

**Whitehorse, Yukon**  
**Tuesday, May 8, 2007 -- 1:00 p.m.**

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

*Prayers*

## DAILY ROUTINE

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

Tributes.

## TRIBUTES

### In recognition of National Nursing Week

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** I rise in the House today to honour National Nursing Week, which is May 7 to 13 this year. This year's theme is "Take a closer look at how nursing is part of your community". This theme emphasizes the vital role nurses play in communities across the country. They not only take an active part in our day-to-day health care, they are at the forefront of public health advocacy. For instance, it was a registered nurse, Lois Scott, who helped develop and champion telehealth. Today, Canadians everywhere have access to expert health advice from professional nurses by telephone at any time of the day or night. Her work has reduced the number of visits to the emergency departments across the country. In the Yukon, telehealth helps Yukoners with everything from continuing education for health care professionals to addictions counselling and therapy services for Yukoners living outside the major centres, and we continue to look for ways to improve this service for all our residents.

Nurses are present in every Yukon community, and they are part of every aspect of our communities. They reassure us that our children are thriving, attend us during surgery and keep track of communicable diseases to help keep us healthy. They work in teams within the bigger health centres, in hospitals and in government, but in the smaller communities they often work on their own and have the responsibility and independence associated with being the sole health care provider and the primary contact.

Outside their professional duties, nurses volunteer on community initiatives such as the Breast Friends committee that fights against breast cancer and with agencies such as Hospice Yukon. They take emergency response training to be able to respond to disasters at a moment's notice. They offer up their service for community initiatives such as the Canada Winter Games and set up initiatives such as sock drives to help the Outreach van be supplied with warm footwear for the clients it serves.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues in the House to join me in paying tribute to the Yukon's nurses; they are truly one of this territory's greatest resources.

Thank you.

**Mr. Mitchell:** I, too, rise today on behalf of the Official Opposition to pay tribute to National Nursing Week. Na-

tional Nursing Week runs from May 7 to 13, and always includes May 12, which is the anniversary of Florence Nightingale's birthday and International Nurses Day. The theme for 2007, as the minister has stated, is, "Think you know nursing? Take a closer look at how nursing is part of your community."

National Nursing Week recognizes the important role that nurses provide to our health and community services system. It allows us an opportunity to draw our attention to the significant contributions our nurses make to the health and well-being of all Yukoners. They deserve recognition and our thanks, not only during National Nursing Week, but every day of the year.

We recognize and value all our nursing professionals from all levels of health care, including registered nurses, nurse practitioners, certified nursing aides, licensed practical nurses, community health nurses, flight nurses, public health clinic nurses, long-term care facility nurses and home care nurses.

In rural communities, they are always on call, the one everyone goes to, be it day or night, for daily health issues. Having lived in a rural community for 20 years prior to moving to Whitehorse, I know first-hand how vital a role nurses play in rural Yukon. Rural Yukoners may have much more frequent contact with a nurse than with a doctor. In our family, most of my wife's prenatal care was provided by the Red Cross outpost nurse who served in Atlin during the 1970s. She was also the person who provided the first medical care following accidents in that community, and she sometimes was even called upon to provide veterinary services.

Nurses play a vital role in our lives and we rely on them to be there to care for us, to give us advice, to educate us on healthy lifestyle choices, to be compassionate and to comfort us. The nursing profession is a cornerstone of our health system. It is challenging, emotionally demanding and yet one of the most rewarding professions.

Nurses also take time out of their busy schedules to give back to their communities by participating in many of our volunteer organizations and community events. Approximately 50 Yukon registered nurses volunteered as medical personnel at sporting events and at the athletes village during the 2007 Canada Winter Games. We thank them for their participation and offer our congratulations on a job well done. On behalf of all Yukoners, please accept our heartfelt appreciation for your dedication, your contributions to our health, our families and our communities. Thank you for being there.

**Mr. Edzerza:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of the third party to pay tribute to Yukon registered nurses, nurse practitioners, certified nursing aides and licensed practical nurses. May 12 is the birthday of the mother of nursing, Florence Nightingale, and it is International Nurses Day.

In Canada, we also celebrate this week as National Nursing Week. The women and men in this demanding field of medical practice are saluted today for their dedication, competence and compassion. This is not an easy profession to work in, with the current shortage of staff at every level. Nurses face hard physical work, long hours and serious decisions about life-threatening situations. Despite the difficulties, their first concern is the interest of the patient.

In the Yukon, the Yukon Registered Nurses Association is active in education and promotion about nursing and disease prevention. It approves nurses for licensing and monitors standards of practice. They have long promoted the seamless health care system and point out the advantages of a collaborative clinic system to alleviate the demands on our health care in the Yukon. We trust that this will not be too long in being realized.

We take this opportunity to thank all people working in the nursing field for their energetic support of our health. Without them, all our lives would be much more difficult.

### In recognition of National Mental Health Week

**Mr. Edzerza:** It is with pleasure that I rise on behalf of the Assembly to pay tribute to National Mental Health Week. Mental illness is not an easy issue for many of us. In the past, if anyone did something we found too unusual, we locked them up and hoped we were keeping them from harming themselves or others.

Fortunately we now have a more enlightened approach to behaviour that is not what we determine to be normal. Modern psychiatry and pharmaceuticals have gone a long way toward stabilizing mental health patients. Awareness and education programs give us a clearer picture of the causes and issues surrounding mental illness.

Still, the tendency is avoidance, both for the individual concerned and for his or her community. Only one in five people with a mental illness ever seek help, and part of the reason is because society does not have a tolerant attitude toward this health problem.

Mental illness is a product of a complex of influences in a person's life. Disturbances can come from social, emotional, biological, genetic, psychological or chemical influences. Good mental health comes from a healthy balance of these factors, which, in many cases, are uncomfortable.

A very serious example of this is the repercussions that First Nations are now dealing with from traumas experienced in residential schools. The federal government is in the process of making payments to affected individuals and MPs have unanimously apologized to aboriginal peoples, but this is not enough. To help correct the tragic mental health legacy of residential schools, there must be secure long-term funding of mental health initiatives that are culturally sensitive and supportive of aboriginal families and communities.

The relationships between addictions, violence, sexual abuse and poverty must be understood and acted upon with greater resources, both financial and human. It is in all our best interest to support a more proactive response to individual and community mental health.

**Speaker:** Are there any further tributes?  
Introduction of visitors.  
Returns or documents for tabling.  
Reports of committees.  
Petitions.  
Bills to be introduced.  
Are there any notices of motion?

### NOTICES OF MOTION

**Mr. Nordick:** I rise to give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to continue to implement and expand its very successful decade of sport and culture initiative and Best Ever program by increasing its investment through the bilateral agreement with Sport Canada to enhance:

- (1) athlete development;
- (2) rural and aboriginal participation;
- (3) coaching and development support; and,
- (4) high performance and elite support.

**Speaker:** Are there any further notices of motion?  
Is there a statement by a minister?  
This then brings us to Question Period

### QUESTION PERIOD

#### Question re: Education reform

**Mr. Fairclough:** My question today is for the Minister of Education.

Mr. Speaker, there has been a great deal of questioning and discussion surrounding the education reform project. Clearly, part of the frustration experienced by members on this side of the House surrounds the freedom of the education reform project team to conduct an open and transparent study of Yukon's education system. At times we are told that it is an arm's-length body, free to explore and report on matters that it deems appropriate. There are times, however, when we clearly get the impression that it is being run from the minister's office. My question is straightforward, and I hope to get a straightforward answer.

Is this education reform project constrained in its efforts by direction given to it by either the minister or the Premier?

**Hon. Mr. Rouble:** Mr. Speaker, I'd like to clarify something for the Member for Mayo-Tatchun. The education reform project is not run by this minister or by this government. The education reform project is a cooperation between the Yukon territorial government, the Council of Yukon First Nations and, in addition, the Kaska governments. The members of the executive committee are me, the co-chair of Council of Yukon First Nations' Chiefs Council on Education and the Chief of the Liard First Nation, and we are the group that provides direction to the education reform team. That's how the process works.

**Mr. Fairclough:** Well, Mr. Speaker, the minister could have answered the question instead of weaving and dodging from it. Since the obvious answer should have been that it is at arm's length, the minister's answers only continue to fuel the belief that the project has been orchestrated from within government.

Now, the former co-chair is reported as saying that the team needs to ensure the project is not hamstrung by the department. He also commented that the project is supposed to be at arm's length so it wouldn't be hamstrung. He also said that the project needs to be let go to do its job, and we need to no longer speculate as to why he may have resigned.

This government is manipulating and putting at risk a very important initiative. What is in the position papers tendered by the project team that caused Cabinet not to give approval for the release of the papers?

**Hon. Mr. Rouble:** Mr. Speaker, I will try to be clearer in my responses, so that I'm not accused of weaving or dodging. The member opposite asked me who was in charge. I told him who was in charge.

I am committed to working on this project. I know that the other members on the executive team are committed to this project. We are committed to coming up with suggestions for the Yukon as to how to better address issues in our education system throughout the territory in order to best serve the needs of all Yukoners.

Mr. Speaker, we have a question in process. Positions and recommendations happen at the end of a process. They don't happen in the middle. They don't happen before consultation. They happen when other people have been involved in the creation of them. We work with Yukoners to identify the best solutions for our Yukon system.

**Mr. Fairclough:** Well, the minister wiggled around that question too.

The other co-chair is on record saying that Cabinet approval is required, prior to the release of the papers. So much for open consultation with the public. There are prepared position papers. Cabinet will not allow them to be released. The team is being sent out empty-handed to consult when, in fact, they should be getting feedback on what they have already accomplished to date. It is obvious, Mr. Speaker, that this is nothing more than a cruel hoax. Why not put the papers on the table, let real consultation begin and let Yukoners decide what they want -- not the Premier and not the minister. Will the minister do that?

**Hon. Mr. Rouble:** Mr. Speaker, it would appear that the member opposite has a new thesaurus to come up with such hyperbole.

The issue here is whether or not a position is taken before consultation or after consultation. Positions will be drafted with the consultation and with the involvement of Yukoners. This isn't a process that will see decisions made at the beginning, then taken out and people say that this is the way it should be. No, we are working on a process that is inclusive. It will include the thoughts, ideas and concerns of our partners in education, the stakeholders in education. We want to see Yukoners -- and I invite all Yukoners to participate either in the meetings or in submissions to the education reform team and to share their thoughts and ideas on how to best improve the system. That is what we are all after.

We are all after making improvements to better serve the needs of Yukoners in our schools, particularly those Yukoners in our schools of First Nation ancestry.

#### **Question re: Education reform**

**Mr. Fairclough:** I have a question for the Premier. It's becoming increasingly clear that the Premier does not intend to allow the Yukon public any real input into the education of their children. It is clear that he has left the Minister of Education to take the heat on this issue and will not jump to his de-

fence like he has with the Minister of Justice. The Premier is on record saying, "We the public government are not going to devolve or dilute jurisdiction of public government." Translation, Mr. Speaker: "Governance of education is not on the table."

Will the Premier confirm that his government has taken governance of our education system off the table?

**Hon. Mr. Rouble:** I'll paraphrase here. The member was making comments to the extent that we didn't want to see Yukoners involved in education reform. That is clearly not what I just said. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to invite all Yukoners, the Members of the Legislative Assembly, parents, First Nation people, teachers, administrators and employers to participate in the process. If anyone feels that they have an issue that they would like to bring forward, please share it with the education reform group. That's why they exist. We've created the education reform team to look at ways to better meet the needs of our kids throughout the system.

**Mr. Fairclough:** This Minister of Education doesn't like to answer questions in this House. That's why I'm directing it to the Premier and hope he can stand up to answer the questions.

Chief Joe Linklater, the chair of Yukon Chiefs Committee on Education, has stated that the Yukon Party caucus has concerns relating to the governance recommendations put forward by the team. There were some issues raised in caucus about the presentation made and that some of those changes would have to be addressed and brought back to caucus before being given approval.

Why can't the Premier be straightforward with Yukoners? If he does not want to give Yukoners a direct say in how their children are educated, then he should at least stand up and say so. Then Yukoners will judge for themselves if that is the way they want it.

Will the Premier now do what Yukoners want and table the recommendations and the papers received to date? Will he do that?

**Hon. Mr. Rouble:** Mr. Speaker, yesterday in this Assembly, I went through the list of issues that we're asking the education reform committee to work on and discuss with Yukoners. In particular, one of those very key points was how we can get people at the community level to become more involved in making more decisions at the community level. We've asked them to look at how to create more open lines of communication and meaningful collaboration between the schools and First Nations.

Mr. Speaker, these are issues of importance to Yukoners. They're issues of importance to First Nations, and they're certainly important to the Department of Education. The Department of Education is working on making many of the reforms. We know that these are issues. We've taken steps. We just have to look at the meeting that was held about a week and a half ago that had the Yukon school administrators meeting with the First Nation Education Advisory Council. It was the first time that a meeting like this had ever taken place, but we're taking steps to get people together to work out the common issues and

to try to find ways to go forward in order to best improve the system to meet the needs of all Yukoners.

**Mr. Fairclough:** Well, the minister didn't answer the question. It's obviously a big secret. They don't want to table all the information. Let's try one last question for the Premier. Now, the former co-chair of the education reform project said there were about 32 position papers on various aspects of our public education system. They shared information both with the Yukon Party government and Cabinet and Yukon First Nations. They hoped that with that input they would formulate and publicize those papers to go into public consultation. Now, Mr. Speaker, it's clear; the intent was to do as we have been suggesting all along: to put these 32 pages and papers into the public realm for meaningful consultation. Will the Premier, who campaigned on wanting to be open and transparent, table the 32 papers before much harm is done to this project and to education in general?

**Hon. Mr. Fentie:** Mr. Speaker, seconds ago, I heard the Member for Mayo-Tatchun mention the fact that this is all a big secret. Then he subsequently goes on to say that there are 32 position papers -- some secret, Mr. Speaker.

The government side is not in the dark on what the member opposite and the Official Opposition are up to here. Let's put this on the record for clarity. If the Official Opposition in this House wants to devolve or dilute public jurisdiction to another order of government, stand up and say so. But, for clarity's sake, this government, a Yukon Party government, will never devolve public jurisdiction, and that's our position.

#### **Question re: Education reform**

**Mr. Cardiff:** We now know that this government has decreed that it isn't prepared to discuss governance as part of the education reform process. At the same time, they've made up a list of where most of the discussion points for the latest round of consultations with the public touch on that very issue. Now, it seems strange that they are sending out a team to discuss things that folks in the corner office upstairs don't want to discuss. It begs the question: what is the point of this so-called consultation? We have to ask the minister: what will the minister's response be if this latest consultation shows that governance is still a concern for the public? Will he put the issue back on the table or is he going to ignore it again?

**Hon. Mr. Rouble:** The whole function of education reform is to find out what better ways that we, as the Department of Education, can provide a public education system to all Yukoners. That includes Yukoners of First Nation ancestry, Yukoners who speak French, and Yukoners who practise different religions. We have an opportunity here to meet with Yukoners to find out how to best change the system in order to have students who do better, who go on to have greater opportunities in life now and down the road.

The members have probably seen the *What We Heard* document that highlighted many of the issues, and many of the issues do involve how we involve the community and the parents in the decisions that affect their kids. That's what we are asking the education reform group to go back out and clarify. We already have an *Education Act*, which creates significant powers for our school councils.

What is up with our system? Are there issues out there that we need to change? Do we just need to make people more aware of their powers and responsibilities on a school council? I could go on, but I see my time is up.

**Mr. Cardiff:** Over the past two years or more, at least three First Nations have been preparing to exercise their right to draw down the responsibility for education under their self-government agreements. They've notified the minister they want to negotiate. He's supposed to reply within a limited time frame.

What resources has the minister assigned to these negotiations? What progress can he report, or is he going to continue to stick his head in the sand about a serious issue that First Nations have pursued in good faith?

**Hon. Mr. Fentie:** This is quite a shocking display by the third party which, throughout history and former NDP governments, was at the very front of the land claim process, negotiating the very point the member just tabled here in this Legislature.

Mr. Speaker, if any First Nation formally exercises its right to inform the government of the day -- Yukon and Canada -- that they want to proceed with a program and services transfer negotiation, whatever that may be, as long as it is within the confines of the *Umbrella Final Agreement* and the final agreements, we are obligated to proceed. It's not a question of resources; it is a question of three parties -- Canada, Yukon and the relative First Nation -- sitting down and negotiating the program and services transfer agreement. That's one of the reasons why this government will never devolve public jurisdiction.

