

**Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Tuesday, November 13, 2012 — 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. The following motions have been removed from the Order Paper, as the actions requested in the motions have been taken in whole or in part: Motions No. 38, 39, 130 and 167, standing in the name of the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin; Motion No. 79 and Motion No. 166, standing in the name of the Member for Takhini-Kopper King; Motion No. 161, standing in the name of the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin.

Also, Motion No. 239, standing in the name of the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin, has been removed from the Order Paper as it is similar to Motion No. 252, which the House adopted on Wednesday, November 7, 2012.

Motion No. 291 was not placed on today's Notice Paper as the action requested in the motion has been taken.

We will proceed with the Order Paper.

DAILY ROUTINE

Speaker: Tributes.
Introduction of visitors.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Speaker: I see Conrad is back to join us again. Conrad Tiedeman, always nice to see you.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Ms. Stick: I have for tabling the Information and Privacy Commissioner's comments on Bill No. 48, *Act to Amend the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act*.

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

Are there any reports of committees?
Petitions.

PETITIONS

Petition No. 6 — received

Clerk: Mr. Speaker and honourable members of the Assembly, I have had the honour to review a petition, being Petition No. 6 of the First Session of the 33rd Legislative Assembly, as presented by the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin on November 8, 2012.

Petition No. 6 meets the requirements as to form of the Standing Orders of the Yukon Legislative Assembly.

Speaker: Accordingly, I declare Petition No. 6 read and received. Pursuant to Standing Order 67, the Executive Council Office shall provide a response to a petition which has been read and received within eight sitting days of its presentation. The Executive Council Office response to Petition No. 6, therefore, shall be provided on or before Monday, November, 26, 2012.

Are there any other petitions for presentation?

Are there any bills to be introduced?

Are there any notices of motion?

NOTICES OF MOTION

Mr. Silver: I rise to give notice of the following motions:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon and the Yukon Hospital Corporation to recruit for the position of chemotherapy nurses on a full-time instead of a part-time basis in order to ensure:

(1) there are no interruptions in service to the public;

(2) the position is attractive to potential applicants who may not want to relocate to Whitehorse for a part-time position; and

(3) the government does not end up paying thousands of dollars in travel costs for patients who have to travel Outside because the service is not available in the Yukon.

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

THAT this House do order the return of a report prepared for the Yukon Hospital Corporation by Stantec Engineering that examines options for expanding Whitehorse General Hospital.

Speaker: Are there any other notices of motion?

Is there a statement by a minister?

This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: *Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act* amendments

Ms. Stick: By closing the door on public access to government information, the minister said his proposals are supported by the Information and Privacy Commissioner. On November 9, the minister said the changes were, and I quote: "recommended by the Information and Privacy Commissioner". On November 6, the minister said, and I quote: "We talked to the Information and Privacy Commissioner about this. He had some concerns and issues we addressed with him ..."

The Information and Privacy Commissioner has a very different view. The Information and Privacy Commissioner wrote, and I quote: "I consider this a substantial amendment to the ATIPP act that would have better been done through a review of the ATIPP act where all the provisions of the act could be considered and read together and where consequences of the amendment could be better considered."

Why has the minister said the proposed changes to the ATIPP act are supported by the Information and Privacy Commissioner when they are not?

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: Thank you. We value the role of the Information and Privacy Commissioner to act on behalf of the people of the Yukon to ensure that government and public bodies achieve the balance between transparency and protection necessary to ensure good governance. We consulted with the Information and Privacy Commissioner and shared draft legislation with him. He provided his perspective on the amendments, and we did incorporate several changes based on his feedback. We appreciate his contributions to the legislative development process. The proposed amendment is very narrow and is, in fact, specific and limited, as recommended by the Information and Privacy Commissioner.

Ms. Stick: Thank you. I'm not sure that the member opposite heard the complete question, but I will move on to the next. In reality, the minister told this House the Information and Privacy Commissioner had supported this when, in fact, he says something different. Let me read another quote made by the Information and Privacy Commissioner — begin quote: "I oppose provisions in the ATIPP act where the right of access is being removed for 'classes of records'". He also wrote, "This undermines the spirit of the Act that all government information, regardless of the record in which it is found, is accessible except in very specific and limited exceptions."

Why is this minister pushing hard with this attack on our democracy that undermines the spirit of the ATIPP act and is opposed by the Information and Privacy Commissioner?

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: I'll say again that we do value the role of the Information and Privacy Commissioner to act on behalf of the people of the Yukon to ensure that the government and public bodies achieve a balance between transparency and protection. The proposed amendment is very narrow and is, in fact, specific and limited, as recommended by the Information and Privacy Commissioner. It applies only to briefing notes for Question Period or for new ministers or a new Premier. It does not apply to any other types of briefing notes — very specific.

Ms. Stick: There are a number of amendments being made to this act, and it's more than briefing notes that are being targeted here. Writing on the proposals, the Commissioner, for sections 15 and 16, called these changes significant. One of the changes would set us apart from the rest of the country.

The Yukon is on track to becoming the only Canadian jurisdiction to shut the door on all information related to the making of government decisions or formulation of government policy. The Commissioner says this — quote: "... has no precedent."

The proposed changes are significant. They would make us a national leader in government secrecy and keeping the public in the dark. They are not supported by the Information and Privacy Commissioner. Will the minister admit he's wrong, apologize to the Information and Privacy Commissioner for misstating his position, apologize to Yukoners for this attack on their democratic rights, and withdraw the *Access to Information and Protection of Privacy* —

Speaker: The member's time has elapsed.

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: I thank the member opposite for the question. I said earlier, the proposed amendment is very narrow and is in fact specific and limited and it was recommended by the Information and Privacy Commissioner.

Cabinet confidentiality is important. Members of Cabinet need to consider all proposals or ideas that are unfettered. The information should be provided freely and those who provide the information to Cabinet — largely civil servants — can do so with the knowledge the information is provided in confidence.

Question re: First Nations/government relations

Ms. Hanson: It is common knowledge that there is a softening in world commodity markets. It is also common knowledge that when this occurs, it is harder to find investment in the resource sector.

It is also common knowledge that when these events occur, it is not at all helpful to pick fights with First Nation governments. Investors already worried will put their money elsewhere. This government is creating economic uncertainty by pursuing conflict and driving First Nation governments to the courts. You do not gain economic certainty and access to resources by undermining aboriginal rights, titles and treaties.

Why is this government committed to a reckless and narrow-minded path to economic uncertainty?

Hon. Mr. Cathers: What I would again point out to the member is that her rhetoric and the manner in which the NDP consistently engages in debate could be seen by some as being specifically aimed at reducing investor confidence for partisan gain. I would encourage the member opposite to be a little more careful in her language. As she ought to know by now, the Yukon government has consistently followed, and will consistently follow all of our obligations under the *Umbrella Final Agreement* and individual self-government and land claims agreements and, in fact, we consistently go above and beyond what we are required to do, which we have done in matters that the NDP have attacked us on.

But again, I would point out that the members have demonstrated consistently — depending on whether the NDP supports the outcome of consultation — they either demand more consultation or demand less consultation.

Ms. Hanson: It is in fact this government that is sending a chill to investors. The Yukon Party government is not so much open to investment as it is open to creating conflict and division. One does not get access to resources by bulldozing through legislation that takes away aboriginal rights. The changes to the *Oil and Gas Act* are highly controversial and require cooler heads to prevail. The Peel Watershed Planning Commission spent years listening to Yukoners and First Nation governments; now the Yukon Party government is setting the stage for even more legal challenges by stripping real protection from the Peel against the will of the people and First Nation governments. This government's propensity for rejecting YESAB recommendations to protect the environment has resulted, for example, in the recent White River First Nation challenge to protect the Chisana caribou from mining activity.

Will the Premier explain to this House how a path of confrontation and legal challenges helps our economy and attracts investment?

Hon. Mr. Cathers: First of all, the member should be a little more careful in her research and should actually try to reflect the facts when the NDP stands in this House. I would remind the member opposite: in the case of the Peel Planning Commission, as is consistent with planning commissions — with the Fish and Wildlife Management Board, renewable resource councils and other examples of bodies created under the *Umbrella Final Agreement* — recommendations are made to government, and government must then decide what to do with it. The member should know that by now.

So, again, this government is continuing to do what we told the public we would do in the 2011 election, which is seek a final plan for the Peel region that is fair and balanced. We've presented potential modifications, and we're seeking public input during one of the longest public consultation periods Yukon government has ever held on anything — 120 days. I would remind the member, in the case of the veto the NDP put in place for three First Nations under the Yukon *Oil and Gas Act* — the change to section 13 would simply make the rules and the rights the same for all First Nations. We would continue to consult with all First Nations and fully consider their input.

Question re: Mining regulatory uncertainty

Mr. Silver: I have some questions for the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources that focus on recommendations from the Yukon Minerals Advisory Board. The board said in its 2011 report, "The mining and exploration industry continues to face a number of challenges." At the top of the list of concerns is "regulatory uncertainty". The report says, "It is imperative that Yukon government continue to assist companies facing cumbersome regulatory processes when expanding or modifying existing operations or facing reassessments for projects that have already been permitted."

Does the minister agree with the board, namely that the regulatory process overseen by his government is cumbersome? What does he intend to do about it?

Hon. Mr. Cathers: It's really interesting to hear the Leader of the Liberal Party — or the interim Leader of the Liberal Party — depending on which day he's standing in this Assembly and which way he appears to think the wind is blowing that day, he's either in favour of development or he's opposed to development.

What I would again point out to the member is we appreciate the input from all, including —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

Speaker: Leader of the Third Party, on a point of order.

Mr. Silver: Searching my mind here, I don't remember ever saying I was against development.

Speaker's ruling

Speaker: Order please. It's a dispute between members.

Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources, please continue.

Hon. Mr. Cathers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, I would remind the member that he has been inconsistent in his approach on issues. On matters pertaining to regulation, we appreciate the input from YMAB and from anyone who comments on regulations. We want to have a regulatory process that is clear, understandable and sets an appropriately high standard that also protects the interest of Yukon citizens, including public health and safety and the Yukon environment.

Mr. Silver: The mining industry continues to raise concerns about the regulatory climate in the Yukon, and it's a fact that the minister can't deny. The minister's own advisory board described the process as "cumbersome".

Its' obvious problems in permitting continue. Let's go back to the 2011 advisory board report — quote: "Large investment funds continue to express concern regarding timelines for advancing projects through the environmental assessment and regulatory phases of permitting in the Yukon." It also says, "Additional work is required with YWB, YESAB and QML to harmonize their activities... And failure to ensure regulatory certainty will erode confidence and subsequently investment in the Yukon's mining and exploration industry as the investment community is highly sensitive to project delays and other permitting difficulties."

What is the minister doing to address permit concerns raised by the industry itself?

Hon. Mr. Cathers: Again, what I would point out to the member, as the member knows, is that we continue to work on these areas, as the member will note if he were to read the Order Paper. He'll see a government motion — I believe it's No. 215 — that I read in, expressing the government's commitment to continuing to work with the Water Board and YESAB to improve and to clarify the process, and point out and remind the member that in fact the Yukon, since devolution in 2003, has taken on significant new responsibilities. There was the five-year review of the *Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Act*, and there continue to be steps taken by the Yukon government and by others involved, including YESAB and the Water Board, to determine where the process can be made to function better.

We certainly agree that there is room to improve the process and to clarify it and to achieve what we believe should be the goal of the process — to be clear, straightforward, understandable, and also effectively provide for public input and effectively protect the Yukon environment and protect public health and safety.

Mr. Silver: Since the Water Board rejected a licence application for the Carmacks copper project in 2010, industry has been calling on this government to do a better job of coordinating the regulatory road map. Another piece of the puzzle raised by the board is the First Nation participation in the YESAA process.

There is significant pressure on First Nation governments regarding their timely participation, and it often comes down to resources. First Nations have been requesting financial support from Ottawa to enable their participation in YESAB reviews and with mixed results. What effort has this government made to ensure that the Government of Canada is supporting Yukon First Nations so that they can effectively participate in YESAB reviews?

Hon. Mr. Cathers: What I would point out to the Leader of the Liberal Party is that, in fact, government has taken significant steps in working with YESAB and First Nations and the Water Board to look at where the various elements of the process can work better.

We are committed to continuing to work with all involved on ensuring that our regulatory process works as well as it should. I would also remind the Leader of the Liberal Party that, contrary to his assertions, in fact, the Yukon's process has been recognized by many within the mining sector as being much more understandable and working quicker and more effectively because of that unique single-assessment process that was established pursuant to the *Umbrella Final Agreement*, that being the YESAB process. That, in fact, works better than most jurisdictions in Canada do, and has enabled the Yukon to be competitive in attracting investment and also provides a great opportunity for public input, comment, trying to ensure that we have a process that works efficiently and effectively, but also does what it must in terms of protecting the environment and protecting public health and safety and recognizing the socio-economic effects, whether they be positive or negative, on others and coming up with appropriate decisions.

Question re: First Nation education

Mr. Tredger: We are nearing the 40th anniversary of the acceptance by Canada of the Yukon First Nations' *Together Today for Our Children Tomorrow*. This landmark document became the impetus for decades of land claims and self-government negotiations and the final agreements signed in the best interests of all Yukoners.

Together Today for Our Children Tomorrow said changes in the system "have not made things better for the Indian student."

It is a shame that the same can still be said today. Today still only 40 percent of First Nation students graduate from high school. Unacceptable dropout rates and high levels of truancy continue, especially in rural Yukon. How will the Minister of Education assure Yukon citizens that the memorandum of understanding he signed with CYFN last week is not just another in a long line of broken promises?

Hon. Mr. Kent: As the member opposite noted, we did sign off on a tripartite agreement. The Yukon government signed as well as members of First Nations. It's my understanding Canada has agreed to sign, although they may or may not have done so yet, but we expect that very soon.

That agreement is going to commit the parties to create and implement a joint education action plan designed to produce successful results for First Nation learners. It's my understanding that the First Nation education committee that operated in the past used to be at a political level; we've now taken

that and moved it to a working group level so we can come up with some concrete results and make progress on doing what the member opposite mentioned, which is closing that gap that exists on the education side between First Nation learners and non-First Nation learners.

Mr. Tredger: In *Together Today for Our Children Tomorrow*, it says that the First Nation signatories did not want, quote: "separate schools for Indians, but unless the present ones are going to meet our needs, we will be forced to take another look at separate Indian schools."

It seems to me that First Nations have been more than patient waiting for schools to meet their needs. The *Education Act* allows for more involvement of First Nations in their own education. Time and again, reports, agreements, memorandums of understanding and studies have called for increased local involvement.

