

**Whitehorse, Yukon**  
**Tuesday, May 22, 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 Aboriginal Awareness Week

**Mr. Edzerza:** It is with great pleasure that I rise on behalf of the Assembly to pay tribute to Aboriginal Awareness Week, May 22 to 25, and to aboriginal peoples everywhere.

Aboriginal peoples in Canada are a true example of our multicultural heritage. There are over 50 distinct aboriginal cultural groups across our nation. First Nations, Inuit and Métis are very different from each other. Within each group there is a diversity of languages and dialects, and each has its own history, administrative system and culture.

Aboriginal peoples face the many challenges of cultural change. The impact of contact with non-aboriginal people is beginning to be understood by all of us through the settlement of land claims, through exposure of the traumas suffered in residential schools and through the strengthening of aboriginal organizations.

Despite the problems, we have embraced our new vision and adapted with vigour and creativity. Great strides have been made by aboriginal peoples in the world outside our own concerns. We are very proud that this year more students are graduating from high schools and universities, more businesses are being owned and operated by aboriginals and more of us are getting involved in politics at other levels of government.

However, progress can sometimes be too slow and does not always include everyone it should. Our national Grand Chief has declared June 29 as the day of protest in response to the lack of completion of land claims and the unacceptable number of our people who face poverty, violence and disease.

Too many of our children are taken into government care; too many of our elders die without hearing their languages in their homes; too many times we experience direct racism and are barred from opportunities that are considered a right for others; too many of our youth die too early, both physically and spiritually.

It is our hope that the protest at the end of June will be joined by many non-aboriginals whose sense of justice will move them to stand beside us as brothers and sisters. It is time.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** Are there any further tributes?  
 Introduction of visitors.  
 Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

## TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

**Hon. Ms. Horne:** I have for tabling the *Crime Prevention and Victim Services Trust Fund 2005-06 Annual Report*.

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

Reports of committees.

Are there any petitions?

Are there bills to be introduced?

Are there any notices of motion?

## NOTICES OF MOTION

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** I give notice of the following motion:

THAT a Select Committee on Whistle-blower Protection be established;

THAT the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, Hon. Ted Staffen, be the chair of the committee;

THAT the honourable members Hon. Jim Kenyon, Steve Nordick, Eric Fairclough and Steve Cardiff be appointed to the committee;

THAT the committee report to the House its findings and recommendations respecting the central issues that should be addressed in whistle-blower protection legislation including:

(a) whether all public institutions and private organizations performing "public" functions will be covered;

(b) whether only employees or others (unions, advocacy groups, the media, citizens) can use the legislation;

(c) what types of wrongdoing will be covered;

(d) whether the same office will conduct investigation, mediation and the protection of whistle-blowers;

(e) whether employees will have to exhaust departmental procedures before approaching the whistle-blowing protection office;

(f) how retaliation against whistle-blowers will be defined and how long protection will exist;

(g) whether there will be a reverse onus on the employer to demonstrate that adverse decisions on a whistle-blowing employee were not a reprisal;

(h) what remedies for employees judged to be adversely affected will be specified in the legislation; and

(i) what sorts of consequences there will be for employees who engage in reckless or malicious accusations of wrongdoing and for managers who engage in reprisal against employees who act in good faith;

THAT the committee report to the House its recommendation as to whether whistle-blower protection legislation should include a sunset clause similar to that found in section 35 of the *Ombudsman Act*;

THAT the committee have the power to call for persons, papers and records and to sit during intersessional periods;

THAT the committee hold hearings for the purpose of receiving the views and opinions of Yukon citizens and interested groups on whistle-blower protection legislation;

THAT the committee have the power to seek background information from experts and to be able to call and hear these experts as witnesses;

THAT while all testimony provided at the committee shall be a matter of public record, the committee have the power to hold in-camera meetings and to direct that the records of the committee, in specific instances, not contain details that would lead to the identification of an individual, group, third party or community;

THAT if the House is not sitting at such time as the committee is prepared to present its report, the committee transmit its report to all Members of the Legislative Assembly, and then, not more than one day later, release the report to the public; and

THAT the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly be responsible for providing the necessary support services to the committee.

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

THAT this House urges the Yukon Party government to ensure its House leader will abide by the standing agreement between House leaders that all parties should not misuse tributes presented in the Assembly by transforming them into political broadcasts, as exemplified on May 17, 2007.

**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: First Nations, government relations with

**Mr. Mitchell:** I have a question for the Premier. The Premier got a letter this week from the Chief of the Ta'an Kwach'an Council. The chief of the First Nation is tired of being ignored by this government, and she told him so in this letter. She said she was writing to express her dismay and her wish to bring to the Premier's attention a number of letters previously sent to his office, which have been ignored and not responded to. She goes on to list several examples, dating back some five months.

Why is the Premier unable to answer a simple thing like a letter from a self-governing First Nation?

**Hon. Mr. Fentie:** Well, Mr. Speaker, it's obvious that the long weekend, and the time spent during the long weekend, certainly wasn't used for the Official Opposition to change their approach. We do respond on a regular basis to all letters that come forward to the government. Of course we do so once a full and thorough analysis of the questions or situation has been completed. We respond with factual information to those that correspond with government.

As far as First Nations, we deal with First Nations on a government-to-government level, and on some of the matters that the Chief of Ta'an Kwach'an is writing about -- a response, for example, on the outfitter policy, was given to all chiefs some time ago. The chief also knows full well that our response with respect to property on the waterfront -- this is a public asset, and we could not do anything or make any decision by agreement with the city until post-Canada Winter Games. Now we'll go through a process but we will ensure that whatever we do with said property is done on the public interest.

Of course, with respect to the issue out at Shallow Bay, everybody knows what has gone on there, including there being a court challenge by the First Nation, and I don't think there is much more that needs to be said.

**Mr. Mitchell:** The Premier could have put all of that information in a letter to the chief of the First Nation. It is about respect, or a lack thereof.

The Ta'an Kwach'an chief goes on in her letter to the Premier saying there is a perception that the Yukon Party government has become so presumptuous as to minimize the authority of self-governing First Nations, but she refuses to accept that. I wonder how a government as arrogant as this one could get a reputation like that.

The Chief of the Ta'an Kwach'an is obviously frustrated with this government and its my-way-or-the-highway approach. The chief has written to the Premier on several different issues over the last five months. She has received no responses. Why can't the Premier be bothered to respond to letters from a self-governing First Nation?

**Hon. Mr. Fentie:** It's a ridiculous question. In fact, if I brought all of the letters that this government has sent to self-governing First Nations into this Assembly, we would have to back a truck up to the door. So, for the member to assert on the floor of this Legislature that we don't respond to First Nation governments is a ridiculous question.

On this issue about the highway, at least the government knows what highway we are on and which direction the highway is going, unlike the Official Opposition.

**Mr. Mitchell:** The Premier says it's a ridiculous question. I would suggest that it was a ridiculous answer. The Chief of the Ta'an Kwach'an Council is tired of being ignored by this government. The Premier can deny it all he wants, but I think he should start reading his mail. I will file the letters here today in case he hasn't opened his mail.

The chief feels ignored by this government. It does not seem to matter what the issue is -- the Premier doesn't respond to letters he gets. This is unacceptable and it needs attention at the highest office.

The chief has asked for a meeting to try to resolve some of these outstanding matters. It's the least the Premier could do after ignoring the Ta'an Kwach'an Council for the last five months. When will the Premier be sitting down with the Chief of the Ta'an Kwach'an Council?

**Hon. Mr. Fentie:** What is unacceptable are the inferences being made by the Leader of the Official Opposition. It is right up there with all the other information that the Official Opposition brings to the floor of the Legislature, somewhat suspect in its content.

We have to be factual here, Mr. Speaker. To say that we don't respond to First Nations in this territory flies in the face of the evidence. The Yukon Forum, *Co-operation in Governance Act*, the sharing of the northern strategy, the sharing of the target investment projects fund, the sharing of the housing trust, the ongoing work we are doing with the outfitter policy and the land committee, the *Children's Act* review, justice, education -- all these matters are responding to First Nations. The government rests its case.

**Question re: Nurse shortage**

**Mr. Mitchell:** I have a question for the Minister of Health and Social Services on his hear-no-evil-see-no-evil approach to affairs at the hospital. Last week, the minister said he supports the position put forward by the new CEO at Whitehorse General Hospital -- namely that there is nothing to worry about. The minister also expressed his full confidence in the new CEO.

While the minister tries to downplay the situation, it is obvious that things are not going well at the hospital. We have learned that the number of grievances filed by nursing staff has increased significantly over the past year. The nurses union said on Friday that the situation is bad enough that they are at risk of losing staff. When is the minister going to stop pretending that nothing is wrong and start addressing some of our nurses' concerns?

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** Mr. Speaker, once again, we have here the Leader of the Official Opposition -- I have a copy of the Blues from Thursday right in front of me. The member's comments and his reflection of my response certainly do not reflect what *Hansard* says about the facts. The member needs to recognize here the independence of the hospital board. The contractual relationship is through the contribution agreement under the Minister of Health and Social Services' signature. The hospital deals with their affairs through the board and through the CEO and through the unions at the hospital. While they may have challenges from time to time, again, I have to emphasize to the member, if the member simply opens up his eyes and takes a look around at every part of this country, he will see that the Yukon's health care system is second to none.

**Mr. Mitchell:** Mr. Speaker, he didn't answer the question. I would agree that Yukon health care workers are second to none, but the system is not working. Nursing staff are on the verge of collapsing because they're so overworked. This Yukon Party government has had almost five years to work on this problem, and they have failed miserably. Several days ago, the CEO of the hospital held a news conference and said everything was fine. We're down a couple of nurses, nothing to worry about. On Friday, the chair of the hospital board said something different. He confirmed that morale is low. He confirmed that there are staffing shortages in several areas, and he confirmed that the number of grievances is up at the hospital. When is the minister going to drop his look-the-other-way approach on this issue and get to work on solving some of the problems at the hospital?

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** Mr. Speaker, I can't believe what I'm hearing from the Leader of the Official Opposition. The member just suggested that this government has not acted. Let me point out what this government has done in comparison to what the Liberals did in office. Under the Liberal watch, operation and maintenance funding to the Hospital Corporation was a mere \$18.1 million. Under our watch, in the 2006-07 fiscal year, \$32.8 million operation and maintenance funding provided. That's not including capital, Mr. Speaker.

Let me emphasize to the member opposite, this government has acted beyond what any other government has done, adding to \$18 million. I know the member's math is sometimes

weak. That's a \$14.7-million difference. This is in addition to what we're doing inside government within the department, within our health human resources strategy, which is a \$12.7-million strategy aimed at areas, including improving the recruitment and retention of nurses. We've acted beyond what any other government has done, and we're going to do more. But, Mr. Speaker, for the member to suggest that we have not acted in comparison to other governments is absolutely ridiculous.

**Mr. Mitchell:** The minister can go on and on about his health strategy. It's not working. There was a cry for help last week from the head of the Yukon Medical Association and the head of the nurses association and the head of the nurses union. They all said the same thing: there are big problems at the hospital. There are big problems with staff shortages. They are all looking for leadership from this minister and he is not providing it. He seems more concerned about downplaying the issues than he is about solving them.

The situation got worse recently when already-overworked staff were told that vacation leave would be cut short or not approved at all. How long is the minister going to sit on the sidelines before he decides to be part of the solution instead of part of the problem?

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** The Leader of the Official Opposition needs to do his research because he is not reflecting the facts. A \$12.7-million health human resources strategy is a significant action, particularly when compared to the record of previous governments, including the Liberals' actions, which were nothing during their time in office. We have stepped forward. There are challenges in every health system in the country.

The member is failing to reflect that portions of the health human resources strategy rolled out last month -- it was announced about a year ago. The strategy has had significant components rolling out on, in some cases, a monthly basis over the past year. The department has done tremendous work in putting this strategy together.

This \$12.7-million health human resources strategy is in addition to the significantly increased investment in O&M for the hospital, which has gone from a mere \$18.1 million under the Liberals' watch to \$32.8 million during the last year of this government's watch -- again, an increase of \$14.7 million. This government has certainly acted and we will continue to do more in partnership and in collaboration with those involved, not in a controversial manner, as the members opposite would do.

**Question re: Minto mine power purchase agreement**

**Mr. Edzerza:** I have a question for the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources. On March 30, the Premier announced that \$5 million from the federal government's climate change trust fund would go directly toward installing a third hydro turbine at Aishihik. The rationale for this investment was that it would reduce the Yukon's greenhouse gas emissions by 3,800 tonnes per year. This decision was made with no prior consultation with the people who could be most affected by the project.

What guarantee can the minister give that a third turbine will not have any adverse environmental effects on Aishihik Lake, Canyon Creek, what's left of Otter Falls or the West Aishihik River? What resources has he allocated to offset any negative impacts that might occur?

**Hon. Mr. Lang:** We have to work within the existing licence. All the concerns that the member opposite has brought forward -- speaking for the Yukon Energy Corporation -- we have to work within the existing licence, so all those questions have been answered.

**Mr. Edzerza:** Three days after announcing the third wheel at Aishihik, the Premier announced a \$10-million investment in the proposed hydro line from Carmacks to Stewart Crossing. Once again, this was put forward as part of the government's so-called climate change strategy. This time we were told that building a line from Carmacks to Pelly would reduce greenhouse gases by 24,100 tonnes per year -- nearly three times what the third wheel would save. Both these measures are supposed to reduce our dependence on diesel-generated electricity. Given this new-found concern about greenhouse gases, can the minister explain why at the very same time Yukon Energy Corporation is buying four industrial diesel units as part of the power purchase agreement with Sherwood Copper?

**Hon. Mr. Lang:** That's an internal business transaction with the corporation and the mine. It's in front of the Yukon Utilities Board at the moment and they will have a decision by the end of this month. The member opposite ignores the fact that we are going to be taking -- if in fact the Yukon Utilities Board approves it and the line goes from Carmacks to Pelly and then to Stewart -- the Minto mine off diesel and the community of Pelly off diesel. Of course, with the third wheel at Aishihik, we're looking at the backup power, which is run by diesel, being at a minimum. We are looking at a very large diesel issue at the moment, but as soon as all of those pieces fall together, there will be one more community off diesel -- Pelly Crossing -- which will put us up to about 95 or 96 percent of our customer base. The first big mine to come into production here in the last 10 years will be totally on hydro, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Edzerza:** At the very least, we seem to be getting a mixed message from the government about diesel and greenhouse gases. After a certain time, the power purchase agreement allows Yukon Energy to take the generators for its own use or sell them to a third party. The Yukon Utilities Board has expressed concern about a publicly owned utility buying these units.

Perhaps the minister can help by telling us what Yukon Energy Corporation has in mind? Does the Yukon Energy Corporation intend to sell these units, use them for backup, or is this really all about satisfying Sherwood Copper without bothering to consider the long-term economic or environmental implications?

**Hon. Mr. Lang:** That's a business deal between the corporation and the mine, and the Utilities Board will certainly have concerns and we will listen to the Utilities Board when those concerns are brought forward.

Mr. Speaker, the Energy Corporation and the mine have entered into an agreement on how the expansion of the line from Carmacks to Pelly, and then to Stewart, would be handled. As far as a business deal, with the Utilities Board's agreement, at the end of the day I think it's a good deal for Yukoners and for consumers, and it certainly does take the issue of diesel off the table so that's good for the environment.

It's a solid move for the environment. The third wheel at Aishihik is already licensed and ready to go. All we have to do is invest in the actual wheel, which will be a \$5-million investment. By the way, this was money that was allocated for that job by the federal government.

It's just one more way we can move into an age where diesel will be minimized as a producer of power in the Yukon. We're expanding our hydro grid and also our economic engine, which is the Minto mine.

#### **Question re: Dawson City sewage lagoon**

**Mr. Cardiff:** The government's plan to put a sewage lagoon at the entrance to Dawson City will no doubt provide a wonderful first impression for visitors, but I'm sure the minister must be aware of other concerns with that site.

