

Whitehorse, Yukon**Wednesday, December 6, 2006 -- 1:00 p.m.**

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

Prayers

DAILY ROUTINE

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

Are there any tributes?

TRIBUTES**In recognition of National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women**

Hon. Ms. Taylor: As Yukon's minister responsible for the Women's Directorate, I rise to pay tribute to National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women.

Mr. Speaker, today, the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin and I, along with other women in Canada, wear buttons displaying a rose in remembrance of all women who have been affected by violence and to draw our attention to the very fact that violence against women is a societal issue.

Likewise, our male counterparts are also wearing white ribbons as a demonstration of their opposition to violence against women, while making a personal pledge to never commit or condone violence against women.

December 6 is marked in Canada's history as the day in 1989 that 14 young women were murdered at Montreal's École Polytechnique engineering school, and they were killed because they were women.

Sadly there have been a number of tragedies in the last year that have similarly targeted women, including the very disturbing day in October of this year in which a man killed five elementary school-age girls letting all the boys leave before doing so.

Statistics continue to show us that women are more likely than men to be victims of spousal assault and homicide, sexual assault and stalking.

In the north, aboriginal women continue to be subjected to three times the national average of spousal assault than any other group of Canadians.

Canada has marked December 6 as the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women so we may address these very inequalities, so that we may speak out and take action to ensure respect, equality and safety for all women and girls.

Eliminating violence against women is a very long-term goal. It requires action on many different levels, and it requires a shift in the way we collectively think. Together, governments working in partnership with community organizations, community leaders and all Yukoners, we are working to find ways to reduce violence in our communities.

On Wednesday next week, a photojournalism exhibit will be launched. This display has been developed by youth

for youth and addresses the prevention of sexualized violence against women as well as promoting healthy relationships.

It will be on display in the foyer of the Elijah Smith Building from December 13 to 21. The project is a collaborative effort of a number of different organizations, including the Women's Directorate, Department of Health and Social Services, through the Youth Achievement Centre, Yukon Family Services Association, Yukon College, Kaushee's Place, and Skyward Outreach Services, and above all else, nine very dedicated, insightful and talented youth whose photos and thoughts make up the display. The Women's Directorate will also be releasing three new brochures addressing violence against young women, including "Just for Girls," which speaks to prevention, "Just for Guys," which also speaks about prevention and awareness and "How to Support a Woman who has been Sexually Assaulted," that gives a means of action for anyone wishing to provide support.

Later today, at the outside entrance of this building on Second Avenue, a community vigil will be held, coordinated by the Victoria Faulkner Women's Centre to remember and honour those 14 young women who were killed in Montreal's École Polytechnique on December 6, 1989. Together, our combined support of victims can help to make change. Our communities can be healthier. Our families can be safer. Our children can be happier.

Thank you.

Mr. Elias: I rise today on behalf of the official opposition and join with my colleagues in tribute to the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women. On this day, December 6, 1989, 14 young women were targeted simply because they were women.

Beyond commemorating the loss of these 14 young lives, this day represents a time to pause to reflect on the phenomenon of violence against women in our society. In Whitehorse, we are fortunate to have Kaushee's Place for women and children in crisis to turn to. Kaushee's Place provides confidential shelter, support and counselling, and also offers a 24-hour crisis line and a drop-in outreach service.

In the community of Dawson City, the Dawson City Women's Shelter provides a confidential shelter, support and advocacy to women and children in crisis on a 24-hour basis. The shelter also provides emergency shelter to transient women and their children. In south Yukon, in Watson Lake, the Help and Hope for Families Society is a home for women and children in crisis, open 24 hours a day, and provides a 24-hour telephone crisis support line. While we are very grateful for these transition homes and the support they provide, it is unfortunate in today's society that there is an ever-growing need for more and more shelters for abused women and children.

Please, if there is any form of physical threats of violence, or of violence, in your life, there is help available. Contact any transition home, the RCMP, victim services or any crisis line. Violence against anyone is unacceptable.

Today is a day for communities and individuals to reflect on concrete actions that each of us can take to prevent and eliminate all forms of violence against women.

As men, we wear the white ribbon as a reminder of our responsibility and as a reaffirmation of our commitment to eliminate violence against women. Women are central to the family structure and healthy women and families are one and the same with healthy, productive communities.

Today there will be a candlelight vigil starting at 5:00 p.m. here at the main YTG building. Those gathered will walk to F.H. Collins School for a ceremony in tribute to the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women. Please join the vigil and show your support.

Mr. Edzerza: I rise on behalf of the third party to remember the 14 women who lost their young lives 17 years ago today. We take this opportunity to grieve with the families of the 14 women but also to grieve for our society, which lost these bright, young, educated women. Their loss is shared by all of us.

On this day of remembrance we must accept that this murder was a highly symbolic act of vengeance against women. The brutal murderer made it clear that his was a gender-based act of violence. These women wanted simply to work as men do with the freedoms and rights of men. He could not accept the advances that women have made.

It is shameful that our current federal government has completely removed the words "women's equality" from the mandate of the Advisory Council on the Status of Women. Equality is at the heart of violence against women. To stop women from seeking equality is just one other act of violence against women. Our public policy should reflect equality not eliminate it.

This day is also a day for action on violence against women. Across Canada, on this day, there are many vigils and remembrance ceremonies planned, just as there will be here in Whitehorse this evening. But the reality is that women still suffer physically, emotionally, economically, and even politically in Canada, and stronger action is called for. This is especially true of aboriginal women who, according to Canadian government statistics are at least five times more likely than other women to die as a result of violence. Aboriginal women have struggled to draw attention to the violence in their families and communities, yet we are still hearing about aboriginal women lost on the streets of our cities and disappearing on our highways.

A comprehensive and coordinated plan of action has long been called for by aboriginal women's groups. We have yet to see that action.

Let us do more than wear a white ribbon to fight acts of violence against women, whether physical, emotional or economic. Let us each in our daily lives and in our lives as legislators, ask how we can take real action on every kind of violence against women, personally and in our communities.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Are there any further tributes?

Introduction of visitors.

Returns or documents for tabling.

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Hon. Mr. Hart: I have for tabling the Yukon Public Service Labour Relations Board Annual Report for 2004-05.

I also have for tabling the Yukon Teachers Labour Relations Board Annual Report for 2004-05, the Yukon Public Service Labour Relations Board Annual Report for 2005-06, and, finally, the Yukon Teachers Labour Relations Board Annual Report for 2005-06.

Hon. Mr. Lang: I have for tabling the following documents: Queen's Printer Agency Annual Report for 2005-06; Property Management Agency Annual Report for 2005-06; the Contracting Summary Report for Yukon Government Departments, April 1, 2005 to March 31, 2006.

Hon. Mr. Kenyon: I have for tabling the Yukon Housing Corporation Annual Report for the year ended March 31, 2006.

Hon. Mr. Fentie: I have for tabling the Public Accounts for fiscal year 2005-06.

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

Petitions.

Are there any bills to be introduced?

Notices of motion.

NOTICES OF MOTION

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to assist elders and seniors in the Yukon by

(1) increasing the inventory of affordable housing in the territory;

(2) continuing to ensure that elders and seniors are able to remain in their own homes as long as possible by increasing home care and other services;

(3) building elders and seniors housing that enables couples with different medical needs to continue living together as long as possible;

(4) enabling elders and seniors to live in their own home communities as long as possible;

(5) completing construction of multi-care facilities in Watson Lake and Dawson City and a seniors facility in Haines Junction; and

(6) consulting with elders and seniors on the need for senior facilities in Teslin and other communities.

Mr. Cardiff: I give notice of the following motion: THAT this House urges the Minister of Health and Social Services and the minister responsible for the Yukon Housing Corporation to develop a Yukon-specific definition of the term "affordable housing" that is based on what can be afforded by the consumer rather than on its relation to prevail-

ing market prices, and to take joint action immediately to address the shelter needs of the growing number of Yukon families who are on the Yukon Housing Corporation or Grey Mountain Housing Society's wait-lists for social housing.

Mr. Edzerza: I give notice of the following motion: THAT this House urges the Yukon government: to immediately increase the food allowance paid to social assistance recipients by an amount representing no less than the increase in Yukon's cost of living since the allowance was last increased in the early 1990s; to index the new rate to the cost of living; and to make the increase retroactive to April 1 of this year in recognition of the additional costs associated with preparing meals for the holiday season, which families in higher income levels take for granted at this time of year.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Speaker: The Member for Vuntut Gwitchin on a point of order, please.

Mr. Elias: Mr. Speaker, I ask that all members join me in recognizing the presence of my wife Tina Elias in the gallery today.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any further notices of motion?
Is there a ministerial statement?

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Tax reduction for small business

Hon. Mr. Fentie: Mr. Speaker, I have the honour of rising in the House today to update the Legislative Assembly on an important corporate taxation initiative. As members will recall in 2004, our government lowered the small business corporation tax rate from six percent to four percent.

This tax change also made provision for changing the small business deduction limit. I am pleased to announce to this Legislature that, as a result of this initiative, the small business tax deduction limit is increasing from \$300,000 to \$400,000, effective January 1, 2007. This means that companies eligible for the small business corporate tax rate of four percent will have an additional \$100,000 of income eligible for this reduced rate beginning in the new year. This 33-percent increase in the limit will allow those involved in small business to retain more funds and therefore provide additional capital to further their business interests. This will not only lead to an expansion of small business activity but also fuel economic expansion throughout the various business sectors here in Yukon. We all know that the private sector is hugely important to the future of our territory, and this is but one small measure that this government is proud to have introduced.

These tax savings for small business corporations complement the income tax deductions that we recently tabled for all individuals. These tax reductions are important to the development of our economy. The personal tax changes ensure that individuals will have more disposable income, disposable income that will find its way into the economy and

into the business sector. The raising of the small business deduction limit, coupled with the lower four-percent small business corporate tax rate, also will ensure that smaller businesses have a larger share of their income available for their own business expansion, which will further stimulate the Yukon economy.

Both these measures are a good investment to the territory's economy. They not only leave more money in the hands of those who work very hard for it but those who also are best able to make choices for its appropriate utilization.

Thank you.

Mr. Mitchell: Mr. Speaker, I rise today on behalf of the official opposition to express our support for the tax changes being introduced today. Reducing the small business corporation tax from six percent to four percent was actually something that was in the 2002 Liberal platform. It was not in the Yukon Party 2002 platform. It was later adopted by the Yukon Party.

As a long-time small business owner, I can appreciate the benefits of the changes that are being introduced today. These changes will help to allow small businesses to reinvest and help to grow the private sector economy. It's a known fact that small businesses create the lion's share of all new jobs in Canada, so this will be beneficial to them.

However, we are disappointed that this government, with some \$85 million in available funds and the financial wherewithal to make changes like this, did not also come forward with other changes that would help people on social assistance. We are asking the least fortunate in our communities to live on some \$390 a month for rent and \$159 a month for food. Surely, with \$85 million at his disposal, the Premier could have found some of that money for people on social assistance. They've chosen not to, and we think this says a lot about this government's new emphasis on a social agenda.

Again, we support the measures being introduced today; we're only pointing out that the government should have gone further.

Mr. Cardiff: I rise on behalf of the third party to respond to the ministerial statement today. We too can support this initiative of the government. We recognize the importance of small business here in the territory and the fact that they create a lot of wealth in our communities and provide for a lot of employment here in the Yukon and across the country.

Contrary to a lot of popular belief from the other side of the House, our party does support small business. During the last election campaign, no fewer than eight candidates either owned small businesses or have owned small businesses in the past. I think that bears testament to the fact we do support small business and we can support initiatives like this.

It's interesting that, in a very short time following an election, this minister has been able to react so fast to address this issue, and it proves that they can act fast to address important issues.

It would be most welcomed if the Premier would act as fast to keep some of their other platform commitments on the "social side of the ledger", as the Premier likes to call it.

We in the third party are looking forward to a ministerial statement in the next few days laying out the Premier's plans to deal with important issues on the social side of the ledger, like social assistance, food allowances, housing allowances, social housing, action on a youth homeless shelter -- which is most needed -- and something that I mentioned the other day in debate about the other income tax changes -- the low-income family tax credit, which is at \$300. The Premier tabled the public accounts today. It is obvious that he is very proud of the fiscal position of the government and the fact that there is money in the bank, and they aren't using the credit card these days. Hopefully, seeing as how there is so much money there, he will be able to react as fast as he did to this issue today. Hopefully he will also react that fast on these other important issues.

Hon. Mr. Fentie: I extend the government side's appreciation for the support on this measure. I think it's all very clear here what this means to Yukon small businesses. It is an important instrument -- the taxation regime -- and we will ensure we utilize it in a manner that contributes to private sector growth. There is good rationale for that, Mr. Speaker. Governments have created a very difficult situation in the Yukon where there was economic devastation across this territory with the exodus of populations, double-digit unemployment; trades and skilled people in many of our business were leaving the territory; governments were forced to direct funds toward trying to deal with that measure. By shoring up the private sector through our tax regime, this government has created more options for itself in dealing with -- as the Member for Mount Lorne so aptly put it -- the social side of the ledger.

I would like to point out to the leader of the official opposition with respect to the comment on the Liberal election platform of 2002 and to go on the record to say that, though then the Liberals, the incumbent government, had made this commitment, we all know the fiscal situation that Yukon was in. In fact, at that time we were actually paying overdraft charges to deliver the programs and services that were available at that time, plus wages for Yukon government employees. How did the former Liberal government expect to deliver on this tax measure? So the first step that the former government missed was getting the fiscal house in order for Yukon. That happened in 2002 and that is why today we can bring forward this tax measure.

There have been some comments about the social assistance programs and why we are not acting fast, or in some way there is a measurement here of how quickly one acts in terms of the quality of program and indeed the quality of life -- and I have to make a point. The announcement today is subsequent to the tabling of the budget that shows an increase in the Department of Health and Social Services with respect to operation and maintenance and capital, addressing many areas such as social services, continuing care, help for

seniors, early learning and childcare, issues for adult day program, continuing care and home care, national diabetes, and the list goes on and on and on. In terms of sequence, this dramatic increase in the Health and Social Services budget was tabled well before this announcement today, so if that is the opposition's measurement, it looks like the government's side is well out in front.

Speaker: This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: *Children's Act* review

Mr. Mitchell: In June 2003, a former Yukon government Minister of Health and Social Services began a review of the Yukon *Children's Act*. That minister is long gone, yet the *Children's Act* review is still with us. We are now at more than three years and counting, and there is still no new legislation ready. According to the government's own Web site, the legislation was supposed to be ready in September 2005. The earliest we will probably see anything is in the fall of 2007. Why is the minister unable to complete this task?

Hon. Mr. Cathers: This matter has been explained before in the House. I see that I will have to explain it again to the leader of the official opposition.

In commencing with the review of the *Children's Act*, we began a brand new process. It was a process that had never been used before. It was an unprecedented collaboration and cooperation between the Yukon government and the Council of Yukon First Nations in developing legislation. There were a few bumps in the road, and that resulted in some delays. We are working together. The bulk of the policy work has been done. We look forward to completing the drafting on the *Children's Act* very soon, and it will be tabled once that is done.

