

**Whitehorse, Yukon****Thursday, May 31, 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 World No Tobacco Day**

**Mr. Hardy:** I rise on behalf of this Assembly to pay tribute to World No Tobacco Day, which is May 31 each year. This awareness day was begun 20 years ago by the World Health Organization in an effort to reduce the number of people affected by smoking-related diseases.

There are over 4,000 chemicals in cigarette smoke, and 50 of them are known to cause cancer. Some of the chemicals have no known safe levels of exposure. Tobacco use is the leading preventable cause of death in the world, causing more than five million deaths each year.

Although the developed world is slowly using less tobacco, increased use in the Third World more than makes up for it. That is where tobacco companies are concentrating their efforts, putting profits before life. If current trends continue, eight out of every 10 tobacco-related deaths will be in the developing world.

Apart from the direct use of tobacco, there is a great danger to health from second-hand smoke. Amounts of cancer-causing chemicals have been found in the body fluids of non-smokers. More than one-half of the smoke from a burning cigarette is not inhaled by the smoker. Side-stream smoke is composed of poisonous gases, liquids and particles that are harmful. It has twice as much nicotine and tar as the smoke that smokers inhale. It also has five times the carbon monoxide, which decreases the amount of oxygen in our blood. Neither ventilation nor filtration can reduce exposure levels of tobacco to levels that are considered acceptable.

The theme of World No Tobacco Day this year is "Smoke-free environments". The theme fits well into the initiative of this Assembly with our smoke-free places bill. The right to clean air is a human right. Most people are non-smokers and have a right not to be exposed to second-hand smoke.

Smoke-free environments provide smokers who want to quit with a strong incentive to cut down or stop. Smoking bans help prevent our youth from starting to smoke. Smoke-free environments fully protect workers and the public from the harmful effects of tobacco smoke.

Unfortunately, less than four percent of the world's population is protected with smoke-free legislation. In the Yukon we look forward to helping increase the number of people kept safe from this serious health hazard.

**Mr. Mitchell:** I rise today on behalf of the Official Opposition to pay tribute to World No Tobacco Day 2007. This year's theme for World No Tobacco Day is "Smoke-free environments".

Social values have changed with respect to tobacco use. I can remember when smoking was allowed at sporting events and public buildings, on airline flights, as well as in restaurants and bars, and the tobacco companies sponsored prestigious sporting events. Society is now aware of the cost to our health care system and the toll on human life, both to smokers and non-smokers from second-hand smoke.

Tobacco is the fourth most common risk factor for disease worldwide and is the second major cause of death in the world. It is currently responsible for the death of one in 10 adults worldwide -- about five million deaths each year. If current smoking patterns continue, it will cause some 10 million deaths each year by 2020. Half of the people who smoke regularly today -- about 650 million people -- will eventually be killed by tobacco. Smoking is a cause of lung cancer, emphysema, esophageal cancer and coronary disease, among others. Even more alarming is the fact that hundreds of thousands of people who never smoked die each year from diseases caused by breathing second-hand tobacco smoke. In addition to its direct health effects, tobacco leads to malnutrition, increased health care costs and premature deaths.

There are many cost-effective tobacco control measures that can be used in different settings and that can have a significant impact on tobacco consumption.

The most cost-effective strategies are population-wide public policies, like bans on direct and indirect tobacco advertising, tobacco taxes and price increases, smoke-free environments in public places and workplaces, and large, clear, graphic messages on tobacco packaging to discourage people from smoking.

Education campaigns are also very important, especially those directed toward our youth before they ever start smoking.

Our Legislative Assembly has created an all-party committee to visit Yukon communities over the summer and fall to consult on anti-smoking legislation. The significance of World No Tobacco Day is to raise awareness and encourage us all to make better lifestyle choices on a personal level and for the people around us.

**Speaker:** Are there any further tributes?

Introductions of visitors.

Returns or documents for tabling.

Reports of committees.

Are there any petitions?

Are there any bills to be introduced?

Are there any notices of motion?

**NOTICES OF MOTION**

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to develop and implement a homeowner protection act that includes mandatory licensing for home builders and contractors and an

effective warranty program for new home construction and home renovations.

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

THAT this House urges the Yukon government to take whatever steps are necessary to ensure that all legislation dealing with domestic relationships conforms to the guarantees of equal protection and equal benefits of the law contained in section 15 of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*.

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

THAT this House urges the Yukon government to establish a rape crisis centre with basic medical staff and trained counsellors accessible 24 hours a day for immediate help for victims of sexual assault, and to provide long-term counselling for victims who endure psychological stress for many years following sexualized violence.

**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: Porcupine caribou herd

**Mr. Elias:** I have some questions for the Minister of Environment. The United States Fish and Wildlife Service and the Alaska Department of Fish and Game are taking the lead to conduct a successful population census of the Porcupine caribou herd very soon. It has been six years since a successful count of the Porcupine caribou herd was done. Since then, the fate of the calving grounds within ANWR is still unknown. There's an unknown First Nation harvest. There's an unknown wounded loss, as a result of harvesting attempts. We don't know the full effect climate change is having on the health of the herd. The Porcupine, Cape Bathurst and the Bluenose West herds are declining. The Vuntut Gwitchin government imposed a partial hunting ban on their lands along the Dempster Highway.

The bottom line is: we have no reason to believe that the Porcupine caribou herd population has increased since 2001. The Porcupine caribou herd needs a minister who always has a plan B in his back pocket, a minister who leads with vigilance and caring in this time when evidence suggests that the herd is in trouble.

What is the minister's plan?

**Hon. Mr. Fentie:** Well, first I want to thank the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin for articulating all the information that this government has been working on for a number of years now. Given that information, it has led us to where we are at today. The member knows full well that in this budget there is a significant investment in modernizing our database, which includes the Porcupine caribou herd. But he also knows full well that we have embarked on an initiative here along with the Porcupine Caribou Management Board, the Northwest Territories, affected First Nations and have even invited the Alaskans to be involved in this, to do a complete analysis of the Porcu-

pine caribou herd. That includes even monitoring its overall health.

But I do share and agree with the member opposite -- in all the information we have gathered to date, there is no evidence that the herd is increasing in any way; in fact, quite the contrary. All the indicators show that there is what we would call a decrease in the herd's numbers.

**Mr. Elias:** Mr. Speaker, if the minister is talking about the harvest management strategy, that is going to take some time -- a luxury the caribou are running out of. There is a sense of urgency here, Mr. Speaker. Yukoners are growing tired of this minister's lackadaisical approach to caring for this herd, and I caution the minister that, in the face of what we don't know, doing nothing may be viewed as acting contrary to the public trust.

The Porcupine Caribou Management Board believes it is now necessary to take immediate steps to ensure the conservation of the Porcupine caribou herd. That was on November 5, 2006 -- eight months ago. The long-term survival of the herd for the present and future generations is clearly at risk here. It is also clear that this minister, once again, doesn't understand his responsibility for conservation of this herd. It's clearly laid out in sections 16.3.1 and 16.8.11 of the *Umbrella Final Agreement*, section 194(1) of the *Wildlife Act*, part F.7 of the *Porcupine Caribou Management Agreement*. We are at that point. Why is the minister doing so little on the conservation front with a herd that means so much?

**Hon. Mr. Fentie:** I would suggest to the member opposite that conservation is not measured by how loud you speak.

That said, how can this member stand on the floor of the Legislature and say that we are not acting with respect to the Porcupine caribou herd and all therein?

There is a tremendous amount of investment and emphasis within the Department of Environment on this herd and, in fact, on gathering all the biophysical evidence we can possibly gather. The list is long. It would take me much longer than an answer in Question Period to present to the member opposite all the things we are doing.

The member opposite should probably stop taking counsel from his colleagues, who obviously have put him up to this, because he knows different. He knows what we are doing with the Vuntut Gwitchin, with the N.W.T., with the Management Board itself -- with all concerned. I would also suggest to the member opposite that his criticisms are levied against all those hard-working professionals -- the biologists, scientists and others -- who have been studying and monitoring this herd for a long time.