How will the minister ensure that the announced action plan, yet to be developed, will involve all First Nation governments, citizens and local school communities in a meaningful way?

Hon. Mr. Kent: As I mentioned, we anticipate that the action plan will be developed at the working group level with representatives of the First Nations at the officials level as well as the department representatives and, of course, Canada's participation.

Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in, for example, has many initiatives underway. They are partnering with the Department of Education such as the dual credit, the trades program, and work on the development of curriculum to deal with the residential school experience — there are a number of initiatives underway with many First Nations: the Vuntut Gwitchin, of course, with their experiential learning program. We want to ensure that when First Nations learners — and all learners — come to our public school system, that they are engaged with a curriculum that is relevant to them and meets their needs as learners. I think it's very important, obviously, to engage the First Nations and people, both outside and inside Whitehorse, when it comes to developing curriculum and programs that are relevant to their learning needs.

Question re: Species at risk legislation

Ms. White: The federal government is on the record as saying the provinces and territories can look after environmental protection, including species at risk. The minister has spoken about how we can work with and rely on the Government of Canada to protect species at risk. However, Ecojustice — a non-profit that focuses legal expertise on environmental issues — released a new report that I have for tabling called "Failure to Protect: Grading Canada's Species at Risk Laws."

The Government of Canada received a bare pass — a C minus — because of underfunding, delays in developing and implementing recovery strategies, identifying critical habitat, and on-the-ground protections.

With the ongoing cuts in Ottawa and the watering down of species at risk legislation, how can the minister tell this House and the Yukon public that Yukon species at risk are well protected?

Hon. Mr. Dixon: As I've said numerous times in this House, we're very confident that, in partnership with the federal government, the Department of Environment will be able to provide for the protection of species at risk in Yukon. We do that in a number of ways. The federal government helps with identifying species at risk, and the Yukon government provides input when it comes to the development of management plans and the implementation of management plans for species at risk.

To date, we've been very successful in developing management plans for species at risk in Yukon. We have numerous examples of very successful attempts at that.

The NDP continues to go to this issue. I'm not sure if they can think of a specific case where we haven't done a good job. If they can, I'd like for them to point it out, but in my opinion the department officials have done a fantastic job so far and will continue to do the good work on behalf of Yukoners.

Ms. White: Last week the Minister of Environment stated: "It's the opinion of this government that species at risk in the territory are well protected currently." However, the Yukon received an F in the report. This is a failing grade for protecting species at risk. This contradicts the minister's assertion that all is good.

The Yukon government failed because: (a) it does not have species at risk legislation; (b) it lacks the tools to protect species at risk; (c) it does not protect habitat; and (d) there are no tools for recovery strategies.

The minister can entertain his opinion as much as he wishes, but what really matters are the facts on the ground, and the most important fact is that we are failing. When will this government step up and deliver on an effective Yukon-made species at risk regime?

Hon. Mr. Dixon: Of course, I know the NDP likes to point to advocacy groups like the one she has pointed to already, which make a number of claims, but I would point out that the Yukon government is a leader in the protection of habitat areas in Canada. We have some remarkable protected areas when it comes to habitat protection areas in Yukon. Wetlands in particular, of course, are a focus of this government. We have a number of territorial parks that account for roughly just under three percent of the Yukon, and the total in the Yukon is just under 13 percent of protected area. So we do an excellent job of identifying habitat areas, critical habitat areas, for both Yukon species as well as species that are risk.

So we have done a fantastic job of protecting habitat areas, as well as developing management plans for species at risk and implementing them in conjunction with the federal government.

Question re: Doctor shortage

Ms. Hanson: Currently, the point of access for the Yukon health care system is the family doctor. Our relationship to our family doctor is vitally important for our health and can provide a continuity of care. Hundreds of Yukoners were in jeopardy of losing their internationally trained family doctor as a result of a bureaucratic catch-22. This situation caused a lot of stress and worry for hundreds of Yukoners, and thankfully

the minister intervened in the eleventh hour to avert this crisis, but we need to move beyond crisis management.

Can the minister tell this House how many international medical graduates under Yukon Party watch over the past 10 years have been driven from Yukon and how many patients have been orphaned?

Hon. Mr. Graham: First of all as the member opposite put it, the situation has absolutely nothing to do with a bureaucratic mixup; it was simply following the legislation that was put in place some years ago. The legislation was fairly clear: an internationally trained doctor could practise and live in the Yukon for a period of five years, during which time they must write a set of examinations set out by the Canadian Medical Association. Failing to achieve that goal, they would no longer be able to practise in the territory.

What we did was simply change that legislation. It was not a bureaucratic nightmare or a bureaucratic mixup; it was simply following the legislation. As to the second part of the answer, I will get that information and bring it to the House.

Ms. Hanson: Again, I have applauded and I do applaud the minister for navigating this crisis, but it didn't have to come down to the final hour with doctors and their families packing up to leave and hundreds of patients worried about the future of their health care. This crisis is not solely the problem for the current minister. This is the legacy of 10 years of Yukon Party patient neglect. The minister has demonstrated his willingness to provide leadership by intervening in this crisis, but it's time to move from crisis management to solid plans that ensure all Yukoners have access to a family doctor and that the rules for international medical graduates are fair.

Is the minister now prepared to call for an independent assessment of the management of the licensed limited family practice guidelines that govern international medical graduates in Yukon with a view to establishing clear, practical and unbiased guidelines — guidelines, which I might point out, were set in 2006; they are guidelines, not law.

Hon. Mr. Graham: They're not guidelines, they're regulations — regulations under the act. The regulation is the thing — it is the part that specified internationally trained doctors had a five-year term in which to complete the examinations. So those were regulations. It wasn't policy; it was a regulation.

I understand that part of the reason the regulations have been put in place is that the Yukon government also has responsibility to the citizens out there to ensure quality medical care for all citizens in the territory. Under the regulation, there was a period by which internationally trained doctors were under the observation or care of a regular Canadian-trained or Canadian medical practitioner and, during that observation period, it could be determined if the doctor met the standards of the Canadian Medical Association.

So there is a responsibility by this government or for this government to ensure we continue to ensure that quality medical practitioners are available here to our citizens. We've undertaken a number of ways to ensure this goes on in the future — and I've named those throughout the Legislature this term.

Ms. Hanson: This government has said they didn't need international medical graduates because there are enough doctors licensed to practice medicine in the territory. Yet it's unclear to most Yukoners how many of these approximately 73 licensed medical practitioners are providing day-to-day medical services to Yukoners, especially those trying to find access to a doctor. How many of these doctors who are licensed are flying in for short stints or just doing one-day contracts?

Since 2006, the Yukon government has spent in excess of \$12 million on recruitment and retention of doctors and it has recently announced an additional \$8 million in spending, yet there are still Yukoners who cannot access a family doctor. Over 10 years of Yukon Party government we have seen international medical graduates leave and we've seen cancer patients lose specialized nursing care due to lack of succession planning. In short, we've seen crisis management and not thoughtful, patient-centred, long-term care.

Who is the minister involving, and what is the game plan, to ensure our health care system stops lurching from crisis to crisis?

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: Quite frankly, I don't even know where to start with some of the statements from the Leader of the NDP. This government continues to pour significant money in all aspects of health care. For example, on the health human resource strategy, we have invested over \$12 million: investment into recruitment and retention of physicians; investment in students, helping give them more money every year for paying off loans; a recent announcement of hiring somebody to work full-time on recruitment. Not only have we increased — she's talking about the fact that we are losing doctors.

We've had our number of family physicians in the Yukon increasing. In about 2005, I think we had about 56 family physicians; now we have over 70 family physicians here. We have over 60 bursaries to Yukon students who are out going to school. Many of these students are in medical school and nursing — other health professions — who will come back here. Mr. Speaker, this government is building health care facilities such as in Watson Lake and in Dawson City. This government is ensuring that specialists can come up here. They're providing medical procedures here that at one time had to be performed Outside. This government is committed to health care for Yukoners and we will continue to do so.

Speaker: The time for Question Period has now elapsed.

Notice of government private members' business

Hon. Mr. Cathers: Pursuant to Standing Order 14.2(7), I would like to identify the items standing to be called in the name of government private members for debate on Wednesday, November 14. They are Motion No. 283, standing in the name of the Member for Watson Lake, and Motion No. 257, standing in the name of the Member for Watson Lake.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

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

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

Motion agreed to

Speaker leaves the Chair

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Chair (Ms. McLeod): Order please. Committee of the Whole will now come to order. The matter before the Committee is Vote 15, Department of Health and Social Services, in Bill No. 7, *Second Appropriation Act, 2012-13*.

Do members wish a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

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

Bill No. 7: *Second Appropriation Act, 2012-13* — continued

Chair: The matter before the Committee is Vote 15, Department of Health and Social Services, in Bill No. 7, *Second Appropriation Act, 2012-13*. We will now continue with general debate in Vote 15, Department of Health and Social Services.

Department of Health and Social Services — continued

Hon. Mr. Graham: I have some follow-up to questions that were asked last week. The first is an answer to the question posed by the Member for Riverdale South on Thursday, November 8, related to identified O&M and capital transfer differences related to the youth shelter. The Department of Health and Social Services initiated a transfer of \$51,000 from the 2012-13 operations and maintenance budget from Family and Children's Services — which was part of the childcare services parent subsidies — to the 2012-13 capital budget to support the start-up costs of the expanded youth shelter that will be operated by the Skookum Jim Friendship Centre.

While the O&M transfer was for \$51,000, the amount reflected within capital was \$31,000. This has occurred due to the manner in which Government of Yukon manages the capital maintenance budget and the timing of the transfer. After the transfer had been initiated — the full \$51,000 transfer — it was determined that sufficient resources were available within the existing capital maintenance envelope to support part of the capital work. The total amount to be expended on capital for the youth shelter will be, as the budget indicated, \$51,000, with \$31,000 only being transferred from operations and maintenance and \$20,000 being reallocated from within the existing capital maintenance envelope. In other words, \$51,000 was the

correct number — \$31,000 will come from a transfer, and \$20,000 will just be reassigned within the current capital budget.

The second question was on midwifery consultation results. I believe it was a question posed by the Leader of the Official Opposition. The question of whether or not to regulate midwives was the subject of the consultation that was referenced by the Leader of the Official Opposition. Those results need to be considered by this government before they can be released. I haven't seen them yet, nor has the Minister of Community Services, but the minister and I will be receiving a briefing on this issue in the very near future and we should at that time be able to be in a position to share with you the results of that consultation, even the next steps we are contemplating, including when the consultation results will be released.

The third issue was in response to various issues raised by the Member for Mayo-Tatchun specifically related to Pelly Crossing. I am able to provide the following information to him at this point.

The first was the nurses rotating — I think you said on an abnormally speedy basis — through the community of Pelly Crossing. The Department of Health and Social Services has been successful in hiring a permanent nurse in charge so we expect that will reduce some of the turnover that you have witnessed. We are still waiting to hire a permanent second nurse. In the meantime, we are using the same float and auxiliary on-call nurses to provide consistency to the community.

The second question was with respect to elders receiving assistance with arranging transportation — rides to medical appointments and so forth. In the first place, community nursing has not been apprised of any concerns from Pelly Crossing residents with the switch to using NIHB for non-insured service arrangements. That means that the switch is to NIHB non-insured health benefits and they now make all of the arrangements for things such as transportation, medical appointments, rides to medical appointments and all of those types of things. So that's being done by the Government of Canada. We at this point — "we" meaning the Department of Health and Social Services — have not been advised of any difficulties in that situation, but if there are difficulties, they should be letting the nurse in charge in Pelly know. Community nursing staff still make arrangements for all of the insured services folks, as they do for anyone across the territory, and the insured services are people not covered by Government of Canada.

There is a follow-up meeting between community nursing and the NIHB in early December and that new meeting will include front-line staff to assess whether there are any issues remaining across the territory after using the new system for approximately three months and to determine, if there are problems, how to correct the problems in any event.

So that answers some of the questions. One of the others was with respect to the Yukon Health and Social Services Council and when the last meeting was and if they were still active. Yes, I'm pleased to announce they are still active. The last meeting was September 21 and 22 here in Whitehorse. A number of issues were considered — everything from the wellness strategy to social inclusion and poverty reduction to issues

with FASD and the personal health information legislation. So those were all addressed.

The council input on developing legislation to protect personal health information was a very hot topic. They also discussed community health care and uniting services in communities and the need for follow-up on social inclusion and poverty reduction and rural hospital issues. So there were a number of things brought forward at that time — recommendations to the department are several pages. Once I have a chance to go through them and take a look at all of the recommendations made by the Health and Social Services Council, I will be happy to pass that information on as well.

In recent meetings the council was also extensively involved in the reopening of the Thomson Centre and we appreciate their input there. I do have notification that an annual report for the Health and Social Services Council is almost ready and once that is ready we'll be happy to table it here in the Legislature.

So that's all the updates I have from last week and I look forward to further questions.

Ms. Stick: I thank the minister opposite for his follow-up on those questions we had last week. That certainly clarifies a number of things for us. I wanted to move on — one of the areas that we didn't hear a lot about or see even on the briefing notes — and I couldn't really find anything specific in the supplementary estimates — has to do with Alcohol and Drug Services. There is mention that there is \$770,000 being put forward for the medically supported detox and what I would like to hear from the minister is the break-out for this — whether it's O&M or capital — and just some more specific information on that, please.

Hon. Mr. Graham: As members are aware, the medically supported detox is part of the continuing effort of this government to implement some task force recommendations from the Beaton and Allen report of some years ago. Significant progress has been made on implementing some recommendations in this report and both the Minister of Justice and I have been involved in them. We are now proceeding with a larger initiative, which is the medically supported detoxification.

An additional \$770,000, as the member opposite indicated, is allocated to Alcohol and Drug Services to support the transition of the social detox centre, which is how what we currently have is classified, to a medically supported detox model and to develop and implement a First Nation cultural awareness program. Both of those things are part of the \$770,000.

Medically supported detox provides improved care and services to clients in withdrawal from substance abuse. Nursing staff assess clients and provide medications to support their withdrawal under standing orders from a doctor.

Transition to a medically supported detox has resulted in a number of changes, and these include the implementation of the new staffing model that includes RNs, LPNs, a social worker and an administrative assistant. There will be the purchase of some new equipment, supplies and, of course, medications that will be used during the detox process.

There will also be implementation of pharmaceutical protocols for when and how medications can be administered to clients — these are clients going through acute withdrawal — by nursing staff, and it will also be used to determine when clients should be sent to the general hospital. The clinical institute withdrawal assessment is a common diagnostic tool used by both detox and emergency room protocols that indicate required client care or treatment, including necessary transfer to the operating room. \$629,000 will be for personnel costs, and the remainder will be for pharmaceutical supplies, medications and some new equipment for the detox centre. It will be located in the current Sarah Steele Building until the new building is constructed.