Let's be clear: our education system in the Yukon is a public education system. It's not focused on one sector of our population or one constituency. It is for the public at large, and we intend to reform the system to teach children. I challenge that member to explain to Yukoners how governance teaches children.

**Mr. Cardiff:** The Minister of Education talked about participating in the process. It's about First Nations and the public participating in the education system. There are only three options for governance of education: maintain the status quo; act in good faith to develop some kind of shared powers; or let things drift toward two or more separate education systems.

We're waiting to hear which option this government is going to choose. All indications are that they want to cling to the status quo like barnacles on a rusty warship, or something like that.

The government is simply not willing to consider sharing power and control, but that's exactly what the *Umbrella Final Agreement* and self-government agreements are all about. The struggle over power and control permeates many areas of this government, not only in education and not only with First Nations.

For the Premier: when will the Premier and his ministers start honouring the spirit and intent of the final agreements, instead of continuing on a path that can only result in division and disharmony?

**Hon. Mr. Fentie:** Actually, the only area where there is division and disharmony is in the opposition. They don't even understand the agreements that were negotiated by the NDP and former federal Liberal governments. That is where the division and disharmony is present.

Mr. Speaker, how can the member stand on the floor of this Legislature and accuse the government of not involving First Nations? The whole process is set up with a joint steering committee, with co-chairs. The principals of this process, the reform process for education, are chiefs and the minister of the government -- the three principals providing direction. That is the sharing of decision making. That is the partnership we have created. However, what the members are suggesting here -- and I noticed they are careful to skirt around the edge and not stand up and reveal their real position -- is the devolution of public jurisdiction. Let's once again for the members' benefit repeat that we the Yukon Party government will never devolve public jurisdiction. We are a public government to represent all citizens. If the members opposite have the position that they would, stand up and say so.

**Question re: Asset construction agreements on First Nation land**

**Mr. Edzerza:** Now that we have the Premier on his feet, maybe we'll keep him there.

I have a question for the Premier. Chapter 22 of the *Kwanlin Dun First Nation Final Agreement* deals with economic development measures. Section 13 requires the Government of Yukon to conclude an asset construction agreement with the First Nation if it intends to construct an asset worth \$3 million or more within the First Nation's traditional territory.

Why is there no asset construction agreement between Kwanlin Dun and the Yukon government with respect to the Hamilton Boulevard extension, which is worth much more than \$3 million?

**Hon. Mr. Fentie:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I will try to be as accommodating as possible, given the question. The member knows full well why there isn't. It is because it is a joint investment. It is not an asset of the government. It's an asset of the City of Whitehorse, which is investing in the project.

One-third of that investment is coming from the Government of Canada, which requires that we also honour and live up to their contracting regulations and obligations. The third investor is the Yukon. The only time that this portion of the agreement is in force and effect is when the Government of Yukon is the sole investor in a project that is a capital project for the Government of Yukon. That is the time when we will be involved with the Kwanlin Dun First Nation on any project in their traditional territory from \$3 million and upward.

The member knows full well that we have already established a memorandum of understanding in that regard.

**Mr. Edzerza:** The asset construction agreements are supposed to provide economic benefit to Kwanlin Dun citizens and firms when the government builds major capital projects within Kwanlin Dun traditional territory. Section 13.1.1 of chapter 22 says that an agreement is only required where the Yukon is the sole proponent of the project and the sole owner of the asset. We know that. I have a great concern that this

government may be promoting the City of Whitehorse as a proponent to avoid having to negotiate an agreement guaranteeing economic benefits to Kwanlin Dun First Nation or firms.

What criteria apply when the government is determining who will be considered a proponent? Is there a dollar threshold, or is there some other measure used to decide when an asset construction agreement is not necessary?

**Hon. Mr. Fentie:** Well, I understand now the problem the member faces. As a minister of this government at one time, the member was involved in an agreement with the city that guaranteed the city would contribute over \$3 million to this project. I'm not sure why the member is asking the question. He was present when the agreement was signed and agreed to.

**Mr. Edzerza:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm just glad that I saw the light at the end of the day.

My concern is that this government can easily get around this requirement in the *Kwanlin Dun First Nation Final Agreement* by naming a third party as a project proponent. We know this government is a fan of public/private partnerships, or P3s. If the government can use the City of Whitehorse to get out of an asset construction agreement on Hamilton Boulevard, it's not much of a stretch to see them using private sector partners as a way to avoid involving the First Nations in the future. Is it any wonder that First Nations don't buy this Premier's fancy talk about his great relations with First Nations?

Will the Premier give his assurance that he won't use third party partners as a way to avoid involving Kwanlin Dun on major capital projects within their traditional territory, such as the long-delayed replacement for the Whitehorse Correctional Centre?

**Hon. Mr. Fentie:** Mr. Speaker, the member mentioned that he has seen the light and he's very pleased about that. I can tell you, so is the government side.

I'll make sure the City of Whitehorse knows that the third party now considers their \$3-million-plus investment in a second access to the region -- and it's called the extension of Hamilton Boulevard -- a public safety measure. I'll make sure the city understands that that investment means absolutely nothing to the third party. I'm shocked the third party would actually put on the floor an option, a suggestion, to get around the law, the policy and the regulatory regime the government must follow. Maybe the Official Opposition and the third party should get together and have some sort of symposium on what "law" really is.

**Question re: Alaska-Yukon railroad feasibility study**

**Mr. Mitchell:** I have a question for the Minister of Economic Development about the long-delayed railroad study. In April of 2005, the Yukon and Alaskan governments agreed to study the feasibility of constructing a Yukon-Alaska rail link. Since that time, a report has been produced and \$2.35 million of Yukon taxpayers' money has been spent. The report, however, has never been released. In January of this year, the Premier told a local paper that he had invited the Governor of Alaska to meet him in Whitehorse so they could release the report together. It is now May and the report is still not released.

When will Yukon taxpayers see this \$2.35-million report?

**Hon. Mr. Kenyon:** It is interesting to see that the member opposite is fixated on reports. I certainly compliment him on getting the dollar figure right. We seem to have finally agreed on that rather than his usual firing around on estimates.

It is a joint project involving the governments of Yukon and Alaska. It is only fair and reasonable that both parties have a chance to review that report, come to their own conclusions and release it jointly. We await the Alaskans' pleasure on that.

We honour our commitments. It is an intergovernmental agreement and we will honour those intergovernmental agreements. The members opposite seem to be more fixated on ways to try to get around the law. We intend to --

**Some Hon. Member:** Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

### Speaker's statement

**Speaker:** Order please. The Chair has allowed a fair amount of latitude during this Question Period. Unless members want me more involved in this debate, all members had better govern themselves, because I will continually interrupt if the members carry on in the way that they are carrying on during this Question Period.

Are you finished, Minister of Economic Development?

**Hon. Mr. Kenyon:** I have one final comment on it, Mr. Chair.

**Speaker:** Then make sure it's in order.

**Hon. Mr. Kenyon:** I'll make sure it is in order. We certainly appreciate your comments and I look forward to and appreciate that control.

Thank you.

**Mr. Mitchell:** The report is not being released, because the Premier can't convince the new Governor of Alaska to pay him a visit. Around the same time the Premier's invitation was being turned down by the new governor, an article appeared in the very influential *Alaska Journal of Commerce*. In the article, one of the Alaskans who worked on the report spilled the beans about what was in it. He said that preliminary estimates showed that building the 1,100- to 1,200-mile track would cost \$11 billion to \$13 billion. The new governor also threw cold water on the project.

"While the Alaska Railroad is an important part of the infrastructure in Alaska, a line to Canada is not a priority project for my administration at this time," Palin said in an e-mail." It would appear that the Alaskans have lost interest in this project. When will Yukon taxpayers see the report so they can judge for themselves whether this project makes sense or not?

**Hon. Mr. Kenyon:** I am surprised that the member opposite seems to be able to read the mind of the Alaskan governor and the Alaskan government. We on this side will honour the intergovernmental commitment. We will honour our agreements with that government, and we will proceed and release the report in due course.

I do appreciate that the member opposite brought up that article. Yesterday, I asked for that to be tabled. I thank the member opposite for tabling that. Once again, Mr. Speaker, he tabled page 2 and page 3. Let's see page 1.

**Mr. Mitchell:** Yukon taxpayers have shelled out more than \$2 million to study the feasibility of a Yukon-Alaska rail link. The Yukon Party government has been sitting on a copy of the report for several months and won't release it. The other partner in this agreement, the Government of Alaska, says this is not a priority project; it's on the back burner. If this project ever goes ahead, it will be build by the private sector, not the government. Can the minister name a single private sector railroad company that has expressed an interest in building this project, and can he table any correspondence confirming that interest?

**Hon. Mr. Kenyon:** Again for the member, who missed it the first two times, we will honour our intergovernmental commitments. We made commitments; we will honour those; we will table the report in due course. There has been much discussion with railroads and with private sector in many areas, and the member opposite is quite right: it will be built by the private sector.

Our job is to show the business case, to show the feasibility of that project, where it will go, what it is capable of doing, so decisions can be made in other rounds. Again, Mr. Speaker, I would do much better in answering his questions if he would table the entire report and not continue in his great zeal to only table parts of letters and parts of articles. Table page 1.

**Speaker:** The time for Question Period has now elapsed.

**Mr. McRobb:** I rise on a question of privilege. Thank you for your indulgence.

### Question of privilege

**Mr. McRobb:** I rise today to respond to comments put on the record yesterday by government members. The May 7 question of privilege called attention to a breach of privilege and the powers available to the opposition side of the Assembly. I'm referring to the government's unilateral action to defer general debate without the consent of other members in this Assembly, an action we believe was unprecedented.

Today's question of privilege addresses a furtherance of that breach and a misrepresentation of facts, as presented yesterday. The first item I wish to address is a comment made by the Government House Leader in response to my statement referencing a further reduction in the opportunities available to the opposition side of our Assembly. He called it, "blatantly false".

Mr. Speaker, if I may respond to that, there should be no doubt that removing the opposition's power to hold the Finance minister to account for his responsibilities in the public interest is a reduction of the powers of the opposition side of the Assembly to do its job, and there should be no doubt that, by doing so, it would further reduce the powers of the opposition, as stated on the record on several occasions in past terms in reference to Standing Orders 75 and 76.

Those sections deal with the length of the sitting and how any business remaining on the final sitting day is cut off and passed by what members now refer to as the "guillotine clause". The guillotine clause, in combination with certain tac-

tics deployed by the government side, has, in our opinion, substantially degenerated the productiveness of the House in terms of providing information needed by the opposition side of the Assembly to hold the government to account in the public interest.

I have spoken to former members who were involved in the drafting of those sections, as well as current members. There is a common message that concurs with my point with respect to the degeneration of productiveness in this House. To bring this first matter to its logical conclusion, the powers available to the opposition side of the Assembly were reduced about five years ago, when the Standing Orders were amended. Those powers are being reduced again by this government in its unilateral decision to set aside general debate and instead proceed to line departments before the conclusion of general debate.

I won't repeat yesterday's reasons why general debate is important to the opposition side of this Assembly. That brings us to the comment made by the Government House Leader that my statement was "blatantly false". Mr. Speaker, I would submit that the information you have allowed me to put on the record today has unequivocally established that it is his statement that is blatantly false, not mine, and I expect an apology from the Member for Lake Laberge to that effect.

Mr. Speaker, I would also submit that his use of the term "blatantly false" is in violation of section 19(h) of our Standing Orders, and I would also ask you to make a ruling on that matter, especially in the absence of a ruling at the time from the Chair of Committee of the Whole.

Aside from that, I want to address a more severe matter, which we believe is another blow to our democratic system and a continued reduction of the powers available to the opposition side of this Assembly. In response to my concern, the Government House Leader said, and I quote, "It is a long-established and well-understood practice that the actual order of business in the day is at the call of government. I believe, if members of the opposition take a look at *Hansard* from years gone past, they will see that changing the business and going into departments before general debate has concluded is not without precedent."

Please let me respond to his allegations, Mr. Speaker.

Now, to begin with, this is not a matter of what's allowed; it's a matter of past practice and procedure and, of course, the precedents.

We have taken up the member on his challenge to review *Hansard*. Let me now get on the record the results of that review.

In 1989-90, general debate ended on April 3 followed by commencement of the departments; in 1990-91, general debate ended first, on February 5, followed by debate of the departments; in 1991-92, general debate concluded on November 28, followed by debate of the departments; in 1992-93, general debate concluded first on December 4 and that was followed by the departments; in 1993-94, general debate concluded on May 12 and it too was followed by the departments; in 1994-95, general debate concluded on December 9 and it too was followed by debate of the departments; in 1995-96, general debate

was concluded on January 16 before proceeding to the departments; in 1996-97, general debate concluded on March 25 followed by the departments; in 1997-98, general debate concluded on April 7 followed by the departments; in 1998-99 general debate concluded on March 5 followed by the departments; in 1999-2000, general debate concluded on March 1 followed by the departments; in 2000-01, general debate concluded on March 1 followed by the departments; in 2001-02, general debate concluded on March 13 followed by the departments; in 2002-03, general debate concluded on April 18 followed by the departments; in 2003-04, general debate concluded on April 8 followed by the departments; in 2004-05, general debate concluded on April 26 followed by the departments; in 2005-06, general debate concluded on April 12 followed by the departments; in 2006-07, general debate concluded on April 18 followed by the departments; but in 2007-08, departments began before general debate was concluded.

The facts speak for themselves, Mr. Speaker. As mentioned yesterday, if a previous instance did occur, we are unaware of it. It was likely supported by the opposition side of the House, because it was probably necessary due to credible circumstances such as the illness of the Finance minister or his need to attend a critical meeting important to the public interest.

There was no such reason indicated by the government side, and it would appear his decision to defer general debate before its conclusion is purely a matter of his own convenience to avoid questions that could only be asked in general debate.

This House should not condone such self-serving reasons at the expense of the opposition doing its job to hold the government accountable in the public interest. Just this morning, I asked the Government House Leader if he could provide any evidence to support his claim that deferral of general debate was practised previously here. He failed to provide any such evidence and commented that he didn't have time to research *Hansard*. Well, Mr. Speaker, as put on the record, we did find time to research *Hansard*, and it's clear that there was no previous practice.

Therefore, we are concerned this government's unilateral action is precedent setting, and we are not prepared to simply roll over and play dead and allow the Finance minister to duck his responsibility to this House simply because he doesn't want to answer our questions.

In his response, I would request the Government House Leader to appreciate this point. He further commented that he didn't believe this would be an issue for the opposition members. Mr. Speaker, to make such a precedent-setting decision to further weaken the opposition's powers without even first conferring with the opposition side of this Assembly is not in keeping with the new era of cooperation we heard so much about in the fall sitting. In fact, if I could be blunt, it reveals more government arrogance.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

### Speaker's statement

**Speaker:** The Chair requests that the honourable member allow me to take this under advisement. I will come back with a ruling on this question of privilege. However, if the

Member for Kluane would have allowed the Chair to read the ruling on the question of privilege that he raised yesterday, I would have been able to answer a lot of your queries prior to your standing up and giving that soliloquy. I appreciate that you allow me, at some point in time, to make my rulings, as I should.

**Hon. Mr. Fentie:** I think the time has come for the Official Opposition to recognize what they are doing here. To suggest that they --

**Some Hon. Member:** Point of order.

### Speaker's statement

**Speaker:** We are not having a debate here. There are remedies for this House to examine these types of questions. Those remedies include giving notices of substantive motions that can then be called for debate using the usual rules of procedure.

**Some Hon. Member:** Point of order.

### Point of order

**Speaker:** Member for Copperbelt, go ahead on a point of order.

**Mr. Mitchell:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

In the Question Period that just concluded, I am taking my first opportunity to respond. In a response, the Hon. Minister of Economic Development questioned why I did not table page 1 of an article and suggested that there was something about this that was lacking. The reason is that, because of the formatting electronically, page 1 is blank except for a header. However, I am filing three copies so that he can have the blank page, if that's what he is looking for.

### Speaker's ruling

**Speaker:** There obviously is no point of order. We will now proceed to Orders of the Day.

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

### Notice of opposition private members' business

**Mr. Cardiff:** Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 14.2(3), I would like to identify the items standing in the name of the third party to be called on Wednesday, May 9: Bill No 104, standing in the name of Mr. Hardy, and Motion No. 26, standing in the name of Mr. Edzerza.