**Mr. Elias:** I have worked with those Yukon biologists for over 20 years -- over the period of my career. I'll let the minister know what we have had to deal with. The caribou are not on this Environment minister's radar and it is frightening. Yukoners need to know that the Porcupine caribou herd is important. They need to know that and that it is a priority of this government.

Here's what we have had to deal with: a Yukon Party rogue minister was witnessed undermining the Vuntut Gwitchin's

tireless efforts at a meeting in Juneau, Alaska, last year. This minister refuses to participate in the grassroots efforts in Washington, D.C. and engage in face-to-face meetings with legislators to protect the calving grounds. The minister was a no-show at a major caribou summit in Inuvik last winter -- so much for the pan-northern vision -- a minister who doesn't even put the caribou on the agenda with his first meeting with Governor Palin.

Will the minister act and give direction to err on the side of conservation and put himself in a position to make decisions and respond accordingly when the results of the census are known in August or September 2007?

**Hon. Mr. Fentie:** The member has brought up his career, and I would point out his career has been, so far, a short one.

The member has made mention of our participation -- and indeed my participation. When was the last time that member talked face to face with the President of the United States about the issue of ANWR? When was the last time that member talked face to face with the governors of Alaska, over a period of years, with respect to ANWR?

The government side is far beyond what the member is suggesting here in dealing with and conserving the Porcupine caribou herd. It's too bad the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin and his colleagues, the Liberals in this House, have not caught up to the government's efforts.

**Question re: First Nations, government relations with**

**Mr. Fairclough:** The Yukon Supreme Court ruled in a way that anyone could understand. The court said the Yukon government has a duty to consult and accommodate the First Nation. The court clearly felt that, in the case of the Little Salmon-Carmacks First Nation and an elder, that such had not been the case.

If you read the Chief Justice's ruling, you can see this is a precedent-setting case -- a major case in the Yukon. In light of the Supreme Court case, I want to revisit the big game outfitter policy. Under the policy proposed by this Yukon Party government, outfitters will eventually gain tenure to the sites.

Can the minister tell the House if government-to-government consultations took place and, if so, were any accommodations made to address the concerns raised by First Nations?

**Hon. Mr. Fentie:** This member is now somehow correlating a court's decision -- by the way, I would suggest to the member that he recognize that due process has not concluded and, as the government has stated, we will thoroughly review, in detail, the court's decision before we take any further steps.

To correlate this to the outfitter policy is irresponsible. The member knows that, outside of the YESAA process, we've already struck with First Nations a group that can look into matters that may fall outside of YESAA -- in this instance, possibly outfitters and what they may do on the land base.

This is a working group that's joint between First Nations and the Yukon government. I would suggest the Member for Mayo-Tatchun allow First Nations and government officials represented on this working body to do their work.

**Mr. Fairclough:** Sounds like courtesy consultation to me.

The Premier ought to read the ruling. It is a ruling coming from the judge and it is what it is, until it's overturned. So the member should know that.

Another First Nation had to resort to the Yukon courts concerning another agricultural lease application at Shallow Bay. A lot of money was spent fighting this Yukon Party government on this issue. That doesn't sound like consultation or accommodation was on the menu that day. However, I'll allow the minister to explain the details.

Can the minister tell this House if government-to-government consultation took place prior to the case going to court and, if so, was any accommodation made to address concerns raised or does this government consider being sued by a First Nation as a government-to-government consultation?

**Hon. Mr. Fentie:** In the first place, the Member for Mayo-Tatchun and his colleagues in the Official Opposition's definition of "consultation" is very similar to their definition of "fact".

That said, how does the member even have the audacity to stand in the House and say that the government doesn't consult? It goes on every day with First Nations, continually.

With respect to the Shallow Bay issue, how does the member respond to this? Concerns brought forward by the First Nation became mitigating measures in the overall process. I speak of setbacks in Horse Creek; I speak of setbacks from the shoreline of Shallow Bay; I speak of commitments made by the proponent -- a private sector Yukoner who has made application for land. All these conditions have been put in place because of concerns brought forward by First Nations. How would you get there without consulting in the first place?

**Mr. Fairclough:** I'm sure Ta'an Kwach'an has a lot to say on this matter.

Now, in my final question, I'd like to draw the attention of the House to land development by this government -- known as Grizzly Valley. The project is for a rural residential subdivision. The project is significant in size and scope and in its impact on the natural environment.

The minister has tried to say that the recent Supreme Court case was an isolated one -- an isolated issue. Well, I've shown here today three more examples relating to the same lack of consultation and reasonable accommodation. Here's another -- the administration of First Nation traditional traplines.

Can the minister tell this House when this government is going to start respecting the agreements signed in good faith by all First Nations, or will the government have to be hauled into court on a regular basis?

**Hon. Mr. Fentie:** What has been determined today in the House is nothing more than the member's opinion, which is in fact incorrect and not even relevant to what's going on in today's Yukon.

Furthermore, as the member goes through with this incorrect opinion and tries to demonstrate all this conviction when it comes to the land claims, where's the member's conviction for other Yukoners who also have rights and have the ability to access land? That's why the government is doing its work,

that's why we'll continue to consult with First Nations, and that's why we'll continue to commit ourselves and dedicate ourselves to ensure that all Yukoners -- First Nation and non-First Nation -- have a better quality of life and access to Yukon land, as they have the right to.

### Speaker's statement

**Speaker:** One moment, please. From the Chair's perspective, we're getting dangerously close in this Legislative Assembly during this Question Period to accusing other members of representing something other than their constituency or other than the best ideals that we are elected here to serve.

I'd ask honourable members to keep that under consideration when both asking and answering the questions, please.

You have the floor, Member for Mount Lorne.

### Question re: *Family Property and Support Act*

**Mr. Cardiff:** Same-sex marriage is now the law of the land in Canada, and I have a question for the Minister of Justice. Do same-sex partners in the Yukon have the same rights as other married people, particularly when the relationship is dissolved?

**Hon. Ms. Horne:** Regarding this question, we leave this up to the courts to decide at the moment.

**Mr. Cardiff:** Well, the courts have decided and the government needs to get in tune with that.

The *Family Property and Support Act* defines the word "spouse" as follows: "spouse" means a man and a woman (a) who are married to each other, or (b) who are married to each other by a form of marriage that is voidable and has not been voided, or (c) who have gone through a form of marriage... that is void and are cohabiting or have cohabited within the preceding year.

Will the minister explain how that definition applies to same-sex partners when it clearly stipulates "a man and a woman"?

**Hon. Ms. Horne:** Mr. Speaker, on this matter, the Yukon government does recognize marriage between same-sex couples, and the marriages are performed.

As to the spouse and insurance companies, that is left up to the courts and the insurance companies to decide.

**Mr. Cardiff:** Well, perhaps I can help the minister out on this. In 1998, the Legislature passed a number of amendments to the *Family Property and Support Act*, including changes to the definition of a spouse. The amendments received assent, but apparently they haven't been proclaimed in nearly eight years. The recognition of same-sex marriage happened during this government's first term in office, partly because of a test case here in the Yukon.

Can the minister explain why the *Family Property and Support Act* hasn't been updated, and will she tell us when the necessary changes will be made?

**Hon. Ms. Horne:** Mr. Speaker, this is in the process now of being reviewed.

### Question re: *Family Property and Support Act*

**Mr. Hardy:** I have a follow-up question for the Minister of Justice, and I'm really looking for some kind of answer.

The *Estate Administration Act* and the *Dependants Relief Act* both include a very clear definition of a common-law spouse. In both these acts, a common-law spouse is a person who is united with another person by a marriage that, although not a legal marriage, is valid as common law, or a person who has cohabited with another person as a couple for at least 12 months before the other person's death. Why is there no definition of a common-law spouse in the *Family Property and Support Act*? Now, that's a simple question. Why is there none? Can the minister please try to answer that one?

**Hon. Ms. Horne:** Mr. Speaker, in this, we follow the federal act as to common-law marriage.

**Mr. Hardy:** I'd actually accept an answer a lot easier than the one she just gave if she says she hasn't got a clue what she is talking about, because that honestly is what is happening here.