Mr. Mitchell: Mr. Speaker, this entire process is off the rails. It is simply no longer a priority for the government or the Minister of Health and Social Services. We listened to the throne speech two weeks ago when the government laid out its priorities; completing the Yukon *Children's Act* was not mentioned in the speech. We listened to the minister's response to the throne speech; again there was nothing. We listened to the minister's reply to the latest budget; again, there was nothing. This project has dropped off the radar and that is simply unacceptable.

When is this minister going to put this back on the front burner and get on with updating the *Children's Act*?

Hon. Mr. Cathers: Once again, Mr. Speaker, the leader of the official opposition is dead wrong in his assertions. This remains a priority for the government, and the issue of whether it appears in one speech or another is absolutely irrelevant. We have made it very clear that this is a priority. It will continue to be a priority. As stated before in response to the leader of the official opposition, there were some challenges and some bumps in the road in beginning this brand new, unprecedented level of cooperation and collaboration with Yukon First Nations in developing the revi-

sions to the *Children's Act*. And though there were some delays, we are now very much on track and moving forward to the very successful completion of the *Children's Act* review.

Mr. Mitchell: Well, this minister has an interesting idea of the word "priority." According to *Collins English Dictionary*: "priority: (1) condition of being prior, antecedents, precedents; (2) the right of precedence over others; (3) something giving specified attention, *my first priority*." Mr. Speaker, the last official word from the government on this project was a news release in March of this year saying the review is ongoing. I suggest that only the minister still believes that any progress is actually happening. The project is clearly stalled and is going nowhere. The Web site has not been updated. The last meeting mentioned on the Web site was in March of 2005, and the last update on the Web site was in June of 2005. While the minister makes excuses, children continue to be at risk. When will we see updated legislation in this House, or has this minister simply given up?

Hon. Mr. Cathers: Mr. Speaker, again, the leader of the official opposition is absolutely wrong in his assertions. To suggest that work is not continuing is dead wrong. The work is moving forward. The policy work has been done between Yukon government and Council of Yukon First Nations, and they are right now working together on informing the legal drafters, which will ultimately result in the act being tabled in this House. We are confident that it will be a very successful end result. But the leader of the official opposition needs to recognize here that this is a unified, collective process between Yukon government and Council of Yukon First Nations. As he stands there and casts criticism at the Yukon government, he is also criticizing the First Nations who are full partners in this process. That is absolutely inappropriate. The First Nations, the Yukon government, and officials of both have worked very hard and very diligently on resolving the complex issues involved. They are being very successful in doing so, and we look forward to the successful tabling of the revisions to the *Children's Act* in this House.

Question re: *Liquor Act* review

Mr. Inverarity: I have some questions for the minister responsible for the Yukon Liquor Corporation. The Yukon *Liquor Act* was adopted in 1977. That's almost 30 years ago. The legislation is outdated, hard to understand and cumbersome. For many reasons, Yukoners want the *Liquor Act* rewritten. Industry seeks a more streamlined licensing regime. The Yukon people desire a modern act that brings the Yukon liquor laws into the 21st century.

This issue has been discussed in the House on several occasions and this government has been asked to bring forward a new liquor act that recognizes the views of the majority of the Yukon public and puts Yukon practices in line with the rest of Canada.

Will the minister commit to bringing forward new legislation in this mandate that modernizes the outdated *Liquor Act* -- yes or no?

Hon. Mr. Kenyon: In regard to that study the member opposite refers to, first of all, there are 28 recommendations that came from that and have already been implemented

-- 23 changes that have actually been made, which we were able to do in regulations, and another four regulations remain unchanged, which in fact they have.

The Yukon Liquor Corporation Board of Directors reviews this and has been working very hard to work within the existing legislation and regulations to maintain control and adequately address substance abuse. I'm very confident of their work and proud of what we've been able to do without having to go back to square one and start over.

Mr. Inverarity: Well, it's nice to see that there have been some things going on.

A review of the *Liquor Act* regulations was completed in 2001. There were over 2,000 completed questionnaires we received, and something like 56 meetings were conducted throughout the Yukon to collect the feedback from the individuals, First Nations, social service organizations, RCMP, licensees and the hospitality industry.

Five years ago, in October 2001, participants in the review process had expressed consultation fatigue and believed that it was time for the Yukon government to act. That was five years ago and nothing really has been done other than acting on a few recommendations.

Will the minister use the results of the consultation process to bring forward new legislation that will modernize the *Liquor Act*?

Hon. Mr. Kenyon: Again, the Yukon Liquor Corporation Board of Directors and the corporation itself have been very much aware of that review and have been very appreciative of the work done on that. We feel that there is a great deal that has been done and a great deal that can be done in the future with regulatory change without having to get into some of the recommendations that came out of that document, such as that minors should be allowed to entertain in cocktail lounges, which I think some Yukoners may have a problem with, Shania Twain's background notwithstanding -- and that minors should be allowed to deliver food to patrons in cocktail lounges and deliver liquor to patrons in other licensed premises. Again, Mr. Speaker, I certainly have some difficulties with that.

There are some aspects of that that we are not really willing to open. For the rest, as I said, we have been able to implement 28 of the recommendations within the existing legislation. I have no doubt that the corporation's board of directors will be able to work within that frame and make that number even larger.

Mr. Inverarity: In May of this year the minister received a cry for help from the community of Pelly Crossing. For years, the community has been plagued by bootleggers, and these problems continue today.

On September 28, 2006, the Premier told the Yukon Chamber of Commerce, "We are not convinced a review of the *Liquor Act* is necessary." A week later, in a letter dated October 5, 2006, to the Yukon Convention Bureau, the Yukon Party stated, "A re-elected Yukon Party government is committed to reviewing all legislation that is outdated, including the Yukon *Liquor Act*." Which is it, Mr. Speaker? The government says it is committed to reviewing the out-

dated *Liquor Act*, and this government says it is not convinced that it needs to have it done. Will the minister be clear on this issue? Will this government bring forward legislation to replace the outdated *Liquor Act*?

Hon. Mr. Kenyon: Yes, I think it is within the responsibility of any government to be continually renewing legislation and to review the consultation that was done under that.

The member opposite refers to the community of Pelly Crossing, which has had some concerns in the past. The member opposite may want to go back and review *Hansard* from last year. Under the safer communities and neighbourhoods legislation, bootlegging and other similar problems within that community can easily be addressed. The Yukon Liquor Corporation inspectors, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, et cetera, have attended meetings with the Village of Pelly Crossing and with the First Nation and have developed a way of approaching that. Again, enforcement of laws preventing bootlegging and such that the member opposite refers to is within the purview of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. We are very pleased the safer communities and neighbourhoods legislation, which came into effect only a few days ago, will address that situation. We are much more concerned at this point with a "substance abuse plan" rather than a "substance use plan".

Question re: Children in care

Mr. Edzerza: The chief of a Yukon First Nation recently expressed his concerns to me about his inability to get through to the Minister of Health and Social Services. This chief said that he had made at least two formal requests for a meeting with the minister about an issue regarding children in the care of this government. Not only did a meeting not happen, the minister has not even bothered responding to the chief's calls, even after messages were left.

Is it the policy of this minister to ignore requests from the chiefs of First Nations? Does he treat all First Nations this way, or is it only some First Nations?

Hon. Mr. Cathers: We certainly work with Yukon First Nations. Our government can be very proud and is very proud of the efforts we have made in improving relations with Yukon First Nations beyond what was the case under previous governments.

I am not sure what the Member for McIntyre-Takhini is referring to, specifically since the term he used was "a Yukon First Nation". I am not certain what he is referring to, but we are very accessible and work with the Council of Yukon First Nations and with individual First Nations to resolve issues that are of mutual concern to our citizens.

Mr. Edzerza: That's good to hear, because I will send a copy of the Blues today to the chief who had concerns.

In my work as an MLA, I have been approached many times with concerns about First Nation children. I have heard from parents, grandparents and the children themselves. They tell me very disturbing stories about grandparents who go for years without being able to see their grandchildren while in the government's care. They tell me about parents

who ask for help with other children and are refused. They tell me about complaints laid against caretakers that are not acted on and about adoptions that have taken place without the knowledge or consent of parents or grandparents.

They all ask that someone look into the policies, actions and inactions of the family and children's services branch. Will this minister look into these valid complaints and assure us that the welfare of our Yukon children is a priority?

Hon. Mr. Cathers: I would remind the Member for McIntyre-Takhini of the *Children's Act* review. I wonder what he thinks the point of this review is. In working with First Nations, we want to ensure we look at the Yukon's legislation around children and ensure the legislation does things such as provide for the rights of family access, and most important and absolutely critical, protect the safety of Yukon's children, particularly when those children end up in the care of the government. We must ensure that, at all times, our policies remain appropriate to protect the safety of Yukon children.

Mr. Edzerza: The point is the *Children's Act* review appears to be stuck in the mud. Over three years ago, this government gave Cabinet direction to revise the *Children's Act*. The work of many people has been marred by political action and, worse, by inaction. Parents and grandparents all over the territory -- not only First Nations -- know the review has heard the same complaints I have heard. They've come up with numerous valid recommendations about revising the act that are public knowledge. This is of vital importance to all Yukoners. What is the holdup? This has been in the works for many years.

Will the minister finally take action on the recommendations that are already known and bring forward an improved and modern *Children's Act* in time for the spring sitting of this Legislature?

Hon. Mr. Cathers: I can't help but point out that this is the opinion of one member and has, unfortunately, very little to do with fact. As I've stated to members, we embarked on a brand new process of unprecedented collaboration in working with the Council of Yukon First Nations in reviewing the *Children's Act*, because of the significant importance this legislation has for all Yukoners and for a significant number of First Nation citizens. We embarked upon the process and, although there were some challenges early on, we're well on track. The policy work has been done on this legislation. The legal drafting has begun, and we look forward to the completion of this act and the tabling of it in the Legislature.

I'm very proud, as I believe the Council of Yukon First Nations also is, of the work that has been done within both governments, on both sides, in moving things forward, working together and coming to a successful end result.

Question re: Education Act review

Mr. Cardiff: Mr. Speaker, the Yukon's *Education Act* spells out very clearly that the act itself must be reviewed after 10 years. The NDP government from 1996 to 2000 started the process on time, beginning with an extensive series of public forums and discussions on education-related

themes. Many Yukoners took part in these events, in the expectation that something fresh and new was about to happen. The Liberal government actually completed a review of the act, although I won't rehash the problems we had with the process they used or what the outcome was.

Now, this government has spent four years so far on a so-called education reform process, with not one single thing to show for it in terms of modernizing the act. Will the minister give us a timeline for when this lingering process will finally be reflected in the *Education Act* itself, if ever?

Hon. Mr. Rouble: Mr. Speaker, I'm sure that we can all agree in this Assembly that education is one of the most important, if not the most important, aspect that we as a government are responsible for.

Yes, Mr. Speaker, the member opposite is correct. The NDP did start a review. The Liberals did a review of the act and we all know the issues that that brought forward. We all know the problems that that identified.

Mr. Speaker, the issue here isn't the legislation specifically; it's the education system. That's why we have started the education reform process. We are committed to providing all Yukoners, all students, First Nation and non-First Nation students alike, with the fundamental skills necessary to prepare them for lifelong learning and for jobs, for citizenship. And we are going to reform the education system in order to address those needs.

Mr. Cardiff: So I assume that the minister is not going to bring forward changes to the *Education Act*, as the act requires.

Mr. Speaker, a big part of the delay in this process concerns three position papers that are somewhat controversial. This was confirmed to me during my recent attendance at the Association of School Councils meeting, which I attended a few weeks ago. These papers in question deal with issues such as governance, administration, and language and culture. The minister is no doubt aware of them, as they are part of the file that his two predecessors left on his desk.

I'd like to ask the minister: has he brought these papers forward for a Cabinet decision yet? If not, when will he be doing that?

Hon. Mr. Rouble: Mr. Speaker, several issues have been brought forward. These include making curriculum changes. This includes the issue of having parental involvement in children's education. It includes issues regarding language revitalization and retention and work on experiential education -- including that in the curriculum. It includes making more decisions at the community level. It includes making apprenticeship and vocational training more important and relevant. These are all issues being incorporated and addressed in the reforms to education.

Mr. Cardiff: Well, Mr. Speaker, the clock is ticking. Yukon people are becoming very frustrated with the perennial delays on this file, and they are the same delays; we heard it today. It doesn't matter whether it's the *Children's Act* review, a review of the *Liquor Act*, a review of the *Workers' Compensation Act* -- the legislative agenda of this government is just about nil.

Once again this week, we heard a First Nation say that it is fed up with being kept in the dark, and it has decided to go its own way on education. The least this minister could do is let Yukon people in on the secret. It's their education system, it's their tax dollars, it's their children's future that is at stake.

Obviously, he wouldn't answer the question before. I don't know -- maybe he is not only keeping the public in the dark, maybe he is keeping the Cabinet in the dark too. Will the minister release the three position papers so Yukon parents can see for themselves what options are being considered, or will they have to wait for Cabinet to say, "This is how it's going to be; take it or leave it"?

Hon. Mr. Rouble: Education is one of those things that is always constantly revolving, changing and progressing. I don't think I have ever met a teacher who hasn't made changes the second or third time they've taught a course to make it better. Teachers are always revising and changing the programs to do things better. This happens in the classrooms, in the schools and at the department level.

Just look at some of the changes that have happened in the last couple of years: things like the opening of the Individual Learning Centre, the continued support for reading recovery and Wilson Reading, the new early intervention programs such as full-day kindergarten, the creation of a First Nation programs and partnerships unit, the support for the First Voices digital language initiative and enhanced literacy strategy reviews.

Education is always being addressed and reformed. We are working on it. We are working with our partners in education to ensure that we continue to have the best education system in the country here in the Yukon.

Question re: *Workers' Compensation Act* review

Mr. Inverarity: It looks like we are talking about legislation today. I have some questions for the minister responsible for the Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board. The *Workers' Compensation Act* has been under review for the last three years. The review process was chaired by the MLA for Southern Lakes. It is a project that he has failed to complete. He has now moved over to the *Education Act*. Let's see if he is going to be as successful there.

The *Workers' Compensation Act* changes were supposed to be ready by the fall of 2004. They are, by the government's own admission, two years late. Who now is responsible for the review of the act and when will the legislation be brought forward?

Hon. Mr. Cathers: The *Workers' Compensation Act* review was originally dealt with by a three-member panel, and the panel unfortunately did not complete their final report prior to the election, but I have asked the remaining members to finalize the report. I had previously in the year asked them to submit the report by September 15. There was a week left before that deadline when the writ was dropped, and I look forward to receiving the report as it should have been almost completed. Certainly the Member for Southern Lakes deserves significant credit for his work on the *Workers' Compensation Act* review and the successful efforts that brought both employers and employees -- the major groups --

together in reaching joint agreement in over 80 of the identified issues.

Mr. Inverarity: It is the normal practice for officials from the Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board to appear before the Legislature every fall. The minister and the Premier refused to allow that to happen this fall. Perhaps they don't want questions asked about why the legislation isn't ready.

Improving our laws has obviously not been a priority for the Yukon Party government over the last four years. Similarly the *Children's Act* review that was talked about earlier today and the new *Workers' Compensation Act* are both at least two years behind schedule.

