding is part of this project that would be time-limited?

Hon. Mr. Hart: With regard to Watson Lake, yes, we are aware there were several issues identified in both consultants' reports with regard to Watson Lake, but the overall issue indicated that the Watson Lake facility could be incorporated as a hospital and they recommended the corporation go through with that process.

The RFP will identify the issues with regard to the planning, which will include the mitigation that's required for any

of the upgrades that will take place, that have to take place, to ensure the facility can become a hospital. I anticipate those will all be integrated with the solution that's brought forth by the consultants to ensure that, when the facility is completed, it meets all the aspects of a hospital — a cottage hospital in this particular case — and that it will meet all the earthquake and other issues that are required for the facility of this type.

Once that has been identified, I am sure that we will be in a much better position to look at what those costs are going to be and hopefully by that time we will be in a position to know when the Yukon Hospital Corporation will take over the Watson Lake facility and whether the staff will accept our position or theirs. That will take place sometime in the new year in January. We will be looking forward to that. In addition, we have an arrangement with the Whitehorse Hospital Corporation that the transfer date is to be April 1, 2010 and we look forward to that date also.

With regard to Dawson City, yes, we are looking at the facility. Again, the RFP will go out and identify the specific issues with regard to what is going to be required. Of course, in Dawson City we are a little bit ahead of the game because we are dealing with a blank piece of land so we'll have to make some adjustments with regard to the playground, but that will take place.

In essence, we are hopeful that the RFP for Dawson City will identify what's required and the architect will identify just exactly what the prints are going to require and how we can establish that and where we fit with regard to timing for this new facility. Once that is in our plans, the Hospital Corporation will be in a position to bring those numbers to us so we can review the same and they can discuss it with their board members to ensure the best available health care facility for Dawson takes place.

Mr. Mitchell: The time being limited this late in the sitting, I don't want to keep going over these questions again and again, and we won't be able to ask quite so many follow-up questions. I'll just remind the minister for when he's next on his feet that I don't think I heard an answer to the infrastructure spending aspect of Dawson. Is there a dedicated amount of infrastructure funding from Canada that's time-limited that is being applied for to be incorporated into this project?

Now, while we're talking about projects, I'll ask the minister — there is money in this budget for upgrades to McDonald Lodge in Dawson, which we know in a couple years hence will be replaced, and well it should be. We heard quite a bit last winter. We actually had residents of the lodge and family members phoning. I think there were some articles in the paper in response to this as well, with concerns about McDonald Lodge, and specifically the heating system, which we were told was not acting sufficiently to heat the building. As a result, residents were actually importing electrical space heaters to keep their rooms warm. Are some of the improvements being made at this time to address that or has this been addressed previous to this budget?

Hon. Mr. Hart: I personally was in McDonald Lodge this summer. I had a look, talked to the staff, and talked to the

maintenance group. Yes, there were some difficulties last winter. Those have been mitigated, so they have assured me.

Pretty much, in my introduction to all but one person who was sleeping, everyone there was very happy with the facilities in Dawson City and very happy with not only the facilities, but the cook who might be very hard to replace, but it seemed like a very amenable group that was there. They had nothing but kudos for the staff of that facility and I look forward to maintaining that facility in the future. Again, as I stated, once we complete the hospital we will commence the replacement for McDonald Lodge, and it will take place where our current health facility is.

Mr. Mitchell: I thank the minister for his answer to the question. The Yukon Medical Association recently at their annual general meeting came out and made some fairly strong statements regarding concerns about aboriginal health. There were a wide variety of issues which they felt impacted on poorer health outcomes for aboriginal members of our population. Can the minister provide us with some information on what sorts of activities and policy changes perhaps the government is looking to undertake to address the concerns that were expressed by the Yukon Medical Association on behalf of aboriginal people?

Hon. Mr. Hart: The aboriginal health transition fund is available from Health Canada to provinces and territories to integrate with and adapt their existing health systems to better meet the needs of all aboriginal peoples. I was at the AGM for the YMA here in Whitehorse. I was there for the motions and I did respond to those motions when questions were asked with regard to this facility.

Unlike many other jurisdictions, in the Yukon we look after all First Nation issues under the hospital and bill back the government at a later date. In many cases, we have to wait well past a year to get our funding but, in essence, everyone is treated equally in the process. We look forward to ensuring the best health is provided for all Yukoners, including First Nations.

For the member opposite, too, we work very closely with the First Nations. Just recently in our pandemic plan, we knew they would have some difficulties with regard to capacity and we did provide them with some assistance in that area to ensure that their membership receives the vaccines wherever possible. I really look forward to that in the process. Yes, we did attest to that issue.

I also brought up the issue of our social inclusion strategy and I indicated that will be coming forth in the next 18 months to cover all aspects of this issue, including poverty, affordable housing, training and education — all of these entities into the new future with regard to dealing with poverty.

As I said, we do have monies in the budget for the aboriginal program from Health Canada and they are in our line. That is what we work with. We have also received a report, basically a round table on health, guiding the plan, which was done May 12 to 14, 2009, here in Whitehorse.

Yes, we're working with the First Nations, and we're working to improve the issue, not only with First Nations, but

with all individuals who are less fortunate and require more assistance to get through life.

Mr. Mitchell: Perhaps I'll follow up on some of the areas that the minister just identified, such as the social inclusion strategy. For the minister's benefit, I do attend the monthly meetings — and as many other activities as I can — of the Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition, so there are a number of areas I'd like to ask questions on related to that.

The minister has mentioned that he hopes to have a social inclusion strategy ready to be tabled and implemented within the next 18 months, and I would point out to the minister that the government has been in place for seven years, and that will make eight and a half years before we have finally gotten to an actual anti-poverty strategy — or social inclusion strategy as the minister likes to call it.

I know that the government has accomplished some things, and I will credit them for what they have accomplished in terms of additional housing, in terms of helping or assisting Habitat for Humanity — those are all positive and good accomplishments.

I know the minister will recall the housing survey backgrounder and the news release put out on April 1 by the Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition. I'll just put some items into the record. I will note that these are not necessarily fully statistically valid, because they're based on self-reporting; nevertheless, they do paint a picture.

Here are some of the more telling patterns from the results of the "Housing Survey Raises Concern" news release: Over half of respondents indicated they did not have a place they could call their own — that's 132 of 246 people who responded. Half of respondents indicated they did not feel their housing situation was stable — 123 of 247 respondents. One-quarter of those who responded said they did not feel safe where they were sleeping — 61 of 252 respondents. One-quarter of respondents said they did not have a place to cook — 61 of 250 respondents. Four out of every 10 respondents said they couldn't afford their current accommodation — 101 of 247 respondents.

Seventy-one people reported that their housing was inadequate. They couch surf, stay with friends or in a hotel, live in vehicles or tents, or rely on the shelter for a warm place to sleep. The co-chair of the Anti-Poverty Coalition stated: "These results confirm the impressions and stories we have heard that the housing currently available for low income people in Whitehorse is inadequate."

I just want to state for the record that I know that this is the situation that people find themselves in, and I also know that the minister cares about it and that it's not the minister's fault or of the minister's making. So when he stands up, I want him to understand that I'm not asking these questions in an accusatory way, but rather to ask this: what is government going to do to more rapidly address these issues? We're 18 months away from this strategy being ready and implemented. If the minister can provide some answers on that, I'm sure that not only members of this House, but members of the Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition would like to hear the responses. I know we recently debated a motion from the Third Party about holding a social

inclusion and anti-poverty summit in the spring. The department is working on that task, but I just want to know what else the minister can do to address these issues, because they're very serious issues in Yukon.

I can tell the minister, for his edification, that even though people think of Copperbelt as Copper Ridge — and it includes a portion of Copper Ridge — but it's not only Copper Ridge. I have areas in my riding where I have gone to visit constituents and found the residence was a tent, or a converted bus, or an aging camper that had been converted into a semi-permanent residence. So this is a problem that exists across the Yukon, even not that far from some of our more affluent neighbourhoods.

Hon. Mr. Hart: I thank the member opposite for his — rather than question — response I guess, with regard to anti-poverty.

I am fully aware of the information the member opposite brought forth. We have had discussions with anti-poverty. I also had a very good conversation with the anti-poverty group with regard to the social inclusion strategy. They were very happy with the process and very happy to be involved. I will remind the member opposite that the situation we are facing here in Yukon is the same right across Canada. We are not alone in the process with regard to dealing with the situation. We have the same situation.

With regard to the data, the member opposite indicated the data was self-obtaining with regard to the anti-poverty group but we are going to take a data assessment of this thing so we can get an idea of what the actual numbers are. In the meantime, we will come forth with a conference early in the new year — I hope it is before spring — so that we can get moving on this. In the meantime, in a parallel process, we have already started an intergovernmental group meeting. I was just at the last one. We are getting the information from all elements and departments of government and looking at coming forth on this issue so we have something to present to the group in the spring, so we can add to it and identify the priorities from that process.

We'll also be looking at developing questionnaires to go out dealing with all aspects of social inclusion. Traditionally, we try to tackle one item at a time. We're looking at planning to cover all of the aspects so that we can look not only just six months down the road, but looking to six or probably 10 years down the road, so we can have a very good idea of what we're looking at, where we're going to need that facility and which community is going to need it first. We will identify it, move forward on it and correct it so we can have as many people in the Yukon included in the process as possible, versus being excluded. I look forward to the results of this study. I did indicate 18 months, yes, but I hope to have a draft of the social inclusion plan by next fall.

Mr. Mitchell: I do thank the minister for those responses. It would be encouraging to see that draft at least by next fall and for the government to at least move forward on some of the most urgent areas, as identified in the draft, rather than waiting for a finalized version.

The minister mentioned this situation exists across Canada. Of course, as we know, that's certainly correct. I know earlier this fall, Mr. Rob Rainer, representing the National Anti-Poverty Organization, came up and met with a number of people in the Yukon, including our caucus, regarding the Dignity for All campaign. The campaign is meant to promote public understanding of the link between the taxes Canadians pay and the supports and services we benefit from as a result.