### Speaker's statement

**Speaker:** From the Chair's perspective, this is getting very personal. You ask a question, you get an answer, but it is really not within the parameters of our Standing Orders for members to make personal comments on those answers. Please keep that in mind.

**Mr. Hardy:** We recently had a call from a Yukon woman who was in a common-law relationship with a man for over 10 years. That is actually very personal. When the relationship --

### Speaker's statement

**Speaker:** We are not debating my rulings here. When I make a ruling, I expect the member to respect it, so please do so.

**Mr. Hardy:** When the relationship ended, she was shocked to learn that the *Family Property and Support Act* didn't apply to her because she and her partner didn't have a cohabitation agreement -- didn't have an agreement. It doesn't apply to her.

With the prevalence of common-law relationships in the Yukon, I am sure there are many other people in the same situation, especially women.

Will the minister agree to change the *Family Property and Support Act* to give common-law spouses the same protection as other married partners when a relationship ends?

I think that question is answerable.

**Hon. Ms. Horne:** If this is a case that is before the courts at this time, it would be inappropriate for me to respond to this question.

**Mr. Hardy:** I'd like to inform the minister that it is not before the courts.

For the minister's benefit, the 1998 amendments that still haven't been proclaimed would have solved this problem. As it is now, a common-law spouse may not be able to get their fair share of the family assets unless their former partner is willing to cooperate by signing an agreement. In the case of the woman I just mentioned, her long-term partner is refusing to cooperate. Surely we need one clear and consistent definition of "spouse"

and "common-law spouse" in all our laws dealing with domestic relationships. I hope that minister can agree with that.

Will the minister immediately do whatever is necessary to give same-sex spouses and common-law spouses in the Yukon the equal protection and equal benefit of the law that is guaranteed in section 15 of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*?

**Hon. Ms. Horne:** Mr. Speaker, as to the matter of the relationship he is speaking to, I am not that familiar with it. I will check into it, and I will get back to you with the appropriate information.

#### **Question re: Contracts, sole-sourcing**

**Mr. Inverarity:** Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank the minister for correcting the record yesterday on the blinds affair. After initially denying it, the minister admitted yesterday that he was, in fact, responsible for the decision to sole source a contract for \$52,000 to a company outside of the Yukon.

The contractor in question was reassured on many occasions that the contract would be tendered. The government officials have indicated that the contract for window coverings was ultimately sole sourced to a construction management company because there wasn't enough time to tender it. Officials further stated that they were within the government contract regulations.

Just for the record, Mr. Speaker, where does it say that running out of time is an acceptable reason for sole-sourcing contracts?

**Hon. Mr. Hart:** As I stated yesterday, we are looking at supporting the purchase of local goods wherever possible, and we did so during the Canada Games. As I stated yesterday, we provided somewhere between \$78 million and \$80 million toward local purchasing.

**Mr. Inverarity:** Mr. Speaker, running out of time is just not an excuse. This contract should never have been sole sourced. Mr. Speaker, in response to my questions yesterday, the minister cited, and again today, that \$80 million flowed into Yukon as a result of the Canada Winter Games to benefit all Yukoners. Well, the local contractor who was denied the opportunity to bid on the contract was asked how much benefit his business received from the Canada Winter Games construction projects. His answer was, "None, zip, zero," Mr. Speaker. That translates into zero benefits for this Yukon business. So a local Yukon business gets nothing, while an outside construction management company gets more than \$1 million in sole-source contracts, and the details of these transactions are withheld from the public.

When will the minister disclose information on the sole-source contracts that were awarded to this construction management company and other Outside companies?

**Hon. Mr. Hart:** We are provided all the contracts for the village, in conjunction with the host society, on that particular item. The member opposite will probably remember there were several discussions in this House with regard to contracts and they are there for everyone to look at.

**Mr. Inverarity:** I'd like to clear up the minister's confusion about my involvement in the Canada Winter Games that he alluded to yesterday. I volunteered for more than 50 hours at

three different venues. I agree with the minister that the games were a resounding success. I'm proud to have been part of something so important in the Yukon. My questions are not about the Canada Winter Games. My questions are about this government's cavalier approach to local businesses.

Vast wealth flows into our territory and vast wealth flows out. Millions of dollars in sole-source contracts are awarded to Outside companies while local business is stonewalled because this government doesn't have time.

Why did the Yukon Party government choose to shut down this local business?

**Hon. Mr. Hart:** I commend him for volunteering his time during the Canada Winter Games, as I and everyone else did who volunteered during the games.

With regard to the athletes village, I would remind the member opposite that we have asked the Auditor General to review this project and provide us with the results of the same. We should anticipate something early next year on that particular aspect.

#### **Question re: Construction budgets**

**Mr. McRobb:** Yesterday we discussed how poorly this Yukon Party has managed capital building projects. For instance, the cost to taxpayers for the new Watson Lake health centre has ballooned from its original budget of \$5.2 million to nearly \$10 million, and we tabled information indicating it will cost another \$6 million to bring the existing hospital up to code. But that project is just the tip of the iceberg.

According to a report earlier this year from the Auditor General of Canada, she examined 10 projects and found they went over budget by more than \$8 million. Why did that happen? Why were so many taxpayers' dollars wasted? According to the Auditor General, it was because, "We did not find any documented project plans that clearly set out a strategy and course of action for completing a project."

It's the Highways and Public Works minister's job to ensure taxpayers' money is spent prudently. Why were so many projects allowed to balloon overbudget under his watch?

**Hon. Mr. Lang:** We certainly were concerned about exactly that question. This government brought in the Auditor General to critique the department, and the department is now looking at that overview and working on it to solve those issues. We're doing our job hand in hand with the Auditor General and the department is working very hard to address those issues.

**Mr. McRobb:** Sure, this government brought in the Auditor General -- great -- but look at what she found: millions of taxpayers' dollars wasted because the minister didn't properly mind the store. This quote from page 18 of the Auditor General's report: "We expected the department would apply sound management practices and adhere to the directive for planning and implementing building development projects; however, we found weaknesses in managing building development projects."

It's the minister's job to oversee these projects. Obviously, he didn't do his job. The result: taxpayers are on the hook for more than \$8 million of unnecessary expenditure.

Why were so many projects mismanaged under the Minister of Highways and Public Works' watch and what does he plan to do about it to ensure that it doesn't happen again?

**Hon. Mr. Lang:** In addressing the member opposite, we certainly were concerned about the overages. We as a government brought the Auditor General into the Department of Highways and Public Works to do the critique that the member opposite is talking about. Being an open and transparent government, we thought that the Auditor General should come in, like we do with many of the departments in the government, and give it an overview with a fresh set of eyes and address some of the management issues we have in the department.

We are concerned about overages. We are concerned about taxpayers' money and we are certainly concerned about the management of the department. As minister, I have a responsibility to oversee. I do not manage the department as the member opposite alluded to, but we are concerned as a government and the Auditor General did a very good job of that audit. The department is reacting very positively to it and we are looking forward to improvements in the future.

**Mr. McRobb:** Well, the Auditor General of Canada came in, all right, and she exposed just how poorly this minister was managing taxpayers' money. After the government builds a project, it is supposed to conduct a project review to see if rules were followed and, if necessary, make improvements in time for the next project. Did that happen under the Yukon Party? Clearly not.

There are all kinds of proof that the Yukon Party government has been asleep at the wheel when it comes to managing projects. The Auditor General said on page 22, and I quote again: "We found the department did not conduct the required review of completed projects to evaluate whether it has followed appropriate procedures, observed economy and efficiency, and met the objectives for the projects. Given the problems in the projects we looked at, we believe a review of completed projects is essential."

Why did the minister not insist on doing these project reviews? Why didn't he mind the store?

**Hon. Mr. Lang:** Being the government, we can't run it in the sense of how the member opposite visualizes government, how they run, but we certainly didn't want a repeat of the Mayo-Dawson line, Mr. Speaker, the one that the Liberals sponsored and, of course, the overruns there -- the Auditor General's report was quite damning. Of course, we're living with the fallout of that project, even as we speak today -- five years after the fact.

We were aware of the struggle of Highways and Public Works. We were the ones who brought in the Auditor General. We are concerned with overages. We also understand management. The department is working to address the issues for the Auditor General and, in turn, address the issues for all Yukoners.