Ms. Stick: That was a great segue into my very next question: I would like to hear from the minister an update on what is happening with the Sarah Steele Building and future plans, costs, consultations and programming.

Hon. Mr. Graham: Instead of doing a design first and then fitting programs into the design, we're doing a functional program study. In other words, we're determining, first of all, which services and programs will be in that building. Once that determination is made and consultation with NGOs and the community as well as various departments within Health and Social Services has taken place — we will then be in a position to determine the actual building layout itself. But to this point, we're still determining what the functional programming will be in that building. Once that is determined, we will begin the design.

Ms. Hanson: In the briefing we talked a little bit about the \$1.6 million in additional funding for the new agreement with the YMA. Part of that, as I understand, was the reassembling of a family physician working group and additional coverage in ER. That does relate to the whole issue of doctors and doctor availability because, as we've seen, there has been this stream of those people without family doctors being directed to the ER to see a doctor if you don't have one. In my question to the minister earlier, I think we may have crossed wires, because the point I'm trying to make and the point that I'm hoping the minister can clarify is that it's my understanding, that, say if today there are 73 physicians licensed to practise medicine in the Yukon, the question of concern to the average Yukoner — to the average person in this room — is how many of them actually practise medicine? Normally when you think of practising, you think that you can call up and get an appointment with a physician — my understanding is that that licensing program includes people who come to the Yukon for two weeks on a locum, it includes somebody who may provide medicals — for example, once a week for the Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board who may be licensed to do something once a year as a special function for another licensing function.

The picture starts to dissemble. We start to see that from 73 down we find out — and the question is, fill in the blanks. How many physicians are actually operating on a day-to-day basis so that the average Yukoner is in part of a family practice, or a practice that operates half days every day for five days a week, or full days, as opposed to one living in Victoria who

flies up and does locums for two weeks; lives in the Okanagan, flies up and does locums for three weeks. Those are helpful and we need them, but they don't provide a continuity of care that the family physician does.

Could the minister please either provide the breakdown of how many are actually practising medicine in the normally understood phrase of "practising medicine" as opposed to those who are registered to practise medicine in the territory?

Hon. Mr. Graham: I don't have exact numbers with me right now, but what you have to realize in the Yukon — and I heard it a number of times on the radio when they were interviewing doctors and young graduates of school who had just come up here — that the Yukon is not a normal place to practise medicine. We're a very small community. So you have very, very few doctors who spend 100 percent of their time doing family practices. The reason for that is quite simple — we require doctors in the ER 24 hours a day, seven days a week. So there are a number of doctors who will provide service in the ER, in addition to the service that they're providing in their family practice unit. There are a number of specialties. The last time I counted, I think there are three or four surgeons resident in Whitehorse at the present time. So there are a number of issues.

How many are actually spending 100 percent of their time working as family practice clinicians — I'm not sure — very few. We know that for a fact. But the other thing I would like to talk about too is the dual-track emergency room that was implemented last year or 2010, I believe. We found, after analyzing some of the data that was brought forward from that, that many people were coming to the ER who had family doctors.

They admitted they had a family doctor, but they didn't want to wait for an appointment with the family doctor because they were concerned that their symptoms would go away and, you know, a week down the road there would be no point in keeping the appointment. So we found that there was quite a large percentage of people coming to the emergency room who actually had family physicians. So that was a bit of a problem to us as well. If we have the data requested, I'll bring it back in future returns.

Ms. Hanson: I thank the minister for that. I would hope that perhaps the Bureau of Statistics or the Yukon Medical Council — since they seem to keep the register — or the people who pay the bills might know — somebody must know. I also want to clarify the discussion with respect to the catch-22 with respect to IMGs. I'd like to have the minister clarify for the record, because it is my understanding that the international medical graduates, under the guidelines that were established in February of 2006, were offered a track that within five years they had to complete the necessary testing to qualify for the College of Family Physicians of Canada, and that in fact there are two tracks that could and should be available to physicians practising in any jurisdiction.

The one track that I just referenced is the track that young doctors — graduating residents — would normally take, which is to assess their capacity and capabilities as a newly graduated doctor.

The other track is the track that many physicians coming to the Yukon find themselves in, where they have practised medicine before; they have experience. When they get to the Yukon — this is the catch-22 — and this is where I'm seeking clarification to confirm — they are required to practise for five years before they can commence a second stream, which is designed for doctors who are practitioners, which is a course of research that takes up to nine months. So they have to be able to go into the sixth year. Now, we had the announcement last week, where the minister has agreed to extend the provisions for these international medical graduates for a period of up to seven years and three months, which is useful. Hopefully, the doctors who are burdened with a load of thousands of patients will find some support from the medical profession here to assist them to find the time because it's a nine-month research process, which is intended for practising doctors, is still going to require some assistance.

I'm looking for the minister's confirmation that that is his understanding. If it's not, then what is the reason for the extension to seven years and three months?

Hon. Mr. Graham: It had nothing to do with any research or nine-month project. It was simply that the doctors we talked to — and, in fact, we spoke with other international medical graduates who had been in the territory — found that if they were operating a full clinic — a full load of patients — they simply didn't have time to do the studying and the work that was necessary — in some cases, it was a language barrier — in order to successfully write their CCFP. It had nothing to do with anything else.

What we have decided to do is work on a program where we can do some work with these doctors if they are having difficulties in a specific area — in writing the CCFP — and we have also put into place the assessment, in conjunction with the Province of Alberta. We have done a number of other things that will help these doctors achieve the goal of successfully writing the CCFP within the five-year term. The extension was to make sure that these doctors had the wherewithal, if necessary, to write the exam in the next two years.

Mr. Tredger: I thank the minister opposite for his comments on some of my questions. I want to point out that I didn't raise the issues in Pelly Crossing to single out Pelly Crossing, but merely to state some of the concerns and challenges facing the delivery of care by service providers into rural communities. We've been having quite a bit of discussion about doctors moving through Whitehorse and how they change — my allusion to teachers, to RCMP and to health care providers in Pelly Crossing. Pelly Crossing is not unique. It's prevalent in many of our rural communities and I commend the minister for the efforts that he and his department have taken to help alleviate some of the transience and the difficulty in causing people to stay.

Last time I was up, I was talking about the importance of building relationships. As a society we can build big buildings and buildings that accomplish many things, and that's all very well and good and it's part of the delivery of care, but research has shown us the key to delivery of care is the relationship that's developed. As a government and a society, I think it's

important that we put our efforts into building those relationships, especially in communities where there has been a history of people moving in and out. How can we facilitate that? I know Health and Social Services is grappling with it, I know Education is grappling with it, and I know the RCMP is grappling with it. But again, I wanted to emphasize the importance of that relationship: the primary caregiver and the patient; the teacher and the student; the RCMP and the general public. It's critical to the success and the well-being of the community.

I did have one question for the minister — again, in terms of supporting seniors in the communities. Is the Line of Life available in all communities or is it only available in Whitehorse, and is there any plan to roll it out to the various communities? That's something that would help seniors and elders stay in their homes for a longer period of time. To me, it seems that it would be very cost-effective.

Hon. Mr. Graham: It is not currently available in all communities. I'm not sure which ones it isn't available in, but I'll get that information and get it back to you as soon as I can.

Mr. Tredger: I did want to touch briefly on fetal alcohol syndrome, the effects that it has and the way it multiplies throughout our community.

There has been a need for supportive housing in many of our communities and for support for people suffering from fetal alcohol syndrome in the communities — what is available — and again, building on the relationship, building on the strength of the local communities and the desire of local communities to work with people in their community to better effect a way of helping them cope.

Hon. Mr. Graham: Madam Chair, maybe I didn't understand what the member opposite said or what the question was.

We do all we can to support people with fetal alcohol syndrome, and that's why we've recently undertaken the work with the Options for Independence Society here in Whitehorse and will extend the number of beds in that community setting. We also have a number of group homes or day homes located throughout the city, for sure, dealing with people severely affected and providing supported living for others. If you're asking how much of it is available in the communities, I can get back with that information as well.

Mr. Tredger: I guess what I was looking for is, again, communities want to support people within their community. It's cost effective to keep people in the community. Certainly the repercussion of not having care within the community is magnified. We lose people when they come to Whitehorse; they get lost in the system; they tend to get into a lot of trouble; they end up in the Justice and corrections systems. The same things happen with the quality of life in communities. If people aren't cared for or don't become part of the community, it affects everyone's quality of life within that community.

I'm asking the minister if he is entertaining the possibility of working with communities to develop creative, cost-effective solutions that might go a long way to bringing down some of our other costs that we get for not paying attention in the first place.

Hon. Mr. Graham: Yes, there is no doubt; we are looking for community solutions. We don't want those people to come to Whitehorse and become guests of the Minister of Justice; that's the least cost-effective method. That's one of the reasons we try to identify and work with people who are afflicted with FASD from a very early age. Part of the Department of Health and Social Services' job is to identify those people before they even enter the school system so the school system can be prepared for those children entering grade 1 or kindergarten. Early detection is vital, and building community resources to care for those folks is one of our high priorities, yes.

Mr. Tredger: Again, I would stress the continuum of care. It's not only early detection; it's what happens after the person in question leaves the school system. What supports do they have to become productive adults? What supports do they have in terms of living arrangements? What supports do their caregivers and the entire community have?

I think it's critical that we as a society recognize that this is an issue, and it's an issue not only in Whitehorse and in the communities, but throughout the Yukon. It's an issue that we need to put some energy and funding into to ensure that we are looking after each other, people aren't being left behind and that we can all take part in it. I thank the minister for that, and I would encourage him to continue to work in that area.

I wanted to take a couple of minutes to talk about another area that I think is critical to our society and the direction we're going, and that's early childhood care. The importance of early childhood intervention — and the minister mentioned it in terms of fetal alcohol syndrome — but it's in terms of all our students — is critical. A recent study done at the Department of Education identified that 38 percent of our students are at risk when they enter kindergarten. That's an incredible number — that's four in 10.

As a principal, I know when somebody enters school behind, that gap only widens. I also know that the longer we wait to address it, the more expensive it becomes. If we start working with people in prenatal care and make a difference there, it costs X amount of dollars. If we wait until they get to school, it costs X times seven. If we wait until they're in school, it continues to increase. I call it, "A dollar spent today will pay big dividends down the line."

Fiscally it adds up, and it becomes extremely critical. One might look at it in terms of compound interest. If we talk about compound interest — we invest a dollar today, the interest rate continues to grow. If we invest a dollar in early childhood, that pays dividends throughout the life of that person. If we don't invest early, we end up with what I call "compound debt", and it costs more and more and more to society in terms of lost opportunity for the individual, in terms of lost productivity for society and the cost of working with that person continues to increase. So we have a choice — we can invest early and watch those investments compound or we can avoid it and watch the debt mount.

Too often as a society we've avoided it in order to save a penny today and it ends up costing us a lot of money down the road. And that's only the fiscal cost. I've seen first-hand the

stress on parents whose kids are struggling in school, how they wonder how they can get their child to read, who doesn't want to read.

How can they help them with their homework? When do they give up and say, "Oh, too bad." That 38 percent of children who enter the school system looks an awful lot like the 40-percent attendance problem we have in school or the 60-percent dropout rate we have; they're related. The stress on the system — I've had teachers in tears when they have four and five and six kids who are struggling, who are not prepared to learn, who are not ready, and teachers who are wearing out. The cost to the system? The people accessing health care and stress leave in our education system is growing astronomically. Again, we can invest now or we can pay later.

I think the greatest concern for me there is our lost opportunity — the fact that we're losing children who, with some intervention, could be productive, could be learning, could be working. I'd like to read to you from a magazine called *Partners for Children*. It talks about early childhood and models of early childhood services and what works internationally.

Early childhood services start before birth for optimum child well-being. Offering access to universal services in the area of basic needs — for example health, education, social services— and unifying the early childhood development and care services are a must to providing a good start for all children. The most successful early childhood services appear to be those that offer quality access, have a holistic approach, are child-centred, cultivate both cognitive and non-cognitive skills and engage families in everyday learning.

Preventing is better than fixing — investing in early years pays off. Implementing a public health initiative at a population level helps: strengthen parenting skills and empower parents; improve children's life outcomes; build healthy communities and reduce social inequities. Program delivery should be guided by the principles of equity, inclusion, quality, capacity building and partnership.

Government's role should be to provide support. Investing in early childhood development is strategic and crucial for a country, but it takes political will, leadership, commitment and integrated planning to influence policy changes. To that, Mr. Minister, I would add the importance and critical aspect of involving the local community.

Too often, what we're seeing now is a drop-in, pass through — here's a solution dropped off. What is needed is training and support in the community and of and by community members. Again, as I mentioned earlier, the relationship is what is critical.

The early development index reveals that Yukon children are vulnerable. Over a third of them are not ready for school when they arrive there on the first day. EDI results are serious across the Yukon. There is no rural/urban split. However, there is a disparity between rural and urban daycares and childcare centres with respect to funding, staff training, facilities and community supports.

Early childhood development needs to be applied system-wide through core funding, not through piecemeal, short-lived projects or application-based grants and subsidies. What I

found when I visited daycare centres throughout the Yukon is that the directors are spending an inordinate amount of time filling out materials in order to get programming — it's a piecemeal method of going about it.

What I'm asking the minister: Will he assure the Legislature that he is looking for a solution that is system-wide, that involves core funding, and doesn't involve piecemeal, short-lived projects or application-based grants, but involves universal funding for all rural early childhood programs?

Chair's statement

Chair: I would remind the member to address his comments through the Chair.

Hon. Mr. Graham: I'll first of all go back to finish my answer on funding for FASD and related difficulties. In the first place, we fund at the present time — "we", meaning Government of Yukon — roughly \$460,000 a year for outreach, prevention, education services focused on high-risk and marginalized individuals, and for diagnostic and assessment services through the Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Society Yukon, or FASSY.

We are in the process of reviewing the delivery of these programs and will make recommendations to determine if future funding arrangements and coordination of services is appropriate and make changes, as necessary. We also fund housing for individuals with FASD through the Options for Independence, as I told the members opposite, for \$266,000 a year. Another \$3 million-plus was awarded to Options for Independence so they would be able to complete the 14 new housing units.

The services for persons with disabilities also provide a range of financial, residential day programming and personal supports for adults with disabilities, including those persons with FASD.