I don't know if the minister had a chance to meet with Mr. Rainer when he was here, but I hope he did. I just want to note that, although this problem exists across Canada, this campaign does identify that everyone has a role to play in building a poverty-free and more socially secure Canada — governments at all levels, businesses of all sizes and types, community and other civil society organizations and individuals. We have a role to play, and part of the role is to work with the minister's colleagues across the country and with the federal minister to take some coordinated action that will help to address these issues.

The national campaign has three goals — the first of which is a comprehensive integrated federal plan for poverty elimination. It talks about — I won't read it all — but it is a pan-Canadian blueprint and it says it needs to be comprehensive in its approach with measures concerning the following and other thematic areas: income security; food security; housing security; childcare and early childhood development; education and training; labour standards; job creation, including a green job strategy; unemployment insurance — which should be employment insurance, I guess; health supports; and, in particular, supports for vulnerable populations such as the population of aboriginal people that I identified in an earlier question. The second is a federal act to eliminate poverty, promote social inclusion and strengthen social security. The third is sufficient federal revenue to invest in social security.

The second item on this list was food security. I am aware of the contribution that Yukon made, that the minister's department made, in terms of the start-up of the Whitehorse Food Bank, which replaced what was being done previously by the Salvation Army and Maryhouse in terms of providing food for people who are short on sufficient funds to buy sufficient food.

I also know that the food bank, earlier this fall, had asked for a meeting with the Premier at one of the Premier's public meetings in the City of Whitehorse. I previously asked the minister this in Question Period, but some time has elapsed since then. Has that meeting with the Premier or with the Premier and the Health and Social Services minister yet occurred?

Along with the very generous volunteer donations that citizens groups and individuals are making to support the food bank, is the minister considering providing any ongoing support to make sure that the food bank is sustainable?

Hon. Mr. Hart: I would have to say that this government has been very good with regard to assisting the food bank. First of all, in its assessment; secondly, in development of its group; thirdly, assisting with its current location; and lastly, with providing funds through CDF for shelving, so that the unit can house all the goods. I might say also, Mr. Chair, this gov-

ernment has made a significant donation of straight cash to the food bank for its services to the general public.

I also would like to identify the issue that food banks across Canada are suffering the same situation. The member opposite only has to turn on the TV. I believe last night I was watching the news and the food banks in several of the big centres throughout Canada are — I think the number used last night was that there is around a 20- to 23-percent increase in the need for food bank services. So it's a stretch right across the country. I think it's probably relative to the economic times that we're in right now. In the Yukon, we're not seeing the situation that they're seeing in places like Ontario or even Alberta for that matter.

With regard to the economy, I think the Yukon has done a very good job in shouldering itself against the economic crunch that's being felt Outside, and we look forward to that. I've also received kudos from the directors with regard to the food bank. Yes, there was a request for a meeting to deal with the situation — or, I think it was a request for additional funding, but we have not received correspondence from the food bank directly with regard to this. I know they have a program, and they identified that program last week, with the hope that they could avoid coming to see the government for additional funding. I wish them success in that process. Hopefully they can achieve that funding requirement, so they can cover their cost to get by.

But I will say that this government did provide a substantial amount of money for them to get started. I checked other jurisdictions across Canada. No jurisdiction across Canada provides direct funding for food banks. There is a national food bank association that does take care of that particular aspect. I know that in some cases some jurisdictions do provide some indirect funding through other sources, but that may be something that we could explore at a later date.

Mr. Mitchell: I do thank the minister for his response. As I mentioned in my question, I know that the food bank is appreciative of the support they have received from the government, and I know that there are many members of this Assembly who, on a personal basis, donate to the food bank.

The minister mentioned that he checked other jurisdictions and that no jurisdiction is directly supporting food banks. In many jurisdictions, I believe, besides volunteer contributions, municipal governments are assisting. In this case, based on the size of our jurisdiction and the particularly limited mandate of the City of Whitehorse where the food bank is located in terms of what they are able to do, it's probably more likely that it is the territorial government that can assist.

I just want to note again for the record that it was the executive director of the Whitehorse Food Bank who made the request at one of the Premier's public meetings for a meeting. A meeting does not necessarily mean that government has to commit to ongoing support, but I would think when a group that's doing that much good work requests a meeting, either the Premier or the Health minister should accommodate them by simply having a meeting.

I would encourage the minister and the Premier — who will perhaps have a bit more flexible time in three more days, when we adjourn this Assembly — to at least meet with the

Whitehorse Food Bank Society. I look forward to the minister making that commitment on the floor of the House today.

I want to move on to other areas, because the time is short. I will ask about one of the items that was certainly in the governing party's platform, as well as in the Liberal Party's platform, and ask for a progress report on the status of a collaborative health care clinic — at least one clinic to use that model where we have the ability for health care to be provided in a slight more holistic way where people have an opportunity to have joint interaction and joint appointments with perhaps their physiotherapist, dieticians, nurses or nurse practitioners as the case may soon be and medical doctors.

I know that there is a working group that involves both the doctors and the nurses, among others. I'm just looking for a progress report from the minister.

Hon. Mr. Hart: This planning for continuing to improve collaborative care has begun. We've had several of the planning group members of health professions at the meetings since June and the group includes physicians, nurses, physiotherapists, occupational therapists, pharmacists, social workers, dieticians, in addition to government representatives. The planning process is being facilitated by consultants with expertise in facilitation and primary health care service delivery.

Improvements in collaboration can occur in a number of ways. The group is exploring what's the best one. Currently, we have collaborative activities underway through the chronic disease program. A nurse, psychiatrist, pharmacist and others are needed to provide services to patients in physician offices in order to improve the quality of diabetic care.

Mr. Mitchell: I thank the minister for his response and for that information. Going down my list of things to ask about, I'm wondering if the minister can provide us with updates to this House regarding the progress on nurse recruitment and doctor recruitment and whether he has any percentages, in terms of what percentage of the nursing staff in the facilities the minister is responsible for are permanent employees versus part-time or casual employees.

Hon. Mr. Hart: Currently, in Yukon, all our nursing positions are staffed and have the appropriate individuals in there.

We have casual nurses available to assist also, but all our permanent positions are filled throughout the Yukon and have been so for some time now. In addition, there are approximately 32 permanent positions with regard to that. For the member opposite, I have just been informed that those are all filled.

In addition, under the physician side, the member opposite will probably recall that there was a recent study by the national association that indicates the Yukon has more physicians per capita than anywhere else in Canada. I also spoke with the YMC recently and they have indicated that they are happy with the doctors who are available here in the Yukon. This includes our IMGs in addition to the process.

So we look forward to many more times of ensuring we also are getting more doctors looking at the Yukon. We were successful in having a couple come here recently. We are also looking at providing an ongoing program for our nurses. We

developed a DVD for this. We have a recruitment officer who goes out regularly for our services for nurses. We have signing bonuses that we provide. Again, this is something we've had to do in order to compete in the marketplace with other jurisdictions. Whether it has been totally successful, we'll be doing an assessment of that, but it has been a very positive thing so far. I think for the first time in about 10 years, we've actually filled all of the spots with regard to nursing.

I know in Alberta they are looking at laying off some of their nurses, so we'll be going to Alberta to maybe see if we can put a few on a bus back here or on a plane — whatever — and get them to come to Yukon.

I think the big thing when it comes to recruitment is to not oversell the Yukon — in other words, explain the situation to them. This is not Florida and this is not Victoria. We don't want to spend a lot of money bringing a nurse here and they're here only three months, and then have them leave.

That could be just as cost inefficient in the process. The big thing is to ensure that we don't oversell the Yukon and we explain the situation to them well so that they get there. That is one of the reasons why we developed the DVD to assist in the process. It has been a very valuable tool. We look forward to carrying on. We will also be going out shortly to identify additional positions we anticipate will be required for the Thomson Centre — the additional pod — and it will take us some time to recruit for that particular facility also. In the meantime, it will take us time to make the renovations required to meet the new accreditation code for that facility.

I would have to say we have a very good relationship with the local physicians and I would like to continue with that process. Hopefully, we can improve it into the positive aspect of all Yukoners in the future.

Mr. Mitchell: I thank the minister for those responses and I would just want to put on the record that I don't think we could oversell the Yukon; that's why we all live here.

As far as Florida and Victoria are concerned, it rarely gets too hot in the Yukon, nor does it very often get too crowded. I think there are lots of positives that we can sell and hopefully people will come here because they want this lifestyle, not because they're hoping to find a different one.

I'm only going to ask a couple more questions now because I know that the Leader of the Third Party wants to get into the debate. I've indicated to him that I would turn it over to him by 3:15 or so, but I have a lot more questions that I'll come back to after he has had an opportunity to ask some of his.

I'd like to ask the minister a couple questions regarding the *Yukon Health Care Review — Taking the Pulse*, and the document that came back afterward. Yukoners were asked what is working well in our health system and respondents did say that they were highly appreciative and satisfied with the quality of our health care system. In addition to generally positive comments about the level of care available, survey respondents listed many examples of what's working well, including the quality of Yukon health care professionals, home care services, specialist services, acute care, chronic care, Whitehorse General Hospital and a variety of community health services.

Yukoners were also asked what is not working well in our health care system. Respondents identified a wide range of issues, including wait times, lack of family doctors, access to long-term, palliative and home care, fraudulent use of Yukon's health care system, limited substance abuse treatment and programming, medevac issues, limited mental health services, lack of prevention programs and human resource and training issues in communities.

They made a lot of suggestions as well. Among others, a vast majority said to keep health care free and did not want to see user fees implemented. I'll ask the minister again — last time I asked him this question in the spring about the Premier's commitment not to implement user fees, the minister's response was it wasn't just up to the Premier; he said it was a Cabinet decision. I'm not sure where he was going with that. Recognizing it is a Cabinet decision and he is the Minister of Health and Social Services, we thought we could count on the promises made by the Premier.

Could the minister comment on the government's position on the implementation of any possible new user fees?