Highways and Public Works wants to do a good job. They've got good people working there. But it doesn't hurt to have the Auditor General come in and have an overview with a fresh set of eyes and critique it and come up with some questions -- not only questions, but also solutions. So we work well

with the Auditor General of Canada. We look forward to working with them in all the departments in our government, and we look forward to working with the department. It's a good department, Mr. Speaker.

#### **Question re: Lotteries, security**

**Mr. Cardiff:** The average household spending on government lotteries in Canada is \$257 per year. The bi-weekly Lotto 6/49 took in almost \$1.5 billion last year with about half of that amount going back to the winners. The odds of winning the Lotto 6/49 are nearly one in 14 million, but the odds for government profits on lotteries are guaranteed.

The last statistics available show that \$7.5 million was spent on lottery tickets in the Yukon in a one-year period. The government's take was approximately 30 percent of that.

How much profit does the Lottery Commission spend on security and monitoring of this gambling?

**Hon. Mr. Kenyon:** Interestingly enough, when we have a look at this and what the member opposite is alluding to, in the Yukon, unlike other jurisdictions, there does not appear to be a disproportionate number of winners from the lottery retail sector.

This year, given the recent technological improvements, the Lottery Commission plans to introduce a whole new smorgasbord of government-consumer features that will alert lottery customers when the ticket is validated as a winner.

The Lottery Commission is independent of political direction but has been very, very diligent on its own in looking at security overall. Most of the programs like Lotto 6/49 are actually run through the Western Canada Lottery Corporation and we work very closely with them in terms of their security. I've been very pleased with the way the Lottery Commission has handled this.

**Mr. Cardiff:** It's somewhat reassuring. Lotteries have been described as a tax on the stupid and the poor, but B.C. and Ontario both discovered in the last month that some of the people in the system may not be so stupid or so poor. Retailers are winning at a rate of three to six times what should be expected. Many of these retail winners are with games such as Keno, which has been criticized in B.C. as one of the most easily cheated on. Keno ticket sales are a major part of Yukon ticket sales and they are on the rise.

Is the minister or the commission doing anything to follow the lead taken by B.C. and Ontario and are they reviewing the winnings of retailers in the Yukon?

**Hon. Mr. Kenyon:** For instance, prizes of \$1,000 and over are administered directly by the main office of Lotteries Yukon, so we work on a much lower level on that. Winners are recorded in a database and regular reports are analyzed for irregularities, including retail winners.

I would draw the member opposite's attention -- and I won't ask him after his opening comments if he buys tickets -- we have 42 retail locations with a staff of retailers totalling about 450 people. While there have been articles and controversy and questions in other jurisdictions in Canada, which the member alludes to, I would again draw his attention to the fact that none of this to date has involved the Yukon. Our Lottery Commission has been very good -- it has been on top of all

these questions and considerations. We've been very proud of the way that they have handled security and very proud of the fact that the Lottery Commission was able to give the opening \$1-million cheque to the Canada Winter Games Host Society to get the Canada Winter Games on track. They have had a very far-reaching vision in support of sport, culture and recreation and it's a very good organization.

**Mr. Cardiff:** Well, just the other day, the B.C. government ordered an independent audit of its lottery commission after a scathing report by the Ombudsman that lottery retailers were winning major prizes. I'm not saying this is happening here, but it would be good if we could look into it -- if the minister and the commission would do that.

Retailer wins with Keno seem to be more common than any others, with a high percentage of 11.6 percent. The monitoring system in place in B.C. was claimed to be dysfunctional. Even when retailers couldn't provide simple answers such as when and where they bought the ticket, they still got the prize of up to a million dollars. Retailers are forbidden from buying tickets while working, but it was found that that was not to be the case in practice.

The B.C. Ombudsman made 27 recommendations for improving the system in that province. Is the minister or the commission reviewing the recommendations from the B.C. Ombudsman to consider applying them in the Yukon?

**Hon. Mr. Kenyon:** Yes, we had those recommendations and speaking notes and everything else related to that within 24 hours of their release.

I thank the member opposite very much for his review of some of the controversy and problems that have occurred across Canada in other jurisdictions. I am very pleased to hear him admit that it sounds like he agrees with me -- that these problems have not occurred in the Yukon.

But I would remind people, when they buy lottery tickets, to sign the ticket. If there is any controversy later in terms of ownership, your signature is on the ticket. Make sure that you check them personally. These are all things that every individual who plays the various lottery games should do on a regular basis.

But again, with what we have seen in the Yukon and what has happened, the integrity and the reputation of the administrators of the Yukon Lottery Commission have been really quite stunning, and we have been able to donate almost 48 percent of lottery net revenues back to various funding programs in sports, recreation and the arts. The commission meets on a regular basis to determine grants and awards -- again, the first \$1-million cheque to the Canada Winter Games. It's a marvelous organization and one that I think we all should support.

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

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

## INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

**Mr. Cardiff:** I would like to ask all Members of the Legislative Assembly to join me in welcoming Laurie Butterworth and Lorelee Kesler to the gallery.

*Applause*

## COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

**Chair:** The matter before the Committee is Bill No. 6, *First Appropriation Act, 2007-08*, Department of Highways and Public Works. Do members wish to take a brief recess before we begin?

**All Hon. Members:** Agreed.

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

*Recess*

**Chair:** I now call Committee of the Whole to order.

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

### Department of Highways and Public Works -- *continued*

**Chair:** The matter before the Committee is Bill No. 6, *First Appropriation Act, 2007-08*, Department of Highways and Public Works.

**Hon. Mr. Lang:** I'd like to review a few things I said the other day about the department we are going to be debating here this afternoon. As Minister of Highways and Public Works, this is one of this government's largest departments with 853 very dedicated employees.

I would like to say, as the minister of this department, that even though sometimes in the House, negativity between the two sides is highlighted by question and answer period, I'm very proud to be the Minister of Highways and Public Works. I take my job very seriously and I respect the employees who work tirelessly in this department to make this department the department that it is today. 552 of these employees are based in the City of Whitehorse and 301 live in Yukon communities. So you can see, Mr. Chair, that to manage this great territory of ours it takes that number of people.

There are 85 employees working in the corporate services branch. Of course, this includes finance, contract services, policy, communications, and information and communication technology program areas. They provide support services to the department itself, as well as information and record management services and guidance.

There are 47 employees working in the supply services branch, Mr. Chair. They successfully deliver cost-effective, accessible, logistical support through the provision of services related to material management, air and ground transportation, mail delivery and publishing.

There are also 11 employees who work in the human resource branch. That speaks for itself, Mr. Speaker, when you have a department with that number of employees.

The Property Management Agency has 257 employees, and they work in virtually every Yukon community. Property management staff procure and manage facilities that provide affordable, appropriate and safe accommodation for government and publicly funded agency program activities. This branch and the entire department is continually scrutinizing business processes and modernizing where necessary to better meet the objectives.

Of course, the transport division has the greatest number of employees. This department, with 431 very dedicated staff spread throughout this territory of ours, maintain our transportation infrastructure to the high standard that it is today.

This industry group manages 4,800 kilometres of road. They have approximately 143 bridges to maintain, two ferries we depend on in our jurisdiction, one national and 13 regional airports, 23 maintenance camps, and two weigh stations in the territory.

The Department of Highways and Public Works has a large and diverse mandate. We're fortunate that the Yukon has always drawn unique, talented and skilled people from a variety of places and fields of endeavour. This department is fortunate to employ many of these people.

The most significant difference in Highways and Public Works O&M budget is that we have a nine-percent increase across the department, for a total of \$31.8 million. The difference is predominantly due to reduced expenses in the 2006-07 fiscal year, resulting from vacancies, rather than an increase in the base complement for 2007-08. Recruitment is complete or underway on the majority of these positions, so estimates are for a full year of expenditure in these areas in 2007-08.

As you can see, Mr. Chair, this department -- managing the number of individuals it has on staff -- is always recruiting and filling positions and people are retiring, so we're very conscious of that. The human resources branch in Highways and Public Works does a stellar job keeping our camps with that high a calibre of individual in place -- something we expect as Yukoners -- to maintain our roads and airports and operate the ferry system and do everything that Yukoners have come to expect this department to do.