One concern is the lack of stability and the drainage patterns from the surrounding hills. Embedding a lagoon in porous rock above the town's main drinking-water source raises questions about potential water contamination. Another concern is the unpleasant hydrogen sulphide odour the lagoon treatment process will be giving off two or three times a year. This is why some jurisdictions require sewage lagoons to be at least one mile away from any community.

Is the minister considering any other location for the Dawson City sewage lagoon, or is this more or less a done deal?

**Hon. Mr. Hart:** We are investigating this particular site for the sewage lagoon in Dawson City, as is required by the court. We are currently moving along that way. It is one of the few locations that we can use in order to satisfy our requirement in court, which is coming due at the end of June.

I would like to also just remind the member opposite that we have done extensive studies with regard to the water in the area, as well as other items that will need to be mitigated and will be handled under the YESAA process.

**Mr. Cardiff:** The minister didn't answer the question. I asked him if they were looking at other locations. Previously, there was a proposed site on the bench across the Klondike River from Dawson. It was considered a suitable site. It is away from the watershed; it is out of sight; it's on more stable land, and the odours wouldn't be as much of a problem.

Unfortunately, it was on First Nation land and a general assembly resolution was passed in 2005 against using that site. Now that resolution has been rescinded and the First Nation is offering the upper bench as a lagoon site.

Have the minister or his officials had any discussion with the Tr'ondek Hwech'in about this offer, or is this another situation where the government has its mind made up and it isn't open to any other ideas?

**Hon. Mr. Hart:** We have had several discussions with the First Nation in question as well as with the City of Dawson itself. After all, the sewage facility is with the City of Dawson,

and we have worked with the First Nation on this particular aspect.

As the member previously indicated, there was not an available site for a sewage facility on the First Nation land because of their AGM policy. We had looked at several different sites in the Dawson City area. The site location that we have now is the one that turned out to be most suitable, because it belongs to the City of Dawson. That is the one we are going forward with to the courts.

For the member opposite, the First Nation made an adjustment to their AGM resolution recently to allow a sewage facility on their particular land, but we don't have time. The end of June is coming. We have to have our application in to the YESA Board in order to look like we're moving forward on this project when we appear before the judge.

**Mr. Cardiff:** Well, we've heard this government's argument about not building on First Nations land before, and I hope that's not part of the issue here. Timing has always been an essential consideration in this project. In fact, there is a court date next month, as the minister stated, on what's being done to meet the construction deadline, which is December 2008. A water licence hearing, as he said, needs to be held. And there is the YESAA process. The minister expressed a pretty dim view of the YESAA process at the Association of Yukon Communities convention -- not this past weekend, but the weekend before. I'm not going to dwell on that.

Will the minister recommend to his department that it would seriously consider the Tr'ondek Hwech'in proposal, even if it means having to request one more delay from the court?

**Hon. Mr. Hart:** We have a court date at the end of June. The Department of Community Services is moving ahead with legal proceedings in that area. We are working with the City of Dawson on that particular location, to where the First Nation has the ability to make an application through YESAA on their particular location, and we can go through that process under YESAA.

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

**Mr. Fairclough:** My question is for the Minister of Education. This morning, Chief Joe Linklater, a member of the executive committee on the education reform project, said in an interview, and I quote in part, "... the issue of governance is obviously not off the table."

Now, Mr. Speaker, the other First Nation representative on the committee is Chief Liard McMillan. On May 18 he said, in part, and I quote: "The education reform project must consider how Yukon First Nations and other Yukoners can hold the government and the Department of Education accountable for what they do with taxpayers' money." It doesn't sound like the issue of governance is off the table.

The minister is a third member of that committee. Will he now admit that the education reform project will consider and bring forth recommendations on a governance model, and will he empower not only First Nations but all Yukoners?

**Hon. Mr. Rouble:** Mr. Speaker, the education reform project is well underway now. With the education reform project we will be looking at what changes we can make to Yukon's

education system to better meet the needs and aspirations of all Yukoners, including Yukoners of First Nation ancestry.

Last week we went through an exercise here in this Assembly, in our public democracy, where we went through the budget of the Department of Education and representatives of all Yukoners had an opportunity to voice their questions, their concerns or their suggestions about it. We even had an opportunity in this Assembly to discuss a vision of education.

We have a public system in the territory; we will be working with all our stakeholders and all our partners in education to find ways to receive their input and have their input translated into actions in the department. We will be working with all people, whether they be of First Nation ancestry or different religious groups or different language groups. We want an education system that involves Yukoners.

**Mr. Fairclough:** I would think that the next meeting of the members of the executive committee on the education reform project is going to be a very interesting one, because two of those members are talking about governance being on the table and this minister is not.

The Premier is fixated on the word "devolve". He needs to realize that he is the only person who is using that word. What all Yukoners want is the right and the opportunity to have a say in the education system. They want a way to hold government and the department accountable -- something enjoyed by nearly all other jurisdictions around Canada.

Is the minister prepared to deny Yukoners this right? Yes or no?

**Hon. Mr. Rouble:** I believe the members opposite have heard this before, but the education reform group has been tasked with talking to Yukoners specifically about how to make more decisions at the community level. They have been given the specific direction to find ways to develop more open lines of communication and meaningful collaboration between schools and First Nations.

This government -- the Department of Education -- is looking at ways to involve Yukoners. We're also looking at ways to make Yukoners aware of what's going on in the education system. It was a little over a week ago that I tabled the annual report of the Department of Education, which provides a significant amount of information about where our education system is and where it's going. Then just last week in our Legislative Assembly, we had an opportunity to review, in great detail, the Department of Education's budget and to look at the vision for education, the goals of education and the specific programs underway.

The budget was on the table before us. That is certainly a high level of accountability.

**Mr. Fairclough:** Chief Liard McMillan said last Friday, "Some kind of body independent of the Department of Education must be established to inform Yukoners about the effectiveness of our public education system." These are not words of a devolutionist; these are words of someone who cares deeply about our education system.

School councils operate at different levels and address different needs, so the minister needs not to go there. Is this minister going to take the side of Yukoners and give them a say, or is

he going to continue to take his marching orders from the Premier?

**Hon. Mr. Rouble:** I'm not sure where the Opposition is going with this. It would have been much clearer if the Liberal Party had actually put forward a vision for education but, unfortunately, they chose not to do that. In fact, they chastised me for even daring to bring that forward on the floor of this Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, we have a public system. The Department of Education's budget was open for all to see and for all to debate last week. We had the opportunity to go through it with a fine-tooth comb but the opposition chose not to go through line by line. They chose not to examine how the money was being spent and they chose not to discuss and debate the vision and the goals of education in the territory.

I wish the Opposition -- the Liberal Party -- would be clear in where they want the government to go on this.

#### **Question re: Power conservation programs**

**Mr. McRobb:** I have more questions for the Energy, Mines and Resources minister on the 30-percent rate hike that he announced last week in a rather roundabout manner. Bills are going up 15 percent on July 1 and a further 15 percent after he completely phases out the rate stabilization fund next year. This will cost Yukon families about \$400 a year on their power bills.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to draw your attention to what the minister said last month when he announced the rate stabilization fund would be under review, and I quote, "The Government of Yukon will introduce a number of other initiatives that address energy efficiency."

His idea at the time was to cushion the impact of his hefty bill increases with the means to help people reduce their consumption. That was a good idea and one we've advocated, but the minister has failed to make good on his promise. His bill hike takes effect in only six weeks and he has done nothing to address energy efficiency.

Why hasn't the minister held true on his promise?

**Hon. Mr. Lang:** We certainly are looking at a plan to move forward with how we can conserve energy. I don't think the member opposite is really living in the real world. Everywhere else in Canada they are looking at conservation, not subsidization. Everywhere else in Canada they are looking at the environment, trying to minimize the impact on the environment. We have an opportunity through taking diesel and putting it behind us. The member opposite, of course, is negative about that. He is negative about the opportunities that Minto mine will offer the community. His attitude is to just say no.

**Mr. McRobb:** Not only did he avoid the question but I disagree entirely with his recap of my position.

Yukoners' power bills are going up 15 percent in six weeks and another 15 percent next July. The minister promised but has failed to deliver on programming to help people reduce their electrical consumption. Many consumers will face high costs to achieve meaningful reductions in their consumption, especially those who heat their homes with electricity. The minister could have assisted homeowners with the installation of high-efficient heating alternatives through new programming

that could be accessible to everyone who wanted it. For instance, there is lots of potential for geothermal heating in the Yukon, a sustainable resource that is drastically underutilized. Instead the minister struck out.

What is he going to do to help homeowners before they get hit with his big bill hikes?

**Hon. Mr. Lang:** Mr. Speaker, in addressing the member opposite, in my last comments, we talked about living in the real age: conservation not subsidization. Energy has to be conserved. We have to start working at managing our energy, not subsidizing our energy. Mr. Speaker, Yukoners want to participate in the Canadian dream of minimizing the impact on our environment. You just have to read any article, any magazine, any newspaper. What we have here in the Yukon, Mr. Speaker, is the opportunity, not just to say no to everything, but to further our hydro, to look at rate relief instead of subsidization. The Liberal Party talked about the environment for two weeks here. Now we're talking about subsidization; we're talking about how we can subsidize so people can abuse the power that they burn.

Mr. Speaker, the members opposite have to make up their minds. We're into conservation; we're into rate reduction. That's our aim as a government, and that's where we're heading.

**Mr. McRobb:** Yes, they're into conservation. That's why they discontinued the clawback on the program. In the real world, the Yukon Party's conservation means big hikes without programming. Hike the price up, and that will reduce, without any programming, despite the minister's promises. Now, only last week, he said, "We are looking at a conservation program to make people in the Yukon more aware of how we can conserve our energy." This sounds like an information campaign only. It does nothing to help people cope with their high bills. I'm asking the minister to cushion the blow. Many Yukoners will have difficulty finding \$400 a year to pay for his bill hikes -- especially people on fixed incomes, seniors, young families and the working poor. When is he going to live up to his commitments and introduce these new promised initiatives to address energy efficiency? When?

**Hon. Mr. Lang:** As we understand the figures that come from the members opposite, which by the way are not factual -- Mr. Speaker, here is a list of things we do today for our consumers. We have the home repair program, the mobile home upgrade program, the green home program and green home mortgage program -- all directed toward Yukoners to improve their consumption of power. There is the rental rehabilitation program -- monies put in so that people can winterize their existing homes -- the Yukon Housing Corporation self-help course and the Energy Solutions Centre. These are unfolding as we sit here in the House.

Again, I remind the members opposite that this Yukon energy business deal with expanding the line is good news for Yukoners and good news for Yukon consumers because it is going to lead to a rate reduction. By this time next year, the reduction will be in place. They are going in front of the Yukon Utilities Board this February and the Yukon Utilities Board will make that decision and we will move forward. It will not be a subsidy. It will be a rate reduction.

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

#### Notice of opposition private members' business

**Mr. Cardiff:** Pursuant to Standing Order 14.2(3), I would like to identify the item standing in the name of the third party to be called on Wednesday, May 23. It is Motion No. 110, standing in the name of the Member for Mount Lorne.

**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 23, 2007. They are Bill No. 102, standing in the name of the Member for Porter Creek South, and Motion No. 33, standing in the name of the Member for Kluane.

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

#### ORDERS OF THE DAY

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

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

*Motion agreed to*

*Speaker leaves the Chair*

#### COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

**Chair:** 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*. Do members wish to take a brief recess?

**All Hon. Members:** Agreed.

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

*Recess*

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

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

**Chair:** The matter before the Committee is Bill No. 6, *First Appropriation Act, 2007-08*. We will continue with general debate.

**Mr. Mitchell:** Mr. Chair, the Premier met this week-end with northern premiers and renewed the pan-northern accord. When he was meeting with Premier Handley, was there any discussion about the N.W.T. mines minister Brendan Bell's recent advocacy earlier in May for an over-the-top and Mackenzie Valley pipeline combination, instead of the Alaska Highway pipeline? And was the Premier, in his pan-northern discussions, able to raise the issue of advocating one route in-

stead of another route, as opposed to the possibility of more than one pipeline, which is sort of contrary to the spirit that he has previously extended regarding the pan-northern cooperation?

**Hon. Mr. Fentie:** As always, this government takes a cooperative approach with all governments -- First Nations and our neighbouring jurisdictions. Both the Yukon and the Northwest Territories continue to support and promote the building of two pipelines and will continue to do that.

I won't make comment on an individual MLA's assertions in the public, but I think it's fair to say that we recognize that the option of an over-the-top pipeline is not realistic. Not only is it illegal in the State of Alaska, it would meet tremendous resistance from all concerned, including the federal government, which does not support an over-the-top route and has certainly maintained that that is its position over time.

For the member opposite, clearly this is an issue that is something that an individual decided would be a matter of their opinion. There is just no way that we even are concerned about comments like that, considering our agreements and the realities of the situation.

**Mr. Mitchell:** Perhaps the Premier could provide more clarification on this, because it was not just an individual or some MLA; it was the minister responsible for mines and representing, presumably, the official government policy of the Government of the Northwest Territories speaking at a conference. Now, the articles about it said that Bell's comments resurrected an old feud between two Canadian territories and one U.S. state. As far as the over-the-top route being unacceptable, I certainly agree with the Premier on that. It's unacceptable to us; I think it's unacceptable to most Yukoners, considering the environmental hazards or risks that would be at stake. There certainly is an economic stake for us as well but, first and foremost, we would be concerned about the environment. Again, this was not just some MLA voicing an opinion.

As far as the Alaskan legislation -- as easily as that legislation was passed and approved, new legislation could be tabled to permit or allow for an over-the-top route and the Premier knows this. Legislation can change. So to hang our hat on "it's illegal in the State of Alaska" -- it's illegal today and it may be illegal tomorrow but we don't know if it will be next year. Surely the Premier recognizes that that law could change and that should not be our line of defence against this potential threat to Yukon.

**Hon. Mr. Fentie:** I'll continue to entertain the member's approach, as we are in general debate and have been -- save and except one department, the Department of Economic Development -- for the full term of the sitting so far. Let me try it this way: as far as this government is concerned, there's as much chance of building an over-the-top pipeline as the member opposite hitting a home run in Yankee Stadium with a toothpick.

**Mr. Mitchell:** I had better hurry, because I believe they're replacing that ballpark in a couple of years and the toothpick certainly puts a large restriction on any effort.

In any case, it's good to hear the Premier reaffirm that he will be firm when speaking with his colleague, the Premier of

the Northwest Territories, on Yukon's concerns about the potential route that was being supported by one of his ministers. Since the Premier stands behind his ministers daily in this Legislature, we would have to presume that Premier Handley would be standing behind Minister Bell.

I want to correct the Premier for the record. While he has been up in his office dealing with other matters, he may have missed the odd day or two, but I believe the Department of Education was debated at some length in general debate. Apparently that slipped the Premier's attention.

In any case, I'm sure that the Minister of Education would feel differently about it.

Now, there are some other issues we would like to raise in general debate. When will we be seeing the north Yukon land use plan? We understand that that may be coming close to completion. Does the Premier have any information that he can let us know in this Legislature as to when that will be completed and when we will have information on it? Also, what other regional land use plans are nearing completion? Does he have any kind of update he can give us on why the progress has been so slow on these plans?

**Hon. Mr. Fentie:** It is getting somewhat tiring having to correct the record all the time. What was stated moments ago was that this Assembly has been in general debate virtually through the whole term of the sitting to date, save and except the Department of Economic Development where the members opposite -- at least the Member for Porter Creek South -- delved into line-by-line discussion. No other department has yet received that kind of scrutiny and that level of accountability by the Official Opposition and/or the opposition side of the House. Frankly, Mr. Chair, that is what budget debate is all about: drilling down into the issues line by line, dollar for dollar, because that is where we are accountable. This is a sizable budget -- some \$862 million -- and the Official Opposition has given it a 30-cent overview.