So there are a number of programs in departments other than specifically FAS. We also fund the Challenge Community Vocational Alternatives, which provides employment supports for people with disabilities, and that also includes folks with FASD. We fund, as you probably are aware, Teegatha'Oh Zheh, to provide day programming, residential homes and supports to adults, again, with disabilities and that includes folks with FASD. So there are a number of programs other than strictly the funding we give to FASSY each year.

As for the question with respect to daycare, some of the questions will be answered by the Minister of Education during debate on his budget. At the present time, the Department of Health and Social Services really works very closely with the Department of Education to identify children for early intervention. We use a number of different strategies, but we also use the Child Development Centre for a great number of the things that we do.

The Department of Health and Social Services funds the Child Development Centre each year to coordinate diagnostics teams for preschool and school-aged children. The diagnostic team for preschool children draws on therapists from the Child Development Centre, and the school-aged team employs therapists from Education. The two teams work closely together,

and they have the capacity to diagnose a number of children each year.

The department also funds the Child Development Centre to provide early supports, including therapeutic and assessment services for preschool children, and they include a lot of family support in that area as well. Family supports for children with disabilities program also provides a wide range of support for children with disabilities — everything from FASD to physical and mental or cognitive challenges. The Child Development Centre participates in staff training on a number of different areas, including training on FASD that may be provided both by FASSY and through Yukon College.

I don't want to answer any questions that deal with education because the department's budget, I'm sure, will be coming up, and you will have the exact same questions for the minister there. So when we talk about daycare and daycare funding — we have been through this on a number of occasions. As I said, the department pays funding on two different levels to daycares. One is the direct operating grant that goes to the various daycare centres around the territory, and the other is the wage subsidy.

The wage subsidy provides up to, I believe, \$9 an hour for staff in the communities. As for the question of whether or not we're looking at universal funding for daycares — it's not on my radar, so I guess the answer to that is no, we're not looking at universal funding for all daycares in the territory at this time.

Mr. Tredger: The Child Development Centre's mandate — and they do an excellent job at what they do, but they're Whitehorse-based. Their mandate is to work with special needs —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Chair: Order please. Mr. Tredger has the floor.

Mr. Tredger: Well, their mandate is to work with special needs students, and they do have outreach teams that go out into the communities, and they do hire people in the communities. But early childhood is much more than working with special needs students. If the Child Development Centre's mandate is to be expanded, I would suggest that there be more funding for them so that they are able to incorporate more work in the daycares and more time in the communities.

Early childhood education is a specialty. It's different from "education". It starts prenatally and it includes family and community environments. My questions were not directed at the Department of Education. I was alluding to the fact that when people enter kindergarten, 38 percent of them are already at risk. It's prior to entering kindergarten that I'm concerned about here.

I think there are a number of areas. One of them is core funding to rural communities and the other is about paperwork. Directors in the daycares talk about the high level of paperwork required to address quarterly grants; applications for funding; subsidies for everything from building maintenance to program supplies; there are reports on attendance; safety; eating habits; and the list goes on.

The concern I have is that the directors, who are usually in the communities — the most trained persons — are spending

more time doing paperwork and less time actually working with the staff and with the students.

The other aspect of the funding is that many of our daycare workers are not paid a consistent wage. They are worrying about the next grant. We attempt to attract people early in their careers who are moving on to something else, because of the low wages in many areas. Anything that we can do to get people into the career, give them the respect and dignity that they deserve so that they can provide quality care to our children will pay off much down the line.

Hon. Mr. Graham: The first thing I have to do is correct the member opposite whose contention is that the Child Development Centre is a Whitehorse-only organization. It's not. They travel to most of the communities on a regular basis, and they don't only deal with children with disabilities. They deal with assessments of children. Anyone can make an appointment and go and see the Child Development Centre. Sometimes they're extremely busy, but staff there will provide assessments if children are accepted. It's a wonderful system. We are providing additional funding in next year's budget for them so they can continue to provide those wonderful services.

The member opposite talks about funding rural daycare. I guess I wonder where that leaves daycare everywhere else as well, because if we're going to provide services for one part of the Yukon, we make sure we do it for every part of the Yukon equally; we don't specifically say that social services dollars are available only to one specific group in the territory. We currently provide funding in two main areas — in direct operating grants and in wage subsidies. That's provided to every community in the territory, and I can just hear at a Public Accounts Committee meeting if we didn't collect the stats that we're collecting or if we didn't require the backup information that we currently require, the grief that I would receive from the same members asking, "Well, why aren't you doing this?" or, "How do you justify spending this amount of money?" So, we're trying to collect the information to provide to members, and we're trying to make sure that every daycare has a chance to operate on a break-even basis at least.

I would also like to point out that, together with the Rendezvous Rotary Club of Whitehorse, the Yukon government has entered into a partnership there. I think the Minister of Finance, in his role as Government Leader, made a commitment during the last election that we would match any contributions received from the community for up to \$50,000 a year to the Rendezvous Rotary Club of Whitehorse to fund the Yukon Imagination Library, which is committed to recognizing the invaluable contributions of reading to preschool-age children. The Imagination Library has, as their objective, to make sure that every child born in the territory has, from the very first opportunity — I think it's age one year — to receive one book a month for every month until they reach school age. I'm also happy to tell the members opposite — I can't remember the exact number now — but I think it was over two thirds of the children born in rural communities in the Yukon — are now recipients of the book-a-month from Rotary Club, and only, I think, about 36 percent of children born in the City of Whitehorse.

The Rotary Club emphasized the rural connection first, and we're very happy as a government to support that connection to the tune of \$250,000 a year. The Rotary Club believes — we just talked to them last week, as a matter of fact — that they will reach 100 percent of new children born in the territory within the next year or so. I think that's a real step forward. They had some statistics as well about how this has impacted families in rural communities, and it was very good to see. When they get us some kind of a report on their operations, I'll be sure to table it here in the Legislature.

So we are working on preschool-aged children — identifying difficulties and pre-screening — making sure that we're ready for them when they enter the school system, and we're spending a lot of money in this area. If, as evaluation goes forward, we find a solution or additional solutions to this problem, we'll implement them as well. Thank you.

Chair: Is there any further general debate? We are going to proceed into a line-by-line examination of Vote 15, starting on page 9-4, operation and maintenance.

On Operation and Maintenance Expenditures

On Corporate Services

Corporate Services in the amount of \$114,000 agreed to On Family and Children's Services

Ms. Hanson: I'd just like to get confirmation, if I could, from the minister that with respect to the early childhood prevention prevention services, which has a decrease in subsidy grants, that there is an assessment underway and that that assessment will be made available to the Legislative Assembly, or the members who are not sitting, to ascertain the lack of uptake with respect to these subsidies.

My understanding is that this has been reprofiled because there has been a lower than anticipated program uptake, and my understanding from the briefing with officials is that an assessment was underway and that it would be completed within the next few months, as my notes are scribbled here. I'm looking to get an undertaking that the assessment would be provided to the Members of the Legislative Assembly.

Hon. Mr. Graham: Yes, that was our undertaking, and we will be providing that assessment.

Chair: Is there any further general debate on Family and Children's Services?

Family and Children's Services in the amount of \$125,000 agreed to

On Social Services

Social Services in the amount of \$769,000 agreed to

On Continuing Care

Ms. Hanson: In the discussion prior to this, I just wanted to confirm that the amount of \$125,000, which is a decrease — to clarify that the federal government is not responsible for personal care for members of self-governing First Nations. I think the language in the Blues refers to First Nations, and this is a specific aspect of self-governing First Nations and the relationship to provisions of the self-government agreements —

Chair: Ms. Hanson, we will require consent in order to go backwards into a line that has already been cleared.

Is it the wish of members to open Family and Children's Services for further discussion?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

On Family and Children's Services — revisited

Ms. Hanson: Thank you for the indulgence of the House. I missed that one.

I just wanted to clarify that it is a nuance of the self-government agreements with respect to section 17.

Hon. Mr. Graham: Madam Chair, that's what I understand. I thought it was —

Chair: We have returned to Family and Children's Services for \$125,000.

Hon. Mr. Graham: No.

Chair: Continuing Care is \$92,000. Are you following page 9-4?

Ms. Hanson: I was. Then I looked across at the material provided in the briefing, and there was a reference to \$125,000, and that's where the misapprehension came from, because it's a decrease of \$125,000 for continuing care as a result of the federal government not paying some amount.

Chair: The supplementary amount in this budget, *Supplementary Estimates No. 1*, is for an increase of \$92,000 for continuing care.

Hon. Mr. Graham: This question will come up later in debate when we get to recoveries. But she is right in her assumption that, yes, we're only dealing with self-governing First Nations. That's caused the reduction. Okay?

Chair: Thank you, everyone.

Family and Children's Services in amount of \$125,000 agreed to

On Continuing Care

Chair: Is there any further general debate on Continuing Care?

Continuing Care in the amount of \$92,000 agreed to

On Health Services

Health Services in the amount of \$1,868,000 agreed to

On Yukon Hospital Services

Yukon Hospital Services in the amount of \$565,000 agreed to

On Total of Other Operation and Maintenance in the amount of nil cleared

Total of Other Operation and Maintenance in the amount of nil cleared

Total Operation and Maintenance Expenditures in the amount of \$3,533,000 agreed to

Chair: We will proceed to capital.

On Capital Expenditures

On Corporate Services

On Office Furniture and Equipment

Office Furniture and Equipment in the amount of \$17,000 agreed to

On Information Technology Equipment and Systems — Workstations and Hardware/Network Equipment

Information Technology Equipment and Systems — Workstations and Hardware/Network Equipment in the amount of \$70,000 agreed to

On Information Technology Equipment and Systems — Systems Development — Canada Health Infoway: Panorama (Public Health Information)

Ms. Hanson: If the minister could just confirm the \$294,000 for Panorama. Is that the program that links physicians? Or, could we have a clarification on Panorama?

Hon. Mr. Graham: No, this isn't the one that links physicians. This is public health in the territory. Canada Health Infoway will be the one that is the overall health information system.

Information Technology Equipment and Systems — Systems Development — Canada Health Infoway: Panorama (Public Health Information) in the amount of \$294,000 agreed to

Information Technology Equipment and Systems — Systems Development — Canada Health Infoway: Panorama (Public Health Information) in the amount of \$294,000 agreed to

On Information Technology Equipment and Systems — Systems Development — Canada Health Infoway: iEHR (Electronic Health Records)

Information Technology Equipment and Systems — Systems Development — Canada Health Infoway: iEHR (Electronic Health Records) in the amount of \$661,000 agreed to

On Information Technology Equipment and Systems — Systems Development — Various Systems Development Projects

Information Technology Equipment and Systems — Systems Development — Various Systems Development Projects in the amount of \$204,000 agreed to

On Family and Children's Services

On Youth Shelter — Operational Equipment

Youth Shelter — Operational Equipment in the amount of \$31,000 agreed to

On Social Services

On Social Services — Renovations

Social Services — Renovations underexpenditure in the amount of \$50,000 cleared

On Social Services - Operational Equipment

Social Services - Operational Equipment underexpenditure in the amount of \$12,000 cleared

On Adult Residential Services - Renovations

Adult Residential Services - Renovations in the amount of \$1,000 agreed to

On Adult Residential Services - Operational Equipment

Adult Residential Services - Operational Equipment in the amount of \$14,000 agreed to

On Continuing Care

On Home Care - Renovations

Home Care - Renovations in the amount of \$50,000 agreed to

On Copper Ridge Place - Nurse Call System

Copper Ridge Place - Nurse Call System in the amount of \$204,000 agreed to

On Copper Ridge Place — Renovations

Copper Ridge Place — Renovations in the amount of \$29,000 agreed to

On Macaulay Lodge — Renovations

Hon. Mr. Kent: I know that there were some boiler improvements and some flooring improvements with this line

item. I was just wondering if the minister can provide a detailed breakdown of the line item or, if he can't, if he could get it back to me in writing at some future point, that would be great.

Hon. Mr. Graham: First of all, this was a revote of \$171,000 to continue work on the boiler room cooling project and there was another \$30,000 for the installation of new flooring at Macaulay Lodge. I have to get back to you with the rest of it.

Macaulay Lodge – Renovations in the amount of \$229,000 agreed to

On Health Services

On Insured Health Services – Renovations

Ms. Hanson: It's with respect to renovations. I've raised with the Minister of Health and Social Services, the Minister of Highways and Public Works and the minister responsible for Yukon Housing Corporation questions with respect to insured benefits and the location of the insured health services office. I see a minor amount for renovations, but the question I have is making the services accessible to the people who need them.

Again, today I walked by the library, which is empty and has been empty for over a year and the question I raise is: has the minister reconsidered the idea of locating this service in a place where people who have multiple health issues — often when they're coming to get approvals for everything from prostheses to dentures to medical travel, and given the frequency with which the elevator in the building that is currently leased by the Government of Yukon has breakdowns, placing seniors and handicapped individuals in a precarious position of having to climb up four levels to get to that service — I see a minor amount of \$2,000. Is that to repair the elevator or is it to do some planning?

Chair: The member will notice that this is a reduction of \$2,000.

Ms. Hanson: Maybe the minister could explain why they decreased their expenditures on something that does need maintenance and/or is he giving thought to actually providing services to those people who need it most in an accessible location?

Hon. Mr. Graham: The transfer is required. It went from renovations into operational equipment, which is just the equipment required in the office, but we have been looking at — it's kind of odd that you would mention this particular elevator and building because I have mentioned the same to my colleague, the Minister of Highways and Public Works, with respect to some changes in that area. It's something that we discuss as a group — access to all of our buildings. I know the current Minister of Highways and Public Works has it high on his radar to ensure that these types of services are in areas that are accessible to those disabled clientele we serve.

Insured Health Services – Renovations underexpenditure in the amount of \$2,000 cleared

On Insured Health Services – Operational Equipment

Insured Health Services – Operational Equipment in the amount of \$2,000 agreed to

On Community Health Programs – Renovations

Community Health Programs – Renovations underexpenditure in the amount of \$123,000 cleared

On Community Nursing – Renovations

Community Nursing – Renovations in the amount of \$170,000 agreed to

On Community Nursing – Operational Equipment

Community Nursing – Operational Equipment underexpenditure in the amount of \$5,000 cleared

On Northern Strategy – Telehealth

On Northern Strategy – Telehealth Expenditures in the amount of \$68,000 agreed to

On Total of Other Capital

Total of Other Capital in the amount of nil cleared

Total Capital Expenditures in the amount of \$1,852,000 agreed to

On Revenues

Ms. Stick: Thank you. I just wondered for clarification what the \$25,000 coming in for social assistance is.

Hon. Mr. Graham: A reciprocal agreement exists between YTG, Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada — formerly INAC — and almost all the self-governing First Nations to bill each other for a portion of the social assistance they have issued as the responsibility of the other party.