Three important term positions are being funded in the real property management program this year to support the business process redesign project, which is underway with the objective of identifying areas for improving real property asset management practices and policies. Again, this department is doing the job of modernization and also of addressing some of the issues that were brought up in the Auditor General's report, which the member opposite was quoting from today.

There are also small changes in the staffing complement to support expansions, including small increases in building main-

tenance, janitorial and security personnel under property management. But most significant increases are reflected within the information and communication technology branch, for additional contract costs for a number of corporate information management initiatives such as ATIPP training, Web site infrastructure support and records storage requirements -- all of this inside the Department of Highways and Public Works.

Mr. Chair, I would like to take this opportunity to provide the House and Yukoners with an update on important operational initiatives that are not directly reflected in the budget. Many of these relate to the Auditor General's transportation capital program and property management report on the Department of Highways and Public Works. Since department officials --

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

#### Point of order

**Chair:** The Member for Kluane, on a point of order.

**Mr. McRobb:** On a point of order, Mr. Chair, I draw your attention to past practice of Chairs' rulings against unnecessary repetitiveness. What we are hearing right now was read verbatim on Monday. The minister's next words are, "Since department officials met with the Public Accounts Committee in February, we have invested further in our department's capital budget system" and so on. This is all in the Blues. I refer you to page 933 of May 28.

#### Chair's ruling

**Chair:** On the point of order, I would just like to advise the minister that if he has made these remarks prior to this, he should move on to further debate.

**Hon. Mr. Lang:** I was trying to address through my opening here some of the questions from the member in Question Period this afternoon on what we were going to do in answering the Auditor General's report, which we were all aware of in February.

I was just going over the points to remind the member opposite that the department is a proactive department that is working with the Auditor General to mitigate the issues that were brought forward and to bring our department into a modern, in-sync department working for Yukoners and, of course, for all the Yukoners who work in the department.

Mr. Chair, as I mentioned in the opening comments last Monday -- or whenever we had the opening comments in the last couple of days -- it's important for Yukoners to realize how diverse this department is. Sometimes we seem to ignore the fact that every time we see a grader on our highways, every time we drive through a small community like Stewart Crossing, we reflect in the coffee shop or the gas bar with employees that are employed with the department -- and certainly, in our bigger centres, we tend to forget the work that these individuals do to make our lives in the Yukon what they are today.

As an example -- the work that we're committed to -- here in this coming year in just bridgework alone -- I'd like to list a few of the investments we've made and this department is preparing to do. The Teslin River bridge will be completed in September of this year hopefully -- a \$5.7-million investment to



bring the Teslin bridge up to the standard that we expect in the territory. Lewes River bridge -- deck and bearing replacements at \$500,000, September 2008, an ongoing renovation and upgrade of that facility. Donjek bridge -- \$7.1 million for a brand new bridge and that includes demolishing the old bridge, and it will be open for Yukoners to cross in September 2007. Duke River bridge -- \$3 million, a completely new bridge, looking at an opening date of the end of September 2008. The Koidern bridge -- this is all on the north highway and this is all part of the Shakwak investment that the Americans have put into that highway system. There's going to be a reseal bridge and girders, a \$50,000 investment that's going to make the Koidern River bridge just that much better, with an August 2007 completion date.

Now, looking at the Takhini River bridge -- that's a little closer to Whitehorse -- we're again looking at a bearing situation. It's on the Klondike Highway and we're looking at a small investment there of \$30,000 -- that's this summer. The Yukon River bridge at Carmacks -- a repair of failed paint and truss members so, in other words, maintenance. There is \$100,000 invested to bring that up to the standard we expect. Of course, we have the North Canal and spending of approximately \$300,000 on the Jeff Creek, Macmillan No. 3 and Macmillan No. 1 bridges -- two are to replace the bridge and one to install a new deck. Also, on Kusawa Lake Road, there's \$90,000 to replace an abutment on the bridge. Down south on the Alaska Highway, we're looking at the Liard bridge -- to rehabilitate and redesign for a \$220,000 investment. March 31, 2008 will see the completion of that project. Tatchun Creek on the Klondike Highway -- rehabilitation and redesign, \$80,000, and that's for next spring. Fox Creek here on the Klondike Highway -- rehabilitation and design, \$80,000.

These are all the things we do as a department to make the Yukon a little easier to get around in and, of course, we're working in situations that change. We work from 35-degree weather to 50-below weather. I compliment the department and, as I said in my opening statement, I look forward to working with them over the next four years, improving the department and moving forward.

We have our priorities. Highway reconstruction and bridge work will continue, as I said in the preamble on bridges. There are major airport infrastructure improvements -- we're expanding the Whitehorse International Airport as a world-class airport so we can accommodate ever-growing tourism demands on that facility. Several information technology projects will commence this year and will improve the quality and types of information available to support decision making on primary areas of business responsibility for this department.

Of course, on the operation and maintenance side of the ledger, the primary difference between the forecast for last year and the new budget request related to the personnel projections for full staffing in several areas, where, of course, as I said before, positions were vacant for part of last fiscal year, looking forward to the complete staffing load that we need, filling the positions and moving forward in the job ahead of us. It looks like a very busy year for the department.

Mr. Chair, I guess, in my preamble here, I'm looking forward to the positive involvement of the members opposite in the dialogue this afternoon. My department people here can work with me in answering the questions, and I look forward to the dialogue moving forward in a very positive way. I would like at this point to present the 2007-08 Highways and Public Works budget.

**Mr. McRobb:** Although the minister would like the tone to be positive, it's unfortunate that we can't be that positive. There's a very good reason why. The budget materials requested from the officials during the briefing session more than a month ago, which we assured was not an onerous undertaking, have still not been provided by the minister to us on this side, yet the Yukon Party government has again demonstrated its arrogance in calling forward this department without providing that information to the opposition side.

Now, Mr. Chair, I'm not going to go on about this. I believe the record speaks for itself from Monday afternoon. I pointed out all kinds of implications from not having the information requested at this opportunity, but I will highlight a few things. It demonstrates clearly that this Yukon Party government is not prepared to be held to full account in this Assembly. That's a concern for all Yukoners. It's a concern for future legislators. It's a concern for the government side. But what do we see? No concern from the minister.

I would remind everybody about the Auditor General of Canada's report, which highlighted a number of failures resulting in a waste of taxpayers' money. One would have fairly concluded that the minister would have ensured that he was fully accountable in time for this questioning to occur. In order to achieve that level of accountability, the minister should have ensured we were provided with the information we needed to formulate our questions to him, but he didn't. We pointed that out on Monday. The minister failed to achieve that accountability test.

Furthermore, the government's side has chosen to recall this department today without providing the material requested. Now we are expected to clear this department sometime this afternoon without having that material. What does that say? One can fairly conclude that the Yukon Party government is not prepared to be held to account by the opposition side. That is the fair conclusion.

The Auditor General of Canada's recent report, tabled this year, really speaks a lot to how this government is not prepared to be held accountable at a time when it should be. Yet, what do we hear the government members say when addressing the media or responding in Question Period? We hear the tired old Yukon Party line about how that government is fully accountable, transparent and open. Those are the buzz words.

Anyone who follows the Assembly's proceedings, especially on the opposition's side, can only point to examples such as this to know how hollow those words really are.

I say, shame on the minister, shame on the entire government, because this reflects badly upon it. How can we follow up on a number of matters when we needed that material in order to pose questions to the minister? We simply can't. We can't do our jobs properly without the material requested. If the

government has a new policy to deny the opposition material requests that officials indicate can be provided expeditiously, then it should come out and say so. It should come out and say so but, instead, we hear the opposite. It's shameful. It really is.

Now, the minister in his speech decided to repeat a lot of what he said on Monday afternoon, but he forgot about my question. He failed to answer the question, to which he got up and responded for about 15 minutes. He didn't answer the simple question. I will remind the minister what the question was about so, when he stands up next time, he can be prepared to answer it.