When we are discussing land use planning, it is in the hands of a commission, as we are obligated to create and allow the commission to conduct its work. This is part of the land claims process. In north Yukon, the commission has done a great deal of work and is advancing. With the input of First Nations and others, we finally have a land use planning process up and running.

Why hasn't it happened to date? There is only one answer: this is the first time that a government has taken this issue seriously -- it's this Yukon Party government -- and we have advanced the commission and the planning process. Under previous governments, including both benches -- the NDP and the Liberals -- zero was done. At least now the Yukon is advancing its land use planning process.

So, with all that in response to the Leader of the Official Opposition, some of the questions that the member may have obviously would be better served in department-by-department, line-by-line debate. I would encourage the Official Opposition to be a little more thorough because they maintain that their job is to hold the government to account. Well, we can't do it in the manner that we are experiencing here. The Official Opposition is going to have to delve into the detail. These are taxpayers'

dollars -- some \$862 million to be exact -- and I think the Official Opposition should do a much more thorough job in department-by-department and line-by-line debate. That's why we're here.

**Mr. Mitchell:** It may be great optics for the Premier to decide how we should conduct our inquiry into the budget. It's fine for him to say we are going to avoid general debate for a number of days and deal with departments, and then we are going to come back into general debate and say you should have done the departments differently.

It's the Official Opposition and the third party's determination when they choose to go line by line and when they feel that perhaps their questions have been sufficiently answered in general debate on a department.

As much as the Premier might like to run back and forth on both sides of this House and both ask and answer the questions, it doesn't work that way, and he knows that. If he would just forget about the theatrics and actually answer questions, it would all move along a lot more expeditiously.

There has been some discussion in here regarding the rate stabilization fund. There have been lots of semantics thrown into this. There has been some discussion and answers in Question Period referring to it as a subsidy. It is a stabilization fund; you can call it a subsidy if you want to, and you should have named it that. In any case, can the Premier explain to us why the decision was made to cut half that stabilization fund, effective July 1 this year, in anticipation of something they cannot know, which is whether or not, come next winter, should there be a general rate application, that such a rate application will, in fact, approve a reduction in the residential rates and the rates to municipalities, which would offset the increase the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources has already provided by axing half the fund now and the remaining half next summer?

**Hon. Mr. Fentie:** The rate stabilization fund, if that's what the member wants to call it -- fine, but we all know what it is. It's a direct subsidy and is the product of a very flawed approach to energy in the territory. Under the tutelage and leadership of the Member for Kluane, the venue where this so-called energy plan was built was a total chaotic disaster, and we're now dealing with the residue of it.

The member's question is, "Why 50 percent?" Well, I think that's fairly simple; it is to raise awareness and ensure that conservation measures are being utilized. It is not subsidization, but conservation. At the same time, there's much more to this overall initiative.

However, this is a very specific question to a specific department and a specific minister, who is in charge of the Yukon Energy Corporation. That's why I keep pointing out that we've been in general debate so far every day of this sitting, save and except when we did second reading, response to the budget speech and third reading, and the Department of Economic Development, during which, to the credit of the Member for Porter Creek South, some details were actually discussed and debated in this House.

Therefore, I would submit, Mr. Chair, that it's obvious that the Leader of the Official Opposition has no targeted questions for general debate of the budget -- a big budget, some \$862



million, I'll repeat for the member's benefit. Maybe that will resonate somewhat. If the member wants to talk about rate stabilization funds and other measures with the Energy Corporation, it is the tradition -- and of course the appropriate approach -- to deal with the minister responsible. If the members are making a different choice here and are going to continue to ask, in general debate, specific questions on specific areas outside of my purview, the answers will be short, and the productivity in this Assembly will be diminished dramatically.

The member made a comment about jumping on both sides of the House, asking the questions and then answering them. I would submit, Mr. Chair, if the government could do that, this place would be a lot more productive, because we'd ask the right questions and provide the right answers.

**Mr. Mitchell:** Well, that's really enlightening, Mr. Chair. I think what the Premier is suggesting is let's just do away with messy democracy altogether, and the Premier knows best and he can ask and answer the questions. But fortunately, there are laws, some of which are not benign legalities, so we will follow those.

As far as this Premier's standing on the ceremony of talking about past protocol and tradition, I find that laughable beyond ironic, because this is the Premier who cut and run out of general debate several weeks ago to go into the departments. He went into the departments. Then when you get into the department, each minister can stand up and say, "Well, that's not exactly in my purview; that should be asked of another minister," -- and we never know when that department will be called. So there is also the tradition of "all decisions are decisions of Cabinet and the buck stops right there with Cabinet." Mr. Speaker, it stops with the Premier. We know that decisions to cut and slash at the rate stabilization fund are not made in isolation; they're made with the full acquiescence and support of the Premier, so he can't claim ignorance of how this is happening or why it's happening. It's just disingenuous, at best, for him to suggest that.

As far as suggesting that there was a terrible rate stabilization fund, a terrible approach -- and the name is the rate stabilization fund, and I think he said "if we wished to call it that". Well, if that is the name, then that should be the name we use. I'd point out that this is the government that ended the previous approach to the RSF that did discourage excessive use by capping it at, I think, 1,500 kilowatt hours and having a sliding scale up to that point. There is no disincentive with a flat approach to it, but this government had the opportunity to do that and in fact they changed it. They abandoned that approach. So now he is criticizing his own government, which I think probably goes against tradition as well, and he shouldn't do so.

As far as discouraging excessive use, the Premier -- as his government likes to point out when promoting a hydro line or a grid extension, which is something we don't disagree with as a good concept for infrastructure -- likes to point out that right now we are spilling water over the dam. There is excess hydro available. We are not using it; we are not getting paid for it. The Energy, Mines and Resources minister has pointed it out. This is good business sense; we are going to get paid for it. Well, you can't have it both ways. You can't say a mine is go-

ing to open up, that it is going to burn diesel and therefore we would like to get that excess power there, and at the same time say to people that we would like to discourage your use of the hydroelectric power that is readily available.

The vast majority of the consumers for the vast portion of the year in Yukon are not contributing to climate change and excess greenhouse gases by whether their electric bill is 1,000 kilowatt hours or 1,200 or 1,500 kilowatt hours when it is produced by hydro.

You can't have it both ways. You can't say, "We don't want to have a rate stabilization fund, we want to use the stick to discourage excessive use and we're going to discourage people from using excess power" and then say, "A little later, we're going to see if we can get rates to drop, and that will be okay." They have the same end.

All we are asking over here is: why would you not wait until the general rate application was done? Why not wait until we see what the results of that are going to be, number one, based on how the rate stabilization fund is structured? If that drop was significant enough, there would be no rate stabilization fund. It would phase itself out. It seems that the only loser in this is the bill payer from now until next February, and then from next February until whenever any potential and possible rate reduction is implemented. In the meantime, your bills will absolutely go up 15 percent this July -- that is a certainty -- and they will go up another 15 percent next July unless or until there is a rate reduction.

I'll ask my question again. Why did this government, which this Premier leads, make the decision to cut half of that rate stabilization fund out now in advance of any application for a general rate application, which may or may not lead to a reduction?

Did they truly believe that this was going to be an effective conservation approach when they did not simultaneously, as previously promised, implement new -- not referring back to already existing programs, but new ones -- energy conservation programs that would allow homeowners to try to offset the 15-percent hike with conservation measures?

**Hon. Mr. Fentie:** What in the world is this member talking about? The only thing I can ascertain from that discourse is the issue of why the government made a decision. Because that's what governments are supposed to do, Mr. Chair -- make decisions. I know that is foreign to the Liberals in the House because decision making is not part of their repertoire, but it certainly is on this side of the House.

The decision was made to get rid of a subsidy. We don't want to continue to subsidize. It is bad practice, bad policy. So, instead of subsidization, we are focused on conservation. Instead of a reduction in customers under the Liberals' watch, where there was an exodus of people from the territory, reducing the customer base for Yukon Energy Corporation, this government is busy increasing the customer base and, by the way, transferring that increased revenue source and benefit back to the ratepayer in the territory.

Furthermore, we are dealing with climate change at the same time. Decision making -- I know it's foreign to the Liberals, but these are all part of decision-making processes. The

fixation on a subsidization of the rates, which the Leader of the Official Opposition has, is coming directly from the Member for Kluane, who should stand up and take ownership of this flawed policy because the Member for Kluane was the architect.

We made a decision to go a different direction, and that is the decision the government made. The members opposite should probably try to make a decision on what it is they would like to discuss and debate in this Legislature that reflects general debate in the budget. If the members want more detail on the RSF or any other energy matter, that will be left to our minister responsible. That is the way this Assembly operates. There is nothing that will preclude me in general debate from pointing that out.

If the members want to continue on this path, the lack of productivity coming from the Official Opposition is going to become very evident and it is going to be very difficult for the Official Opposition to stand up and say to Yukoners that they are holding Yukoners to account, because they are not. They are merely going in endless circular discourse, which produces zero.

**Mr. Mitchell:** The circular discourse, which is producing zero, are the non-answers coming out of this Premier, but we'll keep trying.

Let's move to an area that is directly under this Premier's purview -- the climate change action plan. The Premier has stated recently that a climate change strategy is being implemented. The strategy is the precursor to an action plan.

Why is it taking so long that we are still dealing with a strategy and hoping to develop an action plan? Why did the Premier budget only \$145,000 for developing the action plan? The Premier has stated that we were way ahead of most jurisdictions on addressing climate change. I'm not sure that's correct; I don't believe that's correct.

Why did he budget only \$145,000? Would budgeting more funds accelerate the work on this plan or is this just something where he is going to drag his feet, study it, come back next year and develop another strategy to get closer to having an action plan?

**Hon. Mr. Fentie:** Is the Leader of the Official Opposition unaware of how departments like the Department of Environment are involved in the budget process, the input that they have and the value that this government, this side of the House, places in its public servants in allowing them to come forward with what they believe is going to be necessary to undertake and conduct the work that is required here? The members opposite and the Leader of the Official Opposition should be much more conscious of that effort, dedication and commitment by the public servants and in this case, those in the Department of Environment. We've just had a brief discussion around one of the areas that is of great importance in dealing with climate change -- whether you want to call it a plan or strategy -- and that is what we're doing with energy -- reducing emissions. So for the member's benefit, we are ahead. The Council of the Federation recently just started talking about climate change, when many, many months ago, this government and this territory went forward with a climate change

strategy. The first goal is to enhance awareness and understanding of climate change impacts on Yukon's environment, people and economy.

The second goal is to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and this is especially focused on the Member for Kluane's view -- reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The Member for Kluane and his colleagues, the Official Opposition, would much rather burn diesel and provide subsidization, which breeds bad practices and use of our energy. We need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in Yukon through efficiency improvements.

I've heard a lot from the members opposite about the third wheel in Aishihik. That's exactly what the third wheel is all about -- efficiency improvements in the short term and additional measures related to infrastructure replacement in the longer term.

Imagine that. These are the things the minister responsible for the Energy Corporation has been saying for days and days in this House, and the members opposite continue to dig themselves that hole of bad practice, bad policy, subsidization and emissions into Yukon's atmosphere. I'm not sure what kind of climate change strategy the Official Opposition would bring forward, if they had one -- doubtful.

The third goal is to build Yukon environmental, social and economic systems, enabling them to adapt to climate change impacts and be in a position to take advantage of opportunities presented by climate change.

The members opposite have surely heard the minister responsible for economic development discuss the initiative of the innovation cluster. The members opposite must recognize that in the recent election this government committed to a climate change research centre of excellence. There are investments in this budget related to modernizing our database. These are examples of what we're doing already as we continue to work with Yukoners on the ever-evolving plan when it comes to climate change and dealing with it, whether through adaptation or more measures of conservation this government is bringing forward.

Support efforts to establish Yukon as a northern leader for applied climate change research and innovation. These are all there, Mr. Chair. These are the goals of the strategies.

The first goal is to enhance awareness and understanding of climate change impacts on Yukon's environment, people and the economy; foster the creation, collection and dissemination of Yukon-specific climate change information; modernization of our database, cold climate research in things like highway construction; apply the scientific and traditional knowledge -- traditional knowledge -- of impacts and adaptation research in the north for the use and benefit of northerners and for the application in future development. These are things that are happening now. Continue research and educational programs based on needs assessment performed in Yukon for Yukoners such as the Yukon Climate ExChange gap analysis project. These are other initiatives to further advance this strategy. We will develop and refine climate-change-related databases, ensuring ease of access and availability of information relevant to Yukon and the north. Modernizing our biophysical database is a major step in advancing climate change strategy. We will

plan and support major climate change impact projects, including the Arctic Council's Arctic climate impact assessment project. That's goal 1, and that is about raising awareness.

Now, Mr. Chair, in order to reduce greenhouse gas emissions through efficiency and improvement, we will continue to look at alternatives to diesel for electricity generation. My goodness, Mr. Chair, how much have we heard from the Official Opposition in their criticism and their opposition to using hydro in the territory? It's actually mind-boggling that they would be opposing increased hydro use and efficiency and capacity, but they have stated that on many occasions. Continue and maintain an energy consumption database to provide baseline data on electricity and heating fuel consumption for Yukon government buildings and on transportation emissions for Yukon government vehicles.

Now, the member's saying we've done nothing. Well, does the Leader of the Official Opposition not agree that changing out a number of our fleet vehicles to more efficient vehicles is another step in meeting our goals and priority strategies?

There is also the work with the federal government to ensure that greenhouse gas reporting mechanisms are simple, effective and accurately reflect Yukon emission levels. We went through a process on a certain report that the members opposite tried to make much about -- that was a state of the environment report -- and had incorrect data in it. That's why reports of that nature are not tabled and will only be tabled when they are complete and correct. It is part of doing the right thing with climate change. You can't use misinformation or incorrect data, although I know that, for the members opposite, misinformation and factual information does not always fit with what is going on in the territory. They are making a mistake -- we understand that -- but we have to point out that they are incorrect in their assumptions and assertions. Their position does not reflect what is happening in today's Yukon, whether it be on climate change, economic development, education, health care, our social policies, tourism and culture, taking care of government employees and ensuring we work very positively with our workforce, growing the private sector, marketing the Yukon, growing our population -- the list goes on and on -- establishing energy performance standards for Yukon government building construction -- I think that's pretty self-evident -- instituting energy efficiency measures for the Yukon government's vehicle fleet -- I've talked about that already with regard to changing out some of our vehicles and, in fact, the Department of Environment is driving around in a Smart car, which is dramatically reducing the emission factor here, so we are doing our part and so should the members opposite -- and implement a comprehensive energy conservation program -- conservation.

The reason we are doing what we are doing with the RSF is because of this goal, this priority strategy. Conservation is the correct course of action for any jurisdiction to try to improve our ability to deal with climate change.

Goal 3 is to build Yukon environmental, social, and economic systems and our strategies therein.

There is also work to incorporate climate change mitigation and adaptation measures into environmental assessment

practices with the Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Board. This is a priority because it is that mechanism, that board, that law that is our assessment process, and what better place to ensure our practices are also part of climate change action.

We support the design and implementation of northern-appropriate energy conservation measures and integrated energy efficiency solutions for application in all sectors of the Yukon economy. Well, building a hydro line, as we committed in the last election to connect the grid, and I do believe -- yes, we're on the government side of the House so Yukoners elected the Yukon Party government -- one of our commitments was to connect the grid. So extending the grid from Carmacks to Pelly meets that strategy.

These aren't surprises, Mr. Chair. These are all matters of public interest and they are in the public domain for anybody's discussion.

To assess and prioritize technology related to climate change and innovation gaps and opportunities -- again, research and development, and innovation cluster.

Continue to work with all levels of government on comprehensive adaptive strategies -- for example, when we talk about traditional knowledge, much of that is working with First Nation governments to get that knowledge and have it as part of our strategies going forward. There's a tremendous amount of knowledge and information that can be gleaned and will help us to address adaptation and mitigation in dealing with climate change measures and having those who have the experience, understanding and knowledge from literally thousands of years ago -- how we can incorporate that into where we're at today.