**Mr. McRobb:** Pursuant to Standing Order 14.2(3), I would like to identify the items standing in the name of the Official Opposition to be called on Wednesday, May 9, 2007. They are Motion No. 52, standing in the name of the Member for Mayo-Tatchun, and Motion No. 10, standing in the name of the Member for Copperbelt.

### Speaker's ruling re: question of privilege raised May 7, 2007

**Speaker:** The Chair would like to rule on a question of privilege raised yesterday in Committee of the Whole by the Member for Kluane.

Before discussing the substance of the question of privilege, the Chair will deal with some procedural matters. Though the issue was raised in Committee of the Whole, it is the Speaker who shall provide the required ruling. This is consistent with the principle that a question of privilege -- even if it arises in a committee -- is a matter for the House to decide as a whole.

Standing Order 7(4) states that the Speaker must rule on (a) whether there appears, on the face of it, to be a case of breach of privilege, and (b) whether the matter has been raised at the earliest opportunity.

I shall deal with the second matter first. The Member for Kluane raised the question of privilege immediately upon the Chair of Committee of the Whole calling an order of business. The Member for Kluane assessed that this constituted raising the question of privilege immediately after the words were spoken or events occurred that gave rise to the question, as required by Standing Order 7(2). In reviewing the member's question of privilege it is not clear that this is the case. Nonetheless, the Chair is prepared to accept the question of privilege for a ruling.

I shall now address the issue of breach of privilege itself. In dealing with questions of privilege it is not the Chair's role to rule that a breach of privilege has, or has not, occurred. The question for the Chair to decide is whether there appears, on the face of it, to be a breach of privilege. Should the Chair decide that is the case, the Member for Kluane will be invited to place before the House a motion that would address the issue. All other business before the House, with the exception of the Daily Routine, will be set aside until the issue is dealt with.

In order to rule on the question of privilege we must first consider the nature of parliamentary privilege. According to *House of Commons Procedure and Practice* the term parliamentary privilege "refers...to the rights and immunities that are deemed necessary for the House of Commons, as an institution, and its Members, as representatives of the electorate to fulfil their functions. It also refers to the powers possessed by the House to protect itself, its Members, and its procedures from undue interference, so that it can effectively carry out its principal functions, which are to inquire, to debate and to legislate. In that sense, parliamentary privilege can be viewed as special advantages which Parliament and its Members need to function unimpeded."

*House of Commons Procedure and Practice* also informs us that "[T]he rights and immunities accorded to Members individually are generally categorized under the following headings: freedom of speech; freedom from arrest in civil actions; exemption from jury duty; exemption from attendance as a witness." Of these four, only freedom of speech could be considered at stake in this case.

Having reviewed the comments of the members who spoke to the question of privilege, the Chair finds there is no apparent breach of privilege in this case. The Member for Kluane expressed concern regarding the manner in which the government has identified the order of business in Committee of the Whole regarding Bill No. 6, *First Appropriation Act, 2007-08*. His concern was echoed by the Member for Mount Lorne. How-



ever, this issue is covered by Standing Order 12(2), which says, "When government business has precedence, that business may be called in such sequence as the government chooses."

The Member for Mount Lorne also referred to an understanding members had of the order of business for last Thursday. He also said that the order of business had changed by the time the House resolved into Committee of the Whole. The Chair understands that discussions occur among House leaders outside the House regarding the order of business. However, the Chair has no authority to rule on or judge any understanding made by members outside the Chamber.

Though the Chair has ruled that there does not appear to be a breach of privilege, the Member for Kluane -- or any other member, as I repeated earlier -- may still bring this issue before the House. This could be done by giving notice of a substantive motion, which could then be called for debate using the usual rules of procedure.

The Chair thanks all members for allowing me to provide you with this ruling.

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

The matter before the Committee is Bill No. 6, *First Appropriation Act, 2007-08*, Vote 7, Economic Development.

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

**All Hon. Members:** Agreed.

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

*Recess*

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

### Bill No. 6 -- *First Appropriation Act, 2007-08* -- continued

#### Department of Economic Development -- *continued*

**Chair:** The matter before Committee is Bill No. 6, *First Appropriation Act, 2007-08*, Vote 7, Department of Economic Development. Mr. Kenyon has the floor. He has 15 minutes and 51 seconds remaining.

**Hon. Mr. Kenyon:** If memory serves, what we were talking about was the overview of the Department of Economic Development. It is a topic we have been desperately trying to discuss and we were having at least some success.

Funding activities that involve the department include support for economic development planning, capacity develop-

ment and opportunity identification and associated research. Needs assessments are certainly part of what we do, as well as training and training planning. The strength in the funding lies in the fact that it supports a variety of stakeholders, from First Nations to municipalities to community associations. By working together, we are creating a meaningful and realistic plan for the future. That is really what this is all about.

Also, in support of Yukon communities, projects supported by the community development fund, or CDF, continue to create employment and improve Yukon infrastructure. We've invested \$3.3 million in this budget to this valuable fund. Supporting a broad variety of initiatives, the community development fund contributes substantially to the health of the rural communities by allowing community members to get out and participate in the strengthening of their neighbourhoods and organizations. This fund fosters cooperation, partnerships, collaboration among groups and emphasizes the importance of recreation and training for Yukon people.

Mr. Chair, we have mentioned before and members opposite have asked some questions about the fact that there are lapses each year. This is a fund that is ongoing, and funding projects that come about may not be completed within the same fiscal year, so it is very common to have money that has not been expended, although it has been committed. That money has to be revoted at the next budget. Then, of course, as those projects are completed, other projects come late in the fiscal year the next year and then those funds are on the books and will roll into the next revote.

Again, the members opposite have asked those questions and I hope they understand that accounting principle.

The strategic industries development fund also continues to receive significant support this year with \$1 million invested in this year's budget. The strategic industries development fund provides assistance for research to identify emerging opportunities in strategic industries and assistance for the preparation of, for instance, business plans, research analysis, and also opportunity identification and assessment. These projects have potential for broadly-based economic benefits and secondary spinoffs to the Yukon economy. A good example of that was the \$200,000 contribution agreement through the Minto mines and Sherwood Copper. Their agreements and funding for the operation of the mine are limited to the actual mine site. There's a great deal of land around them that is still part of Selkirk First Nation settlement land, and geologists tell all of us that there is a high likelihood that the mine is actually much larger.

Coming to the table with that contribution agreement and having Sherwood Copper and Minto mines come to the table with another large contribution agreement will allow us to examine the potential of the area around the mine, in terms of where the ore body is, the grade of the ore body, proving it out and allowing the mine to continue and to enlarge its operation. This will mean that there is a longer mining life to that mine, and it will also allow for more jobs and more economic opportunities to be created for the Selkirk First Nation. To make that look like it is simply a grant to a functioning mine is not true.

It's a contribution agreement, one that will give great benefit and potential to all concerned.

The projects have to have broadly-based economic spinoff and benefits in those secondary spinoffs to the Yukon economy. Since its inception, the strategic industry development fund has approved \$2.641 million over 52 projects across the territory. As projects continue to grow, they contribute to an increase in the economic activity, and that's really what this is all about. In addition, with our commitment to promote small business, trade and investment in Yukon, we are continuing to move forward with a number of initiatives. Economic Development is also encouraging Yukon businesses by investing \$894,000 in the business incentive program. This is a way of giving builders, contractors, mining corporations -- any Yukon business -- incentive to hire locally and to work locally. It's an excellent program, and we're very pleased to continue to support that. Businesses can apply for rebates under this policy for a variety of types of work on government contracts carried out in Yukon.

In order to ensure that businesses of all sizes are able to participate in Yukon's economic growth, the Department of Economic Development is continuing to support Dana Naye Ventures' microloan program this year, contributing \$73,000. I had a chance several days ago to speak to this. The project, of course, is operated under an agreement with Dana Naye Ventures, providing training, coordination, mentoring, loans and administrative services to small business operators who may otherwise be unable to obtain suitable credit and training.

As I believe I mentioned a couple of days ago, we also provide \$200,000 for the Dana Naye business development program, which provides Dana Naye Ventures with funds to establish a loans program for small- and medium-sized businesses by assisting and supporting Yukoners in their ideas and in their business ventures. We are proving that we have the confidence in Yukon people to carry out their entrepreneurial undertakings.

We are also supporting Yukoners with a \$500,000 investment to support the Yukon Mine Training Association. That is very important, given the rapid increase in mining activity in the territory. The Yukon Mine Training Association works to train Yukoners to be able to fill employment positions that are right within their own communities, thus increasing both capacity and employment. Direct benefits from the mining project include an increase in Yukon's exports, the growth of rural Yukon small business, capacity building -- which is, of course, always a big thing here -- and an increase in knowledge among the Web development industry. We all want Yukoners to be able to take advantage of the economic opportunities at our doorstep. This government is helping to make this a reality.

To complement the growth in capacity and employment, this government realizes that it also has a vital interest to invest in the growing technologies that play a huge role in Yukon's ability to grow and to thrive in a competitive marketplace. To this end we are investing \$217,000 in technology partnerships. By supporting innovation- and technology-related partnerships with the private sector and with First Nations, we are helping to

increase Yukon's capacity to play an active role in the high technologies business of the future.

Innovative technologies are not simply computers and software in today's world and, in today's world of a global mining industry, Yukon must be in a position to take advantage of new mines being opened in the territory. New mines, of course, use new technology, and that has to be available in the territory. If Yukon wants to be a player in its own economy, it needs to adapt to, understand and participate in new technology business. This kind of investment is vital and will support the long-term growth and diversification of our economy. Diversification of the economy is a key goal of the Department of Economic Development.

We've also continued to invest in the Film and Sound Commission with this budget investing \$756,000 in that commission. Yukon has an incredible array of talented artists who are encouraged by the support this government has given to them, and we intend to continue to support their imagination, hard work and creation of exceptional Yukon cultural products. I don't think it's lost on anyone -- well, maybe it's lost on a few, but it's not lost on most people -- that the cultural and recreational spending in the Yukon is in orders of magnitude higher than in other parts of Canada. We have much higher spending in those areas. It's a very strong interest and commitment of this government -- certainly in terms of commitment to sport and recreation in this decade of sport and recreation. Anyone who was here during the two weeks of the Canada Winter Games is very much aware of what we accomplished and are capable of accomplishing.

It's interesting that the normal post-mortem meetings and such on the Canada Winter Games to discuss the problems, for the most part, have not occurred, and they have not occurred intentionally because very few people involved in the organization have been able to find serious complaints or problems within the Canada Winter Games structure. We wish every bit of luck and goodwill to Prince Edward Island and the future venue hosts of the Canada Winter Games, but they have a hard act to follow. I have every faith they will make every effort, but I suspect it will be difficult to beat what we were able to accomplish here.

The film industry in Yukon also continues to be strong, providing Yukoners with employment and training opportunities. In the past there were 21 projects approved for funding under the film incentive programs. These projects will generate an estimated \$2.6 million in economic activity in Yukon. By supporting the film and sound industry, we are positioning Yukon to be able to compete, not only in national but also the international marketplace.

In closing, I would like to point out again the overall budget and hope some of this information has answered questions the members opposite might have. I think they will agree that it represents the continued hard work on the part of the staff of Economic Development to support Yukon's long-term economic prosperity.

The businesspeople of Yukon deserve specific recognition for their dedication to a strong Yukon economy. At one event in the last few weeks, which was a ribbon-cutting ceremony at

a major box store in Whitehorse, I was asked by the media what I thought of it. My answer was, of course, that I thought this was the best economic study I had ever seen done in Yukon. When national and multinational corporations come in and make huge investments in the long-term well-being of Yukon and its people, they don't do it out of the goodness of their hearts. They do it with the full knowledge and expectation of what they are getting into and where it's going to go. I do submit that it is one of the best economic studies that we can make.

Together, we are building an economy of primary and value-added industries that will capture external dollars. It will capitalize on the strengths of our geography and our people, because while we have challenges with our geography, we also have incredible opportunities because of our geography. That is a major task of our department. The economy is increasingly sustainable and diverse. It's also increasingly flexible enough to mitigate boom-and-bust swings, thus providing all Yukon with good economic development. Again, that is our primary goal: to not only keep the economy up, but also make it diverse and flexible enough that it will be sustainable, not a boom and bust of a single mine coming and going, as many Yukoners are used to.

As I travelled around last weekend with several groups up here looking to make investments, and talked to various restaurants and tourism venues and people on the street, it was amazing to see how many young people are up from Ontario and, in many cases, from Alberta. They see the economy here and the ability to make money here. Most importantly, they see a way of life here that is so much better than in southern Canada.

With that I'll go back and perhaps the members opposite do have specific questions that I have not covered in that review.

**Mr. Inverarity:** I'd like to thank the minister for that monologue, a continuation of yesterday, but I believe the actual question had more to do with guidelines regarding applications for expanding the mining resources that they had, what the policies were, and how other companies would line up to get access to those contribution agreements for extra money.

As the Leader of the Official Opposition isn't here and has turned it over to me, I am going to go on and ask another question. The first place to start is where I started yesterday. I had asked for a list of information and the Member for Mount Lorne had asked in our briefing notes for some returnables that we could have to get into this debate. I know one of the particular things I was looking for was a list of those people who had applied for funding and grants under the enterprise trade fund program from Economic Development and some information regarding the Web site. It would be really nice, Mr. Chair, if we could get that information so we could discuss it here in general debate of Economic Development.

I was wondering if the minister could tell us when I could expect to have that information so that we could continue through with the general debate.

**Hon. Mr. Kenyon:** Before I get into that, I would remind the member opposite that -- who I do realize is new to all of this -- it is inappropriate in this House to refer to a member's

absence. But since he is referring to the absence of his own member, I choose not to really get too excited about that.

I understand at the briefing that the member opposite was given a brochure that outlined some of the things he has the questions on. Again, in terms of specific applications, they are on the Web site. For the most part, it is the people coming in to talk to our good staff and to present their ideas and present their information and their wants, needs, hopes and aspirations and to be directed in terms of how that should proceed. There are no formal applications, and guidelines are set out in a very broad way to give every person or every business or every company a chance to come in and to discuss what they need and how we can best serve them.

The whole emphasis here is creativity; the whole thing is the ability to get the job done and provide the assistance and then properly evaluate it afterwards and to properly go through the information and see what was done with the money involved. As I mentioned the other day, money is not just simply turned over. It is turned over, most commonly, in increments as the work continues and as the project grows. I invite the member opposite, should he have any ideas or any thoughts on that to please get in touch with our officers and have a chat about what can be done on that, from a major mine to support for his selling on eBay. Come on in and talk about it.

**Mr. Inverarity:** Again, the list that I was looking at, Mr. Chair, I did receive at the last sitting in the fall. It was regarding the enterprise trade fund, and it was a list of the funded projects, and it identified which ones had been approved through the ETF and which ones had been declined. I think, if memory serves me correctly, they also listed the reasons why they were either funded or not funded. That was specifically the list that I was looking for. I would still like to get that information from the minister if I could. I was wondering if the minister could tell us who makes up the committee that approves the ETF grants and contribution agreements currently and perhaps even last fall if there was a change in staff in that area.

**Hon. Mr. Kenyon:** I am told that we can probably have that list ready by the beginning of next week. We will assemble it. I suspect that it would not include those who were turned down, because that, I think, would sort of intimidate people and such. But in terms of who was approved and dollar values and what they were for, I think that is reasonable and we can put that together. It is usually a departmental committee that is run by the director of business and trade, but it also includes a representative from the chambers of commerce, so there is a wider range on that. As the projects get larger, certainly other support and input will be brought in. I think we usually go to people with expertise in that particular area so we can get a much better impression. We also have an advisory committee that meets from time to time. It will advise the department on the direction it is going, the promotion of this fund and other funds into certain sectors, or it will give advice on certain problems within the various sectors that we should be aware of and addressing more, but the chambers of commerce and our own staff constitute the bulk of that.

**Mr. Inverarity:** I thank the minister for that response. I recognized the committee members in terms of what positions they might have held but I was looking to see who the actual individuals were. He could provide that with the other information next week, which would be fine. I would appreciate that.

Yesterday in our discussions, the minister made great praise about the fact that 98 percent of Yukon households had access to high-speed Internet, which is great. I think the minister also made reference to the fact that 51 percent are actually subscribing to high-speed Internet. I wasn't really sure so I checked the Blues and it doesn't look like it was mentioned in there. I went back to the discussion we had in the fall and he did mention the figure of 51 percent. I would like to confirm the number of people who have access to high-speed Internet in the Yukon, if it's in his purview.