It was with respect to the testing that is being undertaken for permafrost, the experimentation on the north Alaska Highway. I asked him if one of the tests will involve leaving the highway surface unsurfaced for a period of time, including over winter.

I want him to think about that. I know accompanying him today are two dedicated and well-qualified officials who have that knowledge, so I would expect a full answer to that question. Unfortunately, part of the materials we've requested pertains to Shakwak projects and, without having that information, we can't follow up on any of that material.

Mr. Chair, I read a number of questions on the record Monday that we did ask officials during the briefing. I got partway through that. One of the other questions was: what's in this budget for widening the road on the North Klondike Highway near Fox Lake?

One of the other questions was about breakdowns on expenditures under the Canada strategic infrastructure fund. Another one was the breakdown of airport budgets in the aviation branch. Another one was asking for a copy of the Whitehorse airport improvement plan -- and we know that's readily available. Another one was improving the contract registry. Another one was with regard to fleet vehicles.

I suppose we might have time to get to some of these questions, but a lot of them pertain to material. The minister just simply can't respond to them. That's why we asked for the material at the time of the briefing. That's the only opportunity available to us on the opposition side. We can't ask for this material in the fall because the Yukon Party government came out with a new rule to abolish briefings on supplementary budgets. This is another step backwards in terms of openness, accountability and transparency. There are all kinds of backward steps that really should cause some concern.

I'll give the minister a chance -- now that he has been briefed on the question -- with respect to the experimentation regarding the permafrost situation.

**Hon. Mr. Lang:** Pertaining to the permafrost overview, there are scientists and researchers working on it. The surface has not been decided on. That would be part and parcel of what the scientists and the researchers come up with. We will work with the scientists and researchers on any requests they make, so we're looking forward to that study coming back to us and, of course, the surfacing will be part of that answer.

**Mr. McRobb:** The minister must have some idea. Unfortunately, we are not getting the information.

Another area we didn't get information on was with respect to details about increased cellphone coverage -- even a list of the communities. The minister failed to provide us with that information. Instead, he pointed out how it was a private corporation by the name of Northwestel that is doing the work and the minister can't get involved. However, under follow-up questioning, the minister did admit the government is budgeting toward this expense. Automatically, that makes it something we can question the minister about, but he failed to answer the questions.

I would point out that I asked him who selected the 17 communities and he had no idea. There is information that previous governments were involved in selecting communities for telecommunications advancements, but the minister says he is not involved. Is this some sort of policy change?

Furthermore, he was asked if he would provide a copy of the contract between the Government of Yukon and Northwestel, and I would hope at least that he brought that with him today. There are two questions.

**Hon. Mr. Lang:** The 17 communities that were chosen were chosen on the basis of a footprint of population. Of course the 17<sup>th</sup> community has just, I think recently, been put on-line. The basis, internally, of how it was made -- of course it is a private company that is doing the servicing; Latitude Wireless is doing the servicing -- and the expansion to Marsh Lake and Lake Laberge is a business decision that will have to be made in the future. There has been no decision made as of today. Of course these 17 communities have just been in place for the last 12 months.

When we look at the expanded cell service as a component of the original MoCS project because telephone conversation, emergency communication and all the modernization this brings with it -- we look forward to working with Latitude Wireless on the communities.

We would like to welcome aboard Beaver Creek, Burwash Landing, Carcross, Carmacks, Destruction Bay, Faro, Haines Junction, Mayo, Old Crow, Pelly Crossing, Ross River, Stewart Crossing, Tagish, Teslin, Upper Liard and, of course, Watson Lake.

They are all now part and parcel of the Latitude Wireless family and we look forward to working with Latitude Wireless into the future and answering some of the questions that are being brought up.

**Mr. McRobb:** We asked for a lot more information than that. It seems the minister has decided to only provide information to the first level.

On Monday, he indicated the department was also looking at two other areas for connection to the cellular system. Marsh Lake was one. Can the minister indicate if he is prepared to also include the Ixex Valley region at the top of the priority list as well?

**Hon. Mr. Lang:** Those are business decisions with the corporation. We certainly haven't had discussions with the corporation on those issues.

**Mr. McRobb:** Since the minister won't provide the agreement between the Government of Yukon and Northwestel, perhaps he can enlighten us on this side of the House.

Does the Government of Yukon not have the ability to identify priority areas, or is this left entirely up to the telephone company?

**Hon. Mr. Lang:** Cellphone coverage has only been in these 17 communities for 12 months. We're looking forward to working with Latitude Wireless. We're looking forward to working with our constituents out there. We understand the pressure for cellphone service, but it's not to be decided here in the House. There's a corporation involved. It's not a decision made by the Member for Kluane. It's a business decision that we in the government will look at.

This is the government that brought cellphone service to 17 communities. Doesn't that mean we're committed to cellphone service for the Yukon? This government did it, Mr. Chair. We committed and we moved forward in 17 communities in 12 months. That's more than one community a month. I think that's a pretty good record.

We certainly didn't decide in the House or in a backroom. We worked with the corporation; we partnered and we moved forward to cover the decision -- 12 months, more than one community a month came on-line last year.

Latitude Wireless is moving forward and I'm sure they're looking at other areas. They're in the business of acquiring customers and they will go where there's a demand.

**Mr. McRobb:** It's obvious the minister is covering more than just his decision.

Could I get an answer to my question, please?

**Hon. Mr. Lang:** Would he repeat the question, please?

**Mr. McRobb:** I asked the minister if he could tell us if the Government of Yukon has any ability to identify priority areas to the telephone company with respect to the agreement he won't provide to us.

**Hon. Mr. Lang:** I answered that question the last time it was asked.

**Mr. McRobb:** I listened intently and did not get an answer to the question. Could we get a simple yes or no? Does the Government of Yukon, under the agreement, have the ability to identify priority areas with Northwestel or not? Yes or no, please.

**Hon. Mr. Lang:** Mr. Chair, this could go on for days. I answered that question. We entered into an agreement with Latitude Wireless, not the telephone company, to cover, on population footprint, 17 communities. The job is done; it has just been done. I have committed to the member opposite that Latitude Wireless is in the business of acquiring customers. We look forward to the decisions that corporation will make to involve all Yukoners in cellphone access.

**Mr. McRobb:** It's rather difficult to pose questions without the material. We requested a copy of the agreement but the minister has refused to provide us with that information. We made that request more than a month ago. Perhaps our question would have been resolved had the minister done the right thing and provided the opposition with the material prior to when this department was called for debate. That could have saved time.

Now, the minister has refused to answer the question. It is a very simple one. To ensure he gets it, I will repeat it for him.

Under the agreement, does the Government of Yukon have the ability to identify areas to be upgraded or to receive new infrastructure with respect to cellular coverage? Does the Government of Yukon have the ability to identify areas? Yes or no, please.

**Hon. Mr. Lang:** Again, Mr. Chair, the member opposite is wrong. I did not refuse to give anybody information on this department. So when the member stands up, day in and day out, and requests the information that this department -- this hard-working department -- is working on to get to the member opposite in a timely fashion, and makes a statement like he just made that I, the minister, refused to get the information to him -- I was not at the briefing. My department, the Department of Highways and Public Works, is here to look at the budget, to debate the budget. This is what we're here to do today and for many, many more days, obviously, into the future. But the member opposite is doing everything but debating this budget, Mr. Chair.

**Mr. McRobb:** Well, Mr. Chair, we are debating the budget and this expenditure is in the budget. I'm asking a question that is highly relevant to Yukoners, I might add, and we're not getting a response from the minister. Mr. Chair, I ask you: do you know the answer to the question based on what the minister said?

#### Chair's statement

**Chair:** Order please. I'd remind all members not to involve the Chair in the debate. I am here just to ensure that the debate flows smoothly; I am not participating in the debate.

**Mr. McRobb:** Well, Mr. Chair, have we heard a response to the question? No, we haven't. The minister went so far as to say the government works with the private company and that's it. We need to know if the government has a role in identifying the communities selected for cellular infrastructure or not. We need to know if this matter is completely out of the government's hands.

I refer the minister back to previous sessions when questions were asked in Question Period, for example, about this very matter. We need to know: does the government have a hand in the selection of those communities or not? It's very pertinent.