By the way, the changes in the north are visible and, for all those who bear the traditional knowledge, quite stark, and their input is very important. There's an example.

Goal 4 is to support efforts to establish Yukon as a northern leader for applied climate change research and innovation. Our strategies there are to support developments to address climate change challenges through energy efficiency -- we've been talking about that -- conservation not subsidization, reducing diesel consumption and increasing hydro output.

We support development of scientific research of permafrost condition and degradation in Yukon. That is an important matter because the melting of permafrost will have long-lasting impacts.

Build capacity in academic and research facilities: a commitment to Yukoners that is part of the strategy. Cooperate with other northern jurisdictions on climate change initiatives: it is a major part of the pan-northern approach to climate change. Why? Because the north is experiencing major impacts from climate change.

Make innovative use of the current Whitehorse-Aishihik-Faro electricity grid oversupply. How about big customers, more customers? Innovative use, Mr. Chair.

Continue research and monitoring programs in conjunction: again, Arctic climate impact assessment. Continue to support the acquisition of knowledge in climate change -- and Yukon is involved in International Polar Year. We have a scientist who does a masterful job of representing the Yukon at

IPY. The scientist is housed in the Executive Council Office and we commend the tremendous talent and capacity that the individual has. This individual's involvement in the International Polar Year is serving Yukon very, very well.

Support the development and continuation of research and innovation centres in Yukon, including Northern Climate Exchange Centre, which we are, and indeed the cold climate innovation cluster.

This is a 30,000-foot overview of our climate change strategy and now we are out there working with Yukoners. In fact, I believe the next workshop after hosting the first-ever Yukon environmental forum with 180-plus participants in that forum -- and this was a forum definitely dedicated to Yukon's environment, the climate change challenges and this government's priority placed in our environment -- we are now going to host a workshop on the continuing work of the Department of Environment and this government in dealing with not only the climate change strategy, but the implementation side of the strategy.

I've listed a long list of things that are being implemented today, but we must do more. We recognize that; therefore, we will continue our work with the strategic implementation plan.

Now, Mr. Chair, that's a fairly general response to the member opposite, who had a fairly specific question. We have a Department of Environment, where we could easily call that department and debate it. Therefore, the member cannot just simply cherry-pick a number out of a budget, but must deal with the full budget, in its entirety, in its full context, and would find quickly that the government's investment and attention and emphasis on the Department of Environment and its work is significant -- quite significant. But that's a debate for the Department of Environment. I'm not sure what part of "general" the members opposite -- the Official Opposition -- don't understand, but I will keep trying to impress upon them the difference between the work that must be done department by department, line by line, and a discussion and debate general in nature. By the way, it appears to me that the members opposite view general debate as productive, and they ignore line by line by passing multi-millions of dollars without one discussion, not one question, on all this money, yet we spend hours in this House back and forth, listening to what is questionable --

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

**Hon. Mr. Fentie:** Mr. Chair, I just heard the kibitzing from the Member for Kluane, and I would ask the Member for Kluane when he is going to live up to the code of conduct agreed to by all the members in the Official Opposition? They've broken that commitment; they've broken the trust of Yukoners. Mr. Chair, it is a sad display when we see that, and how quickly they discarded the code of conduct and the commitments therein and reverted to a very non-productive approach to representing not only Yukoners, but also holding the government to account.

Mr. Chair, I think it's evident what has transpired here, and that's why the members opposite sit again -- especially the Member for Kluane -- in opposition. At least the third party takes a position. We certainly place value in that. We may not

agree with it all the time, but they make no bones about it: they will clearly state their position.

Mr. Chair, it would be a positive step for the Official Opposition to take some advice from the third party, which so far has acted in a manner such that all Yukoners recognize them to be the real Official Opposition. It's unfortunate that here we are again.

The Leader of the Official Opposition makes much about general debate versus departmental debate. Does the member only conveniently follow these rules? The Standing Orders are quite clear: the government will call what business it deems ready for any particular day of the sitting. We've been in general debate, as I said, all along, save and except the Department of Economic Development, which was line by line. There, again, the government side clearly cannot fathom why the Official Opposition continues to rapidly head backward in their popularity and position.

**Mr. Mitchell:** Well, as William Shakespeare said in *Henry IV*, and the saying is true: the empty vessel makes the greatest sound. We have just heard the sound, Mr. Chair.

Where to start? The Premier has just filled our ears with so much misinformation regarding our position, climate change, general debate, and departmental debate that it's hard to know where to start. It's absolutely incorrect and misinformed to suggest that we are opposed to increased use of hydro as opposed to diesel, and he knows that. That's a charade. But he can continue to say that and he can continue to deal in misinformation. We will deal in the actual information, Mr. Chair. We haven't opposed it. In fact, on more than one occasion, both here and in the public media, I have said we are in favour of the hydro line interconnection with the grid extension. We want to make sure it's done in a way that protects the public interest.

We have supported the mine. We said we are in favour of the mine. We are in favour of a line to the mine. Again, it's misinformation.

That doesn't mean we have to support the government's approach as to how they're going to do everything.

I heard something new from the Premier this time. He now not only wants to ask the questions and then run over here and answer the questions, but he would also like to choose who should be the Official Opposition and who should be the third party. Apparently he wants to be the puppeteer for all people, not just for his own ministers. It doesn't work that way. Much as I know it pains him, he will have to put up with the reality on the ground, even though he mentioned that he had an overview from 30,000 feet.

He never did answer the specific question, which was: why is he only spending \$145,000 on developing the action plan? Also, when will we get an action plan? I believe that the strategy was intended to be a strategy to develop an action plan. What he has told us is that the department is working hard. We don't doubt that, but he happens to be both the Premier and the Environment minister.

As to why we would ask questions about the Department of Environment instead of waiting till the department is called -- well, he answered his own question. He has told us that the way it works -- read the rules -- is that the government will call

government business as they see fit. In at least two out of the three sittings that I've had the privilege of attending and participating in, he called the Department of Environment on the last afternoon or the last day. So that may be why we would ask the question, because we're never sure whether he's going to get there five minutes before we reach the mandatory final day and, in effect, have closure. That's why.

As a matter of fact, if he can think back to the fall of 2005, I believe we not only started to enter general debate on the Department of Environment on the final day of the fall sitting in 2005 -- and we were the third party at that time -- when he finished his response to the then Leader of the Official Opposition, I had a little under five minutes left to ask my questions. So that might be why we would choose not to depend on the largesse of this Premier as to how he is going to structure debate.

Let's try some other areas. In discussing the climate change action plan, he talked about cold climate strategy and a few other things. I think he may have mentioned the cold climate research centre or innovation cluster. I know that awhile ago he met, as Environment minister, with Minister Baird in February. I'm wondering if the Environment minister made the case for a specific amount of money for that project, for the research centre, and if so, what was the response? If not, what is the Premier's plan for funding this? So far, he has talked about having a cold climate research centre and then he has occasionally tried to confuse the issue by referring to the cold climate innovation cluster. At this point, people aren't sure which is which and what his plans are for funding either of those. I would ask him that.

I think I'll just ask him that and perhaps he can answer that in less than 20 minutes and we can be a little more specific.

**Hon. Mr. Fentie:** I can't let this one go. For the Leader of the Official Opposition to stand up here and say that the problems they experience are because the government calls the business of the day in the House certainly flies in the face of all that is recorded in *Hansard*. I would offer this to the Leader of the Official Opposition: read *Hansard* and then spend some time reflecting on what you read; try to absorb it. Then the member will see there needs to be a change in the approach of how the Official Opposition conducts debate.

Funding for these initiatives: well, first and foremost, work is going on. When we talk about the investment we're making in the strategic action plan, it is to advance, in a period of time, our climate change strategy. That amount is in the budget, in the Department of Environment.

When we talk about modernizing our database, there is significant investment over the next few years to get our biophysical database to a point where we have information available that will contribute to climate change and strategic action plans. That would also mean a research centre of excellence. The cold climate innovation cluster, by the way, has been something worked on for some time now and includes such things as the targeted investment program. However, that's something better left -- too late now, though, as Economic Development is cleared. I did not hear the members -- at least, I

can't say for sure if the members even asked the question of the minister responsible on this matter.

Mr. Chair, I'm doing my best to provide the member opposite some general responses to his very general questions. But we could certainly serve the institution -- this Assembly -- and the public better if we were to sit down, department by department, and actually debate the detail of what's in the budget. That's the avenue for the members opposite: debating detail in the budget. We're talking a very large budget, Mr. Chair.

Once again, I would point out that general debate has been something that has gone on here now for some 15 days in this sitting. The members don't have a lot of time left. The reason the member only gets a five-minute timeline for asking questions at the end of a sitting is because of how the Official Opposition has managed their time in debate. That's why I point out to read *Hansard*. And it doesn't take a political genius to figure this one out.

So are the members interested, is the Official Opposition interested, in constructive debate, holding the government to account, and doing their job on behalf of the public and living up to their commitment to Yukoners, which is called a code of conduct?

**Mr. Mitchell:** Well, the record will show that I asked two specific questions, one about the centre of excellence, one about the cold climate innovation cluster. I've asked for some details as to money that would be spent on either of them and some timelines. The Premier answered neither.

As for indicating how we structure debate, there are three parties involved, as he well knows -- the government and two opposition parties. For that matter, in the sitting to which I was referring, we were the third party. So I think it's a little churlish of this Premier to be criticizing the Leader of the Third Party, who was then the Leader of the Official Opposition, for how he managed time in the fall of 2005. But if he wants to go back historically and criticize people for how they did things in the past, if that satisfies his sense of debate, then so be it.

There was some discussion -- actually it was part of the minister's answer before his generic non-answer, I would say, to questions about the climate change action plan. He made some reference to YESAA, so since he talked about YESAA, I'll ask him another question about YESAA.

Awhile ago this government overruled YESA Board in the Ta'an Kwach'an territory of Shallow Bay. The YESA Board recommendation was strongly against allowing the requested grazing lease to be converted to a titled property, and it was due to very well-documented cultural and heritage reasons, among others. Why did the government overrule this recommendation? Furthermore, why didn't the government meet government to government with the First Nation to discuss this prior to making a final decision? Why didn't they meet with the First Nation government and say, "We think we can mitigate the concerns that the YESA Board has raised; this affects our government; it affects your government and, more importantly, it affects the public; I would like to meet with you, leader to leader", sort of like that friendly, pan-northern approach that we heard about earlier today. Why didn't this Premier do that?

**Hon. Mr. Fentie:** Mr. Chair, we did. How does the Leader of the Official Opposition reconcile this? The mitigation measures applied to said property came out of meetings and discussions and input from the First Nation. That is how the mitigating measures were put in place. Furthermore, this particular piece of property has been a grazing lease for a number of decades. This is a paper transfer from lease to title. It is already a grazing lease, and what the government has done in listening to the Ta'an Kwach'an First Nation is apply setbacks to the shoreline of Shallow Bay. It has applied a corridor where alienation of land base and non-use is implemented, setbacks on a creek that runs through said property, and the list goes on and on and on.

However, the government will also ensure that it makes decisions so Yukoners have access to land. That's part of our commitment as a government. Once again, we've made a decision. The recommendations by the YESAB, once analyzed, showed clearly that much work had been done to address those issues, and the government made a decision. It has no reflection on anything else, other than that the government has done its work and it has delivered.

However, here again is another example of a department that is not under my watch. If the members want to delve into detail on this issue, let's call up the department and let the members ask the questions. Or is there another reason why we are continuing this needless discussion that is producing zero for the Yukon public?

**Mr. Mitchell:** Clearly, we will have to ask the questions again of other ministers because we are not getting any answers out of this minister.

The minister mentioned land use planning a couple of times. There was a consultant who wrote a report a couple of years ago that basically said that the way government was developing rural land was a mess. What is being done to address that report's recommendations? What policy work is being developed, as opposed to the ministers creating policy on the fly?

The Premier talked about how people were previously leaving the territory. Well, if people can't get access to land -- they can't get access in many cases to land in rural communities. We saw how this government dropped the ball on having enough foresight to get in place a land protocol until the penultimate moment with the City of Whitehorse, having failed to plan far enough in advance to make urban lots available in the City of Whitehorse, so we now have none available to be purchased over the counter. What has this Premier's government done to deal with the policy work so that the way in which rural land was being developed will no longer be seen as being in complete disarray?

**Hon. Mr. Fentie:** Mr. Chair, there's no reasonable answer to that. What the member has just stated is there is no access to land anywhere in the Yukon. That is not the case at all. It's incorrect. I'm not even sure what the member is talking about.

Furthermore, the member well knows that, through devolution and the agreement that frames devolution, we had to mirror all relevant federal statutes, which includes the *Lands Act*, with the proviso that in future we, with First Nations, would

begin the work of developing successor legislation for the Yukon. By the way, the working group for that has been struck with the First Nations, and members have been appointed.

Furthermore, to suggest that in rural Yukon there is no access to land, you know, brings to mind some of the work that has been done by Energy, Mines and Resources in a land development arrangement with the Teslin Tlingit Council in Teslin. It's not just residential or agricultural or other types of land required, but there is also access to resources. The member should know that, given the increase in the mining sector, for example, much of that is happening -- a lot of that in rural Yukon, not in Whitehorse.

To suggest that we're suddenly out of available lots in Whitehorse is quite ironic, because it shows clearly the difference of approach by this government to managing the affairs of the territory versus the Liberals of this House, which was the last government outside of the Yukon Party government to lead the territory. Very few lots were taken up here in Whitehorse during those very dark and dim days of the territory under the Liberal government's guidance, because people weren't coming to the Yukon; they were leaving the Yukon. Under our government's watch, in a very short period of time, we'd gone from virtually two, three, four, five, six lots required to -- I don't know what the total is. The minister responsible -- we're in the hundreds now, and developing more.

We the government are very encouraged by that, because instead of dealing with such things as raising taxes to pay for programs and services to Yukoners, we are contributing to increasing the number of taxpayers -- what a concept, Mr. Chair.

Once again, here is a question that belongs in a department. It is certainly not for general debate with me. I have a lot of faith and confidence in our ministers, and if the member opposite is concerned that they might not be able to answer the member's relevant questions, I can assure the Leader of the Official Opposition that this is not the case. They have a good and firm understanding of their departments and the work we are doing. They are a major part of our team. The member might find it very beneficial and enlightening to engage with our ministers in constructive debate versus the stick-handling that we are doing here today.

**Mr. Mitchell:** The only stick-handling I am seeing is that this Premier continues to pass the puck, even if there is nobody to pass it to.

Again, for the record -- because apparently the Premier doesn't deign to answer these questions -- the question was actually about a report that came out a couple years ago and basically said the way the government was developing rural land was a mess. I asked what work was being done to address the report's recommendations and what policy work was being developed. The minister turned around and started talking about how many more people needed lots now than a few years ago. He didn't answer the question. Apparently there has been no policy work done.

I will ask the Premier something that he should be able to answer without having to have a conversation with anybody else. When will the Premier be meeting with the Alaskan governor, Governor Palin, so that we can see the release of the

long-awaited rail study? Again, in the absence of the governor's willingness or availability to meet and release the study, is there some point at which the Premier will release it so that Yukoners can see what their tax dollars were spent on?

We previously heard the Minister of Economic Development go on about protocol and how they are going to respect protocols. Our tax dollars were spent. What if the Governor of Alaska never chooses to come to a joint press release or news announcement on this issue? When will this Premier take another one of these secret studies -- they are always drafts and they are secret. Money is spent on them but we can't get to see them -- like the position papers on education, like the Holdfast report on education, like the reports on the ports and, in this case, the report on the rail study. When can he expect us to see that released?

**Hon. Mr. Fentie:** The member began, once again, by making an incorrect statement. To suggest that the government doesn't have policy when it comes to the access to land, wherever it is in the Yukon, is simply a statement that is out of context with the answer given to the member. Policy comes from the legal mechanisms that we must follow. We've already talked about the Yukon Land Use Planning Council finally up and running, the arrangements in other areas of the Yukon that are being worked on today, and that is why I suggest to the members opposite that they sit down and reflect on how they conduct debate.