I also note for the record that while the Leader of the Third Party and I sit on the oversight committee, we have only ever had one brief meeting and that was to formally receive the findings from Dr. Reddoch who chaired the process. We haven't been called back since, and I am not sure whether there are any plans to do so. Maybe the minister could address that as well.

Hon. Mr. Hart: I thank the member opposite for a lot of those observations. With regard to the health review, there were a substantial number of respondents to the health review. Dr. Reddoch was very pleased with the process and the community tour for the facility. Yes, there was a substantial amount of interest in dealing with many of the issues and like most of us — I think — we'd all like to say that we'd like to keep it for free. I think all of Canada would like to do that. I think we all understand that it costs money. Failing that, there were a lot of suggestions by those respondents on ways and methods of trying to recoup funding for the Yukon.

I know that Dr. Reddoch had a review. People were eligible to comment on the report; thus it was provided during our overview committee. The overview committee, as I stated in the House when asked, is scheduled to meet probably the week of January 20. We will set something up for that week so that we can sit down, review the report and go from there on the suggestions. That is the plan. Obviously the pandemic situation has made it very difficult for us to move anywhere on this issue. We have been working on that plan since August of last year to ensure that we are ready. I can say without a doubt that that preplanning has proved to be very valuable to us.

Mr. Mitchell: I have a follow-up question on the review. One of the recommendations in the report was to look at the pharmacy markup, and the minister commented recently that this is probably the best place to save money and that the government was looking at that, along with the other two territories, I believe he said. I'm wondering if the minister can provide us with a more detailed response to that.

I have promised the Leader of the Third Party that I would let him get into the debate by 3:15 p.m. today, but I would like

to roll one more question into this. We know we're not going to have the chair and CEO of the Hospital Corporation appearing in this House this fall, although the government announced last summer that the decision had been made to transfer the hospital responsibilities in Watson Lake and Dawson to the corporation. The government put out a news release saying that they had accepted the responsibility; nevertheless, they're not here this fall. The minister has now promised they will be here this spring. The Yukon Development Corporation hasn't been here this fall either, but appears once a year for two hours in the Assembly. The Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board also appears once a year for two hours in this Assembly. Two hours is not a lot of time to deal with issues as complex as the provision of health care through what will now be three hospitals under the direction of the Yukon Hospital Corporation.

I'd like to ask the minister this: will the Hospital Corporation definitely be appearing this spring — not perhaps being told that they didn't want to appear, which is what we were told of the Yukon Development Corporation? Will the minister ensure they will appear this spring? Considering the importance of this area to Yukoners, will the minister entertain having them appear spring and fall?

Hon. Mr. Hart: With regard to the pharmaceutical, I did indicate it's there. The western premiers conference identified the issue of dealing with pharmaceuticals on a western basis, on a bulk purchasing aspect. We are currently working through the department with officials of the other jurisdictions on that particular aspect. We are looking forward to the result of same and bringing forth the issue, whereupon the Yukon may be able to take advantage of this particular aspect and provide some savings to Yukoners.

With regard to the Hospital Corporation, I did state that, yes, once the Hospital Corporation assumes the responsibility for the Watson Lake and Dawson City facilities, we would ask them to come before the House. Yes, that is correct.

The news release the member opposite is talking about was basically that the hospital would look at accepting taking over the Watson Lake facility, and it was based on the consultant report for that particular facility also. It was also identified that we would have to provide the staff of the Watson Lake facility an opportunity to look at taking a position with the Yukon Hospital Corporation or maintaining their position with the Yukon government. A substantial amount of work was involved — working with the unions and working with the Public Service Commission, the Hospital Corporation, their actuaries and the pensions. The member opposite must realize that all the aspects take time. We basically fast-tracked that particular process with the option of being able to provide each employee for the Watson Lake facility an opportunity to look at accepting a job from the Yukon Hospital Corporation or remaining with the Yukon government. We've given them that particular process in November and they have until mid-January to accept that one way or the other, and then we can move forward.

We are hoping the majority of the staff will accept facilities with the Hospital Corporation; however, there may be

some staff who wish to remain with us and we will accommodate those in the process.

Mr. Hardy: I thank the Member for Copperbelt for the opportunity to ask questions. I also recognize the fact that many of the questions that are concerns for the NDP have already been expressed or asked by the Leader of the Official Opposition. However, sometimes, we do need to hear a little bit more detail. Excuse me if I sound a little redundant in some areas. We do have a different approach than the Official Opposition at times.

I also appreciate the answers we've been receiving from the minister. I find them a little bit more detailed than we usually get and I appreciate that as well.

For some reason, I remember with regard to the Thomson Centre — I'm not going to get into moving or building or construction; I've seen too much of that in my life and I don't need explanations around that. It's more about the usage. I understand the minister has indicated they're aiming for 19 beds to be opened over there, and that's for long-term care. Is that correct?

Hon. Mr. Hart: Yes, we're looking at providing long-term care in the pod that's there, in addition to palliative care into that particular aspect also.

Mr. Hardy: That's very good. That's the area I was going into. I understood there was going to be palliative care within that facility as well. There is a difference between palliative care and long-term care, as the minister knows, and the department of course does know. Could I get some more detail on what they are anticipating with regard to the breakdown between palliative care and long-term care and how it's going to be set up, the challenges that are being faced? I've been in facilities outside regarding palliative care and long-term care and do know there are different challenges around that. If the minister could give me a little bit more information, I'd appreciate it.

Hon. Mr. Hart: Obviously, yes, we concur there is a difference between palliative care and long-term care, but we're also aware we're being squeezed for space and time. So in the interim, we'll use that facility to accommodate our palliative care, but in the long term, we look at segregating the palliative care from the long-term care facility.

Mr. Hardy: So my understanding is that it will be combined until it will be separated at some point down the road. But then how do you come to the figure of 19 beds? How will that be distributed, based upon the stats or history we have in place already? I'll leave it at that.

Hon. Mr. Hart: We are already operating a palliative care facility out of Copper Ridge, which is a long-term continuing care facility also. We feel we can accommodate the palliative care facility in the pod that is going to be there on an interim basis until such time as we can look at future long-term aspects of providing them the specific area in which to operate.

Mr. Hardy: What about the negotiations, if there are any negotiations — the concern of the federal government ending the financial obligations toward the set-up of the palliative care unit?

Hon. Mr. Hart: Yes, this is all part of our request for extension of our THAF funding, which includes palliative care.

Mr. Hardy: There hasn't been any response or indication if the federal government will continue that funding program or not?

Hon. Mr. Hart: For the member opposite, I was recently in Ottawa on a housing issue and I stopped in to check on the situation with regard to our THAF funding also. Indications are that it is optimistic that we can look at an extension or a renewal of the program but the key aspect will take place this week when both the Minister of Finance for Canada and our Minister of Finance meet on this particular issue.

That will be an important meeting that will take place and hopefully we'll be in a position when the budget comes out to identify what's going to happen. Work with the officials has taken place for well over a year now with Health Canada and our officials. We presented our business case to Ottawa and we have been working the political aspect with regard to lobbying the politicians in Ottawa with our case. We also have a very, shall we say, receptive Minister of Health for the federal government because she understands the north, being as she's from Nunavut.

I would say that we can't get in a better position than what we're in, but the final decision will come from Minister Flaherty. I'm hoping that our Minister of Finance will have very positive discussions with Mr. Flaherty when he's here this week.

Mr. Hardy: What is the commitment of the territorial government in regard to this program if the federal government does not renew its obligations financially?

Hon. Mr. Hart: Obviously, the worst case scenario is being assessed right now, and we are looking at what we must basically carry on with and what programs we would have to look at dropping if the funding doesn't come through from the federal government. The member opposite can understand this is a substantial amount of money, and we have a substantial amount of programming that's involved in this particular process. We are currently reviewing our programming to do an assessment of just what we will have to reallocate funding for in order to ensure that we still maintain sufficient and adequate services for Yukoners.

Mr. Hardy: What is the approach with regard to palliative care for the communities? Is there anything in place currently in any of the communities to ensure the people in the last stages of their life are able to stay in the communities and around loved ones or do they, if necessary, need to come to Whitehorse right now?

Hon. Mr. Hart: Eight new positions for continuing care branch: these positions will provide additional support for the home care program, as well as additional support for Copper Ridge Place and Macaulay Lodge. These positions will enhance services for seniors in Whitehorse and the communities. They will provide palliative care through the home care situation; however, for palliative care that requires 24-hour assistance, they will have to come into Whitehorse in order to obtain that service.

Mr. Hardy: I think I'm going to leave this, but it's hard to leave this subject. It's an extremely important piece of caring for people. Unfortunately, I think it's extremely important that people stay as close to their families as possible during the last stages of their life, wherever possible.

Is there any type of outreach that is not necessarily — how do I put this? In the community or some kind of outreach if the people desire to stay in the — how do I put this? We don't have hospitals but we are going to have hospitals, supposedly, or acute care facilities in Watson Lake and Dawson City. It is my understanding that is the direction the government is going in. Will there be opportunity for people in those regions to be able to stay at the hospital in the last stages of their life and get the kind of care they need, or not?

Hon. Mr. Hart: I think that, in this particular situation, palliative care is a very specific part of the medical profession. It requires a special kind of individual and special nursing with regard to dealing with the client. However, for the member opposite, I could provide him with a technical briefing on the palliative care situation for Yukon, if he wishes, and thereby have the people directly involved provide him specific information, and he would be able to feel a little bit more comforted by the information they provide hopefully.

Mr. Hardy: I appreciate the offer and I look forward to taking the minister up on that. So I'll move off the palliative care. But we'll talk about the nurses since we've been touching a little bit on that already with regard to this. The nurses program that is coming to the end, I believe, within the next few months — it's the accelerated course for the LPNs up at the college. I think the students are now entering into the final stages of their training which, to my understanding, is that their exams are all done and they are all being placed for job training. Knowing the challenge that we have faced over the years, what is the plan to incorporate them into openings around the territory?