Both workers and employers are waiting for changes that might save us money, make the workplace a safer place and speed up the process for injured workers' claims. Why is the minister keeping these groups waiting when we need the new act and when will it be introduced into the Legislature?

Hon. Mr. Cathers: It is puzzling to hear the comments from the new Member for Porter Creek South. Unless the Liberal House leader is not communicating with his caucus, we have had discussions about bringing the Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board chair and president in here. I advised the member as recently as this morning that we were still looking as to when in this session we could bring them in. I look forward to resolving that issue at the House leader level. I would urge the Member for Porter Creek South to talk to the Liberal House leader and urge the Liberal House leader to actually talk to his colleagues and tell them what we discussed in the morning meetings.

Question re: Education reform

Mr. Fairclough: I have a question for the Minister of Education on departmental policy.

For many years now, Yukoners have been waiting for a revision of our education system. There was an *Education Act* review and now there is an education reform commission. I do not want to prejudge what the report may or may not contain, but I know that what people want is greater opportunities to have input into our education system. Does the minister have any plans to address this issue of governance?

Hon. Mr. Rouble: Mr. Speaker, I certainly agree with the member opposite. I don't want to prejudge the process either. That's the whole reason for doing the education reform.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Hon. Mr. Rouble: I'm sorry. There was a comment from a member opposite. Perhaps he would like to wait to ask his question until afterwards.

We have an education reform team together that is addressing these and other issues. As I mentioned earlier, there were many issues that came forward in the pre-consultation, such as how to get parents and school councils involved in the decision-making and how to keep students involved in the system.

We are committed to making the changes necessary to our school system. If that involves making changes to the

legislation, we will do that too. We want the best system that serves the needs of all Yukoners.

Mr. Fairclough: On occasion, the department has lent some support to the use of experiential learning. Simply put, it involves taking children out of school and teaching them the same curriculum but in an environment where teachers can build on prior knowledge, using situations in the real world, the child's world. For many children, this has been a very positive approach to learning.

Can the minister tell the House if this is an approach we can expect to see more of and, if so, what plans are there for further promoting and integrating experiential learning into our schools' daily routines?

Hon. Mr. Rouble: I can't think of a more creative and resourceful group of people than teachers. Teachers are constantly looking for the best way to communicate and to get their message across to their students.

Sometimes that means teaching by doing rather than just by lecturing or by reading. When I was an instructor, I did experiential learning and I would encourage teachers to do that and make use of it wherever they can.

In education, we need to get the message across the best way possible; sometimes that means thinking outside the box; sometimes that means colouring outside the lines. If a teacher wants to use a creative way to get the message across, I would support that.

Mr. Fairclough: It's often said that if we want to change our education system to better reflect the goals and objectives of our society, then the change has to take place in the classroom, and that means supporting our teaching professionals.

This department has been one of the better ones in supporting professional development for its teachers, but things are changing, especially in literacy and numeracy. Yukon is still not doing enough to encourage and promote professional growth for our educators.

Will the minister inform this House of any plans his department may have to further enhance the quality of classroom instruction by promoting teachers' professional development beyond the one-day in-service?

Hon. Mr. Rouble: Mr. Speaker, I think we're all agreed that we want to see our teachers have the best tools, the best resources and the best training. The teachers I know are very committed not only to teaching but also to learning themselves. They are always very open and responsive to learning new information. Mr. Speaker, we have some formal ways that we go about doing that with in-service and with training programs that are run through the Department of Education, and also with our collective bargaining agreement and with the Yukon Teachers Association, where there are funds provided to the YTA to help them help their members with professional development.

Mr. Speaker, I applaud all teachers who continue to expand their own horizons in their career and their knowledge base. I would encourage all to get involved, take more courses, learn more and apply it to the classroom. We'll be working with our partners in education, with the teachers, with the

Yukon Teachers Association and with the Department of Education to make sure that these things are happening.

Speaker: Time for Question Period has now elapsed. We'll proceed to Orders of the Day. Motions other than government motions.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

MOTIONS OTHER THAN GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

Motion No. 57

Clerk: Motion No. 57, standing in the name of Mr. McRobb.

Speaker: It is moved by the Member for Kluane THAT this House requests that Canada Post Corporation apply the same exemption to postal junk mail screening for Members of the Yukon Legislative Assembly as it does for Yukon's Senator and Yukon's Member of Parliament.

Mr. McRobb: Mr. Speaker, it is our intent today to not spend a long time to debate this motion. We believe it is something that all members should be able to support rather quickly so we can send a united message to Canada Post and to the federal government to try to address this situation, which should be improved.

Bringing forward this debate today, I should explain first, Mr. Speaker, it does not mean this is our highest priority -- far from it. There are many issues that rank higher, such as dealing with the territory's *Children's Act*, education reform, land use planning and so on.

Currently, in this short sitting, a review of the supplementary budget remains our primary focus. That's why the motion we called today was anticipated to be a short one, requiring only a few minutes of discussion. That would allow us to move back to the supplementary budget.

Let me now explain the purpose of the motion. Canada Post currently practises what it calls the consumer choice program. This program allows mailbox customers to be excluded from ad mail. Ad mail includes everything from flyers from the stores, to catalogues -- you name it. A lot of people refer to it as "junk mail" but Canada Post's term is "ad mail" so that is what I will use today.

To be clear, we support the consumer choice program. It's just that a few tweaks are necessary or perhaps another resolution would be better. The problem is that mailings from MLAs are not exempt and they get screened out with the ad mail for those customers who choose to opt out of receiving ad mail.

Like other MLAs, I have heard concerns from constituents and other Yukoners over the years about this practice. People do want to hear from their elected representatives but don't want to pay the price of receiving a high volume of ad mail that would come along with it.

Canada Post currently gives consumers only two options: no ad mail with no MLA mail, or all ad mail with MLA mail. There is another factor to consider in the mix of things. Currently the policy used by Canada Post excludes

mailings from members of Parliament and senators. This was mentioned in the wording of the motion that we are dealing with on the floor today. This begs the question: if MPs and senators can be exempt, why not MLAs as well?

About two hours ago, I met with officials from Canada Post and learned more about this matter. The list of exemptions is actually longer than I had previously understood. The list also includes community newspapers, the House of Commons, which I would presume would incorporate members of Parliament, Elections Canada, provincial chief electoral officers or municipal electoral notices. That is rather interesting, Mr. Speaker, when you see that the lists of exemptions are positions and instruments that MLAs make decisions on. One of the decisions we are currently dealing with is how to replace the current Clerk of the Assembly and deal with the Chief Electoral Officer. The Chief Electoral Officer's mail is exempt from junk mailings, yet the MLAs who make the decisions on that position get lumped in with the ad mail. It clearly indicates that there are some inconsistencies.

Under the current system, it seems that Canada Post can't make the changes necessary in isolation from the federal government. Both of those entities must work together to try to resolve this problem. I am aware that this has been raised in other jurisdictions and provinces as an issue. Until now, nothing has come of it. We have an opportunity here to get the ball rolling that could possibly lead to a change at the federal government level, affecting all 10 provinces and 3 territories within our country.

Mr. Speaker, the mailings from an MLA might include items such as newsletters, bulletins, notices, information on issues, or just about anything that serves a useful purpose.

It's also interesting to note that the list of exemptions does not include territorial or provincial governments. I'm wondering why this isn't an issue for the Yukon government. Does the Yukon government not have an obligation to inform all its citizens of an urgent or very important issue? Not everybody is connected to the mainstream media and, in rural Yukon, even if they do get a newspaper, it is sometimes several days late and a lot of the notices published in the newspapers are already redundant.

How does the Yukon government contact or connect with the public if it can't do mass mailings in the community post offices? The government does not have everybody's mailing address -- we know that. If the government's mail is not exempt from ad mail, how does it connect to those who don't want to receive ad mail?

Obviously this is a matter that should be of concern to the Yukon government, regardless of which party holds office. It should be a concern to all MLAs in this Legislature that we, too, have the ability to connect with our constituents without them having to receive volumes of ad mail. It's an issue for other MLAs across the country in other jurisdictions, so why don't we try to address this matter?

I want to conclude by mentioning that, as a result of my meeting with Canada Post officials, the motion could be better worded to indicate that Canada Post and the federal gov-

ernment work together to provide the same communication rights and tools now provided to federal government representatives.

Earlier today, I asked the government side if it was interested in amending this, and it respectfully declined, so I've asked my colleague from Copperbelt if he would introduce an amendment to our motion because, under our current rules, the mover of a motion is not permitted to do that.

I want to point out this is a clear example of a friendly amendment, and I would be supporting the amendment. I encourage every member of this Assembly to do the same.

Amendment proposed

Mr. Mitchell: I move

THAT Motion No. 57 be amended by replacing the words after "Corporation" with the following:

"work together with the federal government to provide the same communication rights and tools for Members of the Legislative Assembly as provided now to federal government representatives."

Speaker: It has been moved by the Member for Copperbelt

THAT Motion No. 57 be amended by replacing the words after Corporation with the following:

"work together with the federal government to provide the same communication rights and tools for Members of the Legislative Assembly as provided now to federal government representatives."

Mr. Mitchell: As my colleague, the Member for Kluane has already stated, this is a friendly amendment and it is a result of the consultation that he had earlier today with Canada Post, which came up with better wording to clarify and focus the intent of the original motion. It does so in a number of ways. For one thing, rather than specifying the senator or any other representative, it speaks to the proper wording that reflects the treatment of other government representatives. Also, it removes the word "junk", as in "junk mail", from the motion, since it is appropriately called ad mail even if we euphemistically refer to it in other ways.

As it is my right to do so, I will speak very briefly to the original motion along with the amendment. I don't want to use a lot of time here because it is our intent to get back to the business of debating the budget.

I just want to say that I can truly support this motion because I have personally run into difficulties. A motion like this, if the intent of it was to be effective and Canada Post were to change the rules, would be helpful to me in communicating with my constituents. I have a riding that is spread over a very large area of different subdivisions -- some rural, some urban -- and I have some areas that don't have any mailboxes at all because people receive their mail from gang-boxes. Unfortunately, when I communicate with my constituents, under our current regulations I only have two possible ways of doing so in written communication. One is to try to get the distribution done by some community group, and our regulations provide a nominal sum to pay

them. It has proven not to be feasible to offer that amount of funding, and some of the areas involved are very complicated for people to even find the residences.

The other is to do this mass mailing. I discovered that when I did my previous newsletter it overlapped significantly with the Member for Whitehorse West's riding. That was certainly not my intent. I apologized to the Member for Whitehorse West for this unintended result. We have, again, met with the post office to see if we could simply specify particular streets, because we both share portions of Copper Ridge within our two ridings. The post office, under the current situation, is unable to, so I have no real choice but to carry forward with this other method, which is not the desired outcome. In fact, when I did my previous mailing, I had several residents of Whitehorse West come to my community barbecue because the invitation was there. They raised a couple of issues with me, and I told each and every one of them that I appreciated them coming and thanked them for the issues, but I pointed out that their MLA was in fact the honourable Tourism minister, the Member for Whitehorse West, and I suggested they communicate directly with her.

I recognize the awkwardness of this situation, but this would help to resolve that. I think it is terribly important that all of us as legislators and as representatives maintain a diverse number of opportunities to communicate with our constituents, from printed matter to community meetings. Although we try to hold community meetings, the attendance is not always what we would hope it would be. We are really forced to communicate using Canada Post.

I can support this motion because I have run into particular difficulties that this motion would help to resolve. I commend it to this House.

Speaker: Are members prepared to vote on the amendment?

Amendment to Motion No. 57 agreed to

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

Mr. Cardiff: Mr. Speaker, I will definitely be brief. I think the purpose of this motion has been well explained, and, yes, I can support it. I've run into many of the same issues as the other members, whether it's people not receiving newsletters and saying, "We never hear from you," or actually I think my newsletter overlaps with the Member for Copperbelt, and I've had numerous calls from Pineridge.

I think the important thing here though -- and it may be cleared up by the Member for Kluane's actions today, meeting with Canada Post -- is that so often in this Legislature we debate motions, we pass them unanimously, and they affect people, and unfortunately it is never really communicated to those people. I think it would be important that at the end of the day, after this has passed unanimously, that whether it's through your office or the Clerk's office that what we've done today is clearly communicated not just to the Canada Post Corporation but to the minister responsible in the federal

government. So we will be supporting this, and I look forward to getting back into debate on the budget.

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

Mr. McRobb: Well, I'll take silence from the government benches as a sign of support for this matter, and I want to thank the third party for its support and again, Mr. Speaker, this is an opportunity to resolve a long-standing issue about members of this Assembly and the government as a whole communicating to Yukoners. They call this the communications age, yet we have some snags, such as this, that still inhibit us today. This is an opportunity to try to effect change at the federal level. Mr. Speaker, if successful, this could be another Yukon first. So I want to thank all members for their support, and I look forward to a response from the federal government and the Canada Post Corporation.

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

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Speaker: I think the ayes have it. I declare Motion No. 57, as amended, carried.

Motion No. 57 agreed to as amended

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

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: I now call Committee of the Whole to order.

Bill No. 3 -- *Second Appropriation Act, 2006-07* -- continued

Chair: The matter before the Committee is Bill No. 3, *Second Appropriation Act, 2006-07*, Department of Tourism and Culture.

Do members wish to take a brief recess before we begin?

Some 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 Tourism and Culture

Chair: The matter before the Committee is Vote 54, Department of Tourism and Culture.

Hon. Ms. Taylor: Mr. Chair, I am pleased to introduce the supplementary estimates for the Department of Tourism and Culture. The department requests an increase of \$1.1 million to its operation and maintenance budget and \$521,000 for its capital budget.

\$30,000 in new funding will go toward the Yukon arts funding program that supports Yukon artists and groups by providing funding for projects that are recommended by the Yukon Arts Advisory Council. Arts funding programs benefit artists, arts organizations, volunteers, audiences and Yukon communities. The Yukon government values its role in supporting the arts, an integral component to our cultural and social well-being. This item is 100-percent recoverable from Yukon Lotteries.

\$21,000 in new funding will go toward the commercial heritage properties incentive fund. This funding is 100-percent recoverable from Canada. Yukon government values its partnership role with Canada in this program that enables Yukon to perform historic sites reviews and assessments at the request of the federal government.

Yukon has assisted Canada in reviewing historic sites, such as the Casa Loma Building in Winnipeg, the Lumbermen's Building in Vancouver, the Oriental Hotel in Victoria and the Prince George Hotel in Kingston.

As part of the 2006-07 supplementary budget, I am pleased to also announce that \$5,000 in new funding will support extended hours at the Whitehorse visitor information centre to allow it to be open to the public on Saturdays throughout the winter months, from October to April, in support of our tourism industry.

In addition, \$10,000 in new funding will support extended hours at the Whitehorse visitor information centre in support of the 2007 Canada Winter Games. As we know, this is the first time an event of this calibre will take place north of 60. The Whitehorse visitor information centre will be open seven days a week from February 21 to March 11, 2007. This gives athletes, coaches, families, friends and visitors an opportunity to take advantage of VIC services while the games are on.

The Department of Tourism and Culture requests that a variety of projects be revoted due to a number of factors that prevented the projects from moving forward. Revotes include \$1 million in O&M funding toward the national marketing campaign in support of the 2007 Canada Winter Games.