For example, if the head of a household for a family of two individuals is not registered under the *Indian Act*, that person would receive the family social assistance payment from YTG. If the second member of the household is registered under the *Indian Act*, YTG would then invoice that particular First Nation for 50 percent of the social assistance that was issued. The \$25,000 is being removed from recoveries from Canada to third-party recoveries to make the recoveries budget more accurate. That's simply the total reason behind it.

Revenues cleared

Department of Health and Social Services agreed to

Chair: We are now going to move on to Vote 7, Department of Economic Development.

Would the members like a break?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

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

Department of Economic Development — continued

Chair: The matter before the Committee is Vote 7, Department of Economic Development, in Bill No. 7, *Second Appropriation Act, 2012-13*. Ms. Stick has the floor.

Ms. Stick: I had to refresh myself on where we left off, because we have been focused on Health and Social Services. But looking back in *Hansard*, I see we were talking about the telecommunications infrastructure and the number of difficulties that the territory ran into earlier in the fall, and the importance of that infrastructure, in terms of health and safety

for communities; impact on businesses, in terms of not having access to payment methods, such as debit and credit cards through the use of machines; and just the number of people left without any communications at all as more and more individuals seem to be moving away from landlines and relying on cellphones only. I just think more and more — that's the way people are moving. They're not getting the phone line for their home — especially with young people who move around more and tend to rely on their cellphones and not the old-fashioned way, like the rest of us.

I would ask the Minister of Economic Development if he could tell us what is happening in terms of an assessment of our vulnerabilities with the telecommunications and whether there is going to be a plan to address this. It did happen once. We do have, certainly, some commitments that it probably won't happen again. But what are the alternatives — or, how are we going to address those vulnerabilities, because seeing ambulance or police or firemen strategically located around town just in case — when we look at Whitehorse and the size of Whitehorse — the physical size — you could have been in any of the country residential locations, and it would have taken you awhile to be able to access emergency services.

So I would ask the minister to address that, please.

Hon. Mr. Dixon: Thanks to the member opposite for the question. It is, indeed, a good one and an important one.

I spoke a little bit last time we were discussing this budget about a number of things that are on the table and a number of processes and initiatives that are underway. One of them that I think is important to go back to is the CRTC, the Canadian Radio-Television and Telecommunications Commission, that continues to monitor the telecommunications world in the north, and has made a number of statements lately and taken a few opportunities to bring forward some concerns they have with the existing infrastructure in the north.

I mentioned earlier there was a ruling not too long ago — it was on a rate increase, and the ruling was that the CRTC required Northwestel to develop a modernization plan.

Of course, I talked a little bit last week about the modernization plan and the development of that plan and the link that Northwestel had for that plan with their parent company, BCE, and their purchase — or potential purchase, proposed purchase — of Astral media, which is a Quebec-based media company. As we saw in the media and as we saw very publicly throughout the national scene, that bid to purchase Astral by BCE was denied by the CRTC for a number of reasons. Probably the most important one to Yukon was that Northwestel's idea of using some of the money that would be aimed at the public good — that was the term they used, "public good" — was planned by Northwestel to go toward infrastructure development in the north. The proposed modernization plan that they had developed had factored in that money going to Northwestel for that development plan.

Of course, as I said that decision was made by the CRTC to not allow the purchase of Astral by Bell, thus requiring Northwestel to go back to the drawing board, as they might say, to develop a new modernization plan to comply with the initial ruling by the CRTC.

So they're doing it now, and we remain in contact with Northwestel to determine both the content and the process by which they intend to implement their modernization plan. This is what I think is a very interesting opportunity for telecommunication infrastructure in the north. It's an instance where the CRTC — the federal regulator — has stepped in and said basically to Northwestel that they needed to — if I may be so blunt — do a better job of investing in and maintaining their infrastructure in the north.

The effects of that lack of investment and lack of attention are an example that the member opposite is raising now where we've seen throughout recent history numerous blackouts and loss of services for businesses and individuals and even the government in the territory.

I think that this is an interesting time for telecommunications in the north, just for the very fact that the CRTC is taking such a keen look at Northwestel. The modernization plan they're going to develop is going to be very interesting for us and the department remains engaged with Northwestel to ensure that the values and interests of Yukon businesses and Yukoners are reflected as best as possible in that modernization plan.

Another way that we are working on these issues is with the industry, specifically the Yukon Information Technology Industry Society. I forgot my acronyms, Madam Chair. They've expressed to us over their time of being active that outages in services like power and telecommunications have a very negative effect on them, and the member opposite noted some of those. When those sorts of services go down, oftentimes small businesses are unable to process visa interactions or debit interactions, and in the odd case where an ATM also goes down concurrent with that, we're left in a very unfortunate situation for businesses. So we know that it does have a negative economic effect on the territory, especially on small businesses, and it's a concern for us. We, as I said, continue to work with Northwestel on a modernization plan.

Another issue that gets a significant amount of attention in the development of infrastructure in the north is the possibility of developing a redundant fibre line to Yukon. As it stands right now we have a sole line going up the Alaska Highway and as I've noted previously a number of times before, that single fibre line is often plagued with disturbances in the south. It's unfortunate when an extraneous issue like roadwork being done in Fort St. John has such a strong negative effect on Yukon's economy, so it's something that we are interested in seeing go forward.

As I mentioned before, over the past several years there are a few individual companies that have taken a hard look at the opportunity of developing a redundant fibre line to the Yukon. We are very interested in that. Whatever goes forward would have to be a private sector solution and driven by the private sector.

Those are the kinds of infrastructure developments, though, that I would see the Department of Economic Development supporting and providing some logistical support, or we could do a number of different studies — typically the Department of Economic Development does studies on infrastruc-

ture developments like what was done with the potential development of a rail link to Yukon a number of years ago. I think Economic Development has a role in working with the private sector to develop the possibility of seeing infrastructure projects like a telecommunications project go forward in the territory. Of course, as I said, we recognize the potential importance of having a redundant fibre line.

I guess, to answer the member's question, in terms of assessments, the modernization plan is underway and the review is being conducted by the CRTC. We anticipate that the CRTC will be engaging with us, as they have over the past several hearings, to determine what our interests are, both as a government and on behalf of Yukon industry and the private sector in Yukon. We'll continue to be engaged on that front. We'll work with Northwestel on the development of their modernization plan. We're going to continue to work with industry, not just the YITIS — the Yukon Information Technology Industry Society — but all small business. The Chamber of Commerce has, of course, raised this with us before, as well. This affects not just those information technology companies, but indeed all small- and medium-sized enterprises in the territory. So we'll continue to engage with the chambers of commerce, both Yukon and Whitehorse, and the regional municipal chambers of commerce — like Watson Lake and Dawson — to ensure that those services are identified as being significantly important.

I think I've covered all the items that I think relate to the member's question, so I'll hand the floor back over to her to hear more about this.

Ms. Stick: I thank the minister for his information. I think one of the big questions that you would find most Yukoners have and are concerned with with regard to telecommunications is the fact that we still have a monopoly here and that there are no other options available in terms of cellphones, in particular. I'm just wondering if the minister is doing anything in terms of remedying that and encouraging other cellphone providers to look at the Yukon as a possibility. Certainly, Northwestel has talked about their modernization, but my understanding was some of that money did not come to fruition with the decision of the CRTC. The NDP did give conditional support to them through a letter to the CRTC on their last application, but I think it's a big concern for all Yukoners. When are we going to see something else, and what's this government doing to promote that?

Hon. Mr. Dixon: Of course, this is another important issue, and I appreciate the member opposite bringing this to the floor. The issue of competition in the telecommunications field is one that's very interesting and one that received some attention of late not only from the CRTC but certainly in the local media, with the increased focus on Northwestel and their developments.

Cellphones themselves are not regulated by the CRTC currently, but the CRTC's review is looking at the issue on a Canada-wide basis. They've indicated that they are interested in developing a national code of conduct for cellphone use and working with the industry at a national level to support that work. That is something that I think a lot of consumer groups

have certainly supported, as I'm sure members will appreciate. Cellphone contracts aren't always the most easy to understand or clear, and they often include — both literally and figuratively — the small print, and sometimes the contract has implications for the consumer that they aren't aware of.

I think the development of a national code of conduct is something that we would be asked to provide input on, and we certainly will. I know the Government of Alberta wrote to the CRTC last year requesting to be involved in that process, and I'm sure we will be involved as well.

Of course when it comes to these issues of telecommunications the key player is the regulator — the CRTC — and they are taking a look at all of these things to determine what the future of telecommunications is going to look like in the territory and in the north.

One of the key issues with regard to the potential of competition is — and forgive me for the term — the “backhaul rate” that Northwestel charges on their infrastructure. Some potential competitors that have considered entering the market are concerned with the rates being proposed by Northwestel currently.

During all the attention and scrutiny of the modernization plan, I had a chance to meet with Northwestel, as well as a few other smaller companies that do business in our sister territories — over in Northwest Territories and Nunavut — and they indicated that there is interest in coming to the Yukon and providing competition to Northwestel, especially on cellphones and other potential services, but that interest would be contingent on the backhaul rate charged by Northwestel — that essentially means the rate or charge that Northwestel would levy against a competitor using their infrastructure. They are required by the CRTC to make their infrastructure available, but the rate that they charge is something that is a matter of discussion.

What we expect in the near future is that there will be a holistic review hearing to be called by the CRTC in the next several months — either early in the new year or into the spring — for the discussion of entry of competition, which will be an item of discussion in those hearings. We'll be monitoring that very closely. We're very interested to hear what the CRTC has to say about what their vision of telecommunications in the north is. We certainly will be providing Yukon government's version — our vision for that — and submitting it to the CRTC. All the while, as I said before, we intend to remain engaged with the chambers of commerce, with industry itself, and with industry organizations, like YITIS — Yukon information technology industry sector — that provide the private sector view of such things. Northwestel is, of course, a member of YITIS, so that is something to keep in mind when considering the sector strategy that YITIS will be developing. They are not the only member, but they are most certainly the biggest member, as members here can imagine, in the society.

What YITIS comes up with in terms of recommendations for the industry is something I'll be considering very closely. And, as I said to those companies from other territories that expressed interest, my door is always open, and I look forward to hearing from them about their thoughts on the CRTC process currently going forward. I am sure they are ecstatic with the

decision by the CRTC to deny the purchase of Astral by BCE, and I'm sure they will be monitoring the situation as it goes forward.

In that holistic review that I mentioned, I do expect that the rates that are charged by Northwestel for usage of their infrastructure will be a key issue, especially for those companies interested in entering the Yukon market.

To sum up, I guess, we remain engaged with industry and the CRTC in the development of these initiatives and look forward to expressing Yukon's opinion on behalf of industry to the CRTC. We anticipate that the CRTC's decisions will have a profound effect on telecommunications in the north and in Yukon specifically.

I think the CRTC's reviews have the potential to perhaps provide a bit of a watershed moment for telecommunications in the north, and we'll most certainly be monitoring those very closely.

Ms. Stick: Moving on, recently we received a news release with regard to the Minister of Economic Development attending a conference in Germany along with Yukon Gold Mining Alliance. I understand that the minister was to make a presentation promoting mining on behalf of the Yukon. I'm just wondering if the minister could please give us more information with regard to Economic Development's involvement with the Yukon Gold Mining Alliance and what the presentation in Germany entailed.

Hon. Mr. Dixon: As I've noted a number of times in the House before, we're very aware that in order for responsible economic projects to go forward in the territory we need to attract investment from outside of our borders. We've got a fairly broad strategy with regard to attracting investment to the territory and in a general sense, that strategy includes a focus on Europe, North America and Asia. This specific trip I made earlier to Munich was an example of the focus on Europe.

The Yukon Gold Mining Alliance is an industry-led group with a focus on attracting mining investment to Yukon. My input with that group is to provide the government's perspective on why the Yukon government believes that the Yukon is a positive place to invest and a positive place to do business.

I noted earlier — I believe it was in the second reading speech on the budget — with the global economy in its current state, raising investment in any project in any part of the world is very difficult right now. The markets are very difficult. It is a difficult environment within which to raise capital. For companies doing business in the Yukon, raising that capital is imperative for them to bring their projects forward.

When we go out to various places throughout the world to both meet with governments and meet with private sector to attract investment, we often highlight a number of features of doing business in the Yukon, and that was certainly what my presentation in Munich consisted of. Basically, it's an information session. For many people in Europe and Asia, and even in North America, you'd be surprised how little folks know about the Yukon — where it is and what it's like here. I would note that when I gave this very same presentation — I believe it was in Chicago — I had a number of questions about, "Is Yukon a part of Alaska or a subsidiary or a territory of Alaska? Is it in

the United States? Is it in Canada?" — questions that I found surprising, to say the least. That isn't to say that there weren't good questions, too. There were very informed, interested and engaged investors who had some very specific knowledge and asked some very specific questions. But oftentimes, I've learned so far that these presentations are often about providing just a very basic context for what the Yukon is like and what opportunities lie here.

If I could sum up my presentation in Munich, it was identifying basically three pieces that I would mention today. The first is Yukon's geographic location; that it is in northern Canada, which is an attractive — northern Canada has received a lot of attention lately in the international forum, both as an interesting place to invest and to bring forward projects, but also for a number of other reasons including environmental and socioeconomic as well. The north has, in my opinion, never been such a focus of international attention as it is right now.

So, to continue, identifying Yukon's geography and geology, simply outlining — I show a map of the world and kind of identify where Yukon is and demonstrate that it has a strategic location in that it's in northern Canada and that Canada is a developed country with very clear sets of rules and environmental regulations. For investors in the international scene, they could just as easily be doing business in South America or Africa or the Middle East, so reiterating the message that this is a stable political jurisdiction within Canada, which is a well-known country for being a stable democracy. It is an attractive feature.

So, once again, identifying the physical attributes of the Yukon, our tremendous geology, and the fact that we have a lot of different mineral resources, as well as other natural resources. At a conference like the one in Munich that was specifically about precious metals, I did focus primarily on the gold resources that we have in the Yukon, but in other conferences we do focus on the base metals and other semi-precious metals as well. The Yukon Gold Mining Alliance is primarily focused on precious metals. It's not explicitly limited to precious metals, but that is the case with the current membership, so that was the focus there.

The second piece of my presentation in Munich, as I've said in other areas, relates to our regulatory regime and environmental regime — basically at a very high level indicating that, yes, we do have a regulatory regime and yes, we do collect royalties on our resources, and we have a very open and transparent system in Canada and the Yukon for determining how those are assessed. It's a bit of an information session about YESAA and its role in the Yukon.