Hon. Mr. Hart: As I mentioned previously on this subject with regard to the Thomson Centre, when I was discussing the Thomson Centre, because obtaining staff is going to be time-consuming also, we are very fortunate that the graduating class for this two-year program will take place this coming summer and we'll be in a position to offer these people permanent positions here in Whitehorse to assist in the Thomson Centre.

We're very fortunate that it's coming at the same time. There is still a two-year program left in that particular aspect, so that will commence in September of next year, and there will be 12 more positions put forth. I understand there were 34 or 33 applications for the first 12 and so I anticipate that there will be full application for the next 12 that are going to be due this September.

We are aware that several of the applicants are Yukon residents already and have families and so we're quite confident that we'll be able to offer them positions that they'll be able to accept here in Yukon.

Mr. Hardy: Does the minister have a breakdown of how many of the students are from Whitehorse or rural communities? Will the opportunity be there for them to go back

into the rural communities to care for the people from which they come, or not?

Hon. Mr. Hart: As I mentioned earlier, all the positions are currently filled throughout the Yukon. A majority of the students are from Whitehorse, anyway, in the program. We're very hopeful we'll be able to offer all those who complete the program successfully a position here in Whitehorse, either through the Thomson Centre or at Copper Ridge.

Mr. Hardy: Is there support in place for extended education to allow nurses to become nurse practitioners? Are there financial incentives in place for that?

Hon. Mr. Hart: We do have bursary programs currently through the process. As the member noted, we just passed the NP legislation yesterday, so we'll obviously be in negotiations with the YRNA to look into these possibilities. But part of our negotiations with YRNA was dealing with the scope of practice for the NPs, so this is something that took some time. We are very hopeful we can utilize the NPs in our rural areas especially. With the extended scope of practice for that area, it will alleviate some of the pressures of prescriptions and things like that — renewal of prescriptions — especially in rural areas.

Mr. Hardy: The minister has indicated that all positions have been filled in the nursing area. Is that true with the mental health nurses?

Hon. Mr. Hart: The mental health nurses are handled by the Yukon Hospital Corporation. I will advise the member opposite that I had a discussion with the CEO recently and he has advised me that they have offers of jobs out to nurse psychiatrists, because of legislation that we recently passed that has enabled the hospital to hire those individuals, and as such they are hopeful that, given the Christmas period — and nobody is going to move over Christmas. So the job offers are out there and accepted and we anticipate that they will be fully staffed by the end of January.

Mr. Hardy: Are there going to be mental health facilities? I know that you mentioned the Yukon Hospital Corporation.

Is it anticipated that there'll be mental health facilities in the new hospitals in Watson Lake and Dawson City?

Hon. Mr. Hart: Yes, the Yukon Hospital Corporation does have a facility. They will have two safe rooms, in addition to four rooms. That'll be in the hospital itself, but with regard to housing for mental patients throughout the Yukon — we currently send our patients out, but we are looking at a review of the needs to see if we can look at the possibility of keeping some of those patients here in the Yukon. As the member opposite can understand, these types of policy decisions take some time to review, and due diligence needs to be done to ensure that we don't open a facility and then have to turn around and shut it down, because we don't have this or that. I think the idea is to ensure that we have the right game plan off the start, so that we have a positive program.

Mr. Hardy: The minister just mentioned that we do send patients Outside. How many, currently, are we sending Outside, on average, per year? How many have we already sent out this year? What are the costs that we incur in doing this?

Hon. Mr. Hart: Obviously, people go and come back. In addition, it depends on where they go and what the facility is charging the Yukon for their services. In some cases it's astronomical. In other cases, it's nominal, but it's very difficult to put a specific amount on it. Again, also because we have patients going out and coming back, it's impossible to put a specific number on it and a cost to date, but we do have a substantial number of clients out there. We do have clients who basically are out there on a continuous basis. But the actual total number is fluctuating, and I can't give the member opposite a specific number. I've been advised it would be very difficult because, in some cases, the costs for maintaining that individual — if it requires 24-hour care, for example, versus just nominal institutional care, there's a difference of cost.

Mr. Hardy: The minister can give me some numbers, because it sounds like there's no oversight on this, if I believe what he's saying. I would hope the department does track the numbers who go Outside and the cost. Maybe I'll make it a simple question: how many patients, on average, are we sending out per year?

Hon. Mr. Hart: I could provide the member opposite with some historical background information, for example, of what we did last year. I just can't tell him what it's going to be this year. It's there, but I could provide him with some historical background on the amounts of money expended.

Yes, of course we know who goes out and what it costs us for each client who goes out but, again, we don't know how long it's going to be for — whether one month or three months, and that variance changes. It depends. For example, when we send an individual out, the province we send that individual may be able to alleviate the client's problems in an earlier stage than what they estimated. There are escort costs; there are medicare costs and medevac costs that have to be taken into consideration also. I don't want the member opposite to think that we're not watching what goes out the door. Obviously every patient who has to go out is assessed, and we do take that very seriously because it is, in some cases, a very substantial cost.

Mr. Hardy: I thank the minister for supplying last year's information — that's perfectly fine. It at least gives me an idea of what we're actually talking about here. The minister can correct me if I'm wrong, but if he is looking at getting the mental health ward or psychiatric health ward established and up and running, I would suspect there would be some analysis on the savings percentage of how many we can keep in the territory to assist with their health issues.

I would assume that has been arrived at and how many beds are going to be provided. It is my understanding that there will be two rooms or was it four rooms? I am not totally sure.

Hon. Mr. Hart: With regard to Whitehorse hospital, yes, there are two safe rooms and four secure rooms and they are segregated from the rest of the other rooms. That was the intent. Also we do have two bedrooms and two beds in Alberta and two in Ontario that we hold on a regular basis for patients we just run in and out on a regular basis. But for the Whitehorse hospital, as I stated, once the positions are filled — and I am advised that should take place by the end of January next

year — they will be able to operate the full mental facility 24 hours a day there at the hospital.

Mr. Hardy: That sounds very good — very good news. Could the minister just explain the difference for me between a “safe room” and a “secure room”?

Hon. Mr. Hart: A safe room is basically isolation. There is nothing in the room, except a bed and mattress, and there is basically nothing that the client can hurt himself with. Of course, when there is some ingenious way, sometimes it happens. But, in essence, it’s basically a bare room with a camera, so we can keep an eye on the patient. There will be two of those rooms and four secure rooms, which are basically hospital rooms, and those are segregated from the hospital itself.

Mr. Hardy: Thank you for the clarification. That does help in understanding the difference between the two. Would the mental health wards also be used for medical detoxification? Because when a person is detoxifying, it can be extremely stressful and dangerous.

Hon. Mr. Hart: With regard to the hospital, of course, that’s a policy that the hospital will dictate. I’m sure that the hospital will take into consideration what, for example, if there’s nobody in the ward. If that comes about, they’re going to make the best decision that’s available for them for the use of that room. If there’s nobody in there, I suspect that they will do that. But, again, that is a decision that the hospital makes.

Mr. Hardy: Good. The oversight committee — the Member for Copper Ridge has already asked about, and the minister has responded a little bit — however, I am on that oversight committee, and we were promised that we would be meeting, I think it was within six weeks, and that was way back in May, I believe. We haven’t met yet but understanding the challenges in getting these meetings together — two things: we haven’t received any other information about what the oversight committee’s role is actually going to be; what its relationship with the steering committee is, or what powers we actually have. Our participation is quite vague.

The other thing is the challenge of meeting in January. I think the minister had indicated January 20. It would be really good to get some clarity and to be engaged in picking the dates we were going to meet, because some of us may not be available through all of January. I have to go out for medical attention, unfortunately, and that’s right in the middle of January. I am not exactly sure how long I will be out there. I would like to have some kind of correspondence happening here so that I’m sure I can participate as well as understanding what the heck we are actually doing as an oversight committee.

Hon. Mr. Hart: As I stated previously, obviously the H1N1 took over most of our summer and fall with regard to time planning. I think the member opposite just demonstrated how difficult it is to get people together. For example, I know that I will be in the hospital in the early part of January. I know the member opposite, colleague will be away until the middle of January, but I also know that member has some issues under PAC and everything else.

The member opposite is correct. It has been awhile but there have been extenuating circumstances. I will endeavour to

get the officials to correspond with you to see if we can find an amenable date when we can get together to review the report and to go forward with some of the recommendations, look at some of the aspects and try to correspond with the steering committee as what items need to be looked at further. We can delve into that and move forward.

I am perfectly willing to do that. But again, trying to find a date is going to be pretty difficult. The member opposite explained the difficulty with it already. I was trying to accommodate because I know that his colleague is away until the 16th and so it would be nice if we could do it in the third or the fourth week of January. I will endeavour to have officials contact them and see if we can sort of get the date when we can get together. I will try to provide the member opposite with a brief outline of what we hope to achieve in our meeting with regard to the oversight steering committee.

Mr. Hardy: That is greatly appreciated. I do like to know what I’m doing at a meeting before I go to it. I also like to know what my role is and if we are actually in a decision-making capacity or just looking at recommendations from the health review. What’s the future role of the oversight committee? Is the plan of having an oversight committee only for a very short period of time and then it deals with the health review and moves on?

There are a lot of questions here that we on the oversight committee actually don’t have answers to and I think it’s time now that — preferably before we meet — we have some answers to these questions. I don’t expect the minister to answer them on the floor today; however, I do expect to see some kind of information sent to us hopefully in the near future — definitely before the meeting — and not have to go into the meeting blinded and then try to figure out at the meeting what we’re doing.

Privatization — recently the president of the Yukon Medical Association speculated about privatization of health care, privatization measures and possibly user fees. In what I’ve read, he had indicated that the continuing substantive growth of costs in health care is what is making him and many people look at privatization, yet privatization has never shown it to be cheaper. So I really want to know where the government is on this whole privatization thing, because if this is just a Yukon Medical Association president speculating, that’s fine. It’s not just him; the Canadian Medical Association is doing the same thing. But, first off, there is no proof that privatization delivers better service or cheaper cost. I really wonder where the government is on this kind of speculation that’s out there, because it’s a very significant question that many people ask me outside of the Legislative Assembly.