**Hon. Mr. Kenyon:** I don't have the figures right in front of me, but, yes, my recollection is 98 percent have access to it; 51 percent take advantage of that access. In reference to the other part of the member's question, the chambers of commerce appoint members to those boards. They may change from time to time, but they are representatives of that chamber, much as an individual might be appointed by the Council of Yukon First Nations to a board, a review panel or an organization like the educational reform group. They are appointed by the organization; they represent the organization and they are not someone that we have. The change -- appointment, resignation or reappointment -- is under the purview of that association, not of the department.

**Mr. Inverarity:** Actually, there was no trick question there. I was just curious about whom the individuals were who sat on the committee, and when they come, they come -- that's sufficient for me.

I would like to get back to the high-speed Internet issue that I was just discussing. About a year and a half ago when I was in my old job, I queried the Bureau of Statistics about Internet access. They, sure enough, came up with the 98-percent figure for the number of individuals who could, in fact, have high-speed Internet. However, they said that 64 percent of all Yukon households actually subscribed to high-speed Internet. What was interesting was that, of individuals living in Whitehorse, the number rose to about 72 percent.

My question for the minister: to what would he attribute this downturn from those numbers to 51 percent? What would be the cause of that decline from then until now?

**Hon. Mr. Kenyon:** I would refer that to Executive Council Office, which controls the Bureau of Statistics. That's not a statistical analysis that we have any input to. We know we are up in that range. We have been told by the same bureau that it is approximately 51 percent. He should direct the question to the appropriate department.

**Mr. Inverarity:** Well, the minister is making the suggestions that they are a certain number, and I was just looking to get clarification as to what the accuracy of it is. He might also want to check with the Executive Council Office so that when the minister is quoting numbers, he is quoting them factually, as I will also endeavour to do so we are both playing with the same sets of numbers.

I was wondering if the minister would care to comment on the developing forest industry? I noticed in the Yukon Party platform that they promised to develop a new Yukon forest stewardship act from the principles of the Yukon forest policy framework. I was wondering how we are doing on this particular act development and when it might be ready.

**Hon. Mr. Kenyon:** We're happy to give support where possible to the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources, but the forestry section resides in Energy, Mines and Resources and I would direct him to direct his question again to the appropriate department.

As to the number of households, whether it's 51 percent or 64 percent or 153 percent, it's a very high number and we're very pleased with that. If the member opposite is so impressed and encouraged to use exact figures, then I have to wonder if Iceland has become our 11<sup>th</sup> province or fourth territory.

**Mr. Inverarity:** I was wondering what research has been done to promote IT industry in the Yukon, particularly in the area of knowledge-based industries.

**Hon. Mr. Kenyon:** There are a number of different industries involved in that and we are happy to give support and involvement to a number of different groups that are looking at this. A good example is voice-over Internet protocol, something that is changing rapidly. As we deal with the fibre-optic connections to the south, that is something that will come even more to the forefront here, as it has down south.

Voice-over-Internet protocol is a technology that allows users to utilize the high-speed Internet connections to place and receive telephone calls. In the south it has become so popular that it is starting to have a severe impact on land lines and phone companies. It offers an alternative to traditional telephone service and should be implemented in a way that is consistent with the government's telecommunications policy principles. The Yukon government believes that, where competition is sustainable, it should be implemented as widely as possible throughout all sectors of the telecommunications market. To that end, on November 16, 2006, the Government of Canada instructed the CRTC to deregulate the provision of voice-over-Internet protocol services.

The Yukon government believes that VoIP -- the voice-over-Internet protocol -- service should be treated the same as services using traditional telecommunications technology -- therefore, local VoIP remains subject to regulation -- and that the northern telecommunications market should be at least temporarily protected from dramatic change to prices and subsidies. The Yukon government has provided this input to the Minister of Industry Canada in writing on October 18, 2006, and I was fortunate enough to present the same information to the minister in his office in Ottawa about two months after that.

That is one example of some of the things we are looking at. We are also looking at more general telecommunications. As a good example, we are recognized again as a leader -- though what is the exact number is debatable. There is even some humour involved. I was talking to a friend of the kids awhile ago and I asked him what his experience was with high-speed Internet and how happy he is with the type and the service. He told me that he is extremely happy with the service. It

is flawless, has never failed him and is perfect. When I asked him what he used, he basically told me that he didn't know. After we stopped laughing, I asked him how he gets it. He said he turned on his computer with a wireless connection, something came up and he answered yes. He says that he has had high-speed Internet for two years, though he is basically tapping into the service of one of the neighbours. I use this, I suppose, as an example to anyone listening that they should set up a firewall and proper safeguards for information, because of course there is a whole new problem arising from that. I know of one person who came up on a boat up the Alaskan coastline. Every night, pulling into a small fishing village, he would turn on his laptop and get Internet. This was every single night and at every single village.

Working with PNWER, we had one of our staffers take off from the office in Seattle, forgetting a file. By pulling in behind a highrise apartment building in Seattle and turning on her computer, she had her choice of about 20 different networks. She simply picked up the file from her office computer in Seattle.

As we develop our technologies, we also develop our own problems. We are one of the most saturated places but, again, that high-speed fibre-optic connection goes to microwave around Fort Nelson and that becomes a real problem in terms of what we are going to do. As I say and as I mentioned days ago, we are still in a jurisdiction where a farmer digging a fencepost in his field might actually take us out. It is also rather humorous with a fibre-optic link going up the north highway -- I have a friend in a tiny little remote house that is five miles from anything, but the link goes right by his house. Given the fact that he is so remote, the irony is that he probably has the fastest connection in the Yukon because he is right on the fibre-optic link.

The fibre optic is a really big part of it and we are looking at the planning of that. In terms of technology partnerships, we have budgeted \$217,000 for this year. The Technology Innovation Centre, a contribution of \$150,000, has the mission to promote and stimulate innovative technology applications for the benefit of Yukon's society and economy. This project is a multi-year initiative that supports innovative product developments.

In terms of capacity and regarding investment in innovation technology, there is a further \$67,000 that has been thrown into that pot. That will help enhance the economic and business growth of the technology sector, coordination of industry partners and help the sector develop partnership-based project applications. It will also be used to leverage federal project funds. So, we are looking at that in a variety of ways and, under the target investment program, we are looking at filling in that fibre-optic hole as we go down the highway.

We have to look at the planning of that because we might go down and tie in through the break around Fort Nelson. We might also connect with Alaska and tie in with what they use that goes down an undersea cable. We do work with Alaska on that and we also, as I've mentioned in this debate, work all the time with these people to determine what the future is of the technology, that it makes no sense to develop and invest in a

technology that suddenly becomes redundant. That will change dramatically.

For the member opposite, that is certainly some of things that we are dealing with in terms of information technology. Anybody who is looking at developing these things has the ability to come in the small end to business and trade and the enterprise trade fund and, at the large end, to the strategic industries development fund. I might add, Mr. Speaker, before the member asks the question, within the target investment program and the big picture on that, yes, First Nations are involved at every point in the decisions and in the committees.

**Mr. Inverarity:** If I understand the minister correctly, there is this bottleneck in the Fort Nelson area. I understand that that bottleneck has been around since I was an Internet service provider in the 1990s. I'm wondering in what time frame we can expect that bottleneck to be fixed. If the minister could give us a time frame, I would appreciate it.

**Hon. Mr. Kenyon:** Yes, for the member opposite, that certainly has been a problem. That has been around a long time.

I think all of us, myself included, sometimes really enjoy and get carried away with criticizing, shall we say, a certain company or two within the telecommunications private sector. The reality is that we do live in a fairly remote region and we enjoy services far beyond what's available in many southern jurisdictions. As I say, I can sit and complain with a two to three megabyte-per-second connection in Porter Creek, and yet when I go to Victoria, within sight of the Legislature, I drop to 128 KB. For the non-technical people, that's sort of like a high-speed bullet train and suddenly having to climb on a goat and toddle down the path. It's an incredible difference. As I say, to have someone visiting from Edmonton who then can't get high-speed Internet in their own neighbourhood within city limits of Edmonton, yet they can get it in Keno City -- there's a point that you have to look and say, you know, look at a map, guys.

But the reality is that's all going to be driven by the private sector. Our job is to show the business case and to show the private sector that it is reasonable. I'm very, very pleased that I got Northwestel involved with the Pacific NorthWest Economic Region, PNWER, with the telecommunications working group. So, with the small budget now and the larger budget that will be coming out of that in terms of preparing the business case, putting it together and the people from one of the companies who are going to play a major part in the whole thing -- to get them involved in those discussions. I would hope -- it's an old phrase, Mr. Chair, but sooner rather than later. I can't give an exact time, but I'm hoping it will be rather soon.

Again, for the members opposite and for anyone listening, we're not talking about just being able to download a movie a little faster and the voice-over-Internet protocol getting a little bit more common, we really are talking about high technology. We're talking high-speed telemedicine. We're talking about doing a live ultrasound in an emergency situation in a remote community rather than doing the ultrasound and trying to e-mail it and hoping that it gets down there in one piece without the farmer hitting the down switch on his auger in the field in Alberta. It's coming, and I think it's coming rapidly. Again,

when you look at all these statistics in terms of high-speed Internet and technology in the north, when I came here 18 years ago, the link south was a goat path. Now, I think we really can use the term "information highway" and mean it.

**Mr. Inverarity:** I find it curious because, if I'm not mistaken, within the last year and a half Yukon College has been able to obtain an OC4 line to the south. I know that the Yukon government over the past decade has invested millions into the Connect Yukon project, which is a very, very good program that connected all Yukoners together. I would think that with the bottleneck, which has been around for at least a decade -- I have to say, as far back as 1994, I can remember complaining about the slow speed. In those days, I remember it being 28.8 and 14.4 and, in fact, the first communications out of the Yukon that I dealt with in the 1970s was at 300 baud. Speed I am aware of, and I know it's always going to be a constant battle.

I find that if we already have an OC4 line, which is a significant pipeline into the north that is being routed to the college for "research and development," I am wondering why it isn't possible that, in the downtime at the college, the rest of the Yukon couldn't share some of this OC4 line to the south. That would at least relieve some of the bottleneck now. It's probably not in the Minister of Economic Development's purview to actually go there but, certainly, it would benefit those Yukoners who want to host their sites in the Yukon, from an economic development point of view. I know that I would dearly love to have my websites hosted in the Yukon but, because of the slow bandwidth, I am unable to achieve that. I know a lot of businesses -- in fact, if I'm not mistaken, I think even some of the Government of Yukon sites are hosted outside the Yukon. If this bandwidth was made available to us all, we could easily see the economic impact of sharing that OC4 line to the south.

Perhaps the minister might be able to comment on that for us.

**Hon. Mr. Kenyon:** I very much thank the member opposite for those high comments and praise. Since we brokered that deal -- we put it together and that really came out of programs and the good staff of the Department of Economic Development. It's called the CANARIE program. I have to admit I have no idea what "CANARIE" stands for, but it is a dedicated line utilized through the college for research and development. It's a federal program that we brokered to denigrate -- first of all, we are not allowed to put other things into it, and it would denigrate and reduce the bandwidth that would be available for its intended purpose. Our department brokered that deal, we put it together, and we're working with NRCan and other federal agencies. That's all part of what we're looking at. That's all part of the study and it continues.

I recognize certainly what the member opposite says in terms of speed. My first involvement in telecommunications was at 300 baud. This is very, very slow. Let's face it -- from here to across the street, I could probably walk there faster. But I agree. The background was that. When it went to 1,200 baud, we joked about why you would go any higher because nobody could read faster than 300. Jokes aside, it increases the speed, but it drops the time necessary to transfer a file. At 28.8, which

I experienced only a few weeks ago in downtown Victoria, you could call up a Web site and have lunch while you're waiting for it. That's in downtown Victoria within sight of the Legislature.

Are we well ahead of everything? Yes. Are we doing extremely well with that? Yes. Can we do more with it? Yes. We will continue to build on the CANARIE program and to fill in that fibre-optic line and keep going with that, but I'm very pleased with what the department has done so far.

**Mr. Inverarity:** My question again was if the minister can see his way to allow the rest of Yukon to share the OC4 line from the CANARIE project in its downtime, so that we can all benefit from that particular bandwidth?

**Hon. Mr. Kenyon:** I am sorry; obviously the member opposite wasn't listening to the answer. The CANARIE project is a dedicated line that goes through the college for research and development. The terms of reference and the terms of its structure do not allow other people to tie into it. It also has no ongoing relationship with the Department of Economic Development. We brokered putting it in. We helped the private sector and we worked with the National Research Council of Canada. We worked with Yukon College and we continue that work by looking at the fibre-optic line. Again, that's not something our department can have any control over or has any control over. Perhaps he can ask that of relevant departments, but it is a federal project, so maybe that one will require a postage stamp.

**Mr. Inverarity:** I think I'll just leave that one for now. I don't think we're going to get an answer as to when we are actually going to get our high-speed line to the south. Maybe we can deal with it again in the fall.

I wonder if the minister would care to comment on his strategy to bring foreign workers into the Yukon to try to reduce the labour shortage that's cropping up.

**Hon. Mr. Kenyon:** Maybe for the fifth time, again -- the member opposite was reading his notes or something, so I will answer the previous question again. The CANARIE project is a federal project in conjunction with Yukon government that is at the Yukon College. The terms of reference do not permit us to tie into that. The people involved with that continue to work on the downside. If the member opposite expects a firm, definitive answer on that, it simply does not exist. It is not within the control of this government. It is not within the control of this department. It is not within the control of this minister. We will do everything we can to broker it, as we brokered the CANARIE project. I do very much appreciate his high praise for that line. I certainly am very happy with what our people have done within the department.

To think that we can tie into a federal line to change a timeline is dreaming in technicolour, Mr. Chair. In terms of immigration, we do have a number of programs, but the initiatives are undertaken by Citizenship and Immigration Canada. I have had the opportunity to meet with the relevant ministers and Minister Monte Solberg. I've been in his office several times now, talking about all these things; however, I would remind the member opposite that the skilled worker program falls under the purview of the Department of Education. Again, I invite him to ask his questions of the relevant department.

**Mr. Inverarity:** I was wondering if the minister would care to comment on regional and community economic development, and I'm kind of curious about what projects they are currently involved with.

**Hon. Mr. Kenyon:** When the member opposite says "community development", I assume he means the community development fund. I am very pleased to say that, yes, we brought that fund back. We have had a great deal of success with it. For instance, tier 1 funding is up to \$20,000. I refer the member opposite to a release of April 23, which is available on the Web, announcing that we had awarded \$140,146 of tier 1 funding. That is to a variety of groups. I won't say "up to," because some of these projects will be completed for less. There is \$845 going to the Alek Music Festival Society to purchase plastic barriers and recycling bins; \$19,632 to the Champagne and Aishihik First Nations to repair the Haines Junction Youth Centre to conform to the National Building Code and to make a healthy, safe space for youth activities.

The Dawson City Arts Society received \$14,000 for a jigsaw puzzle art school promotion to promote Yukon as a destination home for the arts and culture -- and specifically, to Dawson City and to the KIAC school of visual arts. I have to admit that when I first saw the title of that proposal, I sort of scratched my head but, learning more about it, it is a very good proposal and one that we certainly support.

To the Dawson City Chamber of Commerce, \$19,243 is to develop a strategic plan and implementation plan. This is an incredibly good organization that I can't say enough good things about.

The Freedom Trails Therapeutic Riding Association -- \$2,098 to attend the Canadian Therapeutic Riding Association spring conference for recertification of instructors. This is an unusual one, Mr. Chair. The Freedom Trails Therapeutic Riding Association uses horses to work with disabled adults and with handicapped children. It promotes balance and it promotes self-confidence, and normally the fund would be shy about putting money into sending people out the territory, but in this case it allows their instructors to go out, to receive certification from a national body and to come back and do their good work.

The Klondyke Goldpanning Association -- \$17,865 to purchase portable bleachers and picnic tables.

Little Salmon-Carmacks First Nation -- \$11,405 to teach youth how to build and use Northern Tutchone traditional hunting technology.

The Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation received \$8,350 to conduct a Gwitchin workshop to provide First Nation youth instruction in drum making and drumming traditions.

Youth Association of Watson Lake received \$10,000 for upgrades to theatre equipment for the community of Watson Lake -- lighting, sound and technical equipment.