The member asked a question which can easily be answered with a very short answer. We'll meet with the Governor of Alaska when we meet, and we'll make sure the members are notified in due course. Furthermore, the report will be released publicly, but I want to make a point here. This all began with respective federal governments. The Congress in Washington passed a bill dedicating X number of millions of dollars toward an Alaska-Canada railway feasibility study. Even though the Liberals in this territory stood up and said, "We support it," and the Liberal MP said, "Yes, we will be supporting it," and so on, again the Liberals did not act in any way to address those commitments.

The Yukon government filled the void and partnered with the State of Alaska, which received its investment from its federal government. The Yukon did not receive its committed investment from the then federal Liberal government, so we did it ourselves. Once we have completed and concluded all processes, we will make the report public for Yukoners.

The member will have to be patient and allow things to evolve. To suggest that somehow the members are going to be accountable for taxpayers' money -- look at recent history, look at commitments not delivered, and look at what we're dealing with regarding the Mayo-Dawson line. Look at the exodus of the population. Look at the double-digit unemployment figures. And look at this, Mr. Chair: it wasn't that long ago under the Liberal watch and fiscal management that we were having to pay overdraft charges to deliver services to Yukoners. The suggestion the member is making about taxpayers' dollars -- maintaining and caring for taxpayers' dollars is not something in which the Official Opposition is well-versed. This government, however, is, so I can assure the member that any and all re-

ports, once all things have been concluded and completed, will be made available to the public.

The member also talks about secrets. I'm going to challenge the member on that. Is the member suggesting, then, that the government should react to things that are half done and part done? He may understand more clearly now the failure of the former Liberal government in managing the affairs of this territory -- because they reacted to all kinds of things that were incomplete and were not at a point where an informed decision could be made. Well, this government will continue to ensure that initiatives are complete and we can make informed decisions on behalf of the public interest. That's what we're doing.

Whether it be the school study, or any other report or study, that's the process this government continues to adhere to, and for good reason. It has served Yukon well and the Yukon is advancing on all fronts. We expect that trend to continue whether the member likes it or not -- because he doesn't have a half-finished report. Unfortunately, that's simply not something that is resonating in Yukoners' minds these days. They're more interested in the good fortune and the direction the territory is going.

I know the members opposite don't want to get into detail here on the budget, because it's a big budget and it's an investment in Yukon's future. Their challenge here is to try to find ways to criticize the government on the budget. We're considering, discussing and debating things that are helping the members skirt the real obligation that they have. I'll make a point here on why I say that.

The member is saying there's nothing going on with land development. I challenge the member to explain, if the member wants to get into community services, why we have the investment in land development -- industrial, residential and recreational? That's a question that the member could ask the minister responsible. It's a healthy investment, a sizable investment, so we can see that the members really want to steer away from that kind of detail because it blows holes in their position -- if there is a position -- and here we are, circumventing the issues, the facts and the realities of the territory. We're in a needless discussion.

Given that fact, Mr. Chair, there's not much purpose in me getting up in general debate. We'll let the members continue on as they see fit. In general debate, anybody can enter the debate, so that's exactly what the government side will do.

**Mr. Mitchell:** Well, for the record, once again, the Premier didn't answer the question, so perhaps it's just as well that he has taken his apparently majestic, king-like prerogative to suggest that others should answer questions, that it's beneath him to have to actually stand in this House and answer questions. That arrogance will be noted by the public. When he finally decided to come back here and enter into debate, he just couldn't bear to do so. Nevertheless, we didn't say there was no rural land policy. It was the study released a couple of years ago that said that at the time it was seen by the people who had to deal with it to be in a mess, and we asked what policy work has been done since then to address it. If the minister chooses not to answer, fine.

Now, let me see. The answer that we heard on when we might actually expect to see the results of our dollars spent on a rail study or a port study, was, I believe, responded to by in effect saying *que sera, sera*, whatever will be will be. When Governor Palin arrives, that's when she shall arrive.

The Premier went back and recounted the history of why the Martin government didn't provide economic support to the rail study. I might also point out that when Prime Minister Martin was the Prime Minister, this Premier stood here quite often in this House and said, "We have a good working relationship with the Prime Minister. We will work with any Prime Minister, regardless of party. That is the duty of a Yukon Premier." I agree with that. I would also point out that for over a year now there has been a Conservative Prime Minister. I haven't seen any money coming forth from the Conservative Prime Minister in support of the rail study. So it seems to be that there is some bipartisanship on the federal side there, and hopefully this Premier can convince the Prime Minister, the Leader of the Official Opposition -- perhaps he can go and have a good relationship with the Bloc. In any case, someone will help him out, no doubt.

In response to the comments about previous territorial Liberal governments, we could also go back and talk about previous Yukon Party governments; we could talk about two-percent rollbacks; we could talk about failed projects on the waterfront. But the fact of the matter is that we're here today to talk about this government and this government's budget and its immediately preceding first term. There is really nothing to be achieved by coming up here and saying what happened under the NDP's watch or what happened under the Liberals' watch.

I would ask the Premier, now that the three-year agreement with the government Employees Union has been ratified, whether he could let us know what the total cost of that will be over the coming three years? I will ask again -- because I didn't get an answer to that previously, other than we can't anticipate what will be done -- why was there no provision for the current year's increase in the current budget? The Premier has often said that a budget is simply a plan, a forecasting instrument. So, clearly, we wouldn't know when he tabled the budget what the final agreement would be, but he would have had a pretty close idea of the realm of the agreement. So, can he now tell us what that amount is? Will that be coming forward in a supplementary, since he didn't choose to put it into the budget?

**Hon. Mr. Fentie:** Let me respond to something the member has brought forward, and that is the discussion about federal governments. Of course we will work with any federal government in office, but the member drew a comparison to the now Conservative federal government and the former Liberal federal government with respect to the railway feasibility study.

The now Conservative government didn't make a public commitment to this study. The Liberals did. Our MP in this territory clearly made that commitment during an election campaign. That is why it was brought up. It's another example of commitments made and commitments not delivered on, so Yukon stepped into the void and did our job.

Furthermore, let's do another comparison. If you compare the present Conservative federal budget the last federal Liberal budget, Yukon has received almost \$61 million more in rightful investment for infrastructure, eco-trust and, of course, patient wait-times investment, as examples of where we are receiving some of the funds.

Drawing comparisons is one thing, but let's make sure that the comparisons are in full context. Any and all commitments and agreements advanced, if the member doesn't find something in the budget today, that does not necessarily mean that it is something that won't happen. It takes work -- hard work in many cases. Of course, we continue to do that work and deliver on our commitments to Yukoners. That is exactly what this budget does: it delivers on many of the commitments to Yukoners, whether it be quality of life, economic development, our social programs and so on, practising good governance and, indeed, a sizable investment for the environment of the territory.

**Mr. Mitchell:** I'll try a couple of other areas and then I know there are other members who want to ask questions here today.

The Council of Yukon First Nations not that long ago announced their intent to purchase the old Canadian Tire property at Fourth Avenue and Ogilvie Street to be their new headquarters. They also publicly indicated that they were looking for some government support, both financial support to assist them with the purchase and the renovations, as well as a government commitment to lease office space. Several weeks ago when we were having general debate on the budget, I believe that the Premier did indicate that they have entered into discussions with the Council of Yukon First Nations and made some sort of commitment to leasing office space. I am wondering if the Premier can give us some details on that. Is it at any sort of specific rate or just a general agreement in principle, or even a verbal understanding that they are going to do so? Would this be sole-sourced and, if so, how would the government address some of the issues raised by the Auditor General of Canada in her recent report on highways and transportation property management branch about sole sourcing? How will the government ensure that the rates paid are competitive? Will the government be making any other financial contribution to this project, such as a contribution to assist the Council of Yukon First Nations with their deposit on the purchase or any other financial contribution to the project?

**Hon. Mr. Fentie:** We have informed the Council of Yukon First Nations that the government will be in need of sizable space -- I believe some 10,000 to 15,000 square feet -- and we've expressed to the Council of Yukon First Nations our interest in being an anchor tenant should they build or buy, in this case, another facility. That has been passed on to the Council of Yukon First Nations. Our only position and commitment right now is that of anchor tenancy. There is nothing more I can add to that today.

**Mr. Mitchell:** Just to be clear then, when the Premier says the government is interested in being and has committed to being an anchor tenant, that commitment then is still dependent on reaching a mutually agreeable lease rate? Or is the



commitment an open commitment? Presumably the Council of Yukon First Nations needs to get financing from various banks and other financial institutions, so they need to take that government commitment to the banks, so to speak, in order to get financing. Can the Premier give us any more details on that, recognizing that there may be specific business terms that he can't reveal publicly?

**Hon. Mr. Fentie:** I can't give the member any more details because there aren't any, other than what I just said -- that we have articulated to the Council of Yukon First Nations our interest -- given our space requirements in the very near future, if not right now -- in 10,000 to 15,000 square feet, and our interest in becoming an anchor tenant in a building. That is the only detail there is.

**Mr. Mitchell:** I am going to thank the Premier for that answer, because he actually provided a specific, on-topic answer to a specific question, which is rare and almost a novelty these days, but we do appreciate it when we get it.

I will ask him one more question. The Kwanlin Dun First Nation has long been expressing an interest in building a cultural centre on the waterfront for their First Nation. I understand they have also made requests for some form of financial assistance from the Government of Yukon. Will the Government of Yukon be assisting the Kwanlin Dun First Nation financially with their cultural centre on the waterfront?

**Hon. Mr. Fentie:** The government already has contributed to the cultural centre, in living up to its obligations under the Kwanlin Dun agreement. I will use an approximation here in total dollar value, but it's somewhere in the neighbourhood of \$4 million already contributed to this initiative.

**Mr. Mitchell:** The Premier was speaking in the past tense. Are there any discussions ongoing toward additional contributions, or is that the be-all and end-all of the contribution, whatever that amount turns out to be? I know the Premier's officials will get back to us on what the actual amount was.

**Hon. Mr. Fentie:** That's a sizable commitment, but when it comes to cultural issues, it's a chapter in the *Umbrella Final Agreement*. Going forward would require a trilateral discussion, but to date, the Yukon government, has lived up to its obligations with respect to the Kwanlin Dun First Nation land claim, the final agreement. Our contribution is sizable -- somewhere in the neighbourhood of \$4 million.

**Mr. Cardiff:** I have a couple of questions for the Premier in general debate. It was interesting listening earlier today when this started. It almost took me back three weeks, to May 1, when we left general debate. This question has to do with the northern housing trust. The reason I'm asking it here is because the Premier is Minister of Finance and Minister of Executive Council Office and it does cross departments. I did ask him some questions about this when we were debating the supplementary earlier. I only have a couple of questions, so we should be able to move through this fairly quickly.

When we were discussing the northern trust earlier in the sitting, the Premier indicated that there were no plans for the \$17 million that the government had received in trust from Canada. The other \$32.5 million has been distributed to First

Nations under the agreement. But the Premier indicated that there were no plans for the other \$17.5 million. It has come to our attention that there was \$1.1 million of affordable housing money from the northern housing trust. It was for work on the athletes village. It crosses departments. It ends up in Yukon Housing Corporation, in seniors social housing. So I'm just wondering if the Premier could go back and find out for sure if that's right, or if he can let us know right now if, in fact, that \$1.1 million came from the northern housing trust?

**Hon. Mr. Fentie:** No, it did not, Mr. Chair. We have had no decisions on the remaining balance of the \$50-million trust fund. Of course, \$32.5 million was earmarked directly and already allocated directly to First Nations. The remaining balance of \$17.5 million is still in process -- no decisions made, no money expended.

**Mr. Cardiff:** I'll look forward to asking the minister responsible for Yukon Housing Corporation where that \$1.1 million did come from, because it was a transfer from Canada. I'm assuming it came out of other affordable housing money that was transferred.

I'd just like to thank the Premier for his time today.

One of the things that -- I don't know whether he was listening the other day, but there was a discussion earlier this afternoon about getting into line-by-line debate. If the Premier wants to just read it, he can go back to the Department of Education debate, last Thursday, I believe, when we were talking about getting into line-by-line debate.

Part of it is about information. Briefly, what happened was I was asking questions of the minister about a specific First Nation initiative in Watson Lake and from where that money would come. He mentioned a cultural trust fund. If you look in the budget, that information isn't there. It isn't broken down into a cultural trust fund that contains about \$300,000 -- something in that neighbourhood. It is contained in a line that contains \$1.5 million.

This is something that I feel strongly about. We need to receive information and more breakdowns on the budget. That information needs to be made available to us in order to debate line by line. We need to see what is in those lines, even if it is just a synopsis of what is in those lines, because that isn't in our budget briefing book. I believe it is something that should be considered by the Standing Committee on Rules, Elections and Privileges in order to improve the decorum in the Legislature and speed up the debate and allow members on this side of the House to ask relevant questions of the ministers. Then it would make it easier for us to debate line by line. As the Premier said, it's an \$860-million budget. There is a lot there and very short time to debate it.

We are here to ensure the government's spending priorities reflect what we think Yukoners believe in and what they want. In order to do that, we need to have information. The Minister of Education was forthcoming with the information, but the problem was that we probably could have asked different questions if we had been able to see that information in the budget.

I'll just leave the Premier with that and thank him for his time. I look forward to more information in the future about what is in the lines so we can have a fuller debate.

**Mr. Elias:** I will try to be as constructive as I can and just open with thanking the Chair and the Premier for providing this opportunity and for him providing the opportunity to reconsider what I brought up in a couple of questions during Question Period last week that speak to what my constituents consider a commitment made by the Premier last September in Old Crow at the Vuntut Gwitchin General Assembly. This was recorded in minutes and tape recordings were taken. The question was why YTG hasn't done anything to make the roads better.

That we can address this issue quickly was part of the Premier's response. Again, as MLA for Vuntut Gwitchin, I exercised some patience, wrote a letter to the Highways and Public Works minister, got a response. I waited for the budget to be developed. It was developed, and I can't find anything in the budget that says they're going to address this issue. I just came back from my constituency last week. Many of my constituents suggested I take pictures. I have. There are a couple of questions. Will the Premier be willing to look at the six or seven pictures of some of the areas in and around Old Crow that are problematic and speak to the issue of why my constituents felt it was necessary to ask the Premier to have a look at this, something the kids and the community have to deal with on a day-to-day basis? It's a problem that I think can truly be fixed quite quickly, so here's an opportunity for the Premier to address this again in a different venue of our Legislature.

So the question is: when can my constituents of the Vuntut Gwitchin riding expect our roads and our drainage system on the roads to be fixed? Does the Premier want to see the six or seven pictures that I've taken? I can easily e-mail them to his staff to show what the problem is. That's my first question for now.

**Hon. Mr. Fentie:** Mr. Chair, the minister responsible for Highways and Public Works can certainly receive the pictures. It would be more expeditious to give them to the minister than me and there are obvious reasons for that. That's the department that would review and assess these matters.

I just want to say to the member opposite that, first off, you don't fix any roads anywhere without material, so a tremendous amount of investment and work has been done in developing material in Old Crow. Priority, though, was put on the airport runway -- I think that's understandable -- and also bank restabilization, which continues this year. I think that, on a sequencing basis of priorities, is very important as we go forward in the community.

We're always open to discussions. That's something that is the government's overall responsibility, to listen and work on things. It's not a difficult challenge in Old Crow, obviously, given the number of kilometres of street or road but, without material, we're not going to fix anything. Second, you can't fix any road in the wintertime. In fact, you can't fix roads until all thawing is done and all these matters are completed in the climate end of things so that you can actually do some work. So I think the debate is better served with Highways and Public Works.

What's in the budget is sizable for Old Crow, which is hopefully going to finalize the bank stabilization issue, but I

know there's a tremendous amount of material now available because of the investment that we've made in Old Crow and all the crushing that went on up on Crow Mountain and so on. Maybe that heavy traffic has contributed to deterioration of the roads in Old Crow, because of the size of the equipment that had to traverse down to the riverbank.