Both organizations are working to maximize the tourism opportunities that the games will bring to Yukon. The pan-northern approach of the national marketing campaign will spotlight the Yukon, Nunavut and the Northwest Territories to all southern Canada. Highlighting the coming of age to the north and the north hosting the south will allow Canadians a unique opportunity to experience northern culture and hospitality, all meant to share the message: the north is a great place to visit, to live and to invest.

\$42,000 in operation and maintenance funding will be dedicated for the printing of 20,000 French Yukon lure pieces that will be shared with the francophone community seeking tourism experiences in their native language. The Yukon

government is pleased to be able to complete this project, having worked in close cooperation with l'Association franco-yukonnaise. The printing portion of this contract was delayed to coincide with finalization of the new Yukon tourism brand implementation.

\$2,000 in operation and maintenance funding to the Miles Canyon Historical Railway Society is being provided in support of production costs that incorporated the Yukon tourism brand, "Larger than Life", into the advertising materials used by the society. This funding was delayed to coincide with the finalization of the new brand.

The cultural services branch within the Department of Tourism and Culture has revoted capital funding, including \$20,000 in heritage interaction site support, complete landscaping and paving work at the Yukon Transportation Museum. This was delayed in 2005 and the work needs to be carried forward. There is \$19,000 to support historic sites maintenance, replacing the foundation at the Mabel McIntyre House in Mayo. As some of you may recall, the Mabel McIntyre House was the very first to be designated an official Yukon historic site under the Yukon *Historic Resources Act* back in December 2003.

Foundation work was originally delayed, because it took some time to finalize the contract with the proponent; however, the work was completed this past summer.

\$92,000 has also been requested as a revote in museums assistance, made up of \$10,000 for MacBride Museum's expansion plans, \$32,000 for Keno City Mining Museum upgrades to its security system and \$50,000 to George Johnston Museum for upgrades to its security system.

The expansion plan for MacBride Museum is part of their efforts to upgrade their services and programs to the public, allowing them to offer a greater variety of on-site artifacts for public viewing.

Security system upgrades to Keno City Mining Museum and the George Johnston Museum shows our Yukon museums' commitment to professional stewardship in the care and preservation of artifact inventories held under their protection.

Originally this work was delayed due to the challenges in finding a number of qualified contractors to move forward with the appropriate work.

The \$7,000 for the Yukon Beringia Interpretive Centre is being requested for the upgrade of its heat exchanger and, again, the revote is needed due to the delay of the engineer's report.

There is a \$169,000 revote request to the arts fund to facilitate fund disbursements that are claimed in the year following initial applications. This program has four applications per year and sometimes the disbursements occur after the cash flow has been determined. Therefore, final completion dates of some of the projects carry forward into the new year.

\$16,000 is for the decade of sports and culture, which supports community projects in arts, heritage and culture attached to the 2007 Canada Winter Games and the 2010

Winter Olympics. This funding support is administered by the Yukon Arts Centre.

Given that many of the projects carry forward through extended timelines, completion of the funding can be delayed into a new year.

\$82,000 is being requested for the Yukon Archives preservation projects, made up of \$17,000 for skylight renovations, \$55,000 for lighting fixtures and \$10,000 for a dehumidifier study. Projects were delayed because of weather and waiting on final engineering studies and reports that were required before such projects could be completed.

The tourism branch within the Department of Tourism and Culture is revoting, capital funding included, \$31,000 in product development and resource assessment toward the wilderness tourism status report, the north Yukon land use plan niche product development, as well as the Yukon First Nations Tourism Association. \$21,000 is identified for industry research and strategic planning to allow the department to proceed with the printing of the recent Yukon visitor exit survey reports. The department works in cooperation with the Bureau of Statistics to complete this work. There is \$18,000 for the tourism cooperative marketing fund. This highly successful joint marketing venture has injected more than \$2 million these past two years into joint marketing projects that have showcased the Yukon to national and international audiences. This program has ongoing intakes, and fund disbursements often happen throughout an extended time period, which impacts funds being carried forward through the budget process.

There is \$22,000 for the scenic drives initiative. The department has identified a number of official Yukon scenic drives with the long-range goal of positioning the Yukon as one of North America's ultimate road-trip destinations. Current scenic drives that are up and running are the Alaska Highway, the Klondike-Kluane loop, the Golden Circle route and the Silver Trail. The project is ongoing with the final three drives: the Dempster, the Canol-Campbell route, and the Southern Lakes circuit will be completed next year, in 2007.

This concludes my comments on the supplementary estimates for the Department of Tourism and Culture. I certainly look forward to any questions that may be entertained by members opposite.

Mr. Elias: First of all, I want to thank the employees of the Department of Tourism and Culture for their hard work, commitment and dedication, and for the minister's leadership in achieving the departmental objectives.

I was reviewing *Hansard* this spring, doing some research on the department, and I found out -- as was recently confirmed -- that the minister is very thorough. She went through all the line items that I had questions on. In light of this, I am going to maybe ask several questions at once, as they may relate to the topic.

The first line item was the one I had questions on, because it is \$1.1 million. I think the first item -- you can correct me if I'm wrong -- was for the Canada Games. If I missed that, maybe you could reply to that later. I believe

that is what it was for. That was the major item of \$1 million going to the Canada Games.

In forecasting, I have a question about the seven-percent difference from the actual forecast in the spring. I am trying to understand that this came newly about and that is why it is represented in the supplementary budget.

There is also another question. There was a recent request for proposals to assess the potential shift in marketing focus. The question for the minister is: why is the department considering a shift in the marketing strategy?

Under industry research and strategic planning, product development and resource assessment, can the minister clarify what these line items are? Some of the questions I hear are about whether or not this represents the marketing approach that is being taken. What is the target audience?

Just to describe the strategy, is this a niche marketing approach? If so, which niche, or is it a global market approach? Another question related to those two line items is: how have the target groups been identified? What media has the minister chosen in terms of, for example, magazines, newspapers or television?

Hon. Ms. Taylor: I guess I will start off with the national marketing campaign that our government committed to take part in about two years ago. As the member opposite will probably remember, we chose to enter into an arrangement with our counterparts -- our neighbours and sister territories of Nunavut and N.W.T. -- to showcase the north to the rest of the country. This was for a number of reasons. Clearly, the Canada Winter Games in 2007 is viewed by us as a great opportunity -- perhaps one of the greatest opportunities -- for the Yukon and for the north in terms of showcasing all we have to offer here, which is significant, as the member opposite knows. We entered into a joint initiative to market ourselves. Between the three territories, \$5 million was identified for this particular marketing initiative.

The Yukon government agreed to come up with \$2 million from our own reserves. Nunavut and N.W.T. came up with the remainder between them. With that money -- with our money, in particular -- it has gone toward a number of different elements of the campaign, starting with research. Members opposite may recall that last fall there was a request for proposals let for the research component. The research that accrued from this particular project was actually very well done. Interestingly enough, the result that came from the work conducted was synonymous with what came from the Yukon brand strategy, and it's great to see we're all on the same page.

Basically, it speaks to the need for more general awareness of the Yukon, not just to the rest of the world but also in our country. We've known this was a long-standing challenge and concern for many of the jurisdictions in the north. With the opportunity the games and all the national and international media attention will accrue, we wanted to capitalize and leverage the actual extended reach of this particular marketing campaign.

We have been working with department officials, as well as our Senior Marketing Committee, which reports to Tour-

ism Industry Association of Yukon, and the Canada Winter Games Host Society on some key strategies associated with this marketing campaign. Some of the key strategies include focusing communications with media on positive northern stories that involve tourism, as well as economic development, business and employment -- not just showcasing the north as a great place to visit, but also as a great place to invest and to live in.

This bodes well for our efforts to further attract and retain individuals in our health professions, in education, and all across the board.

Another key strategy associated with the campaign is to use special events to demonstrate the appeal of northern tourism and again, economic development and employment to key individuals, groups in major cities, and to also utilize northerners to tell our own stories, as well.

We are targeting a number of different media, from daily newspapers in our major Canadian cities, national newspapers, national magazines, both business and consumer. We're also going to be targeting national broadcasts from television and radio. For the timing, of course, we will also be looking at utilizing these media communication outlets during peak times -- for example, during Superbowl as a case in point. We know there is an extremely high number of individuals tuning into the Superbowl. Maybe this is a great opportunity to dovetail a "Come join us here in the north" message, and so forth. But the overall media coverage, reach and goal is approximately 20 million impressions, according to the media gurus and, again, we will be looking very closely at the end results of the national marketing campaign by looking at using a number of criteria, including Web site traffic that was driven by these media outlets, on-line requests, attendance at events, post-game survey, anecdotal feedback, and even looking at other criteria from number of photos, number of pickups of the use of Yukon and so forth.

I think we're on the right track, and we certainly look forward to seeing the entire rollout of the campaign over the next number of months. It is important to note that it will be running past the games, so that will give us an opportunity to further leverage visitation accruing from the games -- well after the games are said and done and well after this marketing campaign is said and done as well.

This revote is simply for \$1 million. Again it is because of our efforts with the Canada Winter Games Host Society -- making sure that we have all of our ducks lined up, so to speak. The research RFP was one; this is another component of it. That is what this revote is for -- to utilize these funds for the remainder of the year.

I believe the member opposite made reference to product development. Our government took direction from industry about four years ago. One of the key initiatives that industry wanted us to focus on was product development. We developed a new product development officer position in the Department of Tourism. We also came up with some additional funding for product development initiatives that can be tapped into by every tourism operator and every tourism businesses.

The department uses product development counselling services for those operators and those new businesses in particular. We work with a number of tourism organizations, regions, communities and a number of stakeholder groups to identify and deliver tourism workshops on whatever it is they wish to see addressed -- whether it is packaging or pricing or the creation and implementation of Web sites, which we just recently had.

Some of those things that we have worked on in the past -- I will give the member opposite some of the initiatives that we have completed or have currently underway, if that helps. For example, we provided the Yukon Convention Bureau with some funds for their red carpet tour. Again, it was an opportunity for the YCB to bring in a number of different tour operators and organizations to come to the Yukon to take a look at the different facilities and basically give them a taste of what the Yukon has to offer in terms of hosting meetings and incentive travel conventions.

We have also partnered with the Wilderness Tourism Association of the Yukon on risk management, as well as Web site marketing, as I referenced earlier. We are also working with the Tourism Industry Association of the Yukon on Yukon occupancy data collection. This is quite a complex and comprehensive undertaking, and that is why we are looking at possibly a three-year project on this particular initiative.

We also endeavour, each year, to get around to our respective communities, especially those who request an opportunity to sit down with our department officials to talk about the ways in which the Department of Tourism can provide assistance or lead them in the right direction. That is something we always strive to do.

We are also working with the Department of Environment on the wildlife viewing strategy for Yukon. As the member opposite knows full well, when we talk about product we often think about individual businesses or attractions. I always refer to product as meaning good roads, good infrastructure and good highway signage and interpretive signage, not to mention wildlife viewing sites.

We also have been working with the Yukon First Nations Tourism Association on a number of different initiatives over the last few years. Right now, we are just looking at working with them further in terms of delivery and support and tourism capacity building in First Nation communities. We are also looking to perhaps work with the Bed and Breakfast Association of the Yukon on marketing efforts.

The scope, I guess, is very wide reaching and it certainly moves, depending on the different requests that we have. The very fact that we have some funds available and some great staff who are very committed and knowledgeable and who have the very necessary expertise to be able to deliver it is great to see.

The member opposite referred to a request for proposal that he probably saw in the paper recently. I think that one had to -- I'm just trying to recall what the member opposite made reference to now. I think it had to do with the --

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Hon. Ms. Taylor: Thank you. That is a shift. The member opposite was making reference to what the impetus was for this particular RFP. It came as a request from the Senior Marketing Committee, which was formally recommended to the Tourism Industry Association of the Yukon.

I received a formal request for such an initiative and we agreed to undertake such an overview of this particular movement. Again, it's moving toward perhaps more of a general awareness versus marketing specific segments. Of course that will always take place, but perhaps there is need for more general awareness marketing.

So that should answer most of the member opposite's questions, I think.

Mr. Elias: I thank the minister again for answering the majority of the questions. I'll get into some specific ones now.

Highway visitation was down by approximately 6,556 visitors, or eight percent, between July 2005 and July 2006. Basically the question is: what is the minister doing to ensure that those visitors come back to the Yukon, and what policy direction is the minister undertaking to ensure that the tourism industry doesn't experience another decline in the future? That's one question.

Another issue is that one of the difficult aspects to come out recently was the federal government's policy on cutting the GST rebate to tourists, forcing tourism wholesalers to add six percent to the cost of packages they offer to foreign tourists. I guess the question here is: could the department consider a program of rebate to tourists to make Yukon a six-percent cheaper alternative?

Tourism operators around the Yukon are telling us that their numbers are down in many areas across the territory. This is, of course, a concern to us, and I'm sure it is to you as well. Do you have any short-term plans that can be implemented on short notice? We're only six months away from the next season -- if we take some pre-emptive measures to prepare for the next season and help out the tourism operators, especially along the highways.

Those are another few questions for the minister.

Hon. Ms. Taylor: It's important for context to point out that visitation was down all across the country. In fact, if we take a look at statistics from Statistics Canada and look from January to the end of August of this year in all of Canada, they were down almost eight percent. In the Yukon we were down almost three percent. In all of Canada, the number of U.S. residents was down almost nine percent.

I recall that in August, auto travel to Canada fell 10 percent, which followed an almost 13-percent drop in July to its lowest level in nine years. Overall in July, travel to Canada from the United States fell to its lowest level since May 1979. When you look at other jurisdictions, which I have been closely watching over the last couple of years, we've been seeing declining trends. It's really due to a number of factors.

When I said the number of U.S. residents was down almost nine percent in all of Canada from January to August of this year, the number of U.S. residents coming to the Yukon

was down about one percent -- that's what I have here. That said, we recognize that we benefit from a lot of different key markets, including rubber-tire traffic, which we know has been the hardest hit. There are a number of trends going on in the country and worldwide.

Demographics are changing, and we also have the strengthening Canadian dollar which means that more Canadians are looking at travelling outside the country, because perhaps they are looking for different experiences that they weren't necessarily able to tap into before for a number of reasons.

Again, we are dealing with a different market. A lot of baby-boomers are reaching retirement, and they certainly have the time and money to travel, but again have different needs and different requirements for their travel preferences.

I think it is very important to note that there are significant challenges, and they all started a few years back at the time of 9/11, then SARS and mad cow -- now we are dealing with border security requirements.

Through the western hemisphere travel initiative we have to contend with confusion in the marketplace over the proposed regulatory travel requirements surrounding WHTI, which is the short form.

Again, as I mentioned, we do have a favourable exchange rate for visitors, but we are also looking at higher fuel prices and so forth, so there are a number of challenges for industry. That said, there are a number of opportunities that Yukon tourism has been able to tap into.

One only has to look to wilderness tourism. I just had the opportunity to spend some time with them at the recent AGM of the Wilderness Tourism Association of the Yukon. Many of the tour operators recorded record successes. The fly-drive market that I refer to where individuals fly into Whitehorse via Air North or via Air Canada is up significantly and looking to many of our operators here in the Yukon who provide rental campers and motorhomes -- that market has been doing all right in the last few years as well, so there are a number of bright lights.