Hon. Mr. Hart: Obviously, I think the member opposite is referring to the local YMA president’s comments with regard to privatization and fees. I believe I did hear his comment with regard to that. I think the president of the Canadian Medical Association is — the previous chair was very, shall we say, privatization orientated. This current chair is a little less on that side of it. She is actually much more into promoting the general practitioner as a way of going, versus the specialist. I think she made her thoughts known at the AGM, with regard to

that. However, the escalating health care costs across Canada are noticed by every jurisdiction. When I talked to my colleagues in their jurisdictions, yes, the cost of health care is just growing, period. It's difficult to constrain the cost in health care, period.

I think in regard to our assessment of health care, as indicated, there is going to be a huge gap by, I think, 2020. I think what we have to do is sit down and just look at what is required to maintain the health process. The government currently is not looking at entertaining privatization with regard to health care. We are looking at maintaining the health care facility and following the national standard as it relates to health care for Yukon citizens.

Mr. Hardy: There were privatization measures recommended in the health review. Will the oversight committee be involved in discussing those recommendations?

Hon. Mr. Hart: When we had our discussion with the oversight committee the first time, I don't believe there were any restrictions on what from the report was going to be discussed and what was not going to be discussed. In fact, I am hoping that we are able to sit down and discuss the entire report and maybe look at issues that we can examine and put aside right away and other issues that we can sit and look at and other issues that we can put in the parking lot.

Mr. Hardy: Of course the minister is very knowledgeable about the exorbitant costs that Yukon faces when it comes to pharmacare. We had this debate in the Legislative Assembly from the springtime. We asked questions about it and asked why the government wasn't moving on something that was so obviously a huge cost-savings and is so starkly different in how we are being charged compared to other provinces and territories when it comes to pharmacy costs.

The minister has indicated that the western provinces are looking at bulk purchasing. Could the minister tell me how that works, and how that actually would affect the pharmacies? I think there are four pharmacies in the Yukon presently, three in Whitehorse — I could be wrong — there could be four in Whitehorse, but I think there are three. How is bulk purchasing going to affect pharmacies?

Hon. Mr. Hart: Regardless of the situation of the bulk purchasing, the local pharmacies are still responsible for dispersing the pharmaceuticals, and so they would still be in the position to provide the pharmacy — we would deal with the bulk purchase through the other jurisdictions and directly through the manufacturers and submit that through to the local pharmacies and they would be able to collect their portion. Alberta is taking the lead right now on this particular project, and Alberta and Saskatchewan are right out front on this one, so we will be looking very closely at that.

Mr. Hardy: I look forward to hearing more about the discussions and decisions that are made and how it will actually impact our pharmaceutical costs, because it is one of the fastest growing expenditures in the health care field, and we need to find another way to address that.

Interestingly enough, I haven't heard the doctors — when they worry about the costs of health care in Canada or the Yukon, and with the costs continuing to go up, they discuss the

possibility of privatization or user fees but they haven't discussed their own fee. Of course, they're based on a fee-for-service. Has this government ever looked at the fee-for-service? I'm sure they do look at the fee-for-service agreement, but have they also looked at the possibility of salaried doctors as well? We do have salaried nurses. All of the other professions are salaried. We have to look at all options — no sacred cows. Has this been part of any discussions as well?

Hon. Mr. Hart: Yes, obviously, we look at fee-for-service every time we go into negotiations with the doctors. Those are assessed. We do our review in consultation with other jurisdictions. I can let the member opposite know that the Northwest Territories operates on a salary and a contract basis and they can't get doctors. They can't fill their positions and it has been a very costly situation for them. Again, for them, it has been fairly difficult.

I know that for us there may be some situations where we could look at providing a salaried doctor — a specialist for example or whatever. We might be able to look at something that would be consistent with an individual being here on a short-term basis. In essence, we have found this fee-for-service to be the most effective. In checking with other jurisdictions, we also find that this appears to be the method used to deal with the physicians. Like I said, in some locations, for example the Northwest Territories — I am not sure what Nunavut does — but I know there are salaried and contract doctor services in the N.W.T. — they switched from fee-for-services to contract and salaried. From the indications I have heard, they have had great difficulties achieving services for their clients and for their citizens.

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

Recess

Chair: Order please. Committee of the Whole will come to order. The matter before the Committee is Bill No. 17, *Second Appropriation Act, 2009-10*.

Hon. Mr. Hart: Just as a follow-up, I would like to advise the member opposite that with regard to mental health patients, I can provide him with some specific numbers right now; however, it will be fairly difficult for us to accumulate numbers for them because we will have to review and go through several boards, committees and stats to get the information for the member opposite. We will do so.

There is a review board and system stats. There is the mental health system. There is the Whitehorse General Hospital transfer-Outside system. We have the insured health system that covers medical travel and physician aide. We have hospital building costs. We have children in care of the director system; we also have RCMP escort services that have to be taken into consideration for those who require actual escort services to their particular destination. All these items have to be looked into in order to ascertain the overall costs.

Regarding actual patients, Whitehorse General Hospital transfers in 2007-08 were four. The actual in 2008-09 is 11 and we anticipate seven for this upcoming year. Because there are

no forensic patients handled here and they are all sent Outside — we don't have a facility here for that — there are five patients currently Outside. Of course, that fluctuates depending on they are coming back or where they are.

The member opposite could refer to page U-33 of the main estimates and that provides a pretty good breakdown of what the specific costs are for mental health. It is there.

Also, the member opposite was asking about nurses. We have two mental health nurses in Whitehorse, and we have two THAF rural mental health consultants, located in Haines Junction and Dawson City. We are also mentoring a young nurse who would like to gain the experience and training in mental health services. With respect to the hospital, there have been three registered psychiatric nurses hired, and there are two recruitments, as I indicated, that are in progress. We would hope that that will all take place by the end of January. All the LPN positions are filled.

Mr. Hardy: I thank the minister for that information, and I do understand the challenge around nailing down those costs, as they fluctuate.

The Member for Copperbelt has touched on poverty. We don't have a lot of time, unfortunately, left in the sitting. We only have, truthfully, just a few more hours for a debate, and there are still a lot of departments that need to be touched on, or some questions need to be asked. However, this is such a significant department for people. All I'm going to do is just ask a couple of questions in a couple of areas and hopefully we'll get through that.

I believe the Member for Copperbelt has some more questions he wishes to ask and he will come back in, so I won't be much longer here, especially as he has already asked some questions and the minister has answered some.

Has the work begun on putting together the summit and if so, when can organizations anticipate receiving notification of what date it will be?

Hon. Mr. Hart: As I mentioned previously when this question was asked, we have already had meetings at the inter-governmental level with regard to social inclusion. That has already taken place and we are well-underway with regard to that. As I indicated, we were hopeful to have this summit take place sometime in February or March. But right now, I guess our biggest difficulty is finding a facility because we've got to have it big enough to get there because everything is booked between now and that process, so we're looking at a few things.

But we anticipate again — I'm trying to hope for early in the new year to get this thing done. The Member for Copperbelt also indicated that he had talked to Rob Rainer and I had also met with Mr. Rainer myself. He is very appreciative of the strategy. He gave us the suggestion and in fact indicated that the conference would be a great way to deal. We basically got his blessing and he indicated he would provide any assistance that he could. But of course he was here on a different mission. He was on a mission for the national concept, so obviously those were the items that he was looking at for his own concerns.

But, yes, we are looking at it. We've got an intergovernmental team working on the process. We are hopeful to get this conference out and get invitations out so we can do it by February by the latest.

Mr. Hardy: Just to put on record, Mr. Rainer met with all of us, I believe. He definitely met with my staff and came to our office and gave us some insight into the challenges throughout Canada and some direction for ourselves, as well, so we appreciated that.

There was a question about collaborative care, but I didn't hear a response with regard to the collaborative care clinic. This has been talked about as one of the ways to save costs. Has the department done any research in this area and the benefits around it?

Hon. Mr. Hart: For the member opposite, when we were having this discussion, it was indicated that that's what this group is working on and is part of the aspect of how we're going to move forward with regard to the collaborative care. We have the medical profession in the group. They've been meeting since June of this year. Progress has been very good. Everybody seems to be amicably working toward the process. We have already commenced a group to handle the diabetes situation, which involves several different medical professions in that particular venue. We are hopeful that we'll be able to move forward on a clinic at a future date.

Mr. Hardy: Thank you for the answer from the minister. I have a question that you might not be able to answer. You might say the Yukon Hospital Corporation has to answer it.

It's a simple question: what the heck is that building going to be used for — the one with the towers — the one that's going up? It's the brand new building behind the Education building.

Hon. Mr. Hart: The brand new building going up there, which is going up in leaps and bounds lately, I might add — it's nice to see the metal rolling up there in the middle of winter — will be utilized for doctors and nurses residence, as well as office space for the department.

Mr. Hardy: Office space for the department — what offices would be moved in there? When I've been over at the hospital, there have been discussions in just about every room I've gone into, with people indicating that's where they're moving, so there's anticipation that might have to be dealt with here.

Hon. Mr. Hart: Since I'm paying the bill, I'm moving in.

Mr. Hardy: I can understand and I hope it's well-insulated. It would be nice to get a breakdown at some point what he's anticipating — what kind of offices will move in there. If he doesn't have that, if it hasn't been decided yet, when it is decided, if that information could be shared with us, I would appreciate it.

I do get tired of being asked that question, by the way, when I go over to the hospital. It is amazing what is being imagined over there right now.

Will the minister be responding to the research report from the Grandparents' Rights Association of Yukon and the recommendations they brought forward around respite, financial

help, training and legal changes to assist custody cases, et cetera, et cetera.

Hon. Mr. Hart: For the member opposite, yes, I did have a meeting with the author of the report, which was provided along with a couple of grandparents. We are looking at several items that were identified and recommendations in the report.