Yukon Historical and Museums Association received \$17,115 to undertake a strategic planning exercise to determine where the organization is going over the next three years.

Yukon Volunteer Bureau and the Yukon Development Education Centre received \$19,593 for training and implementation of community engagement techniques in areas of identi-

fication, planning, decision making and evaluation of sustainable and effective community development.

That is just that one intake, Mr. Chair.

To give some of the detail on the overall structure, to date in fiscal year 2006-07, we have received 137 applications. Of this, 80 applications were approved. A total of \$2.713 million was funded. Since reinstatement of the fund, after its untimely demise under previous governments, a total of \$11 million in funding has been approved, with most of that going to smaller communities and directly into community organizations within Whitehorse.

The community development fund program includes tier funding levels. Again, if we look at the actual budget, in 2004-05, we budgeted \$3.2 million and actually approved \$3.209 million. Again, there is an overlap of some funds that aren't completed until the next year and that is why some of these things don't totally match.

In 2005-06, there was \$3.2 million. This was the set budget, but we actually approved \$2.42 million. In 2006-07, there was \$3 million in the budget and we have approved funding of \$2.713 million. The budget for 2007-08 is the same as the previous year, with the O&M costs of \$337,000 and contribution expenditures set at about \$3 million.

I am very happy for the member opposite that, beginning in the very near future, the community development fund officers will be travelling in the communities and doing presentations to community groups, local governments, First Nation and community governments to basically see what these groups can do. For instance, in terms of building a building for housing that has the capability of a kitchen that could be used for community use. That's nice, except it needs kitchen equipment. We will hopefully be identifying projects like that where we can get out and put that money to work that will benefit the local groups.

We do have three tiers, for those who are not familiar with the fund. Tier 1 is for projects of less than \$20,000 and those are the ones I just reviewed. Tier 2 is for projects between \$20,000 and \$75,000. Tier 3 is for projects greater than \$75,000.

We have seven intakes per year. For tier 1, we have four intakes. For tier 2, we have two intakes and for tier 3 -- the big one -- there is one intake per year. We do make that information available through advertising, through media releases, it is available on the Web site, and we will also be putting out teams of people to go through the communities to talk about this.

If we look down at the breakdown -- because I know the Member for Kluane likes community breakdowns -- Whitehorse organizations have received 55 percent of the funding. Again, most of that is to small groups, community groups, and neighbourhood groups. The rural parts of Whitehorse have received three percent. Beaver Creek has received two percent, Burwash Landing has received two percent, Carcross has received three percent, Carmacks has received one percent. Dawson City -- a riding that I am sure is near and dear to your heart, Mr. Chair, has received 12 percent. Haines Junction has received three percent, Mayo has received four percent, and Mount Lorne has received four percent. Old Crow has received

two percent. One percent has gone to Pelly Crossing, four percent has gone to Teslin, and four percent has gone to Watson Lake. That's from April 1, 2006, to March 31, 2007. The total approved was \$2,585,761.

If we look at the amount of employment that comes out of that -- because that is certainly part of this -- each application must not only outline what has been done and what will be done -- I shouldn't actually say "has been done" because we, under most circumstances, would not fund work that has already been completed, but it is simply funded for the future.

We also request information on the number of hours and the work that will generate in the area. Again, since the Member for Kluane likes breakdowns on this, the community of Beaver Creek has generated 10,291 person hours, Burwash Landing has generated 14,680 hours, and Carcross has generated 6,566 hours. Faro has generated 15,300 and Destruction Bay has even generated 1,140. The list goes on in terms of what is going to develop and in terms of employment.

I suspect that, no matter what sort of a project that you think of, the chances are pretty good that it has been done to some degree or in some way through here, from putting on coronary health care things to building a concession stand at a ball field, to doing historical research, to get involved in horse shows -- or, as I mentioned, the incredible project of therapeutic riding, which I understand is expanding. I'm not sure if it's related, but a different group in Watson Lake will be starting out -- to various gatherings, music festivals, community centres, and the list goes on. So the community development fund -- I'm glad the member opposite has brought that up, because it certainly is a chance that we can really do something significant for the way of life and the reasons why people live in the communities that they live in.

**Mr. Inverarity:** Actually, I appreciate the comments on the community development fund. It wasn't really the basis of my question. It was regarding one of the departmental objectives, which is to foster regional and community economic development as opposed to proactively administer the community development fund. But it was interesting to learn about those projects, and it was certainly on my list of questions.

I go back to the question regarding what the department is doing to foster regional and community economic development as a separate objective to the community development fund.

**Hon. Mr. Kenyon:** One of the main tools that we have in that toolbox -- to coin a phrase -- is the regional economic development fund. That fund provides funding specifically to foster regional and community economic development. The regional economic development fund was established in recognition of the need for the effective coordination of planning and for economic development efforts by all parties with regional economic interests. The regional economic branch of the department has a number of planners and policy people and the director, of course, who are very much involved in looking at all of this. Approved funding for fiscal year 2006-07 was \$423,000 and, since fiscal 2004-05, to date, the fund has invested \$785,000 in Yukon projects.

Funding activities have included support for economic development planning, capacity development, opportunity identi-

fication and associated research, needs assessment and training plans. The maximum eligible funding per single application is \$50,000, with no more than 75 percent coming from the Yukon government sources and at least a 15-percent contribution of the total project cost funded by the proponent. This is a proponent-driven fund.

The regional economic development budget this year is \$450,000, of which \$45,000 is committed to administration. That is the common breakdown, with 10 percent toward administration, and it is something that has been done under all governments.

We are now reviewing new funding applications, as I speak, of approximately \$100,000. The applications can be submitted at any point in time. Eligible groups include First Nations, municipal governments, First Nation development agencies, community associations and any Yukon business or business-related organization. We continue to look at the wide range of opportunities with a dedicated regional economic development staff.

**Mr. Inverarity:** Where has the actual money been spent so far, and what projects have been funded under this particular category? Can you give us some examples of some of the regional economic development unrelated to the CDF?

**Hon. Mr. Kenyon:** The most recent group we've been working with is the Little Salmon-Carmacks First Nation. We've also been working in support of a business advisor to the north Yukon, and I'm very pleased to have received a number of compliments from the various First Nations, including a very nice letter from the Chief of the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation complimenting us on our ability to work with the government there and to develop business opportunities. It's an ongoing process.

I'm trying to get the member some actual information on some of the things that were done on this: executive leadership training for Champagne-Aishihik; strategic planning for lands; capacity development; provide local governance a workshop on best practices -- training like this is very difficult to get in a rural setting. There is the evaluating and opportunity assessment for a First Nation fire suppression program, and training the board of trustees of a development corporation in how this works in developing capacity. There has been work in mining reclamation -- conference and capacity building for that.

There have been labour market initiatives and labour market studies, conferences to build capacity in mine supply and service, a needs assessment, youth labour market. That is just giving the overview of some of the things. One of the big problems we have in dealing with the regions -- if we think we have a capacity problem in the Yukon in general, or in Whitehorse, look at a small community or a First Nation with 300 members and imagine the capacity problems they have. It is to everyone's benefit to work with capacity development on that and to train people to take over areas and do the work locally. Again, that's an effort we have been trying to make for all our programs. How can the regional effort, people and economy benefit from that rather than having it run out of Whitehorse? It has to be a priority of this government.



**Mr. Inverarity:** I think it has been very enlightening. I would just like to add that, as the minister knows, I have been a strong proponent of regional and community-based economic development, and I look forward to some meaningful discussions in the near future with the minister to share ideas and perhaps see what we could do to foster economic development outside the City of Whitehorse.

I would like to make one last comment regarding the budget speech given a couple of weeks ago here. In it, it was identified that the Department of Economic Development is also supporting the long-term development of the Yukon's economy with funding for economic infrastructure initiatives. I wonder if they could give us some idea what those infrastructure initiatives are, and could the minister indicate how much money is going to be allocated to them in the current year?

**Hon. Mr. Kenyon:** I am glad to see that the member opposite is suddenly agreeing with us that these things should be developed. The infrastructure involves rail access and the rail project, port access and the development of fibre optics that we've been talking about. These are all major infrastructure projects, and it sounds like he's actually now agreeing that it is a good thing to set up that infrastructure.

**Mr. Inverarity:** I am going to turn this over to the Member for Mount Lorne. I will probably come back to it again.

**Mr. Cardiff:** It has been interesting to listen to the discussions this afternoon in Economic Development.

I want to come back to something I mentioned yesterday when we were discussing Economic Development, and one of the procedural things that had come up was whether or not it was standard to go into departments before concluding general debate. Some of the information given today is actually some of the information that was asked for, such as that regarding the strategic development fund, the enterprise trade fund and so on. The minister is providing some of that information, but he is not providing all of it. I don't want to sit here in the Legislature and listen to him give all that information out. What I would like to know is when we can expect to receive that information in writing from the department, so that we can look at it and analyze it properly. When will that information be available?

**Hon. Mr. Kenyon:** For the member opposite, I know that the department is working on it and will be providing that information sooner rather than later. Again, if the member opposite wants to ask questions here, we can do it much more easily and expeditiously.

**Mr. Cardiff:** That would be a whole other matter for discussion -- whether or not it is more efficient to listen to the minister give us all the information and the anecdotes around it or to just get the information and be able to read it. I'd much prefer to receive the information that was requested so I could read it, and then it would be nice to actually come back and ask questions about it. However, it doesn't sound like we will have it in time for that.

One of the activities of the minister in the past -- I know he has travelled to China, he has travelled to Korea, and I'm not sure exactly all the places that he has been to as the Minister of Economic Development. But I would like to know if the minis-

ter has planned any more overseas trips or trade missions in the upcoming year.

**Hon. Mr. Kenyon:** There is a group of our staff who are going over with a variety of companies that will be leaving within a few days, but as the member opposite is asking about me specifically, I do have a trip planned to Anchorage, Alaska, if that qualifies, coming up in July, for PNWER. I do hope to be able to visit family in Korea, if that counts. The last trip that I took was well over a year ago, and that one has been extremely fruitful and our contacts from that continue to develop actually rather rapidly.

**Mr. Cardiff:** The minister mentioned that officials will be travelling on some sort of a trade mission. Could he give us some details about what is planned there and what the anticipated outcomes of that trip would be?

**Hon. Mr. Kenyon:** Yes, they are leaving. I believe the first of our staff leaves tomorrow. It's not a general trade mission, but it is in support of several companies on individual ongoing negotiations, and we're very pleased to see that. But again, they are negotiations for individual companies.

**Mr. Cardiff:** I don't know if I missed it or not, but where exactly are they travelling? And I'd like to know what the anticipated outcomes are. What are going to be the benefits to Yukoners from this trip?

**Hon. Mr. Kenyon:** The basic destination is to Beijing, China, and some members of staff will be continuing on into western and southwestern China. Again, they're involved in negotiation and in support of negotiations of individual companies. So the outcome, certainly, will be good economic development, but I can't get into the individual companies, of course.

One of the big things is to develop the trade links between China and the Asian region in general -- it's a huge initiative, and it's an important initiative, because one only has to look at a map to understand. One doesn't even have to read the *Pathways to Prosperity* that I've tabled in this House to see why this is so important. It's the gateway to all of North America, really. It is five sailing days to Anchorage and down through our corridors, which is closer than SeaTac or Vancouver. I won't get into the huge economic growth of China and everything else. I think the member opposite is aware of that. So we continue to work on that as a major initiative, and we expect to see some very, very good results come out of this. I certainly hope that those outcomes come fairly soon, so that we can present them in the House before this sitting ends. If that doesn't occur, then they'll be presented during the next sitting.

**Mr. Cardiff:** There was a newspaper article where the minister had been back east to meet with economic development ministers or those ministers with that portfolio as their responsibility. One of the things discussed was the trade investment and labour mobility agreement, or TILMA, between British Columbia and Alberta. According to the article, both Yukon and Saskatchewan have been invited to join this agreement. I am just wondering if the minister could tell us a little bit about the agreement and what the government's plans are with regard to signing on.

**Hon. Mr. Kenyon:** We are examining the so-called TILMA between British Columbia and Alberta. To give mem-

bers a bit of the background on this, there is a committee on internal trade, which meets annually and will be meeting in St. John's, Newfoundland in the middle of June. Staff will be going as I am unable to go to that.

The Committee on Internal Trade looks at the agreement. It looks at better mobility of people and goods and services. But one of the problems that has come about from that committee is the lack of product, we think, to many of the smaller jurisdictions. Ontario and Quebec will get into their little things, but there is really no enforcement or ability to work within the committee on internal trade.

Alberta and British Columbia have come together on this agreement. We have been invited, absolutely, to be a party of the B.C.-Alberta trade investment and labour mobility agreement, or TILMA, and we are looking at that and the opportunities and potential effects of joining.

As I say, much of TILMA comes out of the west's frustration of dealing with the committee on internal trade. For instance, one dispute between Quebec and Ontario has been going on for about four years, and there still is no resolution. In fact, I'm not even sure anyone has ever sat down to discuss it. So, we are looking at the pros and cons and impacts on the Yukon economy and the territory's business. We have to consider all of that to make sure that joining TILMA is in our best interests.

It does create the second largest trading region in Canada, after Ontario. The combined region would add an estimated \$4.8 billion annually to Alberta's and British Columbia's economies. That statistic comes from the Conference Board of Canada. The invitation has gone out to other western provinces and territories, so we are not alone in that. All of us, except Nunavut, have signed on to the internal trade agreement. I understand that Nunavut has served notice to the committee on internal trade that they will be joining that. So, that will become a completely national thing to eliminate trade barriers.

As I say, the problem is that it has been, to my point of view anyway, somewhat of a flop. B.C. and Alberta, by going through TILMA, will hopefully speed up that whole process. We have to look at the ramifications of the agreement and see what the costing is versus the benefits. There certainly will be financial benefits but there will also be costs if we join in. That's what our department and other departments are looking at. I have met with the Premier of British Columbia and yesterday I came close to meeting on this issue with the Premier of Alberta. Premier Fentie has also met with Alberta Premier Ed Stelmach and conveyed the message that we are interested in looking at the possibility of joining. All these jurisdictions have directed officials to start looking at the possibilities.

There are a number of potential benefits. Of course, any kind of regionalization, I think, has benefits -- the Pacific NorthWest Economic Region being a classic example of that. Membership in a large economic region, and the benefits that come from that, cross national and international borders. The increased available pool of skilled workers for major projects can certainly come out of this. It reduces barriers, creating a more positive investment climate and perception of Yukon as a preferred investment destination. It can reduce transportation

costs and increase transportation options. It can increase opportunities for Yukon companies to bid on out-of-territory procurement contracts. The downside of that of course is that it also opens up some possibilities to allow out-of-territory procurement contract bidders. That is one of the things we have to look at, which is one of the potential effects of that.

Some of the challenges are that we would need to rewrite probably a number of business and labour legislations and regulations to comply with the agreement. We would potentially lose some business licensing fees, and there is the whole issue of binding dispute resolution and financial awards. This is one of the problems of the Committee on Internal Trade. There is very limited ability to resolve that dispute and so it is very easy on one side to say there would be a financial penalty -- a financial penalty that would even begin to get Ontario's attention could be the budget for an entire municipality in the Yukon, so we have to adjust those sorts of things and look at all those things.

Economic Development and Executive Council Office are the leads on this, and they will continue their good work of looking at all the possibilities within that.

**Mr. Cardiff:** I thank the minister for explaining what he knows about the agreement. There are a couple of other things. This was brought up in the context of the agreement on internal trade, but it was also brought up in the context of PNWER, the Pacific NorthWest Economic Region. I am wondering two things. The minister said there is work ongoing in the Executive Council Office and Economic Development. I am wondering about time frames. When might they be making a decision and letting us and the public know what that decision is? In the context of PNWER, is there a possibility that this could be an international agreement too, or is it strictly within the Canadian context?

**Hon. Mr. Kenyon:** To my knowledge, no, we're not looking at this as an international thing. It could have ramifications in terms of discussions and everything else, but there is the North American Free Trade Agreement and we're not about to rewrite that, for sure. But it does bring the groups together.

PNWER is a different kettle of fish altogether. It's set in statute or, in the case of Yukon, an order-in-council, and it actually has membership from the legislatures of the five states, two provinces and the territory, and it works in conjunction with more education and everything else. PNWER has no direct dispute resolution or anything else like that, which this would have to have. That's one of the challenges of TILMA probably not crossing an international border, because the dispute regulation becomes an international incident and neither Ottawa nor Washington would appreciate that sort of approach.