For North American investors, I do tend to discuss devolution because it's a little more understood about the relationship between the Yukon as a territory, as opposed to a province, and the fact that we have devolution and we have control of our natural resources, unlike our sister territories.

I mention the importance of developing relationships with First Nations and explain — once again this was only a 10-minute presentation, so you can't get into very much detail — that we have modern land claims and that 11 out of the 14 First Nations have settled final agreements with land claims.

As I said, I discuss YESAA and First Nations, and the third piece is that we are a stable political jurisdiction — that the Yukon is a good place to do business; we have guarantees around investment and the practice of common law in Canada; that we are in the responsible, democratic country of Canada, and that we're interested to see economic development occur in the territory.

I think those three pieces — the geography/geology piece, the regulatory or governance piece, and the stable political jurisdiction are the three focuses of a presentation, typically. But, as I said, it does vary for the audience. I imagine when, at a later date, if I'm to do the presentation again in a different part of Europe or perhaps in Asia, there will be minor tweaks to make it appropriate for the audience. That would sum up that particular presentation.

I should note, as well, that our focuses with regard to investment attraction include Europe, Asia and North America. But we're interested in some other emerging markets in Asia as well. China has garnered the most attention by far because of its size and its importance in the global economy, but other emerging economies, like India and South Korea, are of interest to us as well. There has been somewhat of a history of Korean investment in the territory, so there is the potential of additional investment there. India hasn't been a traditional partner for Yukon, but there are a number of signs in the international economy that suggest that India may be interested as a player in the natural resources development world and may be of interest to us as a target for investment attraction.

The Department of Natural Resources Canada has had a number of interactions with Indian investors, and of course the Prime Minister was recently in India on a trade mission. So I would speculate on the possibility of India as a target for us, as well as South Korea — and of course China remains an interesting location for investment attraction as well. A number of staff from the Department of Economic Development, including my acting deputy minister here, Terry Hayden, just came back from China and attended the China mining meeting in Beijing and Tianjin. This is a bit of an interesting time for China on the investment front because they have just gone through their once-every-five years “democratic” — and I use that very loosely and with quotations — congress — their democratic congress — where their communist party selects its new leaders. It most certainly isn't democratic in the sense that we would understand but nonetheless there was a change of leadership there and, of course, there is opportunity for increased investment from China.

As well, the United States is always a target for us. I mentioned earlier — I believe last week — in my second reading speech that I had visited with the YGMA a number of financial capitals in the United States. There are two other markets that I should mention that are very interesting, not because they are so obvious, but because we tend to forget about them. The first one is Canada. I think there is a lot of opportunity within Canada, in other parts of Canada — the east and the south in particular — that there is opportunity to raise awareness of the opportunities in the Yukon with those areas. If I might say so, I think we could probably do more work in terms of raising the

awareness within our own country of what is available in Yukon in terms of investment opportunities. Those don't just have to include natural resources, though. I think that there is a whole slate of business opportunities in Yukon that would be very interesting to investors across the country.

The final one I wanted to note was Australia, actually. We're monitoring Australia very closely as it's anticipated that there may be an exodus of capital from there as a result of the incredibly anti-mining policies being espoused there by the government. We certainly are aware, following international media at least, that there seems to be an impending exodus of capital from that country. So there may be an opportunity for Yukon to capitalize on that market. Of course, mining is a big part of Australia's economy, but some of the disputes — and very public disputes at that — between the government and companies there have really left a sour taste in the mouth of investors, and I think Australia could offer an opportunity for Yukon to provide an alternative to Australia for investors there.

I think I've covered the gamut in terms of our investment attraction strategy: some of the locations we're interested in, some of the locations we've done work in to date, as well as, if we look down the path a little way, where we might end up attracting investment from as well. The reality of our globalized economy is that, really, the world is a very small place and that investment can come from anywhere and it is important to be vigilant in attracting investment to the territory and highlighting the opportunities that Yukon has to offer.

I think that answers the member opposite's question in terms of the content of my presentation in Munich, as well as presentations around the world — well, in a few places around the world at least — and some of our plans for the future.

Ms. Stick: I really was just trying to focus on Germany at the time.

Moving on, though, we know of the interest China and specifically Chinese state-controlled corporations have in the Yukon for our mineral and energy and oil and gas projects. We would agree that there is nothing inherently wrong with having a country like China interested in working in our backyard, as long as Yukoners are getting a fair share and a fair deal from these corporations that are working in our backyard. The reliance on resource extraction and bulk export as the cornerstone still leaves us vulnerable to the inevitable ups and downs that we're going to see with world commodity prices.

We talk about diversification and we talk about the mainstays of the Yukon economy. It's about oil and gas; it's about mining; it's about — I'm not sure what else. We're not hearing a lot about diversification, but more about those industries from Economic Development on other options.

What I'm interested in also, though, is what kind of agreements are we making with countries like China? What are the memorandums of understanding that we're signing? Even including a sister city in China. I'd be interested in hearing whether we can have a look at some of those MOUs or agreements that have been signed because we've heard, but we haven't seen.

Hon. Mr. Dixon: I'll address, first of all, the Yukon-Shaanxi sister province agreement because that's obviously the

one that the member is referencing. That's what I would call a very, very "high-level agreement" between Yukon and the Shaanxi province in China to generally promote good will between the two jurisdictions.

The agreement itself is very high level, almost to the point where there's some question about whether or not there will be deliverables. It's very much a good will gesture and an interest in promoting an improved relationship between the two.

I would say with that agreement what becomes very important is not only the promotion of Yukon business interests, but also the promotion of Yukon values, and identifying to regions like the Shaanxi province — educating them on some of what we consider to be our basic values, such as education, democracy — those kinds of things. Those sorts of agreements offer an ability for Yukon to play a small role in developing the relationship between China and Canada and to do our part to promote Canadian and Yukon values abroad.

The agreement itself speaks to a number of things including trade, investment and tourism.

Also I think what could be possible from it is the possibility of student exchanges — to have Chinese students come to Yukon to study, whether it be studying English specifically as a second language or some of our programs that are unique in the world, like some of the work being done in cold climate innovation and that sort of study. So I think there's an opportunity there for the development of an improved relationship and the promotion of Yukon values.

The member made a few comments about economic diversification and what some of the activities have been, both of the department and the government, to diversify our economy. I'm happy to discuss some of those activities at this point. She was correct that we do identify the mineral resources sector and tourism as our somewhat mainstay economies or sectors of the economy. Of course, I won't get too much into the tourism front, because I know that the Minister of Tourism and Culture would be happy to explain some of those initiatives under the debate of the Department of Tourism and Culture. But I would say that the development of a strong tourism industry in Yukon and a continued development of a strong tourism industry in Yukon is a focus of ours and we often liaise with the Department of Tourism and Culture to ensure that our programming and funds are synched together properly.

One other area I did want to mention is the development of a fairly nebulous topic, which is the knowledge economy. I appreciate that is, as I said, a fairly nebulous item, but I think it's one that we have a lot of opportunity for here in the territory. Not too long ago, we supported the development of a study on the knowledge economy in the Yukon and had a local contractor in the knowledge economy do an assessment of that sector of our economy and really determine what's out there. When we're trying to wrap our heads around what is the knowledge economy and how it works, what its features are, and how we help it to grow, that basic understanding of it is the first step.

What that plan or study showed us was that we have a fairly robust knowledge economy in Yukon that contributes significantly to our general economy and that it has a number

of participants and folks doing work in that industry that we weren't really aware of beforehand.

The release of the study was an excellent opportunity for those folks to network and discuss some of the opportunities and work that is being done currently. The event itself — the release of the study — was very welcomed. In fact, I believe the Member for Copperbelt South was at that event and had a chance to hear about the report and the survey. I should clarify that this was a knowledge sector survey and that the Department of Economic Development, CanNor and Yukon College initiated it. It was completed in September, and it provided an understanding of individuals and organizations that participate in the knowledge sector, the sector's current barriers and success factors, as well as a set of recommendations and actions for supporting the growth of the sector.

We are currently working with local businesses, First Nation governments and other stakeholders to ensure Yukon has a competitive environment for developing economic opportunities in the knowledge sector. As I'm sure you can appreciate, and as the member indicated earlier, a key function of a successful knowledge economy is good telecommunications infrastructure, which ties back to some of the comments I made earlier today.

The purpose of that project was also done through the Yukon Research Centre. As a result of this study and survey, we'd like to assist the Yukon Research Centre to become a coordinating and networking platform for the knowledge sector. In addition to its current work on research, innovation and commercialization — you'll sometimes hear me refer to it as the "RIC" sector — we also hope that it will enable synergies and pooling of expertise and resources, thereby enhancing and accelerating the success of Yukon projects. We want the YRC to provide a better understanding of RIC capabilities and capacities in the Yukon, potentially reducing the need for imported services and to assist in the attraction of new research projects, resources and funding to the YRC.

I think the attention and investment we have put into the Yukon Research Centre, both through the Department of Education, as well as the Department of Economic Development, certainly have that as its goal as the Yukon Research Centre becomes a hub for the knowledge sector in the territory.

I think some of the first steps in this are surveys like this, where we get an understanding of what's out there and where there are opportunities for development. So the work that was done on the knowledge sector survey and the work being done at the research centre currently are examples of the economic diversification and the important contribution of the knowledge economy to Yukon's overall economy that I've found at times often goes unnoticed by the media and others.

There are a few sectors within the knowledge economy, I think, that the Yukon has a lot of opportunity to develop. One of them is the cold climate innovation sector. Through the Department of Economic Development, we fund the Yukon Cold Climate Innovation Centre. Early on in our mandate the Minister of Education and I had the pleasure of extending their funding and providing them with a degree of certainty around funding — in the case of the Cold Climate Innovation Centre, I be-

lieve it was for five years. That's important because it gives them the ability to go out to other funding bodies — SSHRC and NSERC are the two: Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council and NSERC is the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council. I stand to be corrected on those acronyms, but recently the college research centre became eligible for those funds, so the extension of the funding and the certainty that it provides allows the research centre to go out to funds like that and show that they've got concerted government support and it's stable and guaranteed over the year.

Those kinds of funds are the biggest that are available in Canada and any time we get a significant funding project from either NSERC or SSHRC it's a boon to the territory, not just in terms of its economy, but the development of the research capacity in the territory.

There is a lot of remarkable work that is being done currently at the research centre and the Cold Climate Innovation Centre and I'd love to discuss that at length, but I know that I don't have the time to do so. There are a few pieces that I'd like to point out as being important. One of them actually shows a very interesting relationship between the knowledge sector and the mineral resources sector, where we've been able to gain the funding from the national funding body to have a chair position at the research centre in mining water use — life of mining water use — which is an opportunity for industry in the mineral resources sector to get together with industry in the research sector and discuss some of the opportunities that lie in Yukon as a result of mining. That is to get a really good scientific understanding of how water is used in the mining process and how it can be more efficiently used, as well as how projects can be remediated at the end of life.

Another project that I should highlight is the biochar projects that have involved not only national funding bodies but have reached out to other universities — in Alaska, for instance — the University of Alaska in Fairbanks — as well as a local farm, Zakus Farms, which produces a product called biochar, which is essentially burnt wood, for lack of a better, more scientific explanation. The biochar can be used in a number of ways. It can be used to remediate soil that has been contaminated by hydrocarbons and can be used in the remediation of soil at the end of the mining cycle.

We see an interrelation between the development of the research sector and the development of other sectors of our economy. I guess if I were to identify an area where I would like to see some growth and some positive diversification, it is in that area — in the research, innovation and commercialization sector. It's an opportunity that we are just beginning to tap into and just beginning to realize its importance to the territory's economy. It's one that, I think, has a lot of opportunity for growth.

As I said earlier, on a bit of a different topic, I think that never before has there been more interest in the north and in the Yukon. I think that we most certainly should take best efforts to capitalize on that interest and attract the best and the brightest in the scientific world to the territory to do work here. We have what I would call a living laboratory when it comes to the op-

portunity to do research on northern climates, northern infrastructure and the effects of climate change.

That's a point I should touch on as well: the work being done on adaptation to climate change that is being done at the research centre as well. That attracts a significant amount of money to the territory and thus improves our local economy. I know that in the debate on the Environment budget I'll go on a little bit more about the specific projects, but any time that we can have research done in the territory for anything, including adaptation, it brings money to the territory, it creates jobs, it creates opportunities for learning and for the development of research capacity. It's very positive.

I guess to conclude, yes, we do promote the mainstays of tourism and the mineral resources sector, but there are a number of other opportunities out there and I would put the knowledge sector, and specifically the RIC sector, at the top of that list. There is a lot of opportunity there and it's a sector that I am very excited about. I think that that answers the question for the member opposite.

Ms. Stick: I would thank the member opposite for the information and very apparent is his enthusiasm and knowledge of his department.

My next question is going to be fairly specific, and I'm not looking for a big, huge picture, I'm asking this just specifically. One of the things we saw this fall was the mandate letters, and the mandate letter from the Premier to the Department of Economic Development was promoting our economic mainstays such as mining, both hard rock and placer, and tourism — both things the minister has spoken to — and then oil and gas. My question has to do with the oil and gas piece and how we define "economic mainstays". To me it would seem more something that is already producing major economic benefits; certainly we heard from the minister about the knowledge research and cold climate research, and how those things are producing results. We know it's happening in hard rock and placer mining and we know it's happening in tourism, but I'm curious about how we define oil and gas as an economic mainstay at this time. Thank you.

Hon. Mr. Dixon: I am happy to respond to the member opposite's question. Of course the development of Yukon's energy resources offers an opportunity to expand beyond the typical mainstays of hard rock and placer mining, as well as tourism. I think while we have had a fairly active oil and gas sector over the years, primarily in the Kotaneelee area, of late we have been aware that Northern Cross, for instance, is doing some work in the north Yukon to investigate the possibility of oil and gas resources in that area, particularly in the Eagle Plains area. I believe the results of Northern Cross' work so far are not yet available, but we're very optimistic that they'll be successful.

Any time that we are able to use our own energy resources, as opposed to importing them, there's both an economic and an environmental benefit associated with that. Currently in the territory, as far as I'm aware, I don't believe a single drop of hydrocarbons in the territory are produced here in the territory, which is one of those interesting things about the territory. We believe — and some of the work done by the Yukon Geologi-

cal Survey would certainly suggest — that there are some oil and gas resources in the territory and that we do have the possibility to develop them. That kind of development would allow for some economic diversification, of course, as well as somewhat of an environmental benefit because of the fact that we'd be displacing imported hydrocarbons.

Our energy strategy from a few years ago identified the possibility of that kind of development, and I'm sure — when it comes to the specifics of how that development occurs and how it is regulated — members will have a chance to get into the details with the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources. But I will say that the Department of Economic Development is interested in seeing responsible economic projects go forward and attracting investment to do that.