Again, our convention incentive travel meetings and marketing initiatives have been doing very well. We are quite excited about the Canada Winter Games, as I mentioned, and the fact that we are going to be going to be undertaking a very comprehensive marketing initiative of the north, which very much includes the Yukon, front and centre. We look forward to the net results, which will be felt almost immediately after the games. The actual campaign will be running right from February, through the games and afterwards. There will be additional exposure about the Yukon as a place to visit and so on.

I also wanted to make reference to the motorcoach traffic. That has been up significantly in the last few years. We are very pleased to be able to work with a number of different operators who are making efforts to expand their time in the Yukon. A couple of things are really exciting. The train is coming back to Carcross, starting in May, I believe. There will be about two trains a day, and that will result in well over 20,000 passengers coming to that area over the next few

months. The opportunities that will accrue from that particular initiative are great. It will be great for all Yukon, because it raises the awareness and exposure of the Yukon as a destination.

The other thing is Condor and its commitment to continue to come to the Yukon. Condor recently made an announcement. I have lost track of time, but they have just agreed to expand their flights to the end of October next year, so that will certainly increase the passenger loads to the Yukon as well.

In terms of what other initiatives we are working on, as I mentioned we have the Canada Winter Games, which we are really excited to be able to showcase. We are also -- most important, I should note -- taking the lead and direction from industry. I make reference to the Senior Marketing Committee that was struck about three years ago, just soon after I was elected the first time. The Senior Marketing Committee is comprised of a number of individuals who hold a great degree of marketing expertise and experience. We take strategic direction and recommendations from them as to how we can improve the delivery of our tourism marketing programs.

One only has to take a look at the tourism strategy for the long term -- for example, 2003 to 2005-06, as well as our annual reports that we table usually at the AGM of Tourism Industry Association each and every year. These reports also outline the proposed return on investment. Effectively, what we table every year is literally a report card on whether or not we met those targeted projections or, if we haven't, then we go back to the drawing board and we redirect resources to get a better return on investment.

So, again, we have a number of great initiatives that have been effective. Just coming out of the Senior Marketing Committee there were a number of recommendations, including recommendations for strategic investments in a number of different areas -- in particular, media relations, Web site enhancement and familiarization tours. We have significantly increased dollars pertaining to each of these over the last couple of years. In fact, for the Web site enhancement, we recently issued an RFP to take a look at our Web site -- that was touryukon.com. It was just awarded to a local firm -- Outcrop Yukon, I believe it was -- for \$600,000 over the next two years. So, you can well appreciate that the Web site is increasingly becoming the number one tool for visitors to tap into to form their travel planning decisions.

We're really pleased that a local firm has been chosen to undertake this work. It is also interesting to note that this same business is also involved in the national marketing campaign. They won the work for that as well. So there is going to be a lot of continuity. We are very pleased at being able to build capacity in our own backyard.

As I mentioned, we have been able to significantly increase resources to media relations, as well as providing resources to enable a number of familiarization tours to take place throughout the Yukon. These tours take place throughout the Yukon each and every year. I don't recall the actual numbers offhand, but I think it's for every dollar that we in-

vest, we get almost \$10 back when it comes to familiarization tours/media relations. Those are very good investments.

The tourism cooperative marketing fund is a new fund that we created almost two years ago. As I mentioned in my supplementary address, it is very well-received by industry. We have been able to leverage over the last couple of years almost \$2 million' worth of private sector investment. That is funding that is specifically available for tourism businesses, governments and organizations to be able to properly package and market their particular products. So whether that's right here in the Yukon, or if it's the Town of Faro wanting to showcase Farrago, for example, or Whitehorse residents or otherwise, or even a tour operator wanting to showcase their particular product to German-speaking Europe, this particular fund is available for that.

It has worked exceptionally well. We've received a lot of accolades from industry and we're always looking at ways to go back to the drawing board, take a look at the terms of reference and make them more applicable to businesses -- and it has worked very well.

The scenic drives campaign, which I also mentioned in the supplementary, has worked very well over the years too. We are almost near completion designing and numbering several scenic drives. Again, we have worked with each of the communities along the specific drives to provide the products, whether that be an overview of festivals or of products, or an overview of accommodations and so forth. It's all there on the actual Web site. It has worked very well.

The Web site, coupled with an interactive e-mail cooperative marketing program as well as a significant chunk of those dollars -- perhaps almost two-thirds of those dollars -- is designated toward interpretive signage. We've been able to significantly invest dollars and increase those resources to ensure that people who are travelling on the highways have more opportunities to take that extra time and learn about the region through interpretive signage along the highways, not to mention additional pullouts, outhouses, and picnic tables, all of which we benefit from.

As the member opposite will recall, we were able to kick off the new Yukon tourism brand strategy, "Larger than Life", earlier this year and we are slowly but surely implementing the brand into most of our marketing campaigns. We're executing that. We're also working with the business community and other governments, as well as our own government departments here, to execute that campaign. As we speak, there are a number of highway signs being worked on that will incorporate the new tourism brand strategy, including the new sign to go up at the Whitehorse International Airport.

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We have been able to increase resources to our convention bureau to support sports tourism initiatives. That was specifically to lead up to the games, with preparing bids for test events. With the conclusion of the games coming up fairly shortly, there are additional dollars. It's almost \$50,000, on top of the \$200,000 that we have provided in the past, and will continue to be used for sports tourism initiatives. We are really pleased about that. There are a number of great opportunities ahead of us in terms of sports tourism.

We continue to work with our air partners, such as our gateway cities promotions. One only has to look at Air North, for example, and the member opposite would know very well about the great benefits that have accrued from Air North and their employees and their efforts over the years to showcase the Yukon to the rest of the country. They have done really great things. We have been able to partner with them through this particular program, which is \$200,000 a year, as well as through the tourism cooperative marketing fund, and they have also been able to benefit from those different funds to showcase either the \$199 feature or the gateway getaway promotions in Vancouver, Edmonton or Calgary.

As a result, we have been able to see actual physical increases in that particular market. I think we really do need to perhaps enhance our efforts within our own country to raise awareness about the Yukon and the north in general. I think that there are future opportunities to work with our sister territories, whether on winter tourism or other particular initiatives, given our success so far with the national marketing campaign.

In his ministerial statement today, our Premier spoke about how we are soon going to be able to benefit from an increase to the small business tax deduction limit from \$300,000 to \$400,000 commencing January 1, 2007.

That initiative, plus the actual corporate tax rate deduction from six percent to four percent, will have a significant impact on small businesses in the Yukon. It will leave more disposable income in their hands to subsequently reinvest in the growth of their business. It also will encourage businesses to establish a presence in the Yukon, leading to even more employment opportunities.

There are various funds also available through the Department of Economic Development. There are many different funds that I could certainly elaborate on, but it looks as though I have just about run out of time. It appears that I have another minute here.

I am getting to the GST rebate program. I'm sorry I've just about run out of time, but hopefully you will allow me some more time to elaborate on that. The GST rebate program was perhaps one of the top two or three issues that was raised recently at the territorial/federal/provincial tourism ministers meeting. This is the first time that we actually had the opportunity to meet in three years, and we had some very good discussions. There is not a question in my mind that when we left the meeting the federal minister was fully aware of the concerns at hand, and he has endeavoured to make the commitment to raise this with his federal Cabinet colleagues and take a look at it again.

I am hoping -- and I know that industry is hoping -- we are all hoping across the country -- that the federal government will take another look at this.

Mr. Elias: I guess the question is, Mr. Chair: what can we do to help the industry and protect an industry that has been very lucrative for the Yukon economy?

To close out the discussion, I leave the minister with these suggestions. With regard to the federal cuts to the GST rebate, maybe we could conduct a quick cost analysis and find some solid figures for what this means to the Yukon industry so we can consider the option of the Yukon government incurring the six-percent GST rebate. That in turn may buy us some time in light of how quickly the federal government responds to this -- to develop other strategies to alleviate the disadvantage to Yukon tourism operators.

I think we need to develop a short-term plan to entice potential visitors to visit our Yukon and to stay for awhile, especially within the North American market and in anticipation of the upcoming summer season.

Focusing on a domestic marketing strategy between October and March could be one method that brings other Canadians to experience Yukon, and not only the rubber-tire seasonal market, like the minister mentioned earlier.

As the minister mentioned, the market is up significantly with regard to jet service. So, maybe just to put this on the minister's radar screen -- to increase the passenger loads, let's say, farther north to Dawson City and even farther north with regard to jet service would require the upgrading of the Dawson City Airport to accommodate that service. That in turn

could possibly bring tourists from the North American market directly to Dawson City. That way they don't have to worry about the fuel prices for driving all that way. I would ask the minister to have the department consider that.

On a bigger picture issue, maybe the department would consider -- obviously being new here in the critic role, I don't know -- a cost-benefit analysis with regard to visitation statistics -- how much money is the department spending on getting tourists here? I'm basically asking for an analysis of the bang for our buck. Are we getting the bang for our buck?

Another point to mention is that Alaska was known as the last frontier before it was even a state. I'm not quite sure or convinced, for that matter, that the tourists recognize that the "Larger than Life" brand we have means they're headed toward the Yukon. A Yukon tourism re-branding may be in order. I'm not sure how often that occurs. I've heard comments from Yukoners that that might not be an effective approach, so maybe the department can look at that again.

Finally, my constituents in north Yukon have been working on and participating in consultations as part of the north Yukon tourism plan. It has been developed for many years and my constituents are looking forward to the finalization and implementation of this plan. They're excited that its implementation will utilize our water, land, wildlife and culture, sharing that with visitors and putting a showcase forward on our terms so visitors can experience the grandeur of north Yukon.

I'll leave the minister with those final suggestions and comments. I'd like to thank her, again, for being very thorough and going line by line, explaining what was under each line item. I thank her for her time today.

Hon. Ms. Taylor: The member opposite raises a number of good questions, and that is why I take the liberty to take the time to explain what the department has been working on. The department is a pretty busy bunch of individuals working on some very good initiatives.

Getting back to the GST rebate program, one of the things that was discussed at the recent ministers meeting was that perhaps part of the impetus to eliminate the whole program altogether was the very fact that the federal government was only looking at the three-percent uptake of the program by individuals. While that three percent doesn't sound like much, I think the federal government failed to look at the 100-percent uptake by conventions and group tour operators coming over here. That significantly skews the numbers.

So, as I mentioned, when we left the meeting there was a clear consensus among all provincial and territorial ministers that the federal minister responsible for tourism in this country go back to his Cabinet colleagues in Canada to look at this program again and that, yes, there are probably ways of realizing efficiencies -- as was the mandate of the federal government, which led to this particular decision -- but that there are a number of ways of perhaps looking at delivering the program. I know that Tourism Industry Association of Canada recently met with the federal minister, as well as the federal Minister of Finance, and they gave him a proposal as to how they could deliver the program but, more specifically,

as to whether or not there was any consideration -- and this is what we were urging the minister to do -- to look at providing the six-percent continued exemption for group tour operators for the purpose of marketing conventions, meetings, incentive travel and so forth.

I think that I remain quite hopeful that something good will come out of these discussions and efforts that industry has been undertaking over the last little while. It is important to note that it's not just the removal of the GST but also the removal of the PST that was offered in other jurisdictions. We in the Yukon are very fortunate that we don't have that. I hope we never have that.

It is the six-percent reduction, as I mentioned. We are working with the federal government and our provincial and territorial counterparts to address that very matter.

In addition, as I mentioned, there are a number of different funds available to assist businesses to provide marketing of their own individual business here in the territory, and so forth. We will continue to work with industry. Again, it's really critical that the member appreciates that the department and I, in particular, endeavour to work very closely with industry. I do take a lot of the recommendations that they send my way with respect to how we spend our marketing dollars. I think that we have had a very good working rapport over the years. I have a lot of admiration for those individuals involved on the SMC and through TIA Yukon. It is these individuals, after all, who work in this business day in and day out. They have the expertise and experience needed to provide the most effective programs we can that will deliver an appropriate return on investment.

In terms of the member opposite's request for an undertaking as to whether or not we are getting the bang for our buck, I think we, again, have to take a look at the individual reports of areas we invest in and we need to work very closely with our Senior Marketing Committee every year.

We do endeavour to ensure that our programs are going where the money is most needed and that it does result in the proposed return on investment. I think we are already doing that.

As you can appreciate, there are a lot of different ways of determining whether or not a program has succeeded or not. But, at the end of the day -- it's very technical -- that's what we have our department for and they do a great job at really getting down to the fine details as to how much a visitor has spent and how many days a visitor stayed here, and if the program really delivered on the desired results that it was intended to deliver.

Again, I think we are already doing that. One only has to take a look at the actual reports to see that.

There have been programs offered in the past that have worked. Some haven't worked. If there is anything I have learned, it's that this industry, in particular, has shown it has been able to be very resilient to all these changes and there have been massive challenges before industry over the last number of years.

We have been able to take the lead from industry so, if it is the desire of industry to perhaps redirect changes to our

program objectives, we will take a look at that and see how we can better deliver the program. That is the intent and that is our commitment to Yukoners to ensure that we have a good rate of return on visitors but also that we have the appropriate spending yielded to our operators as well.

What we are seeing is that, even though there may be a reduction in visitation, we are also seeing a different group of clients coming to the Yukon, as I mentioned, because of demographic changes, different trends in travel patterns, and we are seeing different needs.

There are a number of different new businesses coming about that I have to commend. One is actually in the riding that the member opposite represents -- the bear-viewing opportunities at Bear Cave Mountain for example. What a wonderful product. Again, that has been grassroots-driven by the First Nation itself.

There is a very high-yield return on the product. I haven't actually seen it first-hand myself, but I have certainly heard it is outstanding. I hope to get out there very soon.

Another product is the Great River Journeys project. It was just recently on the news. There was a little bit of talk about that. Again, that is another great collaborative effort between Yukon First Nations and private industry. I think it is really great to see that we are garnering new quality products that will result in a whole new target market for the Yukon. I think that, yes, while we have to continue to build on our weaknesses, we also have to forge ahead with the development of new products, raising the bar in terms of standards for doing business in the Yukon and so forth.

The member opposite made reference to the Yukon tourism brand strategy, and there was a fair amount of debate in this Legislature, especially between the previous Member for Klondike and I, about this very issue. As I relayed at that time and I'll relay again, it doesn't matter what you and I think, it really matters what the individuals Outside -- those who potentially want to visit the Yukon -- think.

A great amount of research was done during the development of the new tourism brand. It had been some years since we actually reviewed the brand, so we actually undertook that the last year. We launched it earlier this year, just a few short months ago. While I can appreciate that perhaps there may be different brands out there that may appeal to you and me, the important thing is that there was a great amount of research undertaken that led toward this particular brand.

There was a great amount of focus testing in our key international markets, as well as the national and U.S. markets, with respect to the brand. I don't have the figures right in front of me, but I believe it was overwhelming -- almost 80 percent of those tested -- that they very much agreed and were strongly in favour of the proposed brand. More importantly, it was the Senior Marketing Committee, in partnership with Tourism Industry Association of the Yukon, that requested we initiate this new tourism brand exercise. So we dedicated \$200,000 toward the research and actual implementation of the final brand, which we launched earlier this spring.