**Mr. Cardiff:** The minister answered the second question, and I appreciate and thank him for the answer, but the first question was about Executive Council Office and Economic Development looking at this agreement and working through it, looking at the ramifications of it. What are the time frames the government anticipates for dealing with this, and when will we as legislators hear about it? The other question that rolls into that is: will the public be consulted before the government signs on?

**Hon. Mr. Kenyon:** Sorry, I got sidetracked on that one. Both Economic Development and Executive Council Office are looking at this. I have not given them a time frame and I doubt the Minister of Executive Council Office has set a time frame. We don't want to rush them on this. It depends a great deal on where they go, what they do, how they get there, and how long it will take.

I don't know. I haven't set a timetable on that. Travelling with PNWER, I get asked the same questions about what's going to happen with this, and the simple answer is that we don't know. It depends on where that analysis goes.

If it turns out that there's no benefit at all, the answer might be very easy, but, with other things, if we should be negotiating, then it comes down to the negotiations themselves and, again, I can't set timelines on that. I just don't know. I have the same question.

**Mr. Cardiff:** Just to round this one out, and then I'll pass it back to the Official Opposition. There was also a question rolled in at the end of the previous question about public consultation. When the government does all its analysis and comes out with a position, will the public be consulted before the government signs on to this agreement?

**Hon. Mr. Kenyon:** I would assume that when that position comes out, certainly part of that position will indicate whether that should go and to whom it should go, whether it should go to an open consultation or to a targeted consultation within chambers of commerce. These are all parts of the answers we're waiting for. I don't know. Again, I don't have the direct answer to that. It's a very complex document. The Committee on Internal Trade, for instance, probably would cave this desk in, in terms of the documentation that's there. It's times like that when I thank God that I'm not an economist. But how many people -- when you get into something that five people in the Yukon can understand the documentation -- I don't know, but I am assuming that we will certainly talk to the people who should be talked to on that. I understand where the member opposite is coming from, and I tend to agree with him.

**Mr. McRobb:** Mr. Chair, I just have a few questions, and one I wasn't planning to ask. I got prompted by one of the responses from the minister about the travel and so on. I know he has taken quite a few trips in the past, and I still have the Chinese flag in my desk, as a matter of fact, a souvenir he brought back from one of his excursions. I'd like to know what's on his radar screen. What travels is he contemplating in the year ahead?

**Hon. Mr. Kenyon:** In terms of recent travel, I have hit the high points of the world, such as Helena, Montana; Boise, Idaho; Spokane, Idaho; and Sitka, Alaska. As I say, there are the PNWER meetings in July in Anchorage. Other than that, I don't know of anything that is firmly on the books at this point. It depends on where the department goes on that.

If the member opposite has a burning desire, I am hoping at the end of June to go to Hartford, Connecticut for a few days to visit family. I hope to go to Korea in August to visit family there too.

**Mr. McRobb:** Well, maybe he can bring us a jar of maple syrup from Connecticut. It would be appreciated.

I want to ask him now about regional economic development in the territory. I know that there has been some work done on plans for development in the Haines Junction area in particular. I am familiar with what has gone on there. Can the minister just comment as to which regions are actively involved in planning and which regions may have already completed their plans?

**Hon. Mr. Kenyon:** We do have a number of initiatives. We have been working closely with the Tr'ondek Hwech'in First Nation and the Kluane Na Cho Nyak Dun on regional economic development planning initiatives. The Tr'ondek Hwech'in has developed a terms of reference for an oversight committee to begin work with a consultant. The department has had some initial discussions with both the Na Cho Nyak Dun First Nation and Kluane First Nation and will continue to work with them to fulfill our obligations under chapter 22 of the *Umbrella Final Agreement*, which is really the question that the member opposite is asking.

In fiscal 2006-07, the regional economic development branch allocated \$150,000 from the land claims implementation secretariat to undertake the Tr'ondek Hwech'in and Kluane First Nations chapter 22 initiatives. To date, the actual cost for us to participate in the Tr'ondek Hwech'in planning process has only been about \$5,500, so we continue to work through with regional things.

Of course, regional is not only working with the First Nations. We are also looking at potential tourism opportunities in Dawson City and working very closely with the Member for Klondike. We will continue to work with him on that. We will continue to work on smaller projects all over.

This debate, I suppose in the beginning was about the approach taken on regional economic development. Do you put an economic development officer in each community or in each region? Our decision and my decision at the time was no. It isolates the regional development officer; you lose the think tank and the ability to work together. While my decision was not to put these people out into the communities, my decision was to let them run up some pretty substantial frequent-driver miles. I know that in all the driving of one of these people, they pretty well burned the tires off a car in a matter of a year. That's a good thing in terms of getting around, coordinating and working with them. We've visited every community; we work with community and First Nation groups and their economic development officers. Those people come here, et cetera. It has been a good response, especially with north Yukon, working with the Tr'ondek Hwech'in First Nation, the Na Cho Nyak Dun and the Vuntut Gwitchin. I was really pleased to receive a letter from the Chief of the Vuntut Gwitchin complimenting us on the approach and how it has helped the community of Old Crow. We have some very talented people in that department. It didn't come to me as a surprise that they're doing such good work and that it's appreciated.

**Mr. McRobb:** I thank the minister for that response. We certainly would be interested in the department's obligations and activities with respect to chapter 22. The question was not constrained to only chapter 22. It left it wide open for all rural regions of the territory. I asked him specifically about

the Haines Junction plan, which I didn't hear the minister mention at all. My question was about regional economic development planning in rural Yukon. The minister mentioned some specific First Nations, which may or may not represent a region. I would like him to respond to the question in a regional sense as well as my specific question pertaining to the Haines Junction area.

**Hon. Mr. Kenyon:** It's good to hear that the Member for Kluane continues his definite interest in his own riding.

Certainly, the regional economic development crew is involved in all communities. It travels through all communities. All communities and First Nations have been invited to participate. To my knowledge, all of them have, to one degree or another, participated and gotten involved in all of this. The community development fund also, of course, comes under the regional economic development group. For instance, out of a total approved \$2,585,761, three percent went to Haines Junction. If the member missed it before, I have given direction to the department to have their community development people go out into the communities, hold meetings, and identify what can be done and what can benefit the individual regional communities.

Up the north highway -- and concentrating on the Member for Kluane's riding -- within this last year, in Beaver Creek, for instance, we have approved \$119,030, basically allowing for up to 10,291 hours of work -- everything from workplace knowledge tools, a restoration project at Snag, community gardening, community cultural history, and a coronary health improvement project -- although I believe this is now being taken over by Health and Social Services. I know the member opposite is familiar with the coronary health improvement project and has been very complimentary of that. I appreciate that.

In Burwash Landing, we've helped with a recreation director, community beautification and an activity centre. Again, when you start looking at some of the others that fall through here -- I am looking at ones that are specifically of interest -- for Destruction Bay, there was \$18,240 for refurbishing the community hall, bringing a total of 960 hours of employment. Kluane Lake Athletic Association is working on the Kluane Lake dock and was provided \$88,135 for 180 hours. That brings it to a total of \$106,375 and 1,140 hours of employment.

In the community of Haines Junction itself, which the member asked for specifically -- but I make the assumption he is talking about his whole riding -- the Alsek Music Festival has received some funding for production and some equipment and capital purchases and for the actual music festival itself -- so, relatively low, only about 112 hours of employment, but that has come up with around \$26,000.

Hutshi gatherings -- \$7,600 will provide 32 hours of employment. The Takhini summer opportunities program -- \$10,062 for 645 hours. A CHIP program there, or the coronary health improvement project -- \$9,797 and 306 hours of employment.

We were involved in the repair of the Champagne-Aishihik youth centre roof repair, which was having its own problems, the development of a skating rink, renovations to the youth centre, emergency measures plan, a greenhouse project,

annual race coordinator for the Silver Sled race and winter festival, repair the Haines Junction community centre a bit, playground improvements, and the list keeps going on and on. All these are within regional Economic Development.

Given some of the larger projects as well, to produce a regional economic plan we have approved \$12,250, and to date I believe we have paid out \$11,250, with \$1,000 de-committed or, in other words, returned. So those are some of the projects that have come through regional economic development.

Again I just can't say enough about the staff of that section or of any of the sections of Economic Development, but regional economic development has a unique challenge. As I say, they tend to wear out an awful lot of tires, but they get around quite well in the communities.

**Mr. McRobb:** I thank the minister for paying some attention to the particular region. I would invite him, if he wants to take a visit up there this summer, to give me a call and maybe we can travel together and see some of the sights. I'd like an opportunity maybe to point out some areas that are in need of attention.

Most of what he said -- well, practically all the projects identified with the exception of the final one -- are projects that may or may not come under the umbrella of regional economic development. But my question pertained to planning. What I'm referring to is regional economic development planning, as in exercise, as in a holistic view of a region that encompasses concerns and objectives and possibly some doables in terms of economic development in the region. Those are some of the basics you'd see in any planning exercise. I heard him mention \$12,250 for planning, but that wasn't attached to any particular area.

I'd just like to follow up with him, again, on regional economic development planning across the territory. If he could identify which regions are receiving funding or which have already received funding, and with the amounts, that would be a good start. If he could clarify what the \$12,250 was for, that would be excellent. And a follow-up to that would be: if that pertained to the Haines Junction planning exercise, can he indicate at what stage that exercise is and where it goes from here?

**Hon. Mr. Kenyon:** Yes, first of all, the \$12,000-and-some amount was specifically for the Village of Haines Junction -- just to clarify that -- and it was specifically for regional planning.

We have our budget in place, really, to respond to demonstrated needs. Again, communities or regions will come to us, so we work with things like the Carcross memorandum of understanding for the development of Carcross as a tourist destination. We meet with the three First Nations in the communities in the northern part of Yukon to form the Northern Accord.

These are all projects that have come forward from the regional groups. I have never been a real proponent of going into an area and dropping a plan on them. I would much rather respond to what the groups have to say. If the member opposite, as the representative for that region, has specific ideas, I certainly invite him to get involved. I think we have had that debate before in the House. The individual Members of the Legislative Assembly can bring forward plans. It seems to work in

other jurisdictions, so I would invite the member to join the parade on that one.

I may very well take the member up on the invitation to travel. We did this last year. We gave a few people a heart attack as we drove around, but I understand that we may now have the possibility of a Cadillac to drive around in thanks to the member opposite, though he does assure me that it gets very good mileage; some do. It would be interesting to take a look. We went specifically the last time to look at building sites for the seniors facility that is under construction in Haines Junction. That is six units. It is coming along well. I believe they are already on interior work. We are already probably looking at occupancy by this fall -- possibly in early September. It depends how things go over the summer. The work has been good. Most of it has been local. We looked at locations. I thank the member very much for the great tour of the community at that point in time. Perhaps we can do that again. I also thank the member for springing for lunch.

**Mr. McRobb:** I am not suggesting the minister should go around and drop off a plan in these regions. Of course we support regional economic development planning, but from the bottom up in the communities. Participation from people at the community level is imperative to the development of a plan. I am not sure where he got the term "dropping off a plan". I am not sure where he got that from.

Again, I didn't hear any other regions identified. In the absence of that, can we safely assume this is the only planning exercise?

**Hon. Mr. Kenyon:** I believe the budget has in it about \$450,000 to work on these plans. Again, if we go back to our debate of a year ago, do we go out and pound on doors and encourage this? We certainly encourage it, but there is an obligation for the region to come to us to have their own meetings and their own groups and come to us and work with their MLA and come to us with good ideas or, at least, a chance to sit down and say that here is the structure or something and that we would like to look at those ideas.

So I continue this year to encourage the member to get involved in that community and to do what north Yukon did, what Carcross did, and what Ross River did. I believe we have had some involvement with the Marsh Lake community in the beautiful Southern Lakes. The budget is there to utilize if the community wants to get involved in that sort of planning. We certainly encourage the community to do that.

**Mr. McRobb:** All right, I am still not sure if I'm clear on this. It sounds like the minister is saying that his department has \$450,000 set aside that is earmarked for regional economic development planning. However, there is really only one area that currently has a planning process, and that is the Village of Haines Junction. He identified the amount, which is just a small portion of that. I asked him for an update on where that plan is at and what the government intends to do with it. I am still waiting for an answer to that question. Let's let him answer the last questions first before we proceed from here.

**Hon. Mr. Kenyon:** Certainly, economic development is a big part of that, but the member opposite is missing the capacity building that's a huge part of that. Again, of the

\$450,000 that is available on that, we have active work going on with north Yukon. We have active support going on with the Carcross memorandum of understanding. Ross River is working on a plan that we support. As I mentioned before, there has been a contribution to the Village of Haines Junction for development of their plan. But so that the member is very clear, we give that money in support of the development of the local plan. That's Haines Junction's plan, so I suggest that the member opposite contact the community and discuss it with them, because it's their plan. It's theirs to develop.

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

*Recess*

**Chair:** Order please. Committee of the Whole will now come to order. The matter before the Committee is Bill No. 6, *First Appropriation Act, 2007-08, Vote 7, Economic Development*.

**Mr. Fairclough:** I only have a couple of questions, but I do want to follow up in regard to these regional economic development plans. At one time the different communities had regional economic development officers, which helped a lot of people get into business and work on the different developments that could happen around their community. The minister did talk about working with some communities, some First Nations. I'm interested in my region -- Pelly, Mayo, Carmacks, Keno, Stewart Crossing. They're all areas that have very high potential for development in and around the communities. I didn't hear the minister say that they're working with the communities to develop these plans. Is there anything in the works in the department to ensure that we do have some sort of guidance by the communities, other than working on priorities that they identify in a budget for a budget request?

**Hon. Mr. Kenyon:** First of all, it is so nice to see everyone getting an interest in Economic Development. I was beginning to feel a little left out of so many of the Question Periods. I take that as a good sign that we are doing everything right as no one has a question on it.

Actually the member opposite has a very good question in this case. Our job isn't to go in and -- for want of a better term -- drop a plan on a community or a group. The idea is that we work with those groups and we help them develop their own plan and develop what they are doing.

The regional economic development fund, or the \$450,000 that is budgeted for this, is to develop the area, to develop a plan and, most importantly to my mind, to develop the capacity. Many of the First Nations -- and particularly those in the Member for Mayo-Tatchun's area -- have expressed the concern that they wish to work first on developing that capacity before they start going elsewhere. For instance, the department is certainly committed to working with the Little Salmon-Carmacks First Nation in maximizing everything. Through the regional economic development fund we have contributed \$30,165 to Carmacks Development Corporation that will assist the First Nation in identifying and analyzing economic oppor-

tunities relating to the Western Copper project and advance these opportunities to a business-ready stage.

The objective of the project is to identify specific opportunities with direct economic potential for Little Salmon-Carmacks First Nation and to conduct the necessary due diligence to bring these operations and opportunities to fruition.

The total project value is about \$50,000. The contribution agreement with the Carmacks Development Corporation has approved \$30,165. That's one example. In the case of Selkirk First Nation and the Sherwood Copper mine, we have given the Selkirk First Nation \$148,500 through a contribution agreement to identify, examine and maximize the opportunities around that mine development. The funding is a result of a memorandum of understanding signed between the Yukon government and the Selkirk First Nation. The contribution agreement has two main objectives: to identify specific opportunities with direct economic potential for Selkirk First Nation and to conduct the necessary due diligence to bring these opportunities to fruition; and to build corporate organizational and management capacity -- this is where the capacity comes in -- required to undertake and manage those opportunities.

The department continues to work with selected consultants and directly with the Selkirk First Nation Holdings Limited to move the project along. The contribution agreement with the Selkirk First Nation, as I mentioned, is \$148,500, with \$99,500 contributed from the strategic industries fund and \$49,000 from regional economic development. The funds can work together in conjunction; for instance, the \$200,000 that is part of developing the mine resources and developing the proven resources outside the actual mine site is primarily because the development of anything outside of the mine site is beyond the scope of their funding. They could not, therefore, expend that fund directly as part of the mine project. We, however, can get into a contribution agreement with the First Nation and continue the development. That is the reason for it. Again, some members opposite -- and I believe the Official Opposition -- are a bit critical of \$200,000 going to a mine, but the reality is that it wasn't to the mine per se; it was to stimulate the economic possibilities and the capacity of the Selkirk First Nation.