The member opposite previously mentioned some of the work that's been done with state-owned enterprises from China. It is a very well-known and public fact that the China National Offshore Oil Corporation is invested in Northern Cross, which was initially a Yukon company. It's now based out of Calgary, I believe. That opportunity for the development of our natural resources and our oil and gas resources is of interest to us, and the Department of Economic Development is happy to assist any economic project in the territory with some of the resources we have available to us.

Mr. Silver: I'd like to thank the officials for joining us today and giving of their time.

I have several short questions for the minister. I'd like to start with something I heard earlier today, when it comes to redundancy with fibre optics. Is it the official position of this government that the government is going to be relying on the private sector to address those redundancy issues, in terms of fibre optics? I can't see the private sector taking on this challenge without considerable investment from the territorial government, and this view is also shared with the officials I have met with from Northwestel — or, at least, it was the last time that I met with them. So if the minister could reiterate his comments — and I just want to draw attention to the Budget Address, and I'm going to quote here a couple of paragraphs: "By working with Northwestel over the years, every community in Yukon now has a cellphone and high-speed Internet connectivity. However, broadband capacity could be improved and there is no redundancy. If the sole fibre optic cable is damaged, broadband traffic is rerouted through a slower and older microwave system.

There may be opportunities "...by working with Northwestel and Alaska...to address the redundancy issues. One option would be for a fibre optic cable to run from Carcross to Skagway, connecting with Juneau and Seattle. There may also be opportunities to work with Northwestel and the Canadian Space Agency to extend fibre optic cable up the Dempster Highway to Eagle Plains to set up a system that retrieves information from foreign satellites." That's the end of the quote.

When I met with the officials from Northwestel, that seemed to be the plan they most favoured. I know that this summer, we watched as fibre optic lines were being sent up all the way to around Stewart Crossing. So could I just get the minister to comment on that?

Hon. Mr. Dixon: I did go through some of this last week, but I would be happy to reiterate for the Member for Klondike. Of course, as I said earlier, telecommunications infrastructure is key to the development of Yukon's economy. We know that when we have outages and losses of service, it has a negative impact on small-sized and medium-sized enterprises especially, but it has negative impacts across our economy as a whole. We recognize that telecommunications services are essential for Yukon residents and businesses.

Government of Yukon is focused on ensuring the availability of telecommunications services, the reliability and continuity of services, and the affordability of telecommunications services. Government of Yukon recognizes that damage to the fibre optic cable connecting Yukon to southern Canada is disruptive to Yukoners, particularly to business processes and commercial transactions. The government is working with a variety of telecommunications companies in examining opportunities to improve the reliability, availability, and affordability of telecommunication services and reduce the cost of bandwidth to Yukon communities and between Yukon communities.

As I said last week, there are a number of project out there that have potential when it comes to redundancy and the member opposite has touched on one of them. In our discussions through a number of forums with our friends in Alaska, it's been raised that there's an opportunity, perhaps, for the Yukon to use the corridor between Whitehorse and Skagway as a potential route for the development of a fibre optic line. As I mentioned earlier, it's something that was considered previously by a private company doing some work on studying how that would work. The member is correct that that would link us to Skagway and ultimately to Seattle and the entire southern grid, which would create a redundant link and a redundant system in Yukon so that it wouldn't be as fallible to the outages that occur as a result of a breach in that single line.

That project would be something, as I said earlier, that we would be interested in hearing about. The member opposite asked specifically about the government's position on a project and what I meant when I said that it would have to be driven by the private sector is that the private sector would have to be involved. At this present time, the Government of Yukon certainly doesn't have any expertise in operating a telecommunications company or building a fibre optic line. It's something that we would want to see from the private sector. I certainly wouldn't rule out the possibility of government participating in some way or form or means to contribute to the project, whether it be by conducting the sorts of studies and assessments that we have done with a number of other infrastructure projects in the territory. But at the end of the day, I think a project like that would need to be ultimately driven by the private sector. Of course, as we noted earlier today, Northwestel is the biggest company in that respect, so they would be the most likely to go forward with something like that.

We are aware that there are other companies out there that may be interested and have an interest in getting into the Yukon market and perhaps another redundant line would be a

way for them to do so, because it would free them from the necessity of linking on to Northwestel's infrastructure.

Another project that I should mention for members of this House is that the Northwest Territories is considering the option of developing a fibre line down the Mackenzie Valley. It's a project that would be of substantial size and cost, but it's my understanding from discussions with officials there and my counterpart in the Northwest Territories that it's something that they have lent a degree of priority to and have raised with the federal government and I'm sure will at some point — if that project were to go forward to next steps — would need a significant federal investment. I'm not sure that the Northwest Territories is in a position right now to fund such a massive project, but there is a publicly available synopsis of that project. I don't have the website with me, but I'm sure enterprising members could Google it and find that report.

Essentially it sees a fibre line go down the Mackenzie Valley all the way to Inuvik and hence the next project, which the member opposite mentioned, was the link into the Canadian Space Agency and the possibility of having some sort of facility in or around Inuvik and — even as the budget speech the member quoted referenced — the possibility on the Yukon side somewhere around Eagle Plains.

We watch with great interest the development of that project. We're not sure, based on our assessments, if it's going to be feasible or not. As I said, if it were feasible I think it would require a significant federal investment. If that were to go forward, though, we would be very interested in the possibility of sending a fibre line north to link in that way, thus creating the line of redundancy. Typically when we think about redundant systems in Yukon we look south, but the possibility of looking north is indeed exciting and we wish Northwest Territories all the best with that project. It would certainly have an opportunity for Yukon to link in at a later date if that were to go forward.

I'm blanking on what other questions the member opposite asked in his questions, so I'll have to give the floor back to him and beg his forgiveness in forgetting which other questions he asked.

Mr. Silver: I think he pretty much touched on the intent. I just wanted to reiterate a few points. As far as the private sector pushing forth fibre optic tele-technology — it's not going to happen with the small markets that they would have in the smaller communities. There is a need for whatever company it is that is going to provide us these services to have substantial government involvement on the fiscal level. It's not necessarily whether or not we understand the telecommunications industry, but more so that we understand the need from these private sectors trying to provide these types of services in the territories.

I know with the meetings that I've had with Northwestel, the conversation went in that direction. Basically their initial choice was to go to Alaska. They didn't talk in terms of redundancy; they talked in terms of loops. It's good to have a loop into these areas. Anywhere down south with fibre optic technology, there are circles of information so that you can allow streams of information to come from different sources. Their

number-one source would have been going through Alaska, but it didn't seem like the Alaskans had the same attitude as far as willingness to make that connection happen.

So that's when they started looking northward and talked about the Canadian Space Agency and hooking up to a satellite station up there that provides mostly statistics, and currently there is only one route there, as far as I understand it from the presentation that I saw from Northwestel. But, at the same time, it comes down to — these are the initiatives that are going to allow the private sector to actually facilitate a connection into the communities. Without these major projects — and, once again, without some kind of substantial investment from the government — we're not going to see the spinoffs of being able to have G3 services and G4 services — goodness only knows how many G services in the future.

If the minister would like to comment on that, that would be great, but I am going to move on. I'm going to test his multi-tasking abilities here again, and I'm going to ask another question before I sit. We'll go into updates on — if the minister could provide a list of projects approved under the enterprise trade fund, or the regional economic development fund, or the strategic industries development fund. Thank you.

Hon. Mr. Dixon: In the line item in the budget the member has in front of him, under business and industry development, you will note the figure of \$880,000.

Within that number there are a number of projects for all of those funds — the enterprise trade fund, the strategic industries development fund, as well as a number of film and sound incentive projects. So there is funding within this supplementary budget for some of those projects, and the reason they are in this is that they are being revoted, so they would have been approved in the previous year — last fiscal year — and weren't able to be completed in that fiscal year, so they get revoted on to this year. That's where those are in this supplementary budget.

I did want to address a few of the comments the member made about telecommunications again. Within Northwestel's previous modernization plan they were considering fibre linked ultimately up to Dawson. It would be staged over several years — first going to Stewart and then carrying on to Dawson in a later year. Some uncertainty has been raised with that because of the fact that their modernization plan relied so heavily on the public benefit money from Bell's purchase of Astral, which, as we have reiterated a number of times, was rejected.

So Northwestel has indicated an interest in extending northward to the member's community and we of course would support that. When it comes to government becoming financially involved in an investment, that's something we'd have to consider, based on the project, and we haven't seen a proposal yet from the private sector about what that would look like. As I mentioned, the previous work that was done on the project, which would see us linking with fibre to Skagway, ranged somewhere in the neighbourhood of \$16 million to \$32 million, depending on the route and use of existing Alaskan fibre. Obviously that's a very broad range and it's broad for good reason — there are a number of different options. Once we get over to

Skagway, do you go underwater to Juneau and, if so, what existing infrastructure do you link into and how does it all work?

The member opposite also mentioned loops. A loop, of course, refers to redundancy; that's why you have a loop because you have a redundant system — so that is the same thing.

I don't have an itemized list of the strategic industries fund projects, the enterprise trade fund projects or others, but I can mention that the enterprise trade fund money that is currently being revoted in this budget amounts to \$50 million; that's \$50 million of that \$880 million that he'll see in the supplementary budget. The strategic industries development fund project is roughly \$328,000 of that \$880 million and the film and sound incentive program projects amount to about \$62,000.

When it comes to those funds, the enterprise trade fund is identified as a way to develop and stimulate and support the growth of Yukon business activity by focusing on the development or expansion of external markets, attracting investment capital for business and supporting business planning, marketing and business skills training. The fund has been accessed by businesses in a wide variety of sectors, including manufacturing, service, cultural, mining and the film and sound industries. Applicants are eligible for up to \$50,000 toward marketing and investment attraction projects and up to \$10,000 toward the development of business plans and for business training.

So, as the member can appreciate, because those funds are relatively small numbers, there are a large number of them so I won't read them out in the House. We have budgeted \$410,000 for the 2012-13 fiscal year, including the \$50,000 in revotes that are here in the supplementary budget that are projects that were not completed in the 2011-12 year.

The strategic industries fund is the Department of Economic Development method whereby we are able to identify and explore significant economic development opportunities in the natural resource, tourism and culture and research innovation and commercialization sectors. The strategic industries development program supports government's commitment to foster the development of Yukon's strategic industries that have a potential to increase Yukon's economic output.

One of the funds I do know off the top of my head that was funded into that fund was the knowledge sector survey that I referenced earlier. That was one of the projects that was funded under the strategic industries fund and is actually one of the projects that is in this supplementary budget under the revotes.

So, I don't think the member would like me to read the very long list of all the different projects, so I won't bother doing that, but I hope the information I provided sufficed for his understanding.

Mr. Silver: Thank you. We can leave the rest of that for the line-by-line. Moving on to the Yukon business nominee program, the business program overview states: "The Yukon business nominee program operates under an agreement with the Government of Canada and allows the Government of Yukon to nominate for immigration to Canada those individuals with proven business skills who want to live in Yukon, and who want to own and operate a business and make a significant contribution to the community." My question for the minister:

How many people have been approved under the program in the last five years or in this year — if he has that information?

Hon. Mr. Dixon: The numbers I have are since 2004 up until September 30 of this year. The total number of applicants is 105. The number of recommended work visas is 41. The number of nominated permanent residents is 25. Canadian immigration approved nominations was 16. The number of plans actually implemented in Yukon is 24, so I hope those numbers are the ones that the member opposite is after.

Mr. Silver: I appreciate the short answers to short questions. That's great.

What has the uptake on the Yukon small business investment tax credit been this year?

Hon. Mr. Dixon: The small business investment tax credit encourages Yukoners to invest in small Yukon corporations. The program allows Yukoners who invest in eligible Yukon businesses to receive an income tax credit equivalent to 25 percent of their investment costs, short purchase. Since its inception in 1999, the program has assisted nine Yukon businesses to raise just over \$8.1 million. The program is limited to small businesses in Yukon with assets up to \$25 million. The program's objectives are to make small Yukon businesses share offerings more competitive, to help small Yukon businesses to expand and grow, to help diversify the economy and to assist Yukoners to invest in businesses in Yukon. Eligible companies can make share offerings of up to \$800,000 a year, and Yukoners who purchase those shares will receive an income tax credit of 25 percent of the purchase cost. The total value of shares offered by all companies under the program in any one year cannot exceed \$4 million, thus capping Yukon government's exposure at \$1 million in income tax credits per year.

The program is administered on a first-come, first-served basis. From its 1999 inception to March 31, 2012, \$2.04 million worth of tax credits were issued under the program. No credits have been issued in the 2012-13 fiscal year so far.

The businesses approved for share offerings under the program from 1999 to 2012 as of August 31 raised a total of \$8,150,079. The company that subscribes to this program the most, it looks like, was Air North, I do know that Air North did have another offering fairly recently. I know that a number of Yukoners have investments in Air North through this program. But to answer the member opposite's question, there have been no credits issued in the 2012-13 fiscal year so far.

Mr. Silver: Like many other Yukoners, I am waiting for Air North to offer that again.

I'd also like to ask a question. I had a number of my constituents raising the idea of devolution of Yukon government jobs to rural Yukon as an economic development issue. Is this something that the minister feels the government has done any research on that he is willing to share with us and/or is this something that he is willing to investigate in his role as the Minister of Economic Development?

Hon. Mr. Dixon: Obviously the Department of Economic Development is a fairly small department. We have challenges with connectivity among our department as it is with our four locations across Whitehorse. But we haven't con-

sidered, at this point, any further decentralization than we have already within our department.

Mr. Silver: During last spring's debate in Economic Development, the minister spoke of his knowledge of the Klondike Development Organization and it was actually very impressive as a not-for-profit organization dedicated to the economic development of the Klondike region, and also their integral role as a link to the private sector when working forward with regard to local solutions to development issues. I would like to give the minister another opportunity now to give us an update on any correspondence or information sharing or initiatives on a local or territorial level to address rural economic development that the department is cooperating with the KDO on currently or even since the last time we discussed this organization.

Hon. Mr. Dixon: Unfortunately on my last trip to Dawson I wasn't able to meet with the KDO, but I am most certainly interested in that. I haven't had a chance to personally speak with or meet folks associated with the Klondike Development Organization yet, but it'll certainly be a priority for me the next time I'm in Dawson. I have had the chance to meet with the chair or president — I'm not sure what the title is — the head of the Dawson City Chamber of Commerce. I look forward to visiting with her again. She did invite me up to Dawson this winter for some sort of hockey game. I wasn't clear on the details, but maybe the member opposite knows more than I do about that. I'd be happy to meet with the Klondike Development Organization on my next trip to Dawson if scheduling permits and if it works for the organization.