The Senior Marketing Committee was involved throughout the whole initiative, and they were pleased with the process and, I believe, pleased with the end result. The key is that the brand will only be as effective as we want it to be effective. That is, the more that you and I and all of us in the Legislature can grasp the brand, the more that industry will adopt the brand and execute the brand throughout all their marketing endeavours, the more that even municipalities and First Nation governments will incorporate the brand, the more marketing reach we have with the brand.

So in terms of re-branding or getting into a new initiative, seeing that we just conducted a very comprehensive initiative -- probably the most comprehensive initiative we've ever undertaken in tourism's history here -- it's probably not likely that we will go here again for another five years. It could be sooner. We'll have to take a look and monitor the success or perhaps the failure of the brand over the years, but it probably won't be any time soon.

Again, as I mentioned earlier, it's great to see that our various departments are looking at executing the brand. That starts with our highway signs, right through to the Department of Health and Social Services incorporating our brand into its marketing campaign to attract health care professionals to our communities. The employees who work at the liquor stores, for example, wear shirts with the Yukon brand. It's all up to us. The more that we can promote the brand within and outside the territory, the better off the industry will be.

Mr. Edzerza: Well, after listening to this, I don't know if there's much more to talk about today. I know that I want to thank the minister for the information provided.

I am going to touch on another subject that has produced pretty hot debate over the last few days. It has to do with the closing of lodges on the Alaska Highway and other highways in the territory. It appears from the line of answering over the last few days that the government doesn't really consider this an issue. I certainly tend to believe that it is a black eye for the tourism industry. It has to be. There's no other way that it can be interpreted as a positive side of anything.

I just want to put on record that after hearing an elder talk this morning on the radio, it was heart-wrenching to hear the elder say that 30 years of her contribution to the tourism industry in the Yukon ended with a kick in the pants.

I found that very emotionally upsetting, actually, because 30 years is a lot of time to contribute toward making the Yukon a nice place to travel. I know from experience that I have more than once dearly appreciated getting to a lodge at some point in time when I needed to have a rest. I look at this new tourism information guide that was put out by the Yukon government where it says, "Yukon Larger than Life." On page 5 it starts out by saying that on Yukon roads and highways, driver fatigue and being tired can result in an inability to judge speed, distance and traffic conditions. The sun stays up much longer in the north, so don't wait until dark to stop.

In the meantime, it appears we don't have a problem if there are no lodges to stop at. I think it might not be as det-

perimental in the summertime as it is in the wintertime. The wintertime is when those lodges are dearly needed and they need to be supported. I think the tourism industry supports everything else under the sun. Surely they must be concerned about lodge owners. They have to be; it's part of the tourism industry, as far as I'm concerned. A lot of these individual lodge owners not only do a good service to the tourism business but a lot of them are very colourful people and they have a lot of nice stories to share with tourists. That's all part of the Yukon history. We can't get away from that.

So, we not only lose some of the colourful five percent, as individuals and their personalities, but we also lose them as business people in the territory.

Now, even as recently as today, we talk about how we support small business. What do we consider lodge owners? I think they fall right in that category. The question I'm going to ask the minister is: will the minister make closing of lodges known to her travellers before they come up the Alaska Highway? Are you going to advertise also that there are a number of lodges closing due to the fact that the Yukon government feels they're really not a necessity? And maybe the minister can convince her colleagues, with luck on her side, I might say, to make sure no more of these lodges close. I know Swift River is another one that's in jeopardy. I would encourage the government to try the very best they can to ensure that every possible thing is done to assist that individual. We tend to assist many others in this territory, and I think to exclude them is a sad state of affairs, really. So I just want to hear comments from the minister on what effect you feel this will have on tourism in the Yukon.

Hon. Ms. Taylor: Mr. Chair, I am very familiar with the importance of highway lodges to the economy of the territory. As the member opposite pointed out, yes, there are a number of colourful characters behind each of those operations. Having been born and raised in the Yukon, being from Watson Lake -- I am very proud of it, by the way -- I also recognize the many challenges faced by highway lodge operators. As I mentioned earlier, there are a number of trends, changes, in our travellers' patterns over the years.

I think that it is very important, as the member opposite mentioned, that we spend millions of dollars marketing the Yukon to the rest of the world and to the rest of the country. We market it and have become recognized as a destination that is safe and that is secure. We have good service. We are recognized for a lot of quality attributes. That is really what is behind this "Larger than Life" brand. It's about recognizing the large, wide-open spaces, and it's about recognizing the characters who are larger than life, and we have a number of them. It's also about recognizing that we have safe and reliable services for our visitors.

I think that it is safe to say that both Yukon residents and visitors who spend the dollars to come to the territory expect, deservedly so, that the services they use along their travels are safe and do not pose a risk to their health.

The Minister of Health and Social Services has been speaking to this issue over the last number of days, and I just would make reference again to the fact that when we go out

to promote the Yukon, we are there to promote a quality experience and safe and secure travel, first and foremost. If we don't have that, issues resonate throughout the travelling public that will have far more damage than any good media marketing campaign. It is important that we recognize that and I believe that the Government of Yukon has been very amenable to working with our respective operators to ensure that they are aware of programs available to assist them with these challenges and that we fix these problems so we can continue to have quality products available to our visiting travellers.

Mr. Edzerza: I know with respect to this issue that one time I would have agreed there was an abundance of lodges, but I don't believe that to be the case today. That is why I raise the issue of how important it is to really, really support lodge owners as much as possible in the future.

The next area I wanted to go to was the waterfront development because we all know in the Yukon, and especially in the City of Whitehorse, how important that is going to become to tourists who come to the Yukon. I would like an update from the minister as to where the waterfront development project is really at. Does the minister have any information on the status of the Kwanlin Dun cultural centre on the waterfront? This is not meant to put the minister on the spot or be any kind of a trick question; it is just more for information purposes.

I know there may be some elements of this particular issue that may not be in the purview of the minister to deal with. It may fall under the minister responsible for First Nation relationships. I am not 100 percent sure on that, but if the minister can provide some information with regard to the Kwanlin Dun cultural centre and why it appears to not be moving, I would appreciate it.

Hon. Ms. Taylor: The future of the Whitehorse waterfront and proposed development is a very exciting and a great initiative indeed. I think that, as I have clearly articulated over the last couple of years, our government recognizes the very importance of developing that waterfront but more so ensuring that any future development reflects the needs and aspirations of the citizens within our territory and complements the work already done or currently underway by other respective governments and individuals along the waterfront.

So, given the very importance of the waterfront to the territory, we endeavoured to undertake a broader consultation with the public last summer, which resulted in almost 1,000 people taking part in the process, including business, organizations and residents at large. I believe we publicly released the report on November 15. I thought the report was very well done. It contains a number of guiding principles for consideration and has a number of different areas that garnered some consensus among the public. As one can well appreciate, there is a whole host of different views as to what could or should be developed on the waterfront.

Again, as we can appreciate, anything that is to be developed is a complex process. Any planning or proposed developments that transpire on the waterfront must be consistent with whatever other initiatives are going on in that

area. I know that there has been some desire to perhaps see a theatre on the waterfront or even a public library or community space. That was something that came as a bit of a surprise to us, but what a great concept in terms of a multi-use space that would be available to each and every person well past 5:00 p.m.

At the end of the day, the development of the waterfront is complex. It will require some time. Waterfront development will require some fiscal management, comprehensive planning and working with the respective stakeholders and orders of government. We will need to look into further opportunities for continuing community input as well. I see this as a great opportunity to work with our counterparts and identify further consensus. It will also be an opportunity to provide a comprehensive site amenity analysis. For example, if we are looking at bringing the train back to Whitehorse, whether tomorrow or 20 years down the road, we will need to try to figure out what the waterfront will look like then. What are the requirements for the train coming back, and so on?

We need to accommodate that. So, not just looking to plan for tomorrow or even next year or five years out, really this is kind of our first comprehensive opportunity to do so. So we're very much continuing to work with stakeholders and all citizens to ensure that some of the ideas outlined in the report are thoroughly reviewed and assessed before proceeding with any development or before anything is realized on the waterfront.

That said, though, there has been a significant amount of things going on, on the waterfront. I think one only has to take a look at the site improvements, infrastructure associated with the community or the Canadian strategic infrastructure funds that were approved about a year ago or two years ago, in which approximately \$19 million have been funded through the Yukon government, the other half being funded through the federal government. Some monies are also flowing from the City of Whitehorse and Kwanlin Dun First Nation, as I understand it. Those are great improvements. Those are basic infrastructure requirements. We've seen the wonderful improvements along First Avenue and how that's going to serve as a catalyst for further development of the waterfront. It's going to set the stage. We've seen lighting improvements and remediation of soil, which I understand, with respect to the Kwanlin Dun cultural centre, is a really important undertaking. That will serve as one of the main anchors on the waterfront.

We are very excited about the initiative. We know that Kwanlin Dun has identified this as perhaps one of the top priorities of their government, and we certainly remain committed to working in partnership with Kwanlin Dun First Nation to see their vision for a cultural and heritage centre on the Whitehorse waterfront become a reality.

What information I do have at my fingertips is that we have been able to undertake a number of initiatives to assist Kwanlin Dun in helping them to achieve this vision. Some of those things include the original purchase of the waterfront parcels from the City of Whitehorse, and also the provision

of over \$1 million toward the planning and development of the cultural centre. We have also provided some dollars toward environmental remediation of the property.

As I mentioned before, Kwanlin Dun First Nation has also been very much involved in some of the strategic planning surrounding the dedication of the funds associated with the CSIF funding project, and that is the \$19-million project along the waterfront.

Through the Public Service Commission we have provided some funding for the training of future cultural centre staff, so that is available through the government's First Nation training corps program.

Every effort will continue to be made to ensure Kwanlin Dun's participation on other projects that may be developing on the waterfront. They will be very much involved and we will be working alongside them as well.

That is the information I have at my fingertips. I hope that addresses the members opposite's questions.

Chair: Is there any further general debate?

Seeing none, we will proceed to line-by-line consideration.

Mr. Edzerza: I request the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all lines of Vote 54, Department of Tourism and Culture, cleared or carried, as required.

Unanimous consent re deeming all lines in Vote 54, Department of Tourism and Culture, cleared or carried

Chair: Mr. Edzerza has requested the unanimous consent of the Committee to deem all lines of Vote 54, Department of Tourism and Culture, cleared or carried, as required. Are you agreed?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Chair: Unanimous consent has been granted.

On Operation and Maintenance Expenditures

Total Operation and Maintenance Expenditures in the amount of \$1,110,000 agreed to

On Capital Expenditures

Total Capital Expenditures in the amount of \$521,000 agreed to

Department of Tourism and Culture agreed to

Chair: Do members wish to take a recess?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Chair: The Committee will recess for 15 minutes.

Recess

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

Department of Economic Development -- continued

Chair: We will continue with Bill No. 3, *Second Appropriation Act, 2006-07*. We will be discussing Vote 7, Department of Economic Development.

Hon. Mr. Kenyon: I believe that we were talking about economic diversification last time. I wanted to make the members opposite aware of one area that has been very successful in terms of diversification. The Department of Economic Development, in order to facilitate sustained growth in the film and sound recording industry -- the Film and Sound Commission has actually undertaken three studies to fully explore the economic impacts and potential of what we consider these strategic industries.

The first one was a study to assess the gap entitled "Below-the-line crew positions". This was done in July 2005. If anyone is not familiar with the term, "below-the-line" refers to non-starring cast roles, technical crew and others who arrange travel, locations and catering -- the sort of thing that is in support of film production. A Yukon contractor interviewed producers and production managers of major productions who had filmed in the Yukon to more accurately ascertain the health of the Yukon film crews. This report found that the major weakness in the Yukon below-the-line crew is the general lack of experience and the technical ability to consistently meet the needs of producers, particularly on larger productions, longer productions or multiple productions filming concurrently in the Yukon.

We were able to really identify some of our needs in there and address our training strategy in those areas. We also looked at a study from cottage industry to global business. This was an economic impact study that looked at the level of investment around March 2006. The strategic industries branch was involved in that and a consultant was engaged to study and assess the expected economic impact for a 10-year period, resulting from specific strategic investment in infrastructure to develop the capacity of the Yukon film industry.

This study identified two barriers to growth in the Yukon film industry: insufficiently trained and experienced workforce and a lack of studio space available for a production. Based on the analysis, though, a Yukon film industry with an experienced, well-trained workforce and studio space could provide, over the next 10 years, a projected \$83 million in direct Yukon spending, a \$120-million value of film production, a \$53-million increase in GDP and, potentially, as many as 1,100 full-time equivalent jobs. It would require about \$1.7 million in professional training, and our goal is that the studio could be built with private investors.

We actually have started talks with several groups who are looking at that as a possibility. Another study, entitled "Economic Impact of the Yukon's Sound Recording Industry", was done in October 2006 and again with our partners in strategic industry branch, a consultant was retained to evaluate the economic benefits to the Yukon of the music industry and Yukon. We got some rather interesting statistics out of this. The industry contributes roughly \$2.7 million to Yukon GDP in 2005 dollars. Approximately 190 full-time employee positions are supported by the Yukon music industry. The music industry reported approximately \$8.3 million in revenues in 2005, and received roughly \$2 million in grants and other government sources, approximately

\$600,000 from Outside sources and \$1.5 million from Yukon-based, the vast majority of that being the government funders. Ninety percent of funding dollars reported went to service providers, while 10 percent went to the artists. So we have to recognize some of the deficiencies there. Almost 80 percent of artists reported that their total revenues were under \$10,000 in 2005, and about 50 percent of our service providers also fed into this category. So it's a young and growing industry, but it's a very vibrant industry and one that we want to promote and support.

In expenditures in 2005, the music industry reported approximately \$8.9 million in expenditures, and roughly two-thirds of all music expenditures were inside the Yukon.

So, we're looking at research in terms of the industry and what direction we're going in and what marketing and training is needed, but we're also looking individually at that marketing, training and facilitating production.

Some of the things the Yukon Film and Sound Commission was involved in, or did, over the last little while include: we've hosted the Yukon International Film Festival, which screened 39 films and had 3,500 participants; we were privileged to host 25 guests, including producers, directors, media, talent, a distributor and a broadcaster, and the international film industry professionals were hosted from France, China, Great Britain, the United States, as well as Canada.

We worked with 45 volunteers who helped us out with that, and we facilitated seven panel discussions and three workshops. I would direct the members opposite and anyone listening to the Web site: yukonfilmfest.com.

The Web site of the Film and Sound Commission "Reel Yukon" was basically revamped with 45 new pages of information, and we've produced a 2006-07 production guide in partnership with the Northern Film and Video Industry Association. This important marketing tool is available online, and it's also available in book form from the office.

We reinstated the Yukon Film and Sound Commission with the Association of Film Commissioners International, which gives us a very wide range of contacts across Canada and worldwide, so we are very well positioned to continue our good work in that area.

Partnering with the business and trade branch of the Department of Economic Development, we are able to send 25 Yukoners to eight training opportunities ranging from the Banff International Film Festival to the Mannheim co-production meetings in Germany. With our partners in the strategic industry branch of the Department of Economic Development we were able to partner with Northern Native Broadcasting Yukon to create the Yukon First Nation film and television production fund to facilitate opportunities for aboriginal filmmakers.