Now with the new children's act going through, there were several items in that that will be addressed in the process under the new children's act. In addition, we'll be looking at dealing with some respite issues with regard to grandparents who are looking after grandchildren, as well as the younger youth. We'll be looking at that particular venue. We're looking at dealing with the issues of extended family; we're looking at the new extended family care program and basically the guiding principles and delivering all of these things.

We are going to be looking at several issues that were identified — not all of them, of course, but there are several issues in the recommendations under the new *Children's Act* that we will be moving forward on. As I said, with the passing of the new act and now with the child advocate underway, we can start moving and we have. The department is set to go now because we have implementation money to go forth with the new *Children's Act*.

We anticipate that we will be covering some of the issues identified in the study and we also feel that the new *Children's Act* will cover several recommendations that were identified. In addition, we will be looking at coming up with some respite issues for grandparents who are looking after their grandchildren.

Mr. Hardy: Thank you for the minister's response. Hopefully that will encourage the Grandparents' Rights Association of Yukon that there will be assistance and help available soon.

Regarding FASD, I'll just put three or four questions out and just see — whatever the minister feels he can answer is fine. How does the department support adults afflicted with FASD, once they've been assessed? Has the minister ever considered disability pension for adults with FASD who are absolutely not able to work? Will the minister be recommending increases to the grant to FASSY in the new fiscal year? What are the statistics on the number of adults with FASD who are incarcerated in the Yukon? If the minister can address those, I'd be quite happy.

Hon. Mr. Hart: I will try to go over a few of these things. Obviously, a disability pension was not something that we have looked at from the department's point of view with regard to dealing with FASD. We are providing support for adults. We have monies toward that particular venue. In addition, with regard to the grant, it was this government that came to the forefront when the federal government cancelled the FASD funding. Basically, it was us who came out with the information and funding to assist them to go up, plus we did increase their funding also.

But I'm hoping, as part of our review under the social inclusion, to look at FASD and the funding grant to assist this particular NGO in assisting those in great need. With regard to

stats, I don't believe I would have anything specific as far as the adults go with regard to stats; however, Justice may have something specific on that issue in dealing with FASD.

On the FASD question, we are a part of a research entity basically involving all of the western provinces and territories dealing with FASD and the research on same. In fact, we will be doing a teleconference call on FASD on January 20. One of the other reasons why I would like to use that week is because I have to be here for many other issues during that week also.

On that one, the big issue for us at the last meeting and the emphasis on this meeting is that we have been focusing more on trying to deal with the people there. We are focusing more on education and prevention. It is a preventable disease. However, the difficulty is that I can't send a policeman around with every person to watch that they don't drink alcohol. So obviously that is a difficult situation.

I believe — and we believe as a group among us — that it is a very important issue and that is something that we have to — as we have asked our researchers to — pay a little more attention to the prevention and education aspect of this thing and try to take away — you know, deal with the stigma of FASD — and there are varying points of FASD of that process.

There are some who are afflicted with this disease quite heavily and others just mildly. So we can't put a stamp on somebody's forehead that says, "You're FASD," when everybody thinks, well, what is that? It's different for each one. I will say that, because I did talk to an individual, a young lady who had mild FASD. It was not noticeable, quite frankly, until after some discussion with her. Then you sort of suspected a little bit. But by an outward appearance there was nothing. However, I also talked to another individual where it was quite obvious that this was a fetal alcohol symptom of some kind. There is quite a wide variance.

I think the general acceptance among all of my colleagues with regard to this is that the research is important and that's why we're supporting it. This research is being done by an institute that's basically leveraging not only our funding, but the funding from universities in Victoria, B.C. and Alberta with their funding. We're gleaning that information.

I think I'm proud to say the Yukon has been fairly good — a pretty good front leader when it comes to providing identification of FASD. I know for a fact we were one of the first ones to roll out and identify FASD for schoolchildren. I won't say that we're ahead of the Nanaimo group, because they're definitely the top. In fact, we use them for getting further information.

With regard to our adults, we do provide support for independent living situations. We do have special home placements and day programming for these individuals to provide assistance where possible. As I said, for the actual NGO itself, I'm hoping once we work through our social inclusion strategy, we'll be able to sit down and look at the funding that's due to the NGOs.

I do want to stress that we came to the bank when the federal government popped out.

I find it kind of unusual, shall I say, that when the local member came to visit my house during election time, he

brought with him the FASD coordinator — who had just cut his funding. I have to get that out because to me I think that's very important. I think this is a very important situation. It's a group that requires some assistance and I'm proud to say that we stepped up to the plate to assist them, not only once but twice. I look forward to conversation with this group. I look forward to dealing with all aspects and all the stakeholders involved with poverty — or I like to call it social inclusion. I know the member opposite likes to call it poverty, but regardless of the situation, the term “worldwide social inclusion” is used so I'd like to use that because I think it covers a wide spectrum and will deal with many more issues than just poverty itself.

Mr. Hardy: I have a couple more questions. I'm not going to delve too deeply into the poverty discussions. We do have a summit that the minister has indicated is going to be happening fairly shortly and out of that summit I am very, very optimistic that we will hear the voices of the Yukon and all the organizations that deal with poverty throughout the Yukon come together and give guidance to this government and any government that follows. As to the social inclusion, poverty — my language is “poverty”, but “social inclusion” sounds pretty nice too. Whatever works to help the people; I won't get hung up on the words.

Land-based treatment centres — can the minister give me any idea if there are any discussions happening around land-based treatment centres — one or many — what model would be considered for this kind of treatment? Does the government even support the land-based treatment centre concept? How will all the needs and wants of the different regions in the Yukon be met, especially when we have many First Nations vying for their own land-based treatment centres to be established?

Hon. Mr. Hart: We do have a line item for a land-based treatment centre. We have appointed a specific individual to lead this process on our behalf, in conjunction with the First Nation. We have to start somewhere. As I've indicated previously with regard to this, we are looking at developing a template that we can move around once it's established — that we can move it around and share it throughout the Yukon and deal with it.

We're looking more at the programming aspect of land-based treatment versus brick and mortar. Our emphasis is on “we want the programming.” We'd rather spend our money on programming and success, shall we say, of that programming and also be able to develop a system that can be transmitted to other jurisdictions in the Yukon, other than Whitehorse, other than that process. So we want to develop the template, so that we can move it out and adjust it so it can be accommodated throughout.

As the member knows, in some small communities we may only have one or two people. It doesn't make a lot of sense to put a whole rash in there. But, for example, we may have in a smaller town an area where, after a period of time, we have enough numbers that we can go down there for, say, a three-month period and put it in place and make it run.

That is something that has to be developed. Like I said, what we want to do is we have appointed an individual to spearhead this program in conjunction with the First Nation and we will go through this process, and then the idea is to develop this template so that we can take it and make it portable.

Mr. Hardy: So with this template and this programming that would be developed, any region — I won't say towns specifically but region, and that could include two or three of the villages or towns — could offer it and these programs would be for just a short period of time, so it has nothing to do with any structures that are already in place in the territory or even being proposed. It is just strictly programming that the government would be involved in only and it would almost be like they would bid on it or request for it to be delivered.

Hon. Mr. Hart: As I mentioned earlier, in some places we're fluctuating these numbers all the time when it comes to these. In some areas, for example, a year from now it might be six clients; today it's only two. So I'd like to be positive about it when we're dealing with this. We know that there are presently three First Nations who are working with this particular entity. Regardless of the situation, we know that we still need a place to work from. There's no question about that. We need some sort of facility. But what I'm emphasizing is that we don't want to emphasize the building; we're looking at the program. We want to develop that program in such a way that it's a flexible and portable program that we can move around as a template and utilize in other areas throughout the Yukon.

Mr. Hardy: I'm going to move off it. I look forward to more discussion on this in the springtime. I would be very interested to see how this is evolving.

Just to wrap up, as I said, I'm not going to go into the poverty — the whole field of poverty and the challenges in housing, food, care, substance abuse — all those issues that we just don't have the time for left in the sitting. Some of them have already been touched upon by my colleague from — and it's not Copper Ridge, it is Copperbelt. I noticed the minister has the tendency to say Copper Ridge, but the Member for Copperbelt. I'll get myself switched around here if I'm not careful. He has already touched on the issues and I've heard some of the responses, so I'm not going to spend much more time on that.

I just have a couple questions to wrap up on our latest issue that had many people in the Yukon worried, which was H1N1. Do we have a cost? Have we managed to find out what the cost to the Yukon has been for the vaccinations for H1N1? How many Yukoners were vaccinated? What are our plans for the future for something along these lines? What have we learned from it? What did we do really well? We did some wonderful things and I'd congratulate the department for that and the medical profession in dealing with this. That's about it and those will be my final questions.

Hon. Mr. Hart: This is one I actually like to get up and talk about; I feel very proud. We're known right through the rest of Canada for how well we did on the H1N1. Do I have a cost? No, because we're still unfinished. We're doing a post-mortem on what we did wrong, what we did right and what can improve upon from what was there. I will say, though, that the

preparatory work that we did in August — and I know some of the people, when we were doing it in August, thought, “Oh, is it really necessary?” Well, of course it’s necessary. Look at how well we did. My hat is off to all those involved — as I said, all nurses, all the physicians. I mean, quite frankly, I just don’t know how the hospital made out with 170 clients in one night at ER — 170 clients in one night. Again, I know some of those doctors worked 18, 19 hours. So, my hat’s off to them. My hat’s off to the chief medical officer. Brendan Hanley has done a tremendous job informing the public, even when we had the tragic deaths — but we knew we were going to be facing those. We knew that ahead of time. We had to be prepared for that issue. I am proud to say that in general we have just had a few cases and the deaths that we did incur were individuals who had previous difficulties. That is pretty consistent with other deaths in other jurisdictions.