Essentially I don't have any new information based on what the member said. In 2011-12, Economic Development provided funding under two contribution agreements from the regional economic development fund. The projects are still ongoing and are focused on the development of economic planning tools and developing regional economic capacity to strengthen the local economy and obtain secondary economic benefits from large resource projects. Of course we in the department continue to provide economic development support to the Klondike region to encourage economic growth and opportunities that benefit all Yukoners.

I would say that also, within the Regional Economic Development branch, staff maintains a very positive relationship with businesses in the Klondike region and, of course, we engage with the north Yukon business advisory outreach, to which we contract out the delivery of that program in seven communities, including Old Crow, Dawson, Mayo, Faro, Carmacks, Pelly Crossing and Ross River. The program provides mentorship and guidance in business planning, business development, marketing strategies and other related business activities to new and experienced entrepreneurs.

That program strives to improve the viability and profitability of existing businesses and encourage and facilitate new business starts and expansion of existing businesses. Approximately 100 businesses have accessed the program since it was initiated in 2005.

The department initiated business counselling outreach services in north Yukon in 2005, as I said. As a result of the

northern economic partnership agreement signed by the Government of Yukon and First Nations in July 2004, the Department of Economic Development issued a request for proposals to provide north Yukon business advisory outreach services. That contract has currently been awarded to Maritime Business Consulting, which secured the contract in June 2011. That contract expires on March 31, 2014. I have met the gentleman from Maritime Business Consulting, and if he's not a fellow graduate of St. Francis Xavier University, he's certainly from Nova Scotia. I can't remember which it is. But the objective of that program is to improve the viability and profitability of existing businesses and encourage and facilitate new business starts or expansion of existing businesses.

The services include instruction and guidance in areas of business planning and business development; business counselling, which includes business financial planning and business management. It also includes assistance in developing business plans; marketing plans; market research; identifying sources of business financing; preparation and presentation of loan or funding applications to institutions or investors; in-person and on-site service delivery; provision of services are coordinated and delivered through the First Nation and municipal government offices in Old Crow, Dawson and Mayo; communities are visited once a month, at a minimum, based on demand.

The department has budgeted \$100,000 for business counselling services for 2012-13, and that was approved earlier this year in our last sitting with the approval of the budget.

To answer the member's question, there is nothing new to report, in terms of specifically relating to the Klondike Development Organization. As I've said, I remain very open to meeting with those folks and, if they are interested, I would offer to meet with them the next time I'm in Dawson.

Chair: Is there any further general debate on Economic Development, Vote 7? We're going to go forward now to line by line, starting on page 4-4.

On Operation and Maintenance Expenditures

On Business and Industry Development

Ms. Stick: I'm sorry — could you clarify which page?

Chair: 4-4.

Ms. Stick: Sorry. I just wondered if we could have a breakdown of that, please.

Hon. Mr. Dixon: The Business and Industry Development portion of this *Supplementary Estimates No. 1* is, of course, \$880,000.

This represents revotes and approvals for the following projects, not completed by the 2011-12 fiscal year-end: \$50,000 for enterprise trade fund third-party business projects; \$328,000 for strategic industries development fund projects; \$62,000 for film and sound incentive program projects; Yukon College, Yukon Cold Climate Innovation Centre projects, \$49,000; for the northern strategy e-commerce project with the Council of Yukon First Nations, \$129,000; the community access program projects, \$137,000; the Yukon Information Technology Industry Society's sector strategic plan, which I mentioned at length earlier, is \$115,000; and the Yukon Art Society visual arts strategy is \$10,000. I would note that under the film and sound incentive program projects, that one of the projects

is — within those film and sound incentive program projects, there are a number of projects. Under the film training incentive fund there are two projects totalling just over \$5,000. Under the Yukon filmmakers fund, there are 11 projects totalling around \$25,000.

I would point out that one of them is, of course, the short film *Fragments*, which I've mentioned in this House before. It's a project done by some local filmmakers, and that project was the first Yukon-based feature film project to win the Jim Murphy Filmmakers Bursary out of the National Screen Institute. That film, *Fragments*, is in the National Screen Institute's Features First project from producer Michael Vernon, who is local to Whitehorse; writer/director David Hamelin and Neal Macdonald who are from Marsh Lake and Whitehorse, respectively. As I said, it was the Jim Murphy Filmmakers Bursary winner for last year. The \$3,000 bursary, which was recently increased from \$2,500, was presented annually to a filmmaking team going through the NSI Features First training course with an incentive marketing plan for their project. Jim Murphy was the first NSI Features First program manager until his passing in April 2007. The NSI Features First is a training course for writer/director/producer teams working on their first or second feature film. All of the teams presented plans.

Anyway, *Fragments* is a gritty horror film, loosely based on true events that give the zombie genre a sci-fi twist.

When a meteor crashes in a small Yukon town just this side of Whitehorse, the young, career-driven astrobiologist, Erin Steele, is thrust back to the hometown she abandoned. It's loosely based on the meteor that struck on the Southern Lakes several years ago. I've seen a clip of it on-line, and I think the term "gritty horror film" is apropos here. It is indeed quite a gritty film, but it is one of the recipients of the filmmaker's fund that is included in this supplementary budget.

There is one project under the film production fund that amounts to just under \$10,000, and that is Cold Paradise Productions, which documents the experience of the Filipino immigrants to the Yukon and discusses some of the opportunities and challenges that the Filipino community has experienced in Yukon. I know that a number of members of this House were able to attend the screening of that, including the Minister of Education and I believe some member —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Hon. Mr. Dixon: Oh, the Premier, as well, was able to attend that film. I understand it was very interesting.

There are 13 projects under the sound recording fund, totalling just over \$21,600, so the total for the film and sound incentive programs is \$62,000. I think that is a pretty detailed breakdown of that for the member opposite.

Business and Industry Development in the amount of \$880,000 agreed to

On Regional Economic Development

Regional Economic Development in the amount of \$1,120,000 agreed to

On Total of Other Operation and Maintenance

Total of Other Operation and Maintenance in the amount of nil cleared

Total Operation and Maintenance Expenditures in the amount of \$2,000,000 agreed to

On Capital Expenditures

On Business and Industry Development

On Dana Naye Ventures - Business Development Program

Dana Naye Ventures - Business Development Program in the amount of \$43,000 agreed to

On Community Development Trust – Yukon Entrepreneur Support Program

Ms. Stick: I was just wondering if we could have a bit of a description on that, please.

Hon. Mr. Dixon: The Yukon entrepreneur support program is a project run through the Yukon College, which provides entrepreneurial support for students. The amount of \$81,000 is listed there. It's training and assistance to businesses or individuals in the early planning stages of their business. So it's one of the ways that we help the development of the small and medium enterprise sector of Yukon's economy by providing entrepreneurial training. We have seen a number of very successful individuals and businesses come out of that program.

As I'm sure all members of this House will appreciate, we have a very strong sense of entrepreneurial spirit in the territory. A lot of our history relates back to the development of small businesses, a few select businesses have been around for a very long time, and I think the character and history of Yukon have certainly been shaped by that entrepreneurial spirit.

This is one of the ways that we encourage Yukoners — both young and old, but obviously young entrepreneurs especially — to get involved in the development of private sector businesses and benefit from what we would generally characterize as a fairly strong economy currently.

So it's an opportunity for Yukoners to engage in the private sector and tap into the opportunities that are available to Yukoners currently. We have seen fairly strong economic indicators for the Yukon lately, and I think it's a very opportune time for Yukoners to engage in these sorts of programs to get a better understanding of how best they can engage and benefit from the economic development that we've seen over the last several years. The project itself has a number of features to it, but I don't need to get into the details there. I hope that answers the member opposite's question.

Community Development Trust – Yukon Entrepreneur Support Program in the amount of \$81,000 agreed to

On Total of Other Capital

Total of Other Capital Expenditures in the amount of nil cleared

Total Capital Expenditures in the amount of \$124,000 agreed to

Chair: Vote 7, Department of Economic Development, has concluded.

Department of Economic Development agreed to

Chair: We are going to continue with Vote 2, page 2-3, Executive Council Office.

Committee of the Whole will recess for 10 minutes while we shift officials.

Recess

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

Executive Council Office

Chair: The matter before the Committee is Bill No. 7, *Second Appropriation Act, 2012-13*. We will begin general debate in Vote 2, Executive Council Office.

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: It's my pleasure to provide some brief comments that detail the requests for supplementary funds for the Executive Council Office. As is often the case during the fiscal year, there are requirements for adjustments and expenditure plans to match the progress of activities in the department. Most of the items identified in this supplementary relate to these kinds of adjustments.

There are two new items included in this supplementary. The first, noted in both the O&M expenditure and recovery votes under the program area entitled Commissioner's Office, is an increase of \$8,000.

This reflects a new administrative arrangement with the federal Department of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development that will consolidate all of the budget for travel and support for the Office of the Commissioner into a single financial framework managed by Government of Yukon. This change is in response to a request from the Commissioner and will offer his office more efficient accounting processes for eligible travel and communication support costs.

The amount for this year reflects the administrative change becoming effective partway through the fiscal year. Commencing in the next budget, the full amount of \$15,000 will be reflected in the Executive Council Office in both expenditure and recovery votes.

The second new item included under the program Land Claims and Implementation is a request for spending authority in the amount of \$25,000 for a contribution to be made to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission toward the cost of a regional event that will be offered to Yukoners in early 2013. This request for support was received this fall and this supplementary is the first opportunity to request authority to enter into a new contribution.

All of the other elements of this supplementary for Executive Council Office reflect, as I mentioned at the beginning of my comments, adjustments since the beginning of the year due to changes in program activities. I will summarize these briefly: in the operation and maintenance vote, there is an increase for the development of consultation protocols with White River First Nation and Liard First Nation. This work commenced in the previous year and is continued in this fiscal year.

In this vote, there are also decreases for the following: a revised project schedule for the Bureau of Statistics' work on follow-up activities related to the national household survey and census in 2011, and this work will now be spread over this year and next; land claim implementation activities and departments; Water Board expenses due to partial-year vacancies in membership and reduced expenses for the youth leadership activity program.

In the capital vote, there are increases reflected for the following: office furniture and equipment expenses associated with relocation of the Development Assessment branch from the Elijah Smith Building and information and technology equipment and systems associated with the continued development of the on-line registry application for the Yukon Water Board Secretariat. In the capital vote, there is also a decrease under building maintenance, renovations and space, which is for the renovations that will allow consolidation of a number of offices into the main administrative building.

With these brief comments, I would be happy to answer any questions on the Executive Council Office supplementary estimates. Thank you.

Ms. Hanson: I thank the member opposite for that quick review of the supplementary estimates for Executive Council Office. I too have a few questions — just a few. With respect to the land claims and implementation increase of \$90,000 — in my understanding, this is not a revote; it's simply an increase of required funds for this fiscal year.

I heard it mentioned that it commenced last fiscal year, so I'm trying to ascertain the amount that was spent last fiscal year and what the total amount is that is projected to be expended on development of these consultation protocols.

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: This is a revote from last year's funding.

Ms. Hanson: So is that a confirmation that \$90,000 is the entire cost for the negotiation of these consultation protocols?

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: I believe this isn't the total amount. In fact, I believe there was an additional amount to Liard First Nations previous to this, but I will check to confirm.

Ms. Hanson: So I take that as an undertaking that we'll get the complete amount for the participation of White River and Liard First Nations for their participation in the negotiation of these consultation protocols.

Could the minister confirm if there's a target date for completion of these consultation protocols with these two First Nations?

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: There is not an anticipated completion of these consultation protocol agreements. We are hopeful to be able to do this as expediently as possible. Sometimes what can deter this would be impending court actions, which would also defer the opportunity to move forward with this.

Ms. Hanson: With respect to the Water Board Secretariat, I understand that the reduction in expenditure here is because of vacancies for the partial year. Can the minister confirm that appointments have been made? I'm seeking confirmation that the Water Board is at full complement.

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: There is currently still one vacancy on the Water Board. One position was recently filled in early September. It was a position with a nomination from the federal government and there still exists one vacancy at this time.

Ms. Hanson: Two parts to the question: Can the minister confirm that nomination rests with the First Nation or the

territorial government? And is there a job description for Water Board appointees?

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: The vacancy right now is a Yukon government vacancy, and I'm sorry, I didn't get the second half of your question.

Ms. Hanson: My question was, is there in place a job description with the criteria by which the Yukon government in making its determination of who to recommend for appointment to the Water Board will be assessing applicants? So is there a job description, essentially, assessment criteria for anybody who — this is a quasi-judicial board. It plays an incredibly important role in the territory, so I'm curious as to what criteria the Government of Yukon uses to assess potential candidates for the appointment.

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: There is a description of the duties that board members are responsible for to fulfill their obligations as board members and it is within that context that people are aware of that prior to submitting names for consideration.

Ms. Hanson: I have been involved in the screening of similar applications for the same board on another government's perspectives. With respect to the Youth Directorate, if the minister could provide us an explanation as to the nature of the youth leadership activity program. My understanding is that there is a lack of capacity issue in several communities and is it the role of the Youth Directorate to try to enhance the capacity of these communities in terms of getting better uptake and is this the first time that there has been a lapsing of funds in this area?

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: Thank you. I don't believe it's the first time that there has been a lapsing of funds. What this is, as the member opposite has described, is the limited number of communities that didn't apply for the funding that they were able to apply for. As such, it has been undersubscribed for this year to the total of \$25,000.

We continue to work with each community. As you understand, each community is slightly unique in terms of the people that they have, and there are some wonderful people in each of the communities who give of their time to see the betterment of the youth within their communities. Every time I go into the communities — I'm thinking just now of a couple of the speeches that I heard at the Mayo grad, I believe. Their keynote speaker was a person who had been responsible for recreation within the community for many, many years. The kids were graduating. He had known them since they started school in grade 1, so I think there are some wonderful people in each of the communities and we do what we can to help support them.

I would like to also note that the communities have until the end of the year to apply for the funding. While at this point there hasn't been an uptake to the amount specified by some of the communities, they still have an opportunity to do that.

Madam Chair, seeing the time I move that you report progress.

Chair: It has been moved by Mr. Pasloski that the Chair report progress.

Motion agreed to

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

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

Motion agreed to

Speaker resumes the Chair

Speaker: I will now call the House to order.

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

Chair's report

Ms. McLeod: Mr. Speaker, Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 7, entitled *Second Appropriation Act, 2012-13*, and directed me to report progress on it.

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

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Speaker: I declare the report carried.

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

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

Motion agreed to

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

The House adjourned at 5:27 p.m.