However, send the pictures, please. Forward them to the minister, and I'm sure the minister will work closely with the member.

**Mr. Elias:** Again, I'm just trying to be constructive.

Speaking of holding government officials to account, my constituents, the school bus driver and the kids I rode along with on their school bus are trying to hold me to account as their representative. That is why I am bringing this up here today.

A few things to consider: the task of fixing the roads in Old Crow; the drainage problem; the height of the power lines have to be considered; the base of the road; culvert systems to get the water away from the central community of Old Crow; the health concerns with regard to standing water throughout the summer season. A lot of things have to be taken into consideration and I'm more than willing to sit down and discuss some of these issues with the office of the minister responsible. I extend that invitation and I look forward to seeing some resolution to this.

The reason why I brought it up in general debate is because I can't find anywhere in the budget for the Premier's comments made at the Vuntut Gwitchin General Assembly to be discussed. That is why I brought them up here today.

**Hon. Mr. Lang:** In answering as Minister of Highways and Public Works, we'll work with the member and work with the community. We have in the last four years. We certainly addressed the airport situation, the reception area in Old Crow, and, of course, the aggregate on Crow Mountain, which had to be worked on, was addressed. We certainly have to, as a community, work with the community on a go-forward plan if we in fact are going to look at the many issues that the member has brought up.

Certainly I agree with him that there are issues on the quality of roads, the ditching of the roads, the movement of water in the community. Along with that, how we address the issues of looking at the power lines and all that kind of communication and the flow of traffic are certainly concerns of ours.

It's not something that we are ignoring. It's something that we will move forward with over the next period of time. Certainly, we have addressed a lot of the concerns that Old Crow has had with its terminal building and the airport being brought up to standard. The Minister of Community Services just discussed the potential of a new recreation complex there. Old Crow has certainly expressed some concern for that in the past. We have made a commitment to work in partnership with the local government to address those issues.

A lot of the issues the member brings up are issues that are bigger than a six-month commitment. These are issues that might take a period of time. I appreciate the member's concern. As the member was discussing, there is the school bus situa-

tion, and of course there are other vehicles in Old Crow that individuals use to commute back and forth.

Yes, the Premier has discussed the commitments, and we as a government are going to see what we can do in a constructive way, to move forward with those issues that the member brings up.

We appreciate the fact that, being as isolated as Old Crow is, the priority was to make sure that the airport was safe. For the years I spent in and around Old Crow, the airport was marginal in the sense of the word. Again, we are talking about the flow of water and the condition of the airport on a seasonal basis. Our government certainly moved forward last term to address that.

Of course we have an economic partnership with the local government. We will be moving forward with that relationship to address things like the community complex. The departments of Highways and Public Works and Community Services will be looking at how we can move forward on these other issues, which we can hopefully address over the next period of time to the benefit of all people who use Old Crow as a home base and also the public travelling to Old Crow. Hopefully that answers the member's questions.

**Mr. McRobb:** I'd like to start out by asking the Finance minister when we can expect to be provided with the community budget breakdowns. This has been discussed in the past, in this sitting, Mr. Chair. It's a standard part of every spring sitting. The opposition side requests this information. As the Premier is very much aware when he sat on this side of the House, he practically demanded it from the government right away. Here we are into the second month of this sitting and this information still has not been provided. I would like to know when we can expect to receive this important information.

**Hon. Mr. Lang:** I would certainly take the concerns of the Member for Kluane back to the department, see if those calculations are available, consider the request and move forward with the request -- if, in fact, they are available.

**Mr. McRobb:** I don't know why the Premier avoids answering this question. If the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources insists on answering these questions that are directed to the Finance minister, may I help him out a little bit? During the budget briefing, the officials informed us that that information could be produced very quickly and it was readily available. The budget lock-up was on a Thursday morning and we were told to expect it to be available on Monday. That was about a month ago, Mr. Chair -- probably a month ago yesterday. The information still has not been provided. I heard the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin mention that his constituents are asking him questions to which he cannot answer because the information from the government side -- which has a monopoly on this information -- has not been forthcoming. The same goes with this.

I hope the Finance minister can respond to this question: when can we expect the community breakdown information for this budget?

**Chair:** Is there any further general debate?

**Mr. McRobb:** Well, Mr. Chair, this isn't the most cooperative scenario I would imagine. The Finance minister yells

"clear" without responding to a very legitimate question: when can we expect him to provide us with the community breakdown for the budget?

I've given this some thought, Mr. Chair. I just want to add, Mr. Chair, that I know the members across the way on the government side have had this information for a month, and on the opposition side, I look at all the members. Really, there were only two who would put a lot of importance on this, and they are the two rural members, who are the Member for Mayo-Tatchun and me. So we feel a little bit unfairly targeted by the government's wrath in not providing this information. The information is important to us, because it provides a breakdown of all expenditures by all departments, along with an explanation of those expenditures from the main estimates budget. It's a vital part of the information the opposition side of the Legislature needs to have, not only so members can inform their constituents who have questions, but to also have on hand, in order to hold the government side accountable. So the Premier himself, when he sat on this side of the House, made the arguments quite vividly. It is legitimate. It's a legitimate request. To see the Premier remain in his seat and yell "clear" across the floor of the Assembly instead of answering the question certainly raises the spectre of the enormous potential for increased action by the government to truly be accountable.

**Hon. Mr. Fentie:** The total value for each community by breakdown was read into the record many days ago. The member has just stated that the government side has this information. No, we don't have any information of the sort, other than the totals I read into the record. We have the same information the members opposite have, and it's called the mains. It's in this big binder. We have not received, through due process, the breakdown.

The members opposite have the ability to ask that kind of detail in departments. Surely, the members must know what their riding expectations are. They are the representatives of those ridings. Other than to respond to the Member for Kluane, I fail to see why such significance is placed on this when the members have received briefings in budget lock-up, departmental briefings, and they have ample opportunity to ask questions in the House if they would move off general debate and get into the detail. The ministers will provide that kind of detail.

In due course, the information will be made available for the government members and the members opposite. To date, so far, the amount that each community is receiving has been read into the record. When you factor in Shakwak, I believe the member's overall riding is the recipient of some \$19 million that is going into Kluane. Surely the member might want to ask in departmental debate what that is all about. I would submit that the member knows that Highways and Public Works is investing sizable monies into the Shakwak. I am sure the member knows that assisted living facilities are being built, and so on. There are ways for that information to be gleaned, should the members choose to drill down into that detail, Mr. Chair -- but in due course.

**Mr. McRobb:** I stayed on the high road with the request, but the Premier couldn't resist taking a few potshots and I can't let the record go unresponded.

In terms of Shakwak funding, long before the Premier was ever elected as the MLA for Watson Lake, this project was providing millions of dollars per year in construction on the north Alaska Highway and on the Haines Road as part of the U.S.-funded Shakwak reconstruction project. In terms of road upgrades, that project is due to expire at the end of this year and all that remains is bridge construction at a few locations and possibly some paving. So it will soon be wrapped up.

None of that money comes from the Yukon government budget, or the federal government for that matter. It's all funded by the United States of America.

In terms of the assisted living facility in Haines Junction he mentioned, I'm glad he brought that up, because the government likes to take credit for spending \$1.8 million on what it calls a seniors complex. We heard the real definition of it from the Premier himself. He called it an assisted living facility. That would be correct.

In terms of the funding source, all of it was old federal money, and not even from the Harper government. A preceding government was the source of that money. Again, there were zero dollars from the Yukon Party government.

He said the community breakdowns were read on the record, and that would be incomplete and a stretch by anyone's imagination. The Premier quickly blurted out some figures and summarized what they were for. They weren't inclusive of all communities in the region. They didn't identify the department spending the money. The Premier neglected to describe what each item was for and, rather than expend the time of the House reviewing this information, it would be better served if the government side just provided us with that information in writing, as was consistent in the past.

Furthermore, the Premier argued that it was provided in the past and he knows darn well it was. He said the officials haven't passed it on to him. Well, there is only one scenario that would make that true and that is if the government's side told the officials to not give them that information. I know the officials were well-intentioned and extremely capable of producing the information they committed to providing to us within three days, yet the Premier says they weren't provided with it. Well, obviously there was some kind of stop-order given to the officials. That is the only way this can be explained. So you can see there are lots of holes in the Premier's response, as usual.

The Premier -- I can tell where he is going with this. He basically told us to ask the questions in departmental debate. Well, there isn't time in a sitting -- not even in this one -- for every member to do that in every department for both parties -- especially considering the government's usual practice of providing long, 20-minute answers even to simple short questions.

The time allotted in the day for budget debate is between three and three and one-half hours. That time is used up rather quickly when the ministers all give 20-minute answers. The Minister of Economic Development couldn't even adopt the past practice of automatically giving a breakdown for a line

item. He insisted that our members stand up each time and ask for a breakdown. What a time-wasting exercise that was. So is this one. That information should have been provided.

Fine, there is no mechanism at our disposal to force the government to provide this information. All I can think of is one recourse. I know the Finance official is seated beside the Premier, and he's listening to this. So are his associates in the department. I would like to put them on notice that come next budget lock-up, we would appreciate having the community breakdown information provided at that time. If it is not provided, then we will be requesting all the information separately, for each riding, before the lock-up ends. Is that a constructive use of time, Mr. Chair? No, it's not. But that's the only recourse we see available. The department has this information. Just press one button on the computer and it spits out of the printer. It is information the Premier and his colleagues in the Yukon Party don't want us to have.

Allow me to speculate, Mr. Chair, because I know you're new in this Assembly, and perhaps you don't fully appreciate the need for this information. I will recall from years past some of the questions that might come out of a community breakdown after the opposition side has a chance to see it. Some of the questions are related to fairness of spending in the ridings. We know the Yukon Party government, in its first term -- the last term -- I'm not talking about the previous Ostashek government specifically -- spent heavily in the ridings of the Premier and the then deputy Premier. The spending was not fairly allocated in the other ridings. Now, I see the Premier is madly writing down some notes. Surely we'll hear the word "Shakwak" again. But that's U.S.-funded. Or the assisted living facility, that's federally funded -- not even by the current regime in Ottawa.

What people in my riding and the other rural ridings really want to know is what projects are being funded in their communities, as requested. That is one area that we would like to question. Surely, the Premier has already anticipated this. Perhaps that is why they are not being forthcoming with the information.

Another one, Mr. Chair, is to actually see the breakdown of what is spent each year on particular projects. Again, maybe the government is hiding something there. Maybe the government side doesn't want the opposition to know certain information about how the budget is spent. I wonder why.

There are all kinds of lapses in the past of this government -- projects lapsed, funded in one year but not done. We are already seeing examples of that in this current budget that hasn't even passed yet. It is becoming stale-dated as we speak. There are lots of changes going on. We would like to see how the money is apportioned by community.

I see the Premier finds this funny. I would like to suggest that he maybe go to Beaver Creek, or Burwash Landing or Haines Junction, Destruction Bay, Mendenhall, and some of these other parts of my riding, and explain to people why they didn't get their projects.

That brings me to another one of his shots across the floor, when he berated me by saying I should be aware of the riding expectations, and those are in the budget. Well, that is a huge

stretch. The riding expectations of promises made by the government and the actual needs of communities in the riding totals a certain amount. As far as I can see, what is being delivered by this budget is far less than that amount.

So the Premier's equation does not add up. We're still not able to determine what has been delivered out of what has been requested. The reason is because we don't have the community breakdowns. The Premier is pretty good at his pet answers of pointing to the main estimates, the big thick binder. But, Mr. Chair, if you care to examine the detail of the breakdown in the line items, you'll see that unless something is a large project, it's not identified in the mains budget the Premier always points to. That's why we keep going back to the community breakdowns and the need for this information.

I remember when the Member for Watson Lake sat over here where I am -- fortunately, the chairs have been updated since then -- and demanded this from the previous government. When they were so much as a day or two late in providing this information, there was a major crisis. Here we are, more than a month after the Finance officials told us the information would be readily available -- more than a month. Are we raising this every day? No. It has been at least two weeks since we've even mentioned it. We feel we've been quite restrained and responsible in our approach, giving the government side ample opportunity to make amends for its oversights -- I'll use the word "oversights" for reasons of diplomacy -- and there's really no excuse for it. We need that information. I have constituents asking me, "What's in the budget for me?" I'm unable to answer them. I'm also unable to hold the government to account with questions that would arise after reviewing that information.

I've covered pretty well the whole spectrum of issues related to this. Anyone listening to the radio must be pulling their hair out because they don't understand why the government just doesn't provide that information to the opposition, because it is so readily available. I don't want to get into that because I don't have all that much hair left, but this matter is of concern. It hits at the democracy issue again and the whole purpose of this Assembly, and I'd rather not go down that road again, because I'm getting rather disheartened that the debate in here leads to any meaningful or worthwhile conclusion.

We are the Official Opposition. Our main task is to hold the government side accountable. This is the spring sitting, and the spring sitting is to examine the budget. How can we examine the budget without having the community breakdown information that is not in the budget?

The Premier thinks this is a big joke. Well, Mr. Chair, there are lots of people who don't think it is funny at all.

Again, I think I've countered every one of the shots that the Premier has made from across the floor. If he doesn't want to provide it, I guess we can do without this year but, at the next budget lock-up, we are going to expect this information because we know how easy it is for Finance officials to press a button on the keyboard, pick it off the printer and run a few copies. So, we are going to request that right now and, if it's not provided, then we'll be left with one reason: that the information was blocked again by an order from the Minister of Finance.

Has the Premier seen the light? Will he provide this or do we have to wait for the next lock-up?

**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*. We will continue with general debate.

**Mr. McRobb:** Well, I think we're prepared to move off the community breakdown issue and just accept it where it is.

I want to ask the Premier a bit about the eco-trust fund, because not a lot of information has been forthcoming with respect to this matter. The government side has taken the opinion that the third turbine project was the best option. It was a decision that was made in conjunction with the federal government. However, Mr. Chair, I've spent some time reviewing the decision from the energy regulator, the Yukon Utilities Board, with respect to the Yukon Energy Corporation's resource plan. It's a recent decision, dated January of this year. The references to the third turbine put it in somewhat of a dark light with respect to the perceived benefits from this facility.

The government's press release included some hefty figures for tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> that would be displaced and so on. I have looked over the charts and really don't see any backup for those grandiose claims.

At least in the past when the federal government is involved in the selection of a project, the local government really has had a big say in the decision about how the money should be spent. I can imagine the Northern Affairs minister, Mr. Prentice, would probably have asked the Premier about his preference. We have no information about other options that were examined.

The Yukon Utilities Board decision identifies two other options as more favourable to ratepayers and the capacity of the system -- and probably the environment too, although that is not a strong part of this regulator's jurisdiction. The other project is the second line from the Aishihik hydro facility. One of the benefits of having a second line is not only the increased capacity of energy that could be delivered, but also the reliability of the system. We only have to look back to about 14 months or so to a huge blackout on the main grid on the system to realize how fortunate we were that temperatures were unseasonably mild at the time.

Otherwise it would have been quite a catastrophe for a lot of homeowners and businesses that rely on electricity to run their furnaces and provide heating in their homes and businesses. It also had a negative impact on retail sales and any business reliant on electricity, as well as the extra diesel generation that was necessary at the time and the resultant pollutants in the air, especially for Riverdale residents.

So, given all that, with respect to the second line from Aishihik, I am wondering why that project wasn't suggested be-

cause it would appear the board rates that project far higher than the third turbine.

Another option could have been to the provision of demand-side management programs by the utility. I spoke about this the last time we had general debate before it was unexpectedly adjourned for about three weeks. There is no need to recount the argument in favour of demand-side management. Certainly, it would appear that it was a viable option that could help consumers to both reduce their energy consumption practically immediately and help save diesel generation costs and environmental implications on the system.