In terms of the Na Cho Nyak Dun First Nation, it is part of the north Yukon economic development partnership alliance or agreement, and is a very active player in that. Again, capacity building is a huge part of that development.

**Mr. Fairclough:** I know some of that information has gone out with regard to the community development fund and the agreement with the Selkirk First Nation.

I asked whether or not the department was developing regional plans in the different areas of the Yukon and I didn't really get an answer from the minister on that -- other than working with communities. If there's such a plan taking place, could the minister say so? And if that information is not in front of him, could he give it to us in writing?

**Hon. Mr. Kenyon:** At every stage of the game, the department has invited every community to get involved in this. Perhaps the member opposite missed the discussion prior to the recess in terms of the Carcross memorandum of agree-

ment to develop that area, the regional planning exercise, and the \$12,000 and change to the Village of Haines Junction -- I know the Member for Kluane is very happy to see that going ahead -- and the northern agreement for the north Yukon. Many of the other First Nations have been involved -- I mentioned some in the member's riding -- and others have looked at capacity building as a big part of that. There are a number of things we can do.

We work with all these groups. That's sort of an overview of what we have going. We await some of the communities to come in with other ideas and we'd be happy to get involved.

In developing those plans we will get involved in contribution agreements that specifically allow each region, First Nation and community to develop its own plan. The actual plans are coming from those individual groups; they're not coming from the department. We are simply helping to facilitate them.

**Mr. Fairclough:** I hope that we can get some details on those. The Premier has made comments in this House and during the election campaign about making First Nations full partners in economic development. I was wondering whether the department itself has developed some policies in regard to that direction.

**Hon. Mr. Kenyon:** Without going back through that list and reviewing the things we discussed before the recess, I invite the member opposite to go back through *Hansard*, rather than risk being repetitive here. We are in full partnership; we help facilitate and we help fund. We will certainly contribute what resources we have to assist in developing capacity. But the plans still have to belong to that region and come out of that region. Whether it's a community, a First Nation or unincorporated region, it still has to come from those groups. If the member opposite has any great ideas that he wants to put forward on that, please bring them forward. We are always happy to get involved.

**Mr. Fairclough:** I am interested in this direction and so are many of the First Nations. But, in regard to putting any plans forward, they would like to know what parameters they can operate within and develop plans themselves. Part of this is whether or not the Department of Economic Development -- or the Yukon Party -- worked on policies in regard to this. I am interested in that because I would like to know, from the minister's point of view, what the definition of "full partnership in economic development" means with First Nations. Does it mean projects, for example, that the government has and that this commitment by government would kick in when it comes to government projects? Because economic development is about getting people working and developing communities, and so on.

I want to know if that direction has been given to all other departments when projects come up in communities.

**Hon. Mr. Kenyon:** Certainly I can't speak for any other department. We are debating the Department of Economic Development. In terms of our own department, again, we recognize this as a full partnership, since the resurrection of the Department of Economic Development after its untimely demise under the Liberal government. We have had this as our primary directive at every point in time.

We are involved with a number of First Nations. The letters that I've received -- most recently from the Chief of the Vuntut Gwitchin -- have been very complimentary. So I invite the member opposite to have those discussions with the First Nations, since we're involved with the Selkirk First Nation, Champagne and Aishihik First Nations, Carcross-Tagish First Nation, Tr'ondek Hwech'in, Vuntut Gwitchin, and Na Cho Nyak Dun, et cetera.

These things are all ongoing. So, again, I ask the member opposite to contact them because I do know that he has a keen interest in this.

**Mr. Fairclough:** I guess what we have -- we've talked about this with different departments. No one seems to have a clear answer, and that's why I'm checking to see if the minister himself does have a clear answer on this.

Part of the problem here is that I think the minister shouldn't even be answering this question. It should have been done during general debate on the budget. But I think there are some control issues on that side of the House, and that's why we're here today debating it in general debate on Economic Development, when this question could have been answered by the Premier.

I'm bringing this issue forward about policy simply because it has been raised to me to bring forward here.

The minister is getting some direction -- just in case people are wondering why I'm taking breaks here.

If the policy has been developed and there is full partnership with a First Nation in economic development, then I would think that all of government would follow the policy that was developed by the department. So that's my interest there.

I'm hoping that the minister doesn't get sidetracked in answering the question, other than what I've been asking. If the minister doesn't have an answer on this -- I know the department is listening to this and perhaps the minister could bring back an answer in writing, so that I can pass this information on. If the minister has the information, I can pass it directly after he answers my question, of course.

**Hon. Mr. Kenyon:** For the member opposite, we have not left or abandoned general debate in the House on the budget and will return to it. If he's under the impression -- we're still in it, really. I invite the member opposite to bring up the questions when he'd like, but right now, for the specific answers to this, we are involved with a wide variety, from Selkirk First Nation to the First Nation of Na Cho Nyak Dun, Little Salmon-Carmacks, Champagne and Aishihik, Carcross-Tagish, Tr'ondek Hwech'in and Vuntut Gwitchin. We meet regularly, as now required by statute set up by this government in the Yukon Forum, for a chance to talk to all the First Nations that sat at the same table. We have made determinations in how to expend the target investments project or the TIP project. There is the northern housing trust and how to develop that. That has been divided by agreement among the First Nations and the Yukon government.

All these things are occurring and I suspect that the member should talk to more people. I have to go back to a point I made last year. The Member for Mayo-Tatchun just has to get out more often.

**Mr. Fairclough:** Maybe the minister should. Maybe the minister, since being elected to give this budget full consideration, could table the schedule of community tours he has done since the election until now in developing this budget. Can he do that?

**Hon. Mr. Kenyon:** The easy way is there was a wonderful consultation done last October. I think that was pretty clear. In terms of an overall budget consultation we, at this point in time, are in general debate on the Department of Economic Development. I would direct him to ask his questions at the appropriate time in debate.

**Mr. Fairclough:** Is the minister saying that he cannot table a schedule of community tours, since he has been elected, on economic development and developing this department's budget?

**Hon. Mr. Kenyon:** Well, I suppose the simple answer is that this is why we have the department and regional economic development officers who are on the road all the time. As I say, they do good work. They wear out a lot of tires, but that's the nature of the business.

In terms of overall budget, again I invite the member opposite to ask that question at the appropriate time in the debate on the appropriate department. In terms of our own department, the budget was developed over a long period of time -- and under great stress and with problems, I might add. When this government, as the member opposite knows, made the decision that we would allow our employees to get involved and to volunteer for the Canada Winter Games, it was a huge commitment. We literally lost 40 percent of our workforce, or somewhere in that range, very quickly and for the term of that event. It did mean that making decisions was more difficult and a bit delayed. Again, I am very proud of the way the staff reacted to that. We got the work done. We expected it to be a bit late, but we are debating it now.

When the member opposite wants to talk about community tours, community tours are not part of any one department. They are part of Executive Council Office, so I invited the member opposite to ask that question of the appropriate person.

**Mr. Fairclough:** I am, Mr. Chair. Maybe the minister himself has been sidetracked on this matter, but I am asking about his travel to communities. The Minister of Community Services does community tours. He visits communities and he asks questions, although I don't think anything has been done since the election.

I think the minister may have a small excuse that maybe added to his stress with regard to staff not being available due to the Canada Winter Games. We understand that.

I would like to ask the minister another question. He has regional economic development officers around the territory and he would like to put together a good budget for next year. Is the minister relying on the Premier to do the community tours or is he going to be talking with communities to develop a budget -- a different route than he took to develop this one?

**Hon. Mr. Kenyon:** The budget is developed in a variety of ways and it is interesting to get out into the communities. I have been to several of the wellness days and the activities in the community of Mayo, for instance. I haven't seen him there

yet, but it is something that I hear about from a lot of residents there.

In developing the budget, again that is something that is developed by a wide range of staff and a wide range of people - in our department, anyway -- who are in the communities all the time. To go through some of the things we have been involved in, under regional economic development the community development fund has remained up at \$3,874,000 projected for 2006-07. We have tried to keep it up in that range. There was a bit of a downswing in uptake, but in general the amount is there. I think there are very good reasons why the amount was down, although most of it was involved in -- I don't want to use the word "lapses" because it's not a lapse. It is a revote and it will come in the future.

In terms of corporate services and managing the funds, financing project reporting modules and computers -- that has given us a great deal more. That is something we had to put into the planning stage. We are managing funds now from regional economic development, the strategic industries, the community development fund and everything else, so we have to ensure that the government money is being well-spent in that.

Enterprise trade funds -- we have the same problem in terms of some of them being revoted because of the delays. The decrease this year in Dana Naye Ventures business development program that was funded to the tune of \$670,000 was based on a calculation, as the member will remember, of 85 percent of the amount of the delinquent loans portfolio that was collected under this government's watch. For all of the debate on that, I always have to remind people that no political party had wanted to touch that one until we dealt with it. It now approaches resolution and has developed some development funds under that.

The trade and investment program has seen an increase to action some of the things identified in the investment attraction strategy, which was completed in 2006-07. We're looking at the increase in that, and there has been a decrease, interestingly enough, in the business incentive program. They were higher last year because of the athletes village and that, of course, is now complete. I have to mention for the member opposite that the athletes village was completed ahead of schedule and was completed with a few adjustments as we went, but the end result is that it was completed underbudget.

We also have an involvement with the Dana Naye Ventures microloan program and work with them. The Member for Whitehorse Centre, the Leader of the Third Party, has spoken in this House a number of times about the benefit of microloans. Microloans can be for anywhere, from downtown Whitehorse to any of the regions. It's a good program to keep that development going.

The northern strategy project was approved for the mine training strategy. There were contributions to the Mine Training Association of \$500,000 and, again, the targeted investment program was done in cooperation with the First Nations. We came to our own agreements with the First Nations on that as to where to put the money.

There are a number of things the department does that you can't identify as being strictly something that is for a downtown area or a regional area or a small community. Infrastructure is a huge thing and it helps everybody, right across the board. We need those resources to ensure the economic projects are assessed in light of reliable information. We need thorough economic analysis and we need to consider options in order to optimize benefits to the Yukon and the Yukon economy.

It's interesting that the one thing that is always easy to do in opposition -- and I understand the Member for Mayo-Tatchun is the only member of this Assembly sitting on his side who has an appreciation of this. It's easy for anyone to sit down and say, "Why don't we do this?" or "Why don't we throw another \$25,000 at that?" The bottom line is that, when you're in government, you have to consider your options. You have to look at every potential way that things could be done and how things could be best used.

It could be a fund or contribution at this level or a development of a power line. We have to look, for instance, at the extension of the Carmacks to Pelly power line and examine that in all its details and permutations to avoid the absolute disaster that occurred under the Liberal government in terms of the Mayo-Dawson line, which was simply not well-thought-out.

Under the economic infrastructure development funding, we have \$800,000, which is required to facilitate the continued analysis and implementation of planning elements for various infrastructure projects. That, of course, includes the railway, the ports, the energy plans, the telecommunications plans and all the rest of the infrastructure.

It is interesting. I haven't read the whole plan by any means, but with regard to the things that have been discussed on the railway plan before in terms of routing, if the plan comes out with those recommendations, it is totally in a different way than anyone ever expected. When we start looking at the reasons why that way makes sense and why the way everyone in the territory thought it should work makes no sense, it is a very straightforward thing. That information is necessary to do a proper analysis. We can't second-guess this and throw a few bucks this way and that way. It doesn't work that way.

We have to augment the knowledge infrastructure's data collection. The Member for Porter Creek South has stressed data collection, telecommunications and computers. It is interesting to note, for instance, that simply within the opposition offices, there is more computing power than existed in the entire eastern seaboard in the 1970s. Things are changing that quickly. I have a friend with a computer in his living room that would exceed the entire computing capacity of the eastern seaboard in 1970.

It's scary sometimes -- what's there. So you need that information, not only to see where you are, but where you're going and how you're going to utilize that. And that's one of the challenges of regional economic development, as well as anything else.

Again, I ask the member opposite to sort of think of it in that light -- deal with facts, deal with data. Don't sit there and think, "Gee, wouldn't it be nice to do this." It would be nice, and if I were in opposition, I'd probably be sitting there too and



saying, "Boy, wouldn't it be nice if you did that." But the reality is that, without that data, without that information and without that analysis, it's a complete and utter waste of money.

**Mr. Fairclough:** It might be unbelievable to the minister opposite, but he avoided the question again. It was direction to help him and the department out. It wasn't chastising what has been done to date. We've been asking this question, and the minister won't take us up on it and didn't even see the usefulness of it -- of a community tour, or talking with communities and so on, other than dealing with priorities that have been developed by communities through their own capital plans and through the community development fund.

But this minister, Mr. Chair, on the floor of this Legislature, likes to blame other governments over and over again. He likes to pass that message out to the public that other governments -- other parties when in government -- are to blame, or did bad work here, and wants that to stick in the public. But they've been in government for five years -- five years.

And I caution the member pointing fingers because there are a lot of fingers pointing at this government's ability to manage money and so on -- just look at the Auditor General's report that focused on one area of government. It would be nice if we could look at other areas. Maybe the minister won't be involved, like other departments or the political arm of government, on this matter, but the facts speak for themselves. The minister always brings that up again -- facts and data.

The simple question about community tours -- what is wrong with that? I mean, yes, talk to people, and make some effort, other than what has been done in the past. Don't tell us on this side of the House and the public that, back last fall, that is all the consultation the government needed.

People aren't buying that. What happened to this inclusiveness of the public? What happened to consultation that the government promised to do? What happened to all of that? Is the government side throwing that out now and feeling that they have another four years to do whatever they want? I could bring example after example up on this floor for the minister to think about.

I started this question off in this department about some promises made. I am not trying to hit the minister hard on anything or turn it into a debate that really shouldn't be happening on the floor. After all, this government committed to improving decorum in this House. Why do we fall so quickly to another low in trying to bring up the past or chastising members on this side of the House for not doing our job, for -- what he says -- not going to their communities, which the minister knows very little about, when he should perhaps be focusing on his department and his own riding. If the membership in my riding did not want me, they would not have voted me in. I would just like to point out that the percentage in that last election did go up.

What do we have to do on this side of the House every time the minister rises and points a finger back at previous governments? What do we have to do? Remind the Yukon Party about their direction? There are lots and we could and we probably will one day. If we hear more, of course, we may get into that.

I want to see if the minister could rise above this and just answer the question, seeing as how I don't see him answering the one I asked before about the community tours, showing respect to the communities and perhaps getting their input because, you know what? It is not reflected in this budget. What they said in October is not reflected in this budget, even though there was a commitment from the government to make First Nations full partners in economic development.

Let's go back to the regional plans then. The minister said they worked on priorities for some communities. He said there was some. I would like to ask, then, how this department plans to carry out the implementation of those plans and what we can expect down the road for other communities and other sections of the Yukon in regard to this department's plan for economic development.

**Hon. Mr. Kenyon:** Again, the member opposite was maybe thinking of other things and not paying attention. We are involved with contribution agreements for each region, First Nation or community to develop their own plans. They are their plans; they are not our plans. We are not going to go in and drop a plan on them. That makes no sense at all. But it makes sense to assist them to come to their own conclusions. We respect that.

If the member opposite has specific questions on a specific area, go to that area, talk to them, talk about the plan and about how they are going to implement their plan. It's not up to me to direct that plan. It's not up to me or the Department of Economic Development to direct them on how they are going to implement it. It's their plan.

I think the member opposite's comments in terms of the election -- again, I have to point to an incredibly detailed platform. People knew exactly where we were going and what we were doing. Not only did most support that, but I think the polls recently have shown that more and more are supporting it beyond the number on that October day. I think that speaks volumes right there, Mr. Speaker.

In terms of the member's comments of pointing fingers, I do --

#### **Chair's statement**

I'd like to remind all members that we are in general debate on Vote 7, Economic Development, and I think our discussions should centre around that, please.

**Hon. Mr. Kenyon:** Okay. Thank you. This certainly directly involves the questions and directly involves regional economic development plans. The plans are developed in accordance and in conjunction with the local groups; they are their plans, implementation, structure and everything else. I do get a bit concerned when the member opposite complains -- or at least his tone of voice to me implies -- that I'm always bringing up data. I do apologize for that; maybe it's a bad habit but I like dealing with data. I don't like guessing and sort of picking things out of the air. I'd like to deal with that data. I would like to thank the member opposite very much: when he complains about pointing fingers, at least he's using all of his fingers. I do appreciate that.