The only sad part is that in many cases it has affected the young kids and that is the difference between that and the regular flu, which usually affects the elderly. I am very happy with that. As I said, we are cognizant of the fact that there could be a third wave sometime in January. We are very cognizant of that fact and that is why we are really pushing for higher vaccination. As I indicated earlier, we are at a little over 52 percent already. It is just that this little bit now between 52 and 67 that Dr. Hanley wants to get to is going to be a tough pace because now we are facing the people who don’t really want to get it or they feel that they have made it this far. It is really hard to convince them to go get one now because they feel that they have beaten the flu bug. In essence, we are still going to push on.

We’re going to have a campaign to try to increase that number again. We have enough vaccine, so we can do it. As I stated, we have enough vaccine for all Yukoners who want the vaccine. It’s not an issue — First Nation or otherwise.

So, yes, I’m very proud of the officials, the staff and Health and Social Services staff, who provided the advertisements. I’m very happy for the city providing the complex while we had the clinics. I apologize for some of the two-hour waits that maybe some people had. But, in general, people were very happy that they could just get the vaccine, period, not like other jurisdictions where it was very difficult to get it indeed. But I’m very happy to say that I’m very proud of how we managed our way through that process. I’m even prouder, because when I was asked if I’m ready, I said I was, and I believe I can say now that I was.

Mr. Hardy: To close up on that, I would also like to take my hat off to all the professionals and the City of Whitehorse, of course, contributing and all the real work that was done — and the work the minister and the department did. I think they did a first-class job. Seeing what was happening here and what was happening across the rest of Canada, there was quite a stark contrast, especially when those damn hockey players jumped the queue, eh? I’m glad that didn’t happen up here. We were all equal.

So thanks to everybody who worked on this, and I think they did a great job. With that, those are the end of my comments today.

Mr. Mitchell: I will carry forward with this sort of tag-team approach that the Member for Whitehorse Centre and I have been sharing this afternoon — although I think it’s sort of hard to call it “tag-team”, it has been pretty collegial, Mr. Chair. Hopefully we’ll carry forward that way.

The Member for Whitehorse Centre has covered a number of the areas that I was going to cover and I will try not to be too repetitive. If I missed some, the minister can remind me.

I do notice that in that discussion of FASSY and what to do about addressing fetal alcohol syndrome effects, the minister made some comments about what he wished he could do. I’ll just remind the minister that one of his predecessors a few years back was proposing incarcerating a woman who previously had children suspected of having fetal alcohol syndrome — babies — and I’m glad that the minister’s not going there. But perhaps it will be in the platform of the new non-party party. I think the minister knows what I’m talking about here.

What I will say about the issue is that whatever money we spend at the front end will pay off first of all in improved lives for Yukoners. If fewer Yukoners suffer from FAS/FAE, that also means that I think the money is well spent, first of all, on the human side for what it prevents, and second of all because otherwise the Education minister and the Justice minister get to deal with expensive solutions to problems that could be avoided. I encourage the minister to provide whatever support he can.

Because we’re talking about costs, I would like to ask the minister a question. In the *Taking the Pulse* report and in the final report that came out and the background papers — and the Finance minister previously addressed this issue a year ago and I think the Health and Social Services minister has, as well — it talks about the Yukon funding gap from 2007 to 2017.

It talks about how, in the past 30 years, the amount of the total budget that Yukon spends on health care has increased by 80 percent compared to the national average increase of 22 percent. In 1987, health care spending was 9.7 percent of the Yukon budget. In 2006, it was 18 percent of the Yukon budget and I think it is well over 20 percent this year — probably 23 or 24 percent. It says that health care costs have doubled in the past 10 years from \$70 million to \$150 million. I know we are up to \$244 million this year.

This report says that if this difference between revenues and expenditures continues, Yukon will have a health care deficit or funding gap of almost \$250 million by 2017 — a quarter of a billion dollars just eight years from now. My question for the minister is based on the fact that the government has indicated that they are not going to be implementing new health user fees. What are government and the Department of Health and Social Services doing to address this gap?

Hon. Mr. Hart: With regard to the never-ending gap, yes, it was identified in the study and the costs are going up. As I mentioned earlier, the costs are going up right across Canada with regard to health care. We are looking internally — just at what we can do to improve our efficiencies with regard to the department. We’re also working with the Hospital Corporation on ways and means in which we can work out some better efficiencies with regard to dollars and cents.

As I mentioned earlier, we're also hoping to have a successful negotiation with the federal government with regard to our health funding and dealing with that in particular. We're also looking at trying to work through our social inclusion, which will help to strengthen that particular entity. In addition, I'm looking at getting through and basically expanding on our education and prevention — on our wellness program, and basically getting people in the Yukon to look after themselves so that we, as the government, are not looking after them.

We need to get people out to do more exercise — and that exercise doesn't have to be excruciating. It can be simple walking. Just being active doesn't require you to be an athlete; it just requires you to get out and move around and get it done. It's amazing what a little activity will do on a daily basis and just how it does affect the average person in a healthier lifestyle.

We also want to improve people's diet, so we'll be coming out with a program on ensuring people can eat properly and, again, exercise properly so we can avoid the obesity we're currently seeing in our young children, in addition to what we're seeing in adults, quite frankly.

I would have to say, in general, Canadians are a little better off than our friends in the U.S. when it comes to that, but we still have many problems. Even here in the Yukon, we have obesity that has to be dealt with.

Again, I think this is why, through the Minister of Education, we're looking at trying to ban the pop in the school program and those things to get children to eat better. So those are some of the things we'll be looking at. Again, it's not going to be immediate, but we're hoping that with the long-term aspect of that, we will have some time to get that underway, and we're hoping that will have a positive impact and reduce the cost to our medical system by keeping people very fit and just basically in better healthy shape.

We're also looking at providing assistance and keeping people aging healthily. I think we had a conference on that recently. Unfortunately, Mr. Chair, I qualify. It was brought to my attention that I qualify, but I wasn't too happy about that. But anyway, I do. So it's something that's there, and I think it brings home a very important point. I think it was also brought up in the study.

People are saying that it is important that individuals take some responsibility to look after themselves. We are looking at doing that. We are looking at talking to our aging population and we are looking at assisting them to keep healthy. We are providing assistance to them to attend the senior games. It has been very popular, and away we go.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Hon. Mr. Hart: I am getting carried away, the member says. So I will sit down and listen for awhile.

Anyway, the aspect being that we are looking at spending a little bit more money on prevention, on wellness and developing a program that will deal with educating individuals just on how to be fit and basically how to eat well.

Mr. Mitchell: For the minister's benefit, I wasn't suggesting that he was getting carried away, I was suggesting that he qualifies for the senior games, and so do I. These ques-

tions are all very personal as we all become qualified for these events.

In the report, in the appendix to which I refer on page 5, it suggests that the health care review identifies two main options for dealing with this gap. One is to pay for the gap by increasing the government's revenues, and obviously one method would be if we were to implement additional fees.

Another that increases revenues is successful negotiations of funding agreements with Canada, such as THAF, and the other it suggests is reduce the growth rate of health care system costs by increasing efficiency and effectiveness, "making tough choices" and reducing expenditures in some areas.

We get a huge volume of reading material in this job and I noticed in one report, entitled *Value for Money: Making Canadian Health Care Stronger* in February 2009, of which Yukon is a signatory at the deputy minister level, on page 2 it says, "We need to examine and confirm what we want the system to achieve." This report is about the sustainability of health care, and it says, "We value a system built on principles of fairness, equity and universality. Beyond those basic values tougher questions emerge. How do we resolve ethical dilemmas such as how best to care for extremely premature newborns or people at the end of their lives? How do we act compassionately when expenses are extreme?"

Opposite that, there's a photo of a senior citizen and a photo of a newborn baby, or early baby. I found this disturbing, I will tell the minister, because the Yukon is part of this council. The implication when saying "how do we resolve ethical dilemmas" such as how to care for extremely premature newborns or people at the end of their lives; how do we act compassionately when expenses are extreme — I would hope that Yukon is not going to support the idea that we're going to make a cost-effectiveness decision when it comes to the care of premature infants or elderly people based on how much it costs. If there is care that will address these issues, I would hope that Yukon will continue as we have in the past to provide that care or to arrange for it to be provided in other jurisdictions, such as with premature infants where we may not have that level of care available to us.

So I just want to ask the minister, for the record, if the minister agrees with that as being our goal, rather than making decisions based on any sort of cost effectiveness around this issue.

Hon. Mr. Hart: As the member opposite knows, I'm not a doctor. I don't pretend to be. I never have been. Those kinds of decisions will be made in the field as a medical decision, and it will remain as that decision. It will not be an economic decision made by this office.

Mr. Mitchell: I thank the minister for that response. I wasn't suggesting that he was a medical doctor, but rather, he is the funding authority, so to speak, in helping to make those decisions. That's why I wanted to ask that question.

During the departmental briefing, one of the things we were told was there was a department-wide request to absorb \$184,000. Management Board directed departmental reduction. I guess I would ask, why was the department asked specifically to cut this amount of funding?

Hon. Mr. Hart: It was basically a redistribution of monies through the government. We were asked to absorb the funding and the funding went elsewhere.

Mr. Mitchell: Did that have any specific impact on programming that the department would otherwise be offering — that amount of cut impacting specific programs?

Hon. Mr. Hart: None whatsoever.

Mr. Mitchell: I'll leave that. I just wanted to get that question answered.

There has been some indication that the department is considering transferring responsibility for daycare — responsibility being transferred to the Department of Education — in other words, viewing it as early childhood education rather than daycare. I'm wondering if those discussions have advanced at all and what the minister can tell us about the progress of those talks and how this would be done.

Hon. Mr. Hart: Yes, there have been some preliminary discussions regarding that. But right now, the paper has been developed and it is just being reviewed.

Mr. Mitchell: So just for clarification — that paper is an internal document or a draft document, or is that a document that can be shared with this side of the House?

Hon. Mr. Hart: The document is basically at the officials' level right now and it is being reviewed by both departments as to what is applicable, what is not applicable, what we can do and what we can't do. We are into the playing-tennis process.