So I have to wonder why the third turbine was selected ahead of those two, seemingly more advantageous, options. The Premier will probably stand up and say the federal minister insisted on it. Well, I'd have a tough time buying that argument, Mr. Chair. The federal government as a rule does not shove particular projects down the throat of any lesser government, and I don't think it would happen in this case, so I have to wonder why that project was selected.

One of the things I learned -- not from this government, because it hasn't really explained the workings of the eco-trust at all -- from engaging with the public is there were some constraints on the process. Apparently, the funds had to be invested in a solid, already established project with undeniable CO<sub>2</sub> emission savings. That's fine. That might water down the DSM option a little bit, but I think it would still remain viable.

The second line from Aishihik has already demonstrated it would have met the criteria by the utility's own evidence put forward in the hearing. Perhaps there are other options as well. At the time, we critiqued the government's decision by raising the possibility of other means, such as providing greater assistance to help homeowners reduce the energy they require, both from electricity and home heating. Transportation options were possible, both for residents and public government and public transportation. There are quite a lot of other options there, as well.

The wind energy program in the territory has been basically dying for the last four or five years. We hear about the problem with the rime icing on the blades, but we are also aware there must exist a technology to overcome that problem. Perhaps it has a lot to do with the location atop Haeckel Hill.

I don't want this Assembly to forget the advice of the late Dr. Craig who was credited -- and is still acknowledged -- as being the Yukon's first wind-energy pioneer. He would often advocate for the development of a nearby mountain top -- I believe it was called Flat Mountain. He did some testing on top of that mountain and determined that the wind regime was much greater and more consistent -- two factors that a utility must assess and feel comfortable about before pursuing these types of options too deeply. As well, the rime icing may have been less of a disturbance at that site.

In addition, there are other sites around the territory with potentially more favourable wind regimes that could overcome this problem. I know, for instance, in the Kluane region that a lot of the winds are generated from glaciers as opposed to Pacific gulf streams. Perhaps that would lessen the problem of rime icing.

I'm wondering about the wind turbine potential, as well. Recently in my budget reply address, I mentioned a trip I took through the United States. One of the things I noticed, particularly in New Mexico and Arizona, was the prevalence of wind turbines. In fact, I saw a great number of them -- probably in the hundreds -- beside the highway or within view. These states are known for their hydrocarbon production. Yet, here, wind energy was so prevalent. It really struck home that, in a place like the Yukon where supposedly a majority of the citizens put a high value on the environment -- and the government would like us to believe it does, as well -- why aren't we taking the bull by the horns with respect to developing this environmentally friendly energy source? I am sure that Mr. Prentice would have hopped on board if this pitch had been made. Instead, we are left with the decision that was made in isolation of any public consultation.

The Premier didn't ask us or talk to me about it; we just heard it through a press release. The decision was made rather suddenly about the third turbine at Aishihik Lake. The promotion that accompanied that announcement is quite a stretch. We know that the Aishihik hydro facility has a limited capacity. It can only generate whatever energy flows in the lake. For example, you could put a 100-megawatt turbine there but does that then become a 130-megawatt producing plant? Well, maybe for about five days out of the year it would, until the water ran out.

So, there is an optimum level. The whole intent of the Aishihik third turbine -- I can recall from being a participant in the 1992 Yukon Utilities Board capital hearing process, as well as subsequent Water Board hearings -- is to produce the energy more efficiently than the original turbines did.

The whole intent of the Yukon Energy Corporation was not to run all three turbines simultaneously. Without checking on this, I believe that it's a condition of the water licence that confirmed the intent of the corporation not to run all three simultaneously. Only two turbines will be run. Does that add energy? Well, obviously not, but it does produce the energy more efficiently to a degree. It's not a whole lot, but to a degree it does. For instance, if they only need five, six or seven megawatts, it is more efficient to run a seven-megawatt turbine than a 15-megawatt turbine. That was the intent. One could also add one 15-megawatt wheel and argue the same for the 20-megawatt to 22-megawatt range. It's more efficient production. Everyone realized it and that is why the project received pre-approval through the processes up to 15 years ago.

There is another aspect to this. The turbine is going to cost a lot more than the \$5 million thrown at it with our climate change money. I believe it is 2005 dollars. It is estimated at \$7 million. We know what has happened to the price of copper in the last couple of years. I would imagine that there is a lot of copper involved in the turbines. If that is the case, perhaps this project is more like \$10 million. Our climate change money might only contribute to half the cost of that particular project.

The Yukon Utilities Board also identified some years for production when it made sense. The common year used was 2013. This project as envisioned by the regulator, who examined all the factors -- factors too great to even touch on in this

Assembly -- determined that the Yukon Utilities Board was correct in its analysis that 2013 is when this particular project makes sense.

The problem is that we're in 2007, and the Yukon has to do what it can to reduce emissions now. And the government should be taking a lead in helping people reduce their emissions and conserve energy in their homes and businesses. By throwing all the money in this far-off project, it simply doesn't meet the test.

There are all kinds of programs that could be established or enhanced now. I know today in Question Period in his final supplementary, when I didn't have a chance to respond, the Energy, Mines and Resources minister read off a list of existing programs the government helps to sponsor. That's a favourite practice used in this House -- when we don't have a chance to respond is when we get the zinger response, and then we have to move on to the next question.

The programs identified by the Energy, Mines and Resources minister are constrained and are not available to everyone. That was the very point of our critique from day one: what about expanding some of those existing programs so that they can apply to more people -- to people who need them -- and places that can reduce the energy consumed? That's the point exactly.

But I don't know -- I would like the Premier to elaborate on the workings of the program. Was it something that Minister Prentice refused to hear about because it had to be some kind of proven project, as I've alluded to, or what? Or, did the Premier say to him, "This is our choice. The third turbine is the best option." And did the Government of Canada then simply follow suit?

Realistically, I don't expect the federal government or one of its ministers to fully debate whatever the top option for this program is by any province or territory in Canada. I think they would pretty well give a "thumbs up" to whatever is identified, as long as it appears to meet the criteria of the program.

I know that the minister is in a talkative mood today. I would like to hear from him -- as I'm sure others would like to hear from him as well -- about the workings of the program and the minister's point of view toward the potential options that were reviewed, what some of the options were and why this decision was made.

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

**Mr. McRobb:** This is one for the books. The Finance minister/Premier refuses to answer. This is clearly a general debate question. This question cannot be asked --

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

**Mr. McRobb:** He mentions it could be asked to the Yukon Energy Corporation -- well, allow me to respond to that, Mr. Chair. We haven't had the Yukon Energy Corporation officials in this Assembly for a year and a half. I think it was December 13, 2005. Yet the Premier chirps up over there, "This is for the Energy Corporation officials." Well, we've asked for them to come to this sitting. The Yukon Party government denied us, so clearly that's no option. The Premier knows that. We can't ask the officials when they aren't allowed to appear.

We don't get too much out of the Energy, Mines and Resources minister either -- asking questions -- especially when we're looking for substance. This matter clearly is a matter for the Premier. He can't slough this one off to one of his underlings. The eco-trust fund announcement was made by him and he's not responding. I'm not going to try to beat this into anyone. Let's just note it for the record. This is a classic example of how this Yukon Party government is not willing to be accountable, open or transparent -- let alone cooperative with the opposition side of the House.

I know that paints a much different picture from what the Premier likes to paint when we hear him on the radio or wherever. That is fine. The evidence is now clearly on the record, and he doesn't want to talk about it. That is rather disconcerting, but I guess it makes the point that the government is not accountable.

I had more questions to go along with this in the public interest, because this is a matter of public concern, but the Premier is not going to engage in debate. I note the Standing Orders of this Assembly have no provision to force him to do that.

**Hon. Mr. Fentie:** I wanted to make sure that the Member for Kluane could get all his points on the record because there are some doozies. It goes back to pre-break time for the House.

The member has made a point about the Shakwak in his riding and clearly said this is nothing but U.S. money. We all recall in this Legislature the Member for Kluane's view and opinion of our neighbours, the Alaskans, the Americans. We all recall that and how little appreciation was expressed back then for all this investment. Conveniently today it is a different tune: it's American money and American money only.

Furthermore, the member went on to say that the Yukon Party government in the past mandate invested heavily in only our ridings, the ridings we have. Well, how does the member explain the significant investment in the community of Old Crow in the last mandate, a riding we didn't hold? How does the member explain investments in Mayo, Carmacks and Pelly? Huge investments: a school in Carmacks, sewage work in Pelly, a community centre in Mayo and of course a number of ridings in Whitehorse the government didn't hold, but there were huge investments in Whitehorse.

As I go through all this, what really is going on here will become evident. It relates back to a management of time. The Member for Kluane seemed to delve into this issue of time and not having enough time. Well, here this afternoon for over 40 minutes, we have listened to the Member for Kluane and one can only wonder why we are not in departmental debate asking ministers these questions. I have my own opinion but I certainly wouldn't lower the bar here in this Assembly to offer my opinion, unlike the Official Opposition members who are very opinionated on many issues.

I am going to offer something to the Member for Kluane. The member might want to take some time to gather himself emotionally and regroup and reflect on what the problem here is. I can understand how the Member for Kluane feels over what transpired not a very long time ago -- October 10 -- in this territory, and how fixated the Member for Kluane was on be-

coming a minister in government. But Yukoners didn't agree with that. I think much of what we are experiencing in the fall sitting and in this sitting is a reflection of that major, major disappointment and how distraught the Member for Kluane and his leader are about what transpired.

That said, I would encourage the Official Opposition to recognize that Yukoners did pass judgement and made a decision. We will carry on, as we should and as we are responsible to do, in conducting the government's business on behalf of the Yukon public.

Now, the member went into great length on the decision on the eco-trust. Simply put, the Canada eco-trust for clean air and climate change is intended to support specific projects designed to achieve real and sustained reduction in air pollutants and greenhouse gas emissions.

That is the simplest answer I can give on what is a federal bill. I don't have a copy of the bill before me. I am sure that the member has a telephone allowance in his office. The member could always phone the federal government and receive more information.

Through the process, Canada agreed to a certain project. In this case, it was an investment in the third wheel. What I don't quite grasp about why the Member for Kluane is taking this position is the fact that, when one considers that this is intended to reduce air pollutants and greenhouse gas emissions, why the value of using more hydro, increasing efficiency in hydro and building more hydro capacity isn't recognized by the member and the investment that goes with it toward reducing emissions. If the member would allow debate to evolve so we could get to the department responsible for this area, some detailed information can be provided to the Member for Kluane on peak demand times and how much diesel is burned. During those peak times, the member has stated that the announcement of tonnes of carbon emissions that would be reduced is a bunch of hogwash. There is no backup for that.

Well, it is pretty simple stuff. Calculate the amount of diesel burned. It equates into the tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> that goes into the air. Each year, there is an amount of litres of diesel burned. We all know what the emission factor will be from that. We are able now, as we go forward, to continue to reduce that, including adding a wheel in Aishihik and extending the grid so that we can even take a community off diesel. Also, a mine that is coming on stream will eventually, over time, be able to conduct its operations in a way that doesn't require the burning of diesel to produce electricity. These are fairly clear objectives and results from the investments.

The member has, once again, made accusations about the government being -- I'm not sure what it was. I didn't really listen that closely. But I think it was about the government not being accountable, transparent and all these wonderful comments the member makes.

If we go back into *Hansard* over the time that the Member for Kluane has spent in opposition, I think we'll see a repetitive approach to debate in Committee of the Whole and in other discussions in this Assembly because it's the same old rhetoric.

I make every effort to try to accommodate the opposition. The Member for Kluane went into great length over the issue

of the community capital breakdown. I first want to express to the Member for Kluane not to be presumptuous about the amount of work this takes. Quite frankly, it is not as simple as pushing a button, and a piece of paper spits out of the printer with all the member's so-called information.

That is not how it works. It takes effort and time from officials in Finance who, by the way, have many other things that they are responsible for doing on a daily basis. Now, I see the Member for Kluane scoffs at that. The member has just shown this House that the member has absolutely no understanding -- and there's another term to be used, but I won't -- of the effort that officials have to put forward on a daily basis. He just off-handedly passes that off, like that doesn't take place; officials don't work; they sit there at the Member for Kluane's beck and call.

Well, they do work. They work hard and a lot is asked of them. And the member gets on his high horse about a community breakdown. Once again, if we go back through the many years the member has been in opposition in this Assembly -- a good thing too, because I'm sure the officials would be cringing at the thought of the Member for Kluane taking charge: we all recall the disastrous energy commission, where the government of the day had to rally around the Member for Kluane and bail this thing out before the government wound up in very serious trouble.

I can understand, in one respect, the member wanting information, but there are many ways to get that information, so let's go over them.

By the way, the government doesn't have the detailed breakdown -- its members do not have the detailed breakdown -- but officials are available as we have departmental and line-by-line debates to provide more detailed information. They will endeavour to do so for all questions and all matters, but not in general debate.

When the member talks about there not being enough time, this is why. We are sitting here listening to the Member for Kluane's opinion and doing very little in getting down to the detail the member asks for -- by saying the officials are sitting there doing nothing, that we should push a button and the information will come out. It's unfortunate that the member takes that view.

As we go forward in debate, most of what the member wants is very detailed. I am not an engineer in the production of energy or electricity, not in the least. I will never promote that I am. But I understand the Member for Kluane's long participation in energy as an intervenor. I am sure the member feels there is some expertise on his part. I am sure that those in the corporation and the department would be keenly interested in a debate of the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources and that expertise of the Member for Kluane and what it really is all about.

The specifics that the member is asking for are not general debate at all. He is asking for specific detailed information. A minister of this government is there available to pass on all the detail that is available and all that is possible to pass on to the member opposite. I think what happens here more often than not is that the members from the Official Opposition simply do



not like the answers. They have a problem with the answers. Therefore, we go around and around and around this circuit. I hope the members from the Official Opposition recognize what transpired here this afternoon with the third party, how quickly questions were responded to -- questions that were relevant. There wasn't any lengthy preamble or discourse from those members. They were focused and wanting to be productive.

There is value in that, but I think we go back to my earlier comments here and the disappointment and the devastated feelings of the Official Opposition at the recent election's outcome. Unfortunately, the Yukon public and this Assembly and the members on the government's side are feeling that disappointment to a great degree, when the members opposite should simply get over it. That is the past and the members have a job to do.

They have been very critical of procedure but, in all cases, their opinion and their position are not reflected in the Standing Orders or the facts of the matter at all. They are merely complaints coming from the Official Opposition as they stamp their feet and express their disappointment that they didn't get their way on something, but that doesn't mean that their opinion or their position is factual or relevant to what is happening in today's Yukon. I'm trying to express to the members from the Official Opposition that there has to be a way for them to focus in on the issues in a manner that the government side can debate with them. I, for example, am not the minister responsible for Energy, Mines and Resources or Economic Development or Health and Social Services or Tourism and Culture or Justice or Highways and Public Works, and we have -- if you add it up by the hour -- many, many hours of general debate that has transpired in this Assembly since the House convened -- many, many hours. There has been one line-by-line debate in one department and that was Economic Development.

The rest of this discussion has been general debate, department by department, and again today. So, what is the member's point in the Official Opposition? On the one hand they say the government won't provide information; on the other hand, they won't engage in a debate when that information is provided. The point that I'm making, that the government side is making, is that if the members are holding fast to their approach here, they can't have the argument both ways. If the members want detailed information, then let's get on with it. If the members want to continue in general debate and fill the pages of *Hansard* with who-knows-what, then that's their choice to make. But the government side doesn't have to contribute to that approach, not at all.

For the Member for Kluane to stand up and say that the government side won't answer -- that's not the case. All we're pointing out is that there's really no need for further discussion. Let's move along and conduct ourselves in a responsible manner and if the members from the Official Opposition want details and all the information they seek, let's get on with debating the departments and they can glean that detail.