The member opposite refers to fiscal responsibility within this and other departments. Respecting that we are in general debate -- I would remind the member opposite that we asked for the Auditor General's report. We called in the Auditor General and we asked her to evaluate the situation he refers to. We have asked the Auditor General of Canada to look at other departments and other structures within the government. We will continue to ask for more.

The member opposite should be aware of that. I must admit to some confusion as to why the member opposite thinks that this was a bad thing when we were the ones who asked for the review and evaluation. I do understand that anyone can accidentally shoot themselves in the foot, but the trick is not to reload.

**Mr. Fairclough:** Did the minister just shoot himself in the foot or did he stick his foot in his mouth?

What the members didn't expect from the Auditor General is what she found.

**Some Hon. Member:** (Inaudible)

**Mr. Fairclough:** Often we have to wait for the ministers in their debate with one another on that side of the House.

The minister says he likes data. We have been asking for data here. We have been asking for information. We have been asking for facts. A lot of the time, when we ask a question, this is what happens with this minister. He gets sidetracked. For example, if we are talking about a regional economic development plan, he gets sidetracked and starts listing projects in the community development fund. That kind of data is what the member opposite might like to read. It may not have anything to do with the question, but that's where he goes because that is their defence, I suppose.

I would be very interested to hear from the minister what direction has been given to the Auditor General as to what area to examine next. I doubt the minister or his government would do such a thing, because the Auditor General would perhaps find something that the government does not like.

I asked the minister about how they were going to implement these regional economic development plans that he had. The minister then said that they are not his. They are somebody else's and that the Department of Economic Development actually doesn't do those things. That is basically the kind of message the minister is giving.

The Premier, for example, talked about looking at developing certain areas of the territory for economic development, such as southeast Yukon for oil and gas, forestry and logging, and so on. There are certain sections of the Yukon that have been looked at with some interest for economic development by the government. The Minister of Economic Development failed to say that.

We on this side of the House are not asking the questions for nothing. We have to pass this information on to those who have been asking us to ask these questions. How do we pass the information on if it gets sidetracked by the minister? We are trying to keep the questions short and we would like answers. So far, we have nothing on policy when it comes to making First Nations full partners in economic development. Four and one-half years have gone by and no work has been done; not

the hard work, anyway, but fingers have been pointed at other people.

We want to know where this department is going in all of the Yukon, not just some of the agreements that were developed and signed -- the contribution agreements by government. We want to know what area the department is focusing on. The Premier, for example, gave some direction: southeast Yukon, focus on oil and gas, logging and so on. Is it oil and gas? Is it mining, because mining is the big thing now, which is a different department? Some people think that government spending is economic development and we heard nothing around that from the minister other than he did skirt that whole area. We haven't heard anything about policy or the hard work of policy development. Perhaps he can give us some of those.

The minister mentioned a couple of agreements that were signed with First Nations. Perhaps he exhausted the list, but what are the plans for implementing the accords that were signed off between government and the First Nations? Are they being implemented or are they being ignored? How is the department having their input into these accords that have been signed off by the First Nations?

**Hon. Mr. Kenyon:** Mr. Chair, where do I start on this one? Let's go back and just hit a few highlights of this soliloquy.

The member opposite asked about our direction to the Auditor General. I am shocked that the member opposite would think that one would ever give direction to the Auditor General. To me, that indicates that he does not know the plan, the way the Auditor General works, and perhaps has never met the Auditor General who would see great humour in this. The Auditor General directs her own audit plan. We have no involvement in that. We asked the Auditor General to come in on the audit the member refers to. We have asked her to come in on other departments and programs, and we will continue to do that.

The Auditor General found and validated exactly what we expected. That would be basically the residual of past NDP and Liberal governments. We found the problems that came out of that, and we didn't want to make that judgement on our own, but it certainly was validated by the Auditor General of Canada and her very good work and her very good staff. We will continue to ask the Auditor General of Canada to review programs and plans. It is an essential part of doing good business.

When the member opposite talks about policy and that he wants to see policy -- well, the policy is to give financial support and capacity development, in terms of regional work. Maybe he keeps missing these things. Selkirk First Nation, the Na Cho Nyak Dun First Nation, the Little Salmon-Carmacks First Nation, the Champagne and Aishihik First Nations, the Carcross-Tagish First Nation, the Tr'ondek Hwech'in, the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation -- these are all plans that we have partnered with to a degree, and we have become involved in cooperative agreements and contribution agreements. We have met with them through the Yukon Forum -- a forum that was set up legislatively by this government, not by any of the previous governments.

We have gotten involved in so many different ways. For instance, in 2005, the Department of Economic Development conducted a workshop in regional planning. I believe all municipalities and First Nations attended, and I believe the member opposite was there. I'm not 100 percent sure of that, but I do believe he attended that -- and full marks for that.

Economic Development basically wants to provide the tools -- and that's one of the things that came out of that -- the tools for municipalities and orders of government to start economic development planning and to get that planning going.

One of the difficulties has been that some of the First Nations have indicated that they want to deal with capacity issues before they get to that point, and that's reasonable. They are driving the bus on those things. Gone are the days that someone in Ottawa is going to make a decision without having any knowledge or having the community, First Nation or territory involved in the decision.

It's very frustrating to get a report based on federal data showing that 4.7 percent of greenhouse gas emissions in the territory come out of two wells in Kotaneelee and then, after complaining that that's not accurate, finding out that (a) it's 0.047 percent; (b) the data was based on something that's not anywhere near the Yukon; and (c) the guy who wrote it had never been to the Yukon and didn't even know where the well was.

We have to talk to the groups involved. That's what we did in the 2005 workshop; that's what we do with the planning of the various First Nations; that is what we do with the Yukon Forum, when we sit down and go through all the various challenges. Either at that forum, or coming out of that forum, we have discussed a number of the programs.

When the member opposite is critical of what goes into the regions and the First Nations -- the targeted investment program -- \$27 million is on the table. And all of that is done in conjunction with First Nations and communities.

The housing trust -- \$50 million -- all of which will be spent in a way that will best benefit all Yukoners and all communities.

Part of that will be spent locally in Whitehorse, but we are well aware of the fact that much of the housing problem is in First Nation land and they should be a major recipient, which is why it was set up.

The northern strategy funding of \$40 million -- there is almost \$120 million that we are sharing at the table with First Nations partners. The member opposite sees no planning in this? He doesn't think we are planning when we sit down with all the stakeholders and go over all this? Again, the member opposite has to get out more.

**Mr. Fairclough:** I ask the Minister of Economic Development to get out more. He uses that term quite often, as if we don't have the ear of the public or that we are not bringing up their concerns or that the public is not talking to us. That is totally wrong. I think that the minister should look at perhaps eliminating the term "get out more", because we do. We are in touch with the communities. We are in touch with the First Nations. We are in touch with the development community and with people in tourism. We are in touch with people from all

parts of the territory. For the member to think that we're not in his loss. I really think that the member opposite should not try to put the type of message out to the public that we are not in touch with people or that we should get out more.

Perhaps the government side is feeling the heat when it comes to questions. This is not strong questioning in Committee of the Whole. It is not by far. It shouldn't even prompt the minister to go down that road. Question Period today was more difficult. I could see where, strategically on the government side, they might want that message to come out. This is all politics and is the Yukon Party's own way of doing things.

Blaming other people is part of what they want to do, and we have seen it over and over in Question Period, time and time again from almost every member on that side of the House. It seemed like everybody else was doing badly and the government's side couldn't see any good that was done. They like to point fingers, and when it comes to giving credit where credit is due, they don't do it. Everything is like new to the government opposite. The community development fund, for example -- as if it was thought up by the Yukon Party to benefit communities. It wasn't. Maybe that is a bit of data the member was hoping to get, I'm not sure, but we know and the public knows what the Yukon Party is trying to do. I'm going to call the minister on that every time -- or maybe not. Maybe we'll give them that rope.

We only had some targeted questions with regard to this department. Some really good questions have been asked, and we expect the minister to have lots of answers because he does have lots of answers. But we were hoping that they would also some direction that they are taking.

We have asked questions about regional economic development plans, and even though in their program objectives it does say to work with First Nations in developing some direction, there was no policy developed at all in four and one-half years of the government. It is unfortunate. It is hard to take this kind of information back. We ask the questions and we are expecting to get some kind of direction from government on what they are going to do down the road. We are going to debate line by line the items already in the department. We will do that.

Putting all that aside, let's try a new area for the member opposite. It's one that the government has focused on in the past and has had some success with, and there is a potential for a lot of success. I know the government is doing some of them. So perhaps he could explain where the Department of Economic Development is with trade and export and what we could expect down the road with regard to this development.

**Hon. Mr. Kenyon:** The member opposite is dead right on one of his points when he says this is not a strong line of questioning. Absolutely. Right on with that. It is difficult to have to become repetitive to try to hammer some of the ideas home. He makes the comments that we're not working with First Nations and not developing policy with First Nations. Targeted investment program -- \$27 million. Northern housing trust -- \$50 million. Northern strategy -- \$40 million. Yukon Forum to discuss these. All of these were done in conjunction with First Nations. I stand in amazement that somehow he has

missed that. Maybe that too will come to pass and he will begin to understand some of those things.

The member opposite refers to the community development fund as if it were thought up. No, it wasn't thought up. I believe it was originally an NDP initiative. It was the Liberals that cancelled it and did away with it. We didn't go back and think it up. We give full marks to the third party for developing under different names, something like the community development fund. Unfortunately I have to remind the Member for Mayo-Tatchun that it was his newly adopted party that wiped it out. We didn't think it up; we just simply resurrected it and brought it back to the forefront.

Perhaps he missed the discussion earlier that the community development fund staff will be going out to the communities in the very near future to talk about needs assessment and working with each community to see what we can do within those communities to utilize those funds for community groups, societies, First Nation governments and local governments. There is good value to be had in all of that.

In terms of export and everything else, we can look at a variety of different things. For instance, the Yukon enterprise trade fund involves small business, but it also often involves the larger businesses. It was developed to stimulate and support the growth of business activity by focusing on the development and expansion of domestic and external markets, as well as business planning and development activities. The program supports marketing and export projects that enhance the likelihood of Yukon businesses generating increased production and sales of Yukon products, thus further diversifying and expanding the economy and enabling job creation.

For the fiscal year 2006-07, to date, a total of \$644,000 has been approved in funding in support of 94 applicants. Since the inception of the fund in August 2004, \$1.35 million has been approved in funding, providing support for 183 applicants. This is another example of a fund that can be utilized to the benefit of all Yukoners.

Before I get too far away from the community development fund, again, I am very pleased with the fact that we were able to bring that back and add to it with funds like the Yukon enterprise trade fund and others. The interesting thing is that these are not new ideas, but they are newly created since the Liberals basically wiped out the Department of Economic Development.

It's interesting, Mr. Speaker, just on a sort of personal and philosophical note, that most people think of politics as a straight line running from left to right, for want of a better term. In reality, it's a circle. So I think it becomes easier to understand the blendings. We don't live in a black-and-white world. It just simply does not exist. When you go far enough right, you come up on the left, and when you go far enough left, you come up on the right.

One of the things that attracted me to this job was the fact that, having been involved with the NDP in the past, as our Premier was -- the NDP have some excellent ideas in terms of social responsibility. My problem is that they often don't have the ability to pay for those programs, and the best idea in the world isn't going to work if you can't pay for it.

On the other side -- coming at it from the so-called right side of the circle -- there's the whole spectrum there in terms of "develop the economy" and what can be developed there with good social responsibility. My problem with what we saw with the former Liberal government -- again, I would remind the Member for Mayo-Tatchun that where he sits now is with the shortest lived majority government in the history of the Commonwealth of Nations. They have set records.

I see limitations from both the right and the left, and to look at things down the centre means that things often fall apart in both directions. I think we saw that in the last government. I think we saw that when they cancelled the community development fund and by cancelling the Economic Development department and scattered its employees. This just isn't the way to develop anything.

I'm getting a smile out of the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin. You can't protect the environment unless you have the money to do it: no money, no environment -- in my profession, no money, no medicine. So you can have all the best ideas in the world, but unless you have the money and the economy to promote that, it isn't going to work.

Returning to the enterprise trade fund, since that really was the question of the member opposite -- the applicants are eligible for up to \$50,000 toward marketing and business development projects, and up to \$10,000 toward the development of business plans and professional development opportunities. The department maintains an ongoing consultation with key industry stakeholders to help Yukon businesses develop and to maintain a competitive advantage in external markets, and to help raise the profile of Yukon business and industry and products and services in general. Applications can be submitted at any point in time.

It is also this group that works with foreign investors, foreign visitors -- "foreign" being defined as anyone from Haines, Alaska, to western China -- to show them what the Yukon has to offer and what investment potential is there. It has certainly made my job busy. This past weekend, I had the opportunity to basically host, really, four different Chinese investors who are looking. They are coming to us and saying that this is a good, solid economy.

It is interesting to go to the trade show and look at some fairly high-end items and be told that, yes, people have money in their pockets. They have money to spend. Now it's starting to come out of their pockets, because they know that at least for the next four and a half years, the economy is going to stay stable, that we are not going to drop another \$42 million on a completely failed -- well, not completely failed -- it works, as long as we throw enough money at it and prop everything up. They know the economy is going to stay that stable and that things are going to continue working here. That's kind of nice to hear.

The budget for the enterprise trade fund, for instance, is \$600,000. For the 2006-07 fiscal year, \$644,000 has been approved in funding. This is a fund that was developed by the department. There is an advisory committee to assist the department in evaluating all the project applications and to provide advice and recommendations to the department. The

committee is comprised of two private sector representatives nominated by the Yukon Chamber of Commerce, and two departmental representatives.

This is certainly one way that we can move forward in this area. Business-related organizations, either for profit or not-for-profit, must be registered and in good standing under the *Societies Act* or created under another legislated authority to be eligible.

We have also funded trips. We have funded visits and marketing trips to look at business both inside and outside of the Yukon. That all comes out of the good work of this department.

We also have what is called the Yukon business nominee program. This program is jointly administered by Economic Development and the advanced education section of the Department of Education. It has the potential to make some important contributions to increasing business expertise and business investment in the Yukon through the strategic use of the immigration program. I don't think you really need a degree in statistics or demographics to understand that, while I'm likely to see my pension at my age, the likelihood of you, Mr. Chair, seeing a pension when you get there is getting smaller and smaller. We have to do something about this. We have to balance the population.

There are a number of different ways we can do that, of course. Looking at immigration is one possibility. The Yukon government does support foreign nationals who will make a significant business investment in the Yukon. To date, 11 business immigrants have been approved under the program and a further six have been approved under the skilled worker component, which is directly administered by the advanced education section of the Department of Education.

To date, Yukon immigrants have invested a total of \$745,000. Current applications in progress may involve \$3 million to \$4 million in investment in Yukon business. The applications are reviewed by Economic Development, and the review may involve other departments, agencies or the private sector. The program is promoted through the global network of Canadian embassies and consulates. We have been very fortunate to work with Canadian embassies and consulates in the United States, China, Korea and, to a small degree, Japan, though the uptake there has been rather small to date.

In terms of other aspects and trade missions and such, again the member opposite might have completely missed that comment earlier. There is a group of department officials and a variety of members of some individual companies, particularly mining companies, that are going over to China, primarily to Beijing at first, and then part of the group will go into western China.

We are looking at that for furthering the development of negotiations and how people are coming along with those negotiations. We always have to keep in mind that, while we have to understand how they do business, at the same time they have to understand how we do business. Some of the things that happen in that are humorous at best, but things are going to work a lot faster if we can come together on common ground.

That is another reason why, on my last trip to China, we spent as much time in government offices as we did in private

offices; to show the government that yes, the Yukon is here, this is what it is like; these are the capacities; these are our resources; so when a company does go to the Chinese government to talk about the possibility of exporting money, expertise, people or technology that they understand who we are and what we are and what is going to come out of that.

Seeing the time, Mr. Chair, I move that we report progress.

**Chair:** Mr. Kenyon has moved that we report progress.

**Some Hon. Members:** Agree.

**Some Hon. Member:** Disagree.

**Chair:** I'm just counting to see who disagreed. Who disagrees?

**Some Hon. Member:** (Inaudible)

**Chair:** Mr. Fairclough, you disagree? Okay.

The yeas have it.

*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:** Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 6, *First Appropriation Act, 2007-08*, and directed me to report progress.

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

**Some Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**Speaker:** I declare the report carried.

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

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

*Motion agreed to*

*The House adjourned at 5:28 p.m.*