Some of the projects that we have been able to bring to fruition and completion include a National Film Board production entitled *River of Life*. A one-hour documentary for the National Film Board is currently in post-production. Yukoner, Werner Walcher directed that.

Another production entitled *Survivor, Alaskan Rafters* was filmed in August 2006 by Darlow Smithson. Australian

television crews were here and filmed in July 2006. *Angry Planet* filmed one full episode in the Yukon in July 2006. Another episode entitled *Best of America by Horseback* was filmed in July 2006.

A German documentary film: a film crew was on Herschel Island for eight weeks during the summer of 2006, so we've been moving them all over the Yukon Territory. Another one that has completed production recently and is now going over what they've done is entitled *Anash and the Legacy of the Sun-Rock*. This is a Yukon-Alberta co-production, filming six 30-minute episodes, directed, written and co-produced by Yukoner Carol Geddes. This production will hire approximately 90 Yukoners and by the time they've left they will have pumped about \$1.7 million into the Yukon economy.

My understanding is they may well be back next year to film another six 30-minute episodes. This is an interesting technique where everything is done with -- I've always called it a "blue background", but this one was green for obviously technical purposes. It's all done with the actors against this green background and then the rest is done by animation in Edmonton, so what comes out is a blend of live acting and animation. Of course, Canada is the world leader in animation today in our technology in this country.

Whistler Creek in November -- just a couple of weeks ago -- shot a BMW commercial on the Haines Highway, so they've had a presence here.

Of course, the one commercial that I think is starting to wear thin on everyone is the Trimark commercial, where the car is racing around a lake. There is an obvious heavy-duty Bay Street or Wall Street type of investor asking, "Who else but you Finns need winter tires" and he storms off, and the other guy looks with binoculars and says, "That's Russia, isn't it? What a huge market." That was filmed up at Fish Lake. I can't remember the exact figures on that, but it is one that has showcased the Yukon quite a bit.

On the horizon, what are we looking at with the Film and Sound Commission? I use it just as one good example of the economic diversity that we are working on. *Out in the Cold* is a six-part TV series that has the green light for production by the Discovery Channel Canada. Yukoner Tookie Mercredi will co-produce with Ontario-based Reel to Reel. The production manager is currently in the Yukon finalizing locations for the production office, so they are moving all of their production here.

Wall to Wall UK scouted the Yukon in October for a six-part gold rush series. Wall to Wall has submitted their production budget to the financiers. They are awaiting the final green light for production, anticipated to occur over eight weeks in Dawson City in the summer of 2007. That will move up into your part of the world, Mr. Chair.

Northern Town has the green light to develop 13 additional episodes. If the scripts are acceptable to CBC, production could begin in August 2007. We don't have that in stone yet, but we are certainly moving toward it. We also have a three-part miniseries in development with CBC, which will be done by Yukoner Andrew Crowther.

Yukoner Celia McBride has received Bravo! channel support for production of her short film *Last Stop for Miles*.

Yukoner Marten Berkman has received APTN support for his one-hour documentary *Wild Waters, Sacred Places*.

We also have three other Yukoners awaiting word for broadcasting support for their projects. This gives you an idea of the broad spectrum of what we're working on in just this one area. One of the things that we have to recognize -- and the department has recognized since the days that we redid the Department of Economic Development, rising out of the ashes of the previous governments -- the infrastructure, and getting that infrastructure in place, is very critical. If you think of this as sort of a pyramid, at the top is where the wealth production starts and you start actually getting the product coming out of it. We're very rapidly getting to that point, but we still have to look at a large percentage of this in terms of developing infrastructure, developing the capacity in getting people trained up to be able to work in the field. The challenge, of course, once we train these people is to make sure that there are ongoing productions that are going to keep them working. We are very pleased with the good work of the Film and Sound Commission on that.

I will remind members opposite that we're talking about the business and trade branch, the strategic industries branch and the regional development branch.

When you start looking outside of the Film and Sound Commission and start looking at some of the training in other areas and what's on the horizon, you have to look at what we're doing to attract business, what we're trying to do to develop the business, to retain the business of course, and then gradually expand it. We have facilitated a good deal of trade and export with the work of the business and trade branch. It was very heartening to have one film crew come in. I was very honoured to be invited to join them the night they flew in from Los Angeles -- half from Los Angeles and half from Vancouver. It was interesting. After we got over the initial horror when they realized that their cellphones didn't work -- and this was months ago. They still wouldn't work now, but that's another story. At least they could get some cellphones that would be functioning. Before I could even question what they were doing, the executive producer cornered me and said, "I want you to know that we are not here scouting a location. We are here to establish the location and where we're shooting. You brought us up on a familiarization tour last year. You flew us around and showed us what the potential was. We're bringing the production crew up here from Los Angeles and Vancouver because of what we saw, and it's that familiarization tour that did it."

Again, it was kind of nice. It was completely unsolicited but sometimes we have to look at these familiarization tours, which are basically run through business and trade, to show people what we have to offer.

We also have the business incentive program, which allows us to give an incentive to Yukon businesses in their contracting and in their work. Under the SUFA mobility agreement -- the social union framework agreement -- Canadians have the right to work anywhere in Canada and you

can't, for instance, go to Quebec, Prince Edward Island or Newfoundland and be told that the jobs are for local people and not for you as a Yukoner. The same works here. If someone wanted to come, they could bring in a crew from Outside and we would have no really significant way to stop that.

The approach of the government over many years has been to incorporate the business incentive program, which pays an incentive for them to hire Yukon employees. It's not a huge investment in the overall pattern of things but it certainly is a way we can get the people to utilize the businesses, employees and training here.

The other thing done within business and trade, which is topical to the Member for McIntyre-Takhini's comments earlier, is that business and trade has the ability to meet with anyone who has an existing business or a business they want to develop or expand, to work with them to develop a business plan to allow them to take that business plan in its proper form, ready to go, to a funding agency -- to a bank or whatever. This is all available. Granted it is only part of the argument when we are talking about highway lodges, but it certainly is a part of the argument.

In checking this morning, I find that not one highway lodge has approached us on that to even ask questions about how this could be done. I would encourage anyone listening and the Member for Kluane who, for some strange reason, didn't see this as his function, to encourage people within their constituencies to come in and have a chat, because we could probably come up with something that is going to work, as long as the business case is there and there is a viable thing to work with on that.

So, again, this is an overview of some of the broader parts of what Economic Development is trying to do and how we're trying to diversify the economy.

Mr. Cardiff: Well, I'd like to congratulate the minister on burning the clock up -- he's doing a fine job of that. Actually, I suppose there was a little bit of a link back to the question. The minister should have read the Blues. Basically, the question I asked and that he was responding to yesterday was -- and I'll ask the question one more time. What is the minister doing to promote these funds in the various regions of the Yukon, as opposed to what he just talked about? He didn't talk about promoting the regional economic development fund. He didn't talk about promoting the enterprise trade fund or the strategic industries development fund. He didn't talk about that. He talked about some of the things that have happened.

But what I want to know is what the minister is doing in Watson Lake, Teslin, Ross River, Faro, Mayo, Dawson City, Beaver Creek, Burwash, Destruction Bay, Haines Junction, Carcross and Teslin to promote these funds so that local people can have access to them and we can have local businesses created there. That's what I would like to know.

And, along with that -- and this is my final question because I know the minister is going to talk for 20 minutes and then it will all be over. I would also like the minister, at this time, to provide a legislative return. I'd like the number of

applications for each fund, how many were accepted, the dollar value of those applications, and what economic benefits have accrued to the Yukon public from the money disbursed from those funds.

Hon. Mr. Kenyon: The member opposite missed Keno City, which, interestingly enough, is a very vibrant community. We hope Elsa will soon be moving up into that category when that mine starts coming on-line. All funds are available to all communities. In fact, the regional branch puts the regions and the communities into a better situation, because Whitehorse businesses can't access the regional funds, whereas the regions can access those and all other funds.

Let's look at those regional funds. Every time he asks a question, the answer usually is that I didn't answer it, so let's look at it in detail. Business and trade, again, is export development. It can be for many of the communities, such as marketing, promotion, events planning, filming in the small communities, or whatever. It is to keep a stimulated and positive business climate. As I say, it involves all communities. It also looks at the potential for economic immigration. That has just started to develop, but it is certainly under the purview of this branch and its good work. We look at a variety of different ways of doing that.

First of all, there are inbound business investment and trade missions. These are groups coming in, whether they want to see a facility in Watson Lake or Ross River, or whether it's a Chinese investment group that we get up to the Howard's Pass area or is another group that looks at Dawson City, or wants to look at filming in the beautiful Southern Lakes -- wherever. We also look at export promotions and ventures and put groups in touch with potential export markets. Again, that can be from Whitehorse or anywhere else. It can be anything from Aroma Borealis, which involves both Whitehorse and the surrounding area or any one of a number of things.

We also look at external trade shows, exhibitions and events.

That's all part of this -- to keep it as a positive business climate at all times. We have an on-line business directory and exporting database. We have a presence in the Canada Export Centre in Vancouver on Hastings Street, which does draw some business and it also provides us with office facilities and production of seminars and that sort of thing. We look at investment attraction; we look at a wide variety of these things.

Regional -- the member is most involved in that. Again I'm reminded that if the members look on the department Web site, they'll see a fair amount of information in English, German, French, Mandarin, and I think there's also Japanese. We're looking at a wide variety of areas: the trade shows, the geoscience show, the gold show in Dawson City.

We have meetings with TIA and the chambers of commerce.

The other thing we have to look at in all of that is the fact that we work very closely -- and this is particularly true with regional economic development -- with not only the communities but with the First Nations. I found it quite inter-

esting last weekend that one of the things that's always interesting about this job, although sometimes frustrating, is the fact that it's a small jurisdiction; you can't go anywhere without somebody stopping and asking a question. I was stopped three different times by people from your home community, Mr. Chair, who had great praise for their regional economic branch of our department. We're very much involved in that.

We're also looking at a partnering arrangement to assist with training -- although I think we'll get a great deal from it -- from an employee of the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in First Nation. We're looking at a much closer relationship there.

When you start looking at the budget breakdowns and such, again, the big regional problem that we have is capacity, and to go out and start looking at one little individual project becomes very difficult. What we have to do is be able to get there and to work with the First Nations and to work with the community to make sure that they are able to take advantage of the opportunities that they have on that, be it research and innovation or policy and regulations, and again, physical infrastructure. We need that physical infrastructure in order to have those things go ahead. So once we have those enabling factors and we can begin to look at the support, then we get to the top of that pyramid, which is where we can actually start working with individual programs.

One of the controversies for the member opposite and his great interest in regional economic development -- and I hear the Member for Mayo-Tatchun over there yelling "clear" repetitively; often he has more to say than that. So perhaps he would like to listen and actually get something out of the debate.

What role does regional economic development play? We can work with the industry in partnerships and with the First Nation partnerships. We have to create certainty for the industry by strengthening those First Nations' ability to successfully engage in economic development. People have to recognize that while we have capacity problems within the Yukon government, the smaller First Nations have those problems magnified. We have to work together, and we have to recognize the fact that often, in some areas, that First Nation has more capacity than we do. So it's a two-way street.

When we can look at working together, one of the first controversies that we had with the regional economic development was some communities felt that we should put a regional economic development officer into the community. We fought against that trend for a couple of different reasons, not the least of which is it pulls that development officer out of many of the areas that he or she can be working in and doing more in.

It also allows them to look at a much wider range of what they have in their tool chests, basically.

So, the decision was to keep those people centrally but to let them know right from the start that they are going to be developing a huge amount of frequent-driver miles. This is a branch that is on the road constantly and is constantly moving.

It is frustrating from our point of view sometimes to find them but, now with the improved cellphone service, I'm sure that will help dramatically.

How do we move the projects from enabling to a wealth-generating process? Really, we have to look at, again, that infrastructure -- look at the structure of the individual development corporation, First Nation, municipality, or it could be at any level or order like that. Once we can get that relationship going and recruit board members and undergo training and get the people ready to go, we then have to look at what is going to be necessary to support them. That could be in terms of helping with office staff, putting them back into business and trade, to produce better business plans and better information that could then go to funding agencies -- be that development banks, First Nation banks or Dana Naye Ventures, or any of those. It becomes wealth generating, of course, once we get to that point.

It is also very important to remember here that there is a geography here and communities as a place, or people and the projects, really often can be looked at in a much wider range, and these groups can get together and do things that are quite good.

In terms of that regional aspect and bringing the groups together, what drives those projects, and what are we trying to accomplish and what is going to happen as we accomplish it? For instance, if we know that there is a mine going to come on-line and we know there is going to be something happening in the next two, three, four or five years, we have to be talking to other departments and looking at other ways of getting these groups together.

We recognize that because of the fact that Economic Development didn't exist substantially three years ago, really; three or four years ago we should have been talking with Community Services, we should have been talking with Yukon Housing Corporation, and we should have perhaps been a little bit faster in developing lots, because as we look at economic drivers that are going to bring in additional employees, they're going to need housing, support services and all these things. We might even have to develop a road a little faster.

We recognize the fact that due to the previous government dismantling the Department of Economic Development, we may have some functional problems there.

But in terms of other mines coming on-line, be it Howard's Pass -- it's certainly one that's there -- Mactung, Red Mountain. A number of them are coming on-line, and Energy, Mines and Resources has to be part of this matrix in order to work together and know exactly where that's going to go.

With all of this, we have to look at job creation and, once created, how do we retain these people? How are each of these businesses going to expand? How are we going to retain the wealth in the area? It makes no sense to generate wealth that suddenly just simply goes out the door.

We have to look at reduction of poverty in these areas and the economic stability that's going to bring success to each individual community and give them economic self-

sufficiency and to diversify the economy in that individual area.

Some of the things we will certainly be looking at -- for instance, we will be looking more at getting information out on government programs, job postings, announcements and all the rest of the stuff. We will be taking a look at exactly how that does get out into the communities and how it puts some wealth back into the community, as opposed to simply supporting one or two businesses in Whitehorse that are looking at distribution into the community. I would rather put it into the community and, as a good example -- not to interrupt the conversations going on all around me here -- if I might continue. Thank you.

The Member for Mayo-Tatchun says I'm not allowed. Well, he hasn't really listened to much of anything I have said anyway, but hopefully he can read the Blues, due to our good educational system.

Chair's statement

Chair: Order please. I would like to remind everybody that Mr. Kenyon does have the floor and we are debating Vote 7, Department of Economic Development, and we would like to remind everybody that we shouldn't personalize debates.

Hon. Mr. Kenyon: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

One of the good examples of that is what is happening in the beautiful Southern Lakes. One of the good things there is that they developed a newsletter. The newsletter is presently produced quarterly; it is produced on-line; it has started to take on a good amount of advertising. A few hundred dollars to a business in Whitehorse really wouldn't mean much, but a few hundred dollars monthly to that newsletter to allow it to publish monthly and to publish more advertising and to distribute better in that area, to that community that would be an economic driver. Those are the sorts of things that we will be looking at in the future.

We could carry that to all of the extremes: from a small radio station in the community of Tagish to newsletters in Faro, the *Klondike Sun* in your own riding, Mr. Chair. All these things can be helped out in many, many ways that will allow us to fulfill the things that we have to do, and should do, but do it in a way that derives local benefit.