We heard concerns from the fire chief in the Ibex Valley region about how the lack of communications in that area could pose a serious threat to citizens in Ibex Valley. We need to know if anything can be done about it. If the minister and this government don't have the ability to identify areas to be included in the cellular network to the private company, then we could take an alternative path.

So far the minister has avoided the question. I plead with him. Would he give us a simple yes or no? Does the Yukon government have the ability to identify communities or regions for upgrading to the private company or is that completely out of the government's hands? Yes or no, please.

**Hon. Mr. Lang:** I appreciate the question from the positive Member for Kluane this afternoon. I am glad that we are going to debate this question all afternoon, because I've

answered it many times in many ways in the House this afternoon.

Latitude Wireless -- the server, the supplier of the service - has 17 communities on-line at the moment. It makes a 90-percent footprint on the population of the Yukon. We work with Latitude Wireless to make that service available. As far as the expansion of that service, Latitude Wireless has options to do that. I would have to say that the 17 communities have been hooked up and that Latitude Wireless is covering the area.

The question is whether or not we would pick the communities, prioritize the communities, or pick the winners in the cellphone world -- that's what we'll do. I would say to the member opposite that we're not prepared to pick the winners. Latitude Wireless has a job to do and we would discuss any of the opportunities for expanding cellphone coverage. We as a government would discuss things with Latitude Wireless. Does that say that we are going to agree? No. We are certainly open to dialogue, as we are to all Yukoners.

As the member pointed out, cellphones are important. This is the government that put cellphones in the Yukon -- 17 communities in 12 months. That part of the contract is done. That's all I can talk about in the House at the moment.

Latitude Wireless is a partnership, a corporation that has a business plan and that is going forward with that business plan. As far as their expansion of the cellphone business in the Yukon, I look forward to making sure that all communities in the Yukon are covered eventually.

When will it happen? That will be up to Latitude Wireless. That's not my decision or the government's decision.

Would we talk to Latitude Wireless about opportunities in the Yukon? We talk to all corporations about opportunities in the Yukon, so the door is open for companies in the Yukon to come and talk to this government and see if we can be of some assistance in some way. But as far as picking winners or losers in the cellphone business, we'll leave that up to Latitude Wireless.

**Mr. McRobb:** Still no answer, and it doesn't appear that we are going to get one from this minister.

Can he give us an update on the MoCS system that was identified? I see there is nearly \$1 million in the budget. What is the status of this particular program?

**Hon. Mr. Lang:** That is part of our arrangement with Latitude Wireless. We have an agreement with them on cellphone service until the year 2011.

**Mr. McRobb:** Can the minister give us a little more information than that, particularly with respect to the phasing out of the MDMRS -- multi-departmental mobile radio system -- and some information with respect to scheduling?

**Hon. Mr. Lang:** I would commit to sending over breakdowns on that. That is fairly complicated to discuss here on the floor. I am certain the member opposite would appreciate that in writing.

**Mr. McRobb:** Sure, I would imagine we will probably get it in July or August, along with the other outstanding material that we should have had before Monday and certainly before this afternoon.

Let's ask the minister -- because he went on at length and repeatedly -- about the staff recruitment. Can he indicate how many positions have been budgeted for and how many of those have been filled to date?

**Hon. Mr. Lang:** That's a management issue. Really, there are roughly 800 employees who are employed and I would have to commit again -- I'll get my department to get those figures over to him. I think the rule is that there is roughly a five-percent vacancy rate, and that is a management tool if you look at retirement and people who are leaving the department. I would commit to some more information -- hopefully getting it across the floor in a timely fashion.

**Mr. McRobb:** The problem with that, of course, is that we won't receive the information before losing the only opportunity we have to ask the minister questions with respect to this year's budget and before it comes time to vote on the budget, as well. The minister, of course, should have provided this information by now, and hasn't. That speaks rather poorly to the level of accountability that both we and the Auditor General of Canada have found.

I want to ask the minister about office space, which was also a matter raised by the Auditor General of Canada. How much additional space is the department looking for in Whitehorse, as appropriated in this year's budget?

**Hon. Mr. Lang:** There is a master plan being worked out now. We look forward to having that in front of us by late this fall.

**Mr. McRobb:** I'm not sure where to go from here, Mr. Chair, because the minister did not identify how much space he will be looking for as part of this year's budget. One would have thought, before the budget numbers were established, that a space requirement would have been identified. But now we have to wait until the fall for a plan to come out. This is on record and it is something that perhaps the Auditor General might want to follow up on at a later date.

Let's ask the minister about the Fleet Vehicle Agency. Does a policy exist with respect to the purchase of "green" cars? Or is it simply a will-nilly decision on what to buy?

**Hon. Mr. Lang:** In addressing the member's last question about space availability, we've gone to work as a government and understand the issue of the demand on space by government, and we have put a team together to come to us with a master plan that will address all departments and their needs in the future for the upcoming years -- for the next five or 10 years. So when the member talks about space and what this department or that department needs, we've done a thorough job. We took some time, did our work, and are looking forward to a complete overview of what we have in inventory and what we're using and what we're going to need in the future.

So late this fall, that study will be done and that will be addressed at that time. As far as our fleet policy on environmentally-friendly or green cars, in conjunction with the Department of Environment and the overall direction of the government, we have worked with the department to buy smaller, more efficient cars for our fleets. Of course, we have expanded that to 35 units that are more fuel efficient, more modern, and smaller, of course. But there is no policy in place. We just

manage the issue in conjunction with other departments and the needs of the day.

**Mr. McRobb:** Moving on, I have some highway-related questions. It has been brought to my attention from members of the public that apparently a lot of meridian line painting is not being done this year. Can the minister indicate if there has been a cutback in that area?

**Hon. Mr. Lang:** No. That's a simple answer. The painting and that part of highway maintenance is a continual cost and it is being done as it has been done in years past, and will be done in future years.

**Mr. McRobb:** One of the road sections that has been brought to my attention is the recently improved section east of Haines Junction toward Whitehorse. It still does not have meridian lines. It has been resurfaced for a couple of years now. I'd like the minister to tell us when that work will be done.

**Hon. Mr. Lang:** How we as a department address the meridian painting is as a program. What we do is, instead of spot-doing things -- the member opposite is talking about a section of new road. That will be part of this year's program, but we do it as a program. There is a plan ahead about what is going to be done and what is going to be upgraded. We are using our equipment and individuals who work on the equipment more efficiently.

**Mr. McRobb:** I am aware of a section on the north Klondike Highway as well. Perhaps the minister would indulge us by sending over a schedule that he anticipates will be followed with respect to this undertaking.

That reminds me of another request we made during the briefing with officials. It was a request for the BST scheduling. Would he oblige us on those two requests?

**Hon. Mr. Lang:** I didn't hear the member opposite. With the chewing of gum and everything, I find it hard to hear his comments.

### Chair's statement

**Chair:** Order please. I would like to remind all members not to personalize the debate. Mr. McRobb, please repeat the question.

**Mr. McRobb:** Mr. Chair, that is rather ridiculous from this minister.

Can he provide the schedules for both BST and for meridian line painting that will be followed? Can he provide us with that information?

**Hon. Mr. Lang:** I'd take that under advisement.

**Mr. McRobb:** Obviously the minister isn't willing to provide us with even the simplest of information at his fingertips. How accountable is this government now? Even worse than we imagine. I recall how many previous highways ministers would simply agree to such an undertaking, but not this one.

I want to ask him about his experimentation with the salt brine on the highways. We know this evolved from the south Klondike Highway toward Skagway and it was attempted in the Yukon without any public consultation or awareness, I might add. It has resulted in a lot of extremely corrosive deterioration of our highways, of highways equipment, of vehicles

travelling the roads and a number of other repercussions as well. I have been informed that it was about a \$1-million experiment gone bad. I heard it was being phased out, but there are indications it is being redeployed.

Can the minister respond to these concerns and give us an update on the use of salt brine?