Mr. Mitchell: For the record, we in the Official Opposition think that is of great interest, considering the term "daycare", which, since its evolution or its beginning, has implied just that — caring for children in the absence of a parent. The function of daycares over time has increasingly become more educational, and I know in other countries and other jurisdictions in Canada, it is more of an educational role. I think that there is great interest in that and we would encourage the government to pursue that tennis game, as he referred to it, and see if it has a successful outcome.

I think that might be of real benefit, although obviously there are costs involved. It might assist the daycare providers, the workers, in achieving, over time, a higher level of remuneration based on a skill set that is more of an education skill set. I hope the minister pursues that.

The minister indicated earlier this afternoon that the stats branch — I think he said it previously as well — will be doing a survey on homelessness in January. I know, in attending meetings either one or two years ago with the Anti-Poverty Coalition and with the working group that was addressing youth homelessness, departmental officials attended a couple of those meetings held at Many Rivers. This was under the minister's predecessor; the Member for Lake Laberge was the minister at the time. These officials said that prior to making any funding commitment to a youth shelter, the department was going to look at this homelessness issue and do surveying then.

Was this not completed at the time and does the minister have any results of what information was found at that time?

Hon. Mr. Hart: Sorry, I had to regroup my own thoughts on this one. Yes, I do remember something with re-

gard to the stats, but again, I'm not going to try to make excuses for delaying whatever in this process. We've been very busy, as I said, with lots of other things. But this is also part of the reason why I asked the branch to look at moving toward a social inclusion strategy so that we are not just dealing with youth. We're dealing with everyone, rather than just go out and pound the ground. At this time, too, Mr. Chair, we were looking at a separate issue. There was an aspect of looking at single women.

It looked like it was going to be like two separate ones — one for youth and one for single women. It was just getting to the point, Mr. Chair, where I just felt that we've got too many spokes out here and I'll try to bring it all together in with a piece of rubber tire. We came forth and I have asked the branch to move ahead with the poverty strategy. We are now calling it "social inclusion" and I am very happy that we are going this way. We will provide that information and, again, we are hoping that it will provide us with a wide spectrum, give us the information that we need, allow us to move forward and present solid facts and, of course, we will utilize the information provided by the anti-poverty group in their study, in addition to other information that we've had previously, and garner that information together to see what we can utilize.

I am also hoping, Mr. Chair, that when we have our conference we will have some ideas and get some input from the stakeholders. We will all be very anxious to move. I will be very anxious to see what comes out of there.

I don't believe any one group or one person has all the right amenities to solve our problem. I don't think it's going to get solved right away. I think it's something that's going to be ongoing and developing, and it's going to improve as we go along — as we fix the template and adjust it and work from our priorities, addressing those issues the group feels have to be addressed first.

I do want to get away from taking this line that says, "If you're above this line, you're okay; if you're below it, you're in poverty." What we're looking at is about getting our discussions with all those involved and ensuring that everyone has input, so we can come out with a result that at least a majority of our stakeholders concur with and feel we're taking a positive step and we can move forward. I look forward to that.

I'm very happy that we have the anti-poverty group on-side. With regard to this issue, I've talked to many other groups that have indicated that this is a positive step. I guess the only person who wasn't too excited was the newspaper, but I guess we have to produce a piece of brick and mortar for them to be excited.

I don't think that's what we want here. I think what we want here is a program and we want to ensure people are included in all parts of our community. I think it has been said by the member opposite, the Leader of the Third Party, that we're only as good as our weakest link. That's kind of a cliché but I guess it has been used many times. I think we have to try to strengthen the chain here and we need to work together versus trying to split it apart. I look forward to that result and to see what comes.

Mr. Mitchell: I thank the minister for his response. I just want to say that I don't have a particular problem with the term "social inclusion strategy"; however, I will point out the minister referred to the Anti-Poverty Coalition as a group and what it actually is, is an umbrella organization that represents probably some 20 or two dozen non-governmental organizations. Within that group, I know that at a recent meeting I heard the co-chair say that they had some concern in that they wanted to maintain the knowledge in the public that we are talking about poverty.

I didn't want it to be sort of an Orwellian newspeak where we changed the term and it doesn't sound as unpleasant. The minister referred earlier this afternoon to the fact that we weren't as hard hit here as some other jurisdictions by the recent recession. That's true insofar as our unemployment figures are concerned. Although they have gone up significantly this fall, we're relatively better off than the industrial areas of central Canada, for example.

But nevertheless, a lot of poverty issues don't show up in unemployment figures because there are many people who have jobs, but they're not very well-paying jobs. They are jobs that — they're called the "working poor." In some cases, you can meet some of those people in more than one job. I'm not going to point out any business in our community, but rather just to say you see people who are working in the service industry and then you run into them at another time of the day and they're working on a janitorial contract. So there is a class of working poor and those people have been affected by the downturn, but they don't show up in the unemployment stats.

I know the minister is very aware. We talked about the food bank earlier. They are giving out some 340 — or something to that effect — they are dealing with that many families and they extrapolate that to be some 1,200 people a month who they are providing assistance to. That assistance can only be provided by them a couple of times a month. It is either once or twice a month. It is provided in Whitehorse but there are people from some of Yukon's other communities who come to town once a month to receive that support. Nevertheless it does equate numerically, if it is 1,200 people, to five percent of the population of the City of Whitehorse — so it is significant.

Moving on to another area, Mr. Chair, we have heard recently of the financial difficulties that the Boys and Girls Club ran into and I know the minister pointed out that the funding since this government took office seven years ago had been increased to the various youth groups. I believe there is a total of \$330,000 that is provided as \$110,000 to the Youth of Today Society; \$110,000 toward BYTE; and \$110,000 to the Boys and Girls Club.

I know that the executive director of the Youth of Today Society also was by to see us recently, to say that they, too, are struggling with their funding arrangement, in terms of making it to the end of the fiscal year. One of the issues that she raised was that they continue to have to apply for funding on a sort of application basis for particular projects. I think she indicated that they had been turned down six times over the course of the past fiscal year, and that the indication that she was getting from the department was that the applications indicated that

this was for program provision, and that the funding windows were really for projects.

I don't want to get into a debate over how well-written the applications are or aren't, because I'm not privy to them. However, it is a concern if another agency that deals with youth, a second agency, is struggling and, she indicated, may have to close its doors before the end of the fiscal year. I don't know if the minister has anything he can tell us about assisting them — and, because it's late in the day, and I may not be back on my feet again, I'll also ask about progress on the concept of creating some form of youth-at-risk shelter — homeless and at risk.

I know that the minister's department does the surveys. Those are very difficult numbers to come up with, because the numbers vary. Youth are not necessarily out sleeping under the bridge to Riverdale, but rather there are youth who have a safe place to sleep for some days of the week and others don't because of whatever is going on in their families, be it substance abuse or marital discord. They flee their homes.

If the minister can answer those questions, that may bring us pretty close to the end of the day.

Hon. Mr. Hart: For the member opposite, I think with regard to his questions, yes, with regard to a youth shelter. As I said, we'll be doing an assessment and it will identify that issue. I'm hoping that will be one of the issues that we can identify. I think I shared this with the member opposite, but we did go visit a couple of shelters in British Columbia. There again, the same difficulty is trying to identify exactly what that is. I will share with the member opposite that it was a very interesting situation.

I was surprised, quite frankly, at the fact that all the facilities we looked at had a certain amount of — well, I shouldn't say a certain amount. All the facilities had security and/or a security guard in them. For example, you couldn't get in and take the elevator up; you had to have a key and it had to be provided by the front desk in order for them to pass. It was a very interesting tour that I went through.

I was impressed that there was little or no tolerance for the individuals. If you broke the house rules, you were asked to leave. You could come back as many times as you wanted, but you had to follow the house rules. Again, there was protection for the workers. The workers were qualified. They were social workers that were providing this. Every person that walked into the shelters had to be assessed — and assessed by a professional.

They were put together with that individual, and that social worker worked with that individual as long as he was in the facility. The shelter is there, but didn't provide overnight sleeping. In fact, at the one in downtown Vancouver, you couldn't sleep there. You were allowed to go in and stay there for a maximum of four hours but you still had to see a counsellor when you went in.

I can tell the member opposite that I was in the facility and those youths or those individuals or adolescents were definitely homeless. It was kind of a gut-wrenching process that I watched in the short time that we were there. They had all the facilities there. They had a medical nurse. As I said, they had professional social workers there. Again, in that particular fa-

cility right downtown, it was a two-door facility. You could get through the first door and you had to talk to somebody to get in, but you still had to get through the second door.

You know, a shelter for those at risk still is something that is not just a building. It doesn't come just with a door on it that opens, and it doesn't come just with a couch. It's something that has to be looked at for its needs, and it has to be looked at for all the issues that youth are required — and especially youth who are homeless, or just in need of assistance.

Looking at the time, Mr. Chair, I move that you report progress.

Chair: It has been moved by Mr. Hart that Committee of the Whole report progress.

Motion agreed to

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

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

Motion agreed to

Speaker resumes the Chair

Speaker: I will now call the House to order.

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

Chair's report

Mr. Nordick: Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 17, *Second Appropriation Act, 2009-10*, and directed me to report progress.

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

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Speaker: I declare the report carried.

Mr. Nordick: I move that the House do now adjourn.

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

Motion agreed to

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

The House adjourned at 5:28 p.m.

The following Sessional Papers were tabled December 15, 2009:

09-1-144

Shareholder Letter of Expectations 2009-2010 from the Minister responsible for the Yukon Development Corporation to the Yukon Development Corporation and Yukon Energy Corporation (Premier Fentie)

09-1-145

Appointments to Major Government Boards and Committees, Standing Committee on: Twelfth Report (dated December 10, 2009) (Nordick)

The following documents were filed December 15, 2009:

09-1-132

Yukon Development Corporation Dividend Policy (dated October 15, 2009) (Premier Fentie)

09-1-133

Canada-Yukon Energy Corporation Green Infrastructure Fund: Agreement for the Yukon Green Energy Legacy Project 2009-2010/2011-2012 between Her Majesty the Queen in Right of Canada and Yukon Energy Corporation (Premier Fentie)