Beyond that, the decision on the eco-trust money is not going to change. The decision is made. The Government of Canada concurred that that kind of investment met with what I put on the floor moments ago -- to achieve real and sustained re-

ductions in air pollutants and greenhouse gas emissions. They concurred and we're moving along -- investing in Yukon's future, infrastructure, the protection of our environment, education, health care, social services, tourism, culture, marketing the Yukon, developing Yukon's economic fortunes and future and so on.

Obviously the members opposite aren't into that, because that's what's in the budget. What we're listening to today has virtually nothing to do with the direction the Yukon is going in and the debate we should be having on an \$862-million budget.

**Mr. McRobb:** I listened very closely to the Finance minister's response and I would say, in general, there was no point made in his response. He covered a lot of the issues, providing his perspective, his hidden views and beliefs about why some things are.

There's not one thing he mentioned that I would agree with, starting with his conclusion that I hold some kind of derogatory view of the Americans, all the way down to attacking my experience in energy matters as something that is supposed to be bad -- and everything in between. He paraphrased me as attacking officials, saying I believe they are sitting there doing nothing. That statement was never made. The Premier is imagining that I made those statements. That may be what he thinks. There were several other ones that were equally incorrect. I don't think it is very becoming for the Premier to take such a position and berate the opposition side of the House.

We heard his views on how we are still remorseful about the results of the last election. Mr. Chair, where does he get that from? We were elected to be the Official Opposition. It is our job to hold the government accountable. We take pride in that role and we are trying to effectively do our jobs. I have no idea where that mindset comes from, other than perhaps the Member for Porter Creek Centre used the words "mop the floor" in referring to his opposition in the last election. It's a very arrogant attitude. It does not speak well of even a government in a communist country. If they had an election and said something like that, it would be despicable.

I think what we heard spoke more about what the Premier really thinks than anything factual. I can tell from his rather hollow reply to my valid questions with respect to the decision that was made, that it is rather fruitless to continue this line of questioning with the Premier.

What do we hope to get out of it? More berating rhetoric? Well, that's very unproductive. So, given that, I suggest we clear general debate.

**Hon. Mr. Fentie:** What I just heard from the Member for Kluane is very encouraging. The member has stated and proposed and moved that we clear general debate. I commend the Member for Kluane for finally understanding that this is how to move forward. Much information can be provided to the members opposite but we have to get the members up on their feet.

I am flattered that the member opposite has the view that I can answer all questions and I am the whatever for all matters. That is not the way it works. We as a government operate as a team and a collective and we have ministers who have tremendous responsibilities and burdens they must carry out, along

with me, and we collectively advance the territory by committing ourselves to that responsibility and obligation. I want to thank the Member for Kluane. He has come around. It took awhile, but here we go.

**Mr. Mitchell:** I have one question for this Premier. The reason I will ask it of him is we tried asking it of his minister when we discussed that department in general debate but we didn't get an answer. The Premier has answered several times during Question Period so he must have an opinion that he wants to continue to promote. That has to do with education reform.

The Premier has stood on his feet in this House and said here and on the radio on several occasions that he represents public government and they will never devolve education. If First Nations want to draw down, that is their business but they are not interested in devolving education. I don't know that anybody on this side, certainly not in the Official Opposition, has asked for the government to devolve education.

What we have asked this government to do, on numerous occasions, is to shine a little light on this process. We've gone through this close to two-year process of education reform. We know there are a bunch of reports -- position papers. We don't know why the government feels that these papers are too scary to see the light of day. Are they not rated G? Are they rated PG? Well, PG is "parental guidance" and that's what the public is asking for.

Parents want a role in guiding the education system. They want a greater role in the education of their children and we don't know why that is so scary that the Premier has to stand on his feet and polarize debate by saying, "It's my way or the highway. We don't want to devolve education; members opposite do" -- which we haven't said.

So what is the role of the education reform project? We couldn't get answers from the Education minister. If it isn't to consider all alternatives to improve education for all Yukoners, why would this government want to go out to additional public consultations? We know there was one last week where one member of the general public appeared. There were six people there -- two politicians, three government officials and one member of the general public. The public has become cynical.

They're saying, "You consult with us, and then you come back and ask us the questions again without showing us the results of the earlier round. Why should we spend our evenings doing this?"

So, since this Premier has stood on his feet on several occasions and drawn this line in the sand -- that only he imagines as being required -- saying, "We will not devolve education", I want to make it clear: we're not asking him to devolve education. We're asking whether we can have an open examination of all the work that has gone in, from all the Yukoners who contributed to the process, and find out what has been suggested until now.

Maybe we'll read those papers and say, you know, that doesn't make sense. Maybe everybody will agree that they don't make sense, or maybe, like so many jurisdictions, there will be a recommendation to have a school board or some other way in which parents can have a greater say.

I know that the minister is looking at the clock and he's thinking, "Well, I can talk for 20 minutes and then call time." And that's fine, if that's the game he wants to play, but since he talks about not wasting the public's time -- we couldn't get an answer when the Education minister was on his feet -- what is the position of this government, since the Premier likes to answer this question, about having an open and free discussion about governance?

It wouldn't be about devolving the powers or the authorities, but simply about governance and what additional role parents and Yukoners can have in education, including governance.

**Hon. Mr. Fentie:** It's remarkable, Mr. Chair, to have witnessed the debacle by the opposition benches when it comes to this question.

Let's go back a number of days and review the facts. In the first instance, the members opposite decided that they were going to launch into this area and take up a position that education and the system can only be fixed by addressing governance. They said, on the public record: this is the sharing of power. Well, that position is quite clear. If that is the case, the sharing of power can only mean the sharing of authority. The only way that can be done is devolving public jurisdiction. We said as a government that we are not going to devolve public jurisdiction. That is the approach we have taken all along, and that is why there is the *Co-operation in Governance Act* and the agreement that structures the Yukon Forum and how we -- two jurisdictions in the Yukon -- come together to work on issues. It's about cooperation and -- we'll take it further -- cooperative governance. That's what it is.

In doing that, we have created a process for educational reform that includes that element of cooperative governance. It is not the sharing of power; it is providing input, involving others -- in this case, other governments -- in decision making, in forming the decision.

We've done that with the *Children's Act* review; we've done that with correctional reform; we've done that with educational reform; we've done that with structuring the investment plan for northern strategy; we've done that with the trilateral approach to the targeted investment program; we've done that with the investment strategy for the northern housing trust. These are all examples -- this is important -- all examples of cooperative governance; not the sharing of power, the sharing of authority and the devolving of public jurisdiction.

I don't think that there is any confusion on this side of the House. What is remarkable is that, once the members opposite recognized their mistake, they have been rushing in reverse, trying to change their approach to this. They now have it down to parents being involved and so on. Today, parents are involved in decisions in the education system -- a public education system. First Nations are involved in the public education system and help with informed decisions the public system has to make. There are guaranteed seats on school councils. Now we are going further. We have examples throughout the Yukon where, in specific schools in specific communities, there are further elements of involvement of First Nations in the public education system.

There is a purpose to all this. It is to ensure that the public education system is the best possible education system for all, including being more receptive and reflective of First Nation needs, culture and language. If we go through the debate the way the minister wanted, the minister challenged the Official Opposition on what their position and vision for education in the Yukon and nothing was forthcoming. We are building on that through education reform to add to what is already a fairly solid partnership in the public education system here in the Yukon.

We, the government, do not in any way, shape or form diminish what the First Nations in the Yukon have accomplished through negotiations. They have negotiated the right to draw down this authority on behalf of their citizens. Why would anyone diminish that accomplishment? We on the government side certainly do not. I am wondering about the members opposite who are starting to express, in a negative way, their position around the great accomplishment that First Nations have achieved in this territory.

It is a significant step to have that option available as a government. Canada and Yukon have agreed to that -- but that's the choice First Nations would make. The members opposite are, in effect, dictating what should happen here. They're not even leaving the option available for First Nations to sit down and decide as a government on behalf of their citizens if they should exercise and occupy that authority or continue to work in the public system, because we've offered the opportunity and the mechanisms and the ability for that to take place.

Mr. Chair, the education reform process is incomplete. Once again, I want to inform the Leader of the Official Opposition that, on this side of the House, we will complete the work before decisions are made. We will put into the public domain a completed work, correct work, and factual information. Why? So people can make informed decisions. I wish the Official Opposition would follow that course, because Yukoners deserve to be more informed, to have that ability and access to factual and complete information.

The long and short of it is the opposition could exercise some patience, allow the consultation to take place and conclude, and all matters will then be tabled, because what the members have ruled out, right up front, is the involvement of the rest of the public.

This is a public education system. So I ask the Official Opposition, and the Leader of the Official Opposition: does not the public have the option and the opportunity to provide input into decisions that affect them in the public education system? I think they do, Mr. Chair, and that's why the minister and his colleagues, the other principals of the educational reform process, are conducting this last phase of public consultation.

Not only has the Member for Kluane today suddenly broken the mould and even moved progress and clearing general debate, the opposition is now rapidly reversing themselves from their original position on governance and the devolving of public jurisdiction. These are good things.

Do you know what I think, Mr. Chair? I think the government side is getting through. We are actually getting through and we are changing the minds of the Official Opposition. I

think the days ahead are bright. I hear the Member for Mayo-Tatchun making comment on a certain chief who has stated in the public domain that the public education system is failing their children and their families. Let me be clear again. Unlike the Member for Mayo-Tatchun, the government side disagrees with that. We disagree with an attack on teachers in that manner, and administrators and education assistants. Those people are not failing children nor is the system failing children. However, we see lots of room for improvement and that's what the educational reform process is all about.

I would hope the Member for Mayo-Tatchun sits down and thinks about his statements here because of what they mean. To suggest that the system is failing children and families is not consistent with the dedication and efforts of so many who continue to work diligently in a public education system to educate our children, and I commend those people. You haven't failed us at all, nor will we the Yukon Party government fail you.

**Chair:** Is there any further general debate?

#### **Department of Community Services**

**Chair:** We will move to the Department of Community Services, Vote 51.

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

#### **Point of order**

**Chair:** Mr. McRobb, on a point of order.

**Mr. McRobb:** This is highly unusual. The minister has been in here all afternoon waiting for this to conclude and now he has to run and get his officials, when all he has to do is read his prepared speech.

#### **Chair's ruling**

**Chair:** On a point of order, Mr. McRobb, there is no point of order.

**Mr. Fairclough:** There is no point of order, Mr. Chair; we are just continuing with Community Services?

**Chair:** If the member is ready to speak -- Mr. Fairclough?

**Mr. Fairclough:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I appreciate the opportunity to say something about Community Services since the minister doesn't want to say very much on this matter.

We have a lot of questions in regard to this, and I just want to thank the employees and all the officials in Community Services for all the hard work they have done over the past year in putting this budget together and giving us the briefing on this department, as well as sending back some details when asked.

We on this side of the House are appreciative of that information. We did get what we asked for, but some of it was not in detail, and I'm hoping that the minister -- if there is interest shown -- would provide that level of detail to us when we ask questions in general debate in this particular department.

Some issues have been raised by members on this side of the House over past years. We've given very constructive direction to the minister, and he has not responded like we thought he would.

This particular department has a direct impact on funding to the communities, and that is why I believe this is one of the

more important departments that government has. I'm surprised, though, that the minister chose not to have any opening remarks. Perhaps we will hear it, or perhaps it is the same tactic that the Minister of Education took when he broke his opening remarks into four separate sections and we had to hear it over and over again. Most of the people, including members on that side of the House, didn't really hear exactly what the minister said because it was broken into several sections.

That is certainly not what we expected. This new approach of the government is not working with us on this side of the House. We feel that they should be making some opening remarks and keeping it pointed, and we take it from there by asking questions. I know it's a little different tack than the members opposite has.

We're hoping that things are going to improve somehow with the ministers. We have to see some improvement here because, you know, this is close to the end of the day now and we could be speeding up the process here and not delaying it any further. We do need to have a really good debate in this House.

I have to thank the officials in the departmental lock-up. They did provide information. Some provided quite a bit.

I see the Minister of Community Services is now showing an interest in the department.

They did provide a lot of information. Although it was broken down, we asked for information with regard to recreation facilities across the territory. I think we must have received close to 100 pages from the department just on that. Here is another important one that shows why we ask these questions in the House. We asked the department for a community breakdown. What was provided, however, was a breakdown of the total amount of money going into the communities, rather than the expenditure broken down separately in order to see the line items. That is unfortunate, because it has been provided in the past and has been very useful information for every elected member. Not only does it clearly show all the different programs and projects in the communities, it was also used as a reference by some of the communities to see where other communities are going with regard to projects.

I know that there are usually breakdowns in the community development fund, but we are looking at total government money broken down into the communities. It is unfortunate that this Yukon Party government chose not to go that route, because I believe it is useful information. Any of the members could take that information and table it for the municipalities, the First Nations or unincorporated communities such as Keno City, Old Crow or Stewart Crossing.

I hope that the minister has a more detailed breakdown, because we are going to ask for it. This is a problem, because I believe that every department in government could provide it. What we were told in the main budget briefing was that the officials had to get permission from the Premier to have this information flow to members on this side of the House.

That information is there and the Premier could give the go-ahead to get it done. It was done in the past and every community out there was appreciative of the government when they

provided that information, so hopefully this minister can provide that information to us on this side of the House.

I think the minister missed an opportunity to provide that, straight to the municipalities, at the last annual general meeting of the Association of Yukon Communities. That information would have been very useful. People would be able to see where the different communities are moving and so on. That wasn't provided, although it is back to the main budget and the big items that are in there and it's up to the communities to see where the breakdowns are. Unfortunately that didn't happen on behalf of this Yukon Party government.

What are we seeing here? We are trying to get some commitment from the government side on a number of different fronts -- not only the elected members on this side of the House, but municipalities also. The municipalities, through Association of Yukon Communities, were really hoping that this minister would make an announcement at the annual general meeting in Dawson City, and it didn't come.

It was regarding increasing the municipal grants from government. Although it was alluded to by the minister, there was no commitment. Since that meeting took place, I've had discussions with those in attendance at the meeting -- those involved with the municipal governments -- and all showed disappointment that the minister didn't bring what they expected to this meeting.

Unfortunately we are going to have to ask that question again. We are going to ask the minister again if he's going to commit to an increase to the municipal grants -- when, how much, what percentage, and so on.

Hopefully the minister has answers because I am sure that, since the Dawson meeting, the minister has had discussions with his caucus at the Cabinet table and Management Board about how much municipalities can expect for increases. It won't be this year because they are not in the budget, but perhaps for next year.

They are already faced with increased costs to their O&M simply because of this government's decisions. One of them is in regard to reducing the rate stabilization fund. Everybody's bills go up, including municipalities, and this is so unfortunate, but they are looking for increased monies. This government is sitting on an \$85-million surplus and doesn't know what to do with that money. We are making suggestions from this side of the House. Hopefully, the Yukon Party will take some of them seriously and move on the suggestions made by the communities.

We on this side of the House have a lot of questions, and hopefully we will get some highlights on the department from the minister. I know he is going to show some interest. Perhaps we are going to see it another day, but I am hoping he will take the time from now until after Question Period tomorrow when we come back into this department to focus his comments within that 20-minute allotment so we don't have the opening remarks broken into three or four different and separate comments by the minister -- while he grabs his pen and shortens up his speech to within 20 minutes.

I realize that the time is coming close to 5:30 p.m., Mr. Chair, so I move that you report progress.

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

*Motion agreed to*

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

*Motion agreed to*

*Speaker resumes the Chair*

**Speaker:** I will now call the House to order.

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

**Chair's report**

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

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

**Some Hon. Members:** Agreed.

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

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

*The House adjourned at 5:30 p.m.*

**The following Sessional Paper was tabled May 22, 2007:**

07-1-25

Crime Prevention and Victim Services Trust Fund 2005-06 Annual Report (Horne)

**The following document was filed May 22, 2007:**

07-1-16

Yukon Government, previous correspondence to: letter (dated May 15, 2007) from Ruth Massie, Chief, Ta'an Kwach'an Council, to Hon. Dennis Fentie, Premier (Mitchell)