It is those local, regional economies that we are looking at, and we have to now determine where we are going and how we are going to get there. We have been building on this work for two years; we have been developing the capacity; we have developed the relationships; we are putting a really strong focus on supporting direct-wealth generation, but now I think the emphasis has to go more in that direction. We have to work with all the First Nations and I think, at the same time, we have to take a look at what the First Nations have to offer us because it is a two-way street.

We have to focus on being ready for that capability -- not only the major projects, but also for the small projects. I think we are at that point right now.

I hope that gives the member opposite a better overview of the regional economic development. I won't go into the

strategic development, which is still mostly in the regional areas. One we are working on right now includes everything from lower Laberge to the Pelly area to, again, a strong involvement in Dawson. Things are starting to come together and the infrastructure is starting to come into place. For that, I certainly commend the department for their very good work in the field.

Chair: Is there any further general debate?

Seeing none, we will continue with line-by-line debate.

Mr. Cardiff: I would request unanimous consent of the Committee of the Whole to deem all lines in Vote 7, Department of Economic Development, cleared or carried, as required.

Unanimous consent re deeming all lines in Vote 7, Department of Economic Development, cleared or carried

Chair: Mr. Cardiff has requested the unanimous consent of the Committee to deem all lines in Vote 7, the Department of Economic Development, cleared or carried, as required. Are you agreed?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Chair: Unanimous consent has been granted.

On Operation and Maintenance Expenditures

Total Operation and Maintenance Expenditures in the amount of \$10,000 agreed to

On Capital Expenditures

Total Capital Expenditures in the amount of \$2,994,000 agreed to

Department of Economic Development agreed to

Chair: The Committee of the Whole will now come to order. The matter before the Committee is Vote 11, Women's Directorate.

Women's Directorate

Hon. Ms. Taylor: Mr. Chair, it is indeed my honour and privilege to speak to the *Supplementary Estimates No. 1* for 2006-07 for the Women's Directorate, and a privilege to be back as minister responsible for the Women's Directorate.

As you will recall, Mr. Chair, our government took it upon ourselves to reinstate the Women's Directorate. Over the last number of years, the Women's Directorate has been engaged in a number of various initiatives and many accomplishments, whether they be with respect to health initiatives, women in economics, violence prevention, women's equality issues, gender equity initiatives, aboriginal women initiatives, general public education or initiatives surrounding women in poverty.

Today we are here to speak to the supplementary budget for this current fiscal year. The Women's Directorate operation and maintenance budget will be increasing by \$50,000. This increase is being provided to Yukon Family Services Association for expanded services to young women through the Outreach van, which was presented within a joint submission in partnership with the Department of Health and Social Services.

As members will recall, there was a tremendous amount of discussion and consultation undertaken with a number of organizations on the Yukon substance abuse action plan. It was through those discussions that it was determined that this certainly was one of the priorities identified among the women's community. As we know, there are many associations between women at risk -- particularly young women at risk, especially women who are 25 years and younger -- and interaction with problems related to substance abuse.

It is for those very reasons that the initiative to provide enhanced dollars to the Outreach van for the specific purpose of providing outreach services for those young women at risk was done in partnership with the Department of Health and Social Services. We are very pleased to be able to provide the \$50,000.

That concludes my remarks.

Mr. Elias: Just very briefly, there have been some federal cuts to some national women's organizations across the country, including the possible closing of the B.C.-Yukon office. What is the minister doing about those federal cuts?

Also, in my response to the Speech from the Throne, I recognized that it was a priority of my community of Old Crow to have a full-time family and children support services professional being resident in Old Crow with a long-term funding commitment. When things happen in my community where professional services are required, especially for young women and children in our community, someone has to be flown in from either Dawson or Whitehorse. There is no continuity; there is no face of a professional person there all the time.

Again, the statistics with regard to aboriginal women and violence against aboriginal women are three times that of the national average. I am just wondering if the minister will commit to or consider providing full-time professional family and children support services in my community of Old Crow.

Maybe just give a general overview of community safe houses around the Yukon -- the services they provide. Those are the only questions that I have.

Hon. Ms. Taylor: Getting to the discussions surrounding the recent announcement made by the federal minister responsible for the Status of Women Canada, as I have spoken on a number of occasions over the last week, I view the proposed reductions as effectively a step backwards in time. I view them as nonsensical, and it is very unfortunate that the federal minister chose to target this particular area for the sake of efficiencies.

The Status of Women Canada was established back in 1974 to bring about attitudinal shifts in Canadian people for the very purpose of furthering and ensuring women's equality. Over the years I think that Status of Women Canada, under the leadership and guidance of the 16 regional offices that have been established throughout the country, and in particular the B.C.-Yukon regional office, has been very instrumental in providing funding as well as a lot of research tools to assist women's organizations to advance women's equality in Canada.

I know that over the years, recently with the help of our combined funding -- I make reference to a new initiative that the Women's Directorate developed about three years ago -- and that is the aboriginal women's violence prevention initiatives, we provide \$100,000 in funding for aboriginal women to create projects to address violence in their communities as they deem most appropriate.

We have been able to work through the Status of Women regional office in Vancouver -- the B.C.-Yukon regional office -- and we've been able to use our funds to further leverage those funds using their funds. With the help of combined funding and support made available through both of our respective offices, I believe that many, many women's organizations have made great strides toward raising awareness about the issues of the day and also about the need for reaching equality, again by bringing issues of importance for women to the forefront, including violence, as well as poverty. So, the \$5 million funding reduction to the Status of Women Canada will, in my eyes, undoubtedly have an effect on these steps forward.

The other issue that is of great concern is the proposed changes to the guidelines of the women's programming initiative, which is currently administered by Status of Women Canada. As I understand, the proposed changes to the guidelines will effectively eliminate all reference to lobbying, advocacy work and so forth. I view that as a step backward for the very sake that it's really the job of women's organizations to advocate for change and to raise the issues of importance to women, particularly women in our society who may not be able to do so for a number of reasons.

So as minister responsible for the Women's Directorate, I have written a couple of letters to the federal minister, impressing upon her the importance of this particular office and urging the government to maintain the collaborative structure of the Status of Women Canada and to also reinstate funding for women's equality work, and that includes advocacy, lobbying, et cetera.

Recently when the word actually finally did come down, I also asked our officials in the Women's Directorate to request a conference call of provincial and territorial ministers to discuss these very changes. I also asked, and this has gone back a ways now, for a conference call including the federal minister. It was very unfortunate, but when we had our recent meeting for federal, provincial and territorial ministers responsible for the status of women back in October, I believe it was, I unfortunately was not able to participate in that meeting because of the election. But when they did have that meeting, I understand that the business on the agenda was not concluded because the federal minister was not able to stay throughout the duration of the meeting. That was a rather large disappointment. So we have been asking her for some time to convene a teleconference call or a videoconference to conclude the business that was unfinished from the last meeting and to also talk about these proposed reductions in funding.

There has also been, I know, a movement afoot that, if the federal government is not willing to budge or move its

position, we have made it known that perhaps the federal minister should be looking, instead of reinstating the B.C.-Yukon regional office, to have an office for the north. It just makes a lot of sense, between our respective territories across the north. I think that there is a lot of impetus for having such an office because of our unique situation, our geography, the number of issues confronting women in the north and, as the member opposite referred to a while back, the degree of violence in our communities, particularly toward aboriginal women.

There are many aboriginal women in the north. I am hoping that we will be able to convene that conference call in due time and I look forward to the opportunity to discuss, hear some of the rationales and perhaps make the case known that this is not acceptable and that we need the federal government to rethink its position.

In terms of what we are doing, as I mentioned, ever since we reinstated the Women's Directorate a few years ago, which was one of our platform commitments from the last election, we have been engaged in a number of different initiatives. Violence prevention is clearly one of the top priorities in the Women's Directorate. As members can appreciate, there are a number of initiatives underway to address violence in our communities. We have certainly been looking at new, creative and innovative ways to address violence in our communities, working in collaboration with women's organizations and First Nations women.

I will refer to a number of initiatives that we have been engaged in with aboriginal women on violence prevention. As I referenced earlier, we have now invested some \$300,000 in violence prevention initiatives, such as the aboriginal women's forum on violence that was held awhile back, as well as a number of different contribution agreements with aboriginal women's organizations and others throughout the communities to address violence in their respective communities in the most appropriate manner, whether that's building capacity in terms of building peer support networks or raising awareness through public education, and so forth. I believe these funds have been utilized very effectively and have been very well received.

We have also supported a number of women in leadership initiatives, such as the aboriginal women in self-governance policy forum that was held a couple of years ago, as well as land claims training for aboriginal women, which was developed by Legend Seekers. We have also implemented a new position within the department to liaise with First Nation women throughout the territory, and so forth.

Those are just a very small degree of the very many initiatives that we are involved in and have been very much involved in. As well, we have been working with our partners through CORE -- Circles of Respect and Equality -- on a long-term public education campaign on violence prevention. I made reference earlier today in our tribute about the photo-journalism exhibit to be showcased, and that certainly is part of it. We have been raising awareness in specific areas of violence but, again, we are trying to go about it in different creative ways to raise awareness -- talking about what a

healthy relationship is, how we can support women who are suffering from abuse, providing the supports and working effectively through our policy objectives with our front-line service deliverers -- those being primarily the Department of Justice and the Department of Health and Social Services.

That leads me to the next area that the member opposite made reference to, and that was, I believe, the family services worker. I can't comment directly on that because that would be of more relevance to the Minister of Health and Social Services. They provide many front-line service deliverers of many worthwhile programs and that would be housed within their domain.

But, again, as part of the next phase of the public education campaign on violence prevention, one way of being able to reach out further into the communities and help build capacity in providing front-line workers and people at large to support women in these particular situations is to perhaps look at developing a video -- a comprehensive and professional video that engages Yukon women of the north who have been experiencing domestic and family violence; again, just providing tools and building the capacity in the communities as to what resources are available and how to address and support women in violent situations, so we can be better able to let these individuals know what exists and how we can each assist these individuals.

With respect to the safe houses, it's an ongoing issue of concern. Again, as the member opposite made reference to, just building upon making more resources available in our communities is of great importance to our government.

As the member opposite knows full well, we have a number of women's shelters in our communities: Dawson City, Watson Lake, and here in Whitehorse. In Ross River, we have the Majedi House, as well. And we are engaging with the women's community, as well, to look at other possible venues for providing safe houses or safe homes, safe places in the communities. As you can well appreciate, this is a difficult, complex issue given the very smallness of our communities and the number of individuals who may reside in our communities.

It's easier said than done, but providing a safe place in our communities and how to keep that place safe when everybody in town knows where that safe place is -- it's an issue that everyone wrestles with. We are actively dialoguing with the women's organizations and our existing shelters just to see what other routes we can pursue to provide more resources in our communities.

Mr. Cardiff: Mr. Chair, I'll be brief. Actually, we should all be attending an event right now, but I'll ask the minister a quick question, and if she can't respond, I'd appreciate a legislative return as soon as it can be provided. My recollection from the Women's Directorate budget debate in the spring, or something that came out from the Women's Directorate, was that the Women's Directorate was going to go around to communities and women's organizations and ask them how to best spend the money that is allocated in the budget, which is close to -- or a little over -- \$1 million now.

What I would like to know is the outcome of those consultations and what the decisions were.

Hon. Ms. Taylor: Thank you very much for the question. As I mentioned earlier this year in debate, there is great merit in going around to our communities because each community is very diverse and has diverse needs and requests; it is not simply a cookie-cutter approach.

One of the things we endeavoured to do was work with our Yukon Advisory Council on Women's Issues, YACWI, to see if we could, instead of having an annual women's forum like we had the last couple of years -- but because of the Canada Winter Games and other logistical problems, we made the suggestion that perhaps we could each go to our respective communities and consult with those communities. That discussion has begun as of this fall; those discussions are far from being complete though. Hopefully within the next few months those discussions will have concluded as well. Because we are very much engaged with YACWI and members were moving on their timelines -- the timeline of respective communities -- it is very important to the women's community and very important to me, so that we can better address some of those issues in our communities. Hopefully that addresses the member's question.

Mr. Cardiff: I would just like to clarify. The point I am trying to make is that I think the most important thing that needs to be recognized here is that we can travel around and talk to people and discuss how money should be spent, but the money must be spent where the most need is. The idea is, again, like Social Services with food allowances and housing allowances: the money should be spent where the need is greatest. Women who are at risk or need services should be provided with those services, as opposed to other activities. I think that is the important thing and I am hoping that it is the purpose of the exercise that the minister and YACWI are endeavouring to accomplish.

Hon. Ms. Taylor: Certainly. We have dedicated initiatives, particularly by way of violence prevention. That comes up categorically. It's one of our top priorities in the Women's Directorate and we feel that money spent in preventing violence in our communities is certainly a great investment and we need a lot more of it.

One other thing that I just wanted to make reference to was with respect to providing funding to women's organizations. For the first time ever, we are actually providing several women's organizations with monies to do strategic plans. These strategic plans will then lend themselves to be able to apply for long-term funding, which is something that women's organizations have been asking for for a long, long time. It is certainly something that is of great importance.

Seeing the time, I move that we report progress.

Some Hon. Member: Point of order.

Point of order

Chair: Mr. Fairclough, on a point of order.

Mr. Fairclough: I don't believe there is much discussion left on this department. Could we move quickly and clear lines on this? If that is okay with the minister, then we don't have to come back to this department.

Chair: Mr. Cathers, on the point of order.

Hon. Mr. Cathers: There is no point of order. The motion has been moved and, subject to your ruling, I believe the motion is in order.

Chair's ruling

Chair: There is no point of order. Ms. Taylor has moved that we report progress.

Motion agreed to

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

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

Motion agreed to

Speaker resumes the Chair

Speaker: I will now call the House to order. May the House have a report from the Chair of Committee of the Whole?

Chair's report

Mr. Nordick: Mr. Speaker, Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 3, *Second Appropriation Act, 2006-07*, and has directed me to report progress on it.

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

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Speaker: I declare the report carried.

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

The House adjourned at 5:30 p.m.

The following Sessional Papers were tabled December 6, 2006:

06-1-4

Yukon Public Service Labour Relations Board 2004-05 Annual Report (Hart)

06-1-5

Yukon Teachers Labour Relations Board 2004-05 Annual Report (Hart)

06-1-6

Yukon Public Service Labour Relations Board 2005-06 Annual Report (Hart)

06-1-7

Yukon Teachers Labour Relations Board 2005-06 Annual Report (Hart)

06-1-8

Yukon Housing Corporation 2005-06 Annual Report (Kenyon)

06-1-9

Public Accounts of the Government of Yukon for the year ended March 31, 2006 (Fentie)

The following documents were filed December 6, 2006:

06-1-4

Queen's Printer Agency 2005-06 Annual Report (Lang)

06-1-5

Property Management Agency 2005-06 Annual Report (Lang)

06-1-6

Contracting Summary Report for Yukon Government Departments (April 1, 2005 – March 31, 2006) and Yukon Government Corporations (YDC and YWCHSB: January 1, 2005 – December 31, 2005; YHC and YLC: April 1, 2005 – March 31, 2006) and Purchase Contracts for Yukon Government Departments (Lang)