**Hon. Mr. Lang:** I appreciate the member opposite but again the facts don't bear out. Salt brine is a tool. It is used in specific places for specific jobs. It is used on ice and some snow areas. Salt brine is just salt with water, so it has no worse or no better impact on the travelling public. Salt brine is used sparingly and it is used for a specific job.

**Mr. McRobb:** Well, if that's the minister's understanding, I'd invite him to get in touch with the real world.

Now, this matter has been raised by Highways and Public Works department workers. It has been raised by the Yukon Transportation Association. It's a real concern, and the minister denies it even exists. Well, how much in touch is the minister with his own department? I can see the writing on the wall -- another Auditor General's report in the works.

Now, I want to ask the minister about something I questioned him on fairly recently and that's his secret decision to remove highway corner signs. Can he tell us how many signs have been removed from Yukon highways and how many more he plans to remove?

**Hon. Mr. Lang:** On the issue of the salt brine and the insinuation that we're doing anything but managing the highways in a proper fashion, to insinuate that the highways staff would not know the simplicity of the question -- the simplicity of that question is not fair to the employees in the Department of Highways and Public Works. It isn't nuclear science, Mr. Chair. It's management -- management of road surface.

Salt brine is used, again, as a tool. Some places it doesn't work; some places it works very well. So it's utilized as a management tool, and anybody -- or the member opposite -- who would insinuate that somebody at the Department of Highways and Public Works couldn't go to his foreman or some other employee to get that information -- Mr. Chair, all the employees of the Department of Highways and Public Works are a very high grade of individual. For the member opposite to put that kind of comment in the Blues that we have people in the Department of Highways and Public Works who don't know the difference between salt and salt brine, who work daily on our highways system -- Mr. Chair, the member opposite is again wrong and putting wrong information on this floor.

Mr. Chair, we're in the House to debate the budget. At no point should we talk or debate personnel issues in this House.

As the Minister of Highways and Public Works, I am very proud to be working in partnership with all the members of the workforce in that department. I will be proud for the next four years. So, for the member opposite to bring personnel issues on the floor here, insinuating individuals in our department are not doing the stellar job they're doing -- that is not what this House is for, Mr. Chair. This is to debate the budget -- not the workforce -- of the Department of Highways and Public Works.

The next question is on the signs. The signs -- as are our highways -- are upgraded. As our highways meet a certain

standard -- the national highway code -- we work across Canada with that issue and signs come down as they're no longer needed. As far as the number of signs, I haven't got that at my fingertips, but that could be more information I could send across to the Member for Kluane so he could raise the question again in the fall sitting.

**Mr. McRobb:** The minister was over the top again. I did not question officials. I merely pointed out he wasn't in touch with his department. Why did he stand up, grandstanding about this point about discussing personnel, when it was he who raised it?

**Hon. Mr. Lang:** Bringing personnel issues to the floor here is not appropriate. The member opposite knows that and the member opposite raised it. I am defending the employees of the Department of Highways and Public Works. We are here to debate the budget, not personnel issues.

**Mr. McRobb:** Let's move on, Mr. Chair. The record will clearly show who raised the personnel issues. I suppose we can accept the fact that this is yet more information that we won't have until the fall sitting with respect to how many corner signs have been removed and how many more the minister plans to plunk out of our highway system.

I want to ask him about the widening of the Fox Lake section of the north Klondike Highway. Can he tell us what he is doing with respect to that project and what the timelines are?

**Hon. Mr. Lang:** As we go through the budget here this afternoon, we will see that there has been no money budgeted for the widening, but it's not something that we wouldn't look at in the future.

**Mr. McRobb:** We are aware that projects that are sitting on the shelf, so to speak, have been estimated and they are considered at budget time. Quite often, projects don't make the budget cut. I would like the minister to identify for us on the opposition side, who aren't privy to those numbers, an estimate of the expected cost of that project.

**Hon. Mr. Lang:** I don't have those figures in my head, Mr. Chair. As we move forward, any expenditure we spend on highways is in the Highways and Public Works budget of the year, and they will certainly be available when in fact they are in the budget.

**Mr. McRobb:** I understand the minister might not have those numbers in his head. Is it something he could get back to us on, along with all the other material we've been waiting for?

**Hon. Mr. Lang:** We would have that in future budgets and we look forward to maintaining all the highways to the high standard we do today. The Klondike Highway will be getting an overview and, in future budgets, there will be money spent on that highway system.

**Mr. McRobb:** I think Yukoners deserve to know how much that project would cost. The minister is privy to that information that has already been spelled out. I would like to know if he can provide it for us -- along with all the other material -- so we don't have to wait for an undetermined period of years before we see what that figure is. I recall previous Highways and Public Works' ministers easily complying with such a simple request.

Would this minister, in the spirit of cooperation -- he talked about being positive earlier this afternoon -- agree to provide that estimate for us?

**Hon. Mr. Lang:** As Minister of Highways and Public Works, I have a responsibility to be factual. I cannot pull figures out of my head on future projects. There has been no Minister of Highways and Public Works -- hopefully -- who has done that. There will be money spent where it's needed on our highway systems.

**Mr. McRobb:** At the risk of further deteriorating the positive approach I tried to lay a foundation for, I can recall previous ministers providing that information. I refer back to the sections of the Alaska Highway that were reconstructed in the past six years. I requested that information from previous ministers and received that information, along with the estimated costs for each section to be improved. This request is much smaller than that; it pertains to only one section of road. We're asking for an estimated cost. We understand that it's not a firm figure. We also know that someone in the department has it. It was probably considered by this government at budget time, but it decided to not proceed with that project for whatever reason, even though there is an \$85-million surplus.

This is not out of the ordinary to provide such basic information, yet the minister refuses.

We know he doesn't have the numbers in his head. We know the numbers exist on a piece of paper, fully within the minister's right to ask for if he doesn't already have it. What we are doing now is requesting him to provide us with that piece of paper. Would he do that?

**Hon. Mr. Lang:** I've been told by the department heads that we don't have those figures in the department or in my head or their heads.

**Mr. McRobb:** Yeah, right, Mr. Chair.

Has the minister investigated the possibility of additional projects on the Alaska Highway to the south with respect to developing passing lanes where required? This item has been raised in the past, particularly with respect to becoming pipeline ready. I've heard concerns from the transportation industry about the need for these projects. I'm sure the minister has heard these similar requests and concerns.

I would like to know what the minister is aware of. For instance, is he aware of six particular locations for a total distance of five kilometres at an estimated cost of \$10 million? Can he give us some basic numbers such as the ones I just gave as examples?

**Hon. Mr. Lang:** If we wanted to look at realistic numbers, we could get into line-by-line debate here in the department and we could actually talk about factual numbers instead of guessing at numbers.

We manage the highways in a very productive way. Certainly we put passing lanes where they are demanded because of volume of vehicles, and the government has done a very good job in the past and I'm sure they will be looking at the future.

If the Member for Kluane wants to talk about figures, why don't we get into the factual figures -- called line by line in the

budget -- and then we could debate actual figures that are written here in the budget?

**Mr. McRobb:** Mr. Chair, that information isn't in the lines. We know that. The only line we heard was the minister's response.

Now, obviously we won't get that information, because the minister's not being very cooperative, nor is he being very positive, nor is he being very accountable. I would like to ask him about another project -- and I don't anticipate he'll have these numbers in his head, but certainly we're prepared to accept the information, along with all the other material we should have had by now, when it arrives sometime before the fall -- and that is a project that would involve the widening of the Alaska Highway between the Carcross Cutoff and the Mayo Road Cutoff: widening it to allow for four lanes in total. Has the minister considered this project, and is it something he can provide us an estimate on, along with the other material?

**Hon. Mr. Lang:** In addressing that issue on twinning highways, as the member is talking about, is based on volume of traffic and on a study that the department does internally. Certainly we will be looking at that in the future but, right now, the traffic is not heavy enough to demand that kind of a process. But I can assure the member opposite if, in fact, in the future something came out of those figures that said that, because of the number of vehicles and the use of that corridor, that would be one of the options we could look at, then we would look at the option at that time.

**Mr. McRobb:** Well, again, not a helpful answer. I can extrapolate through that response that the minister hasn't investigated the option yet. Fine, that's part of what I asked. But the main part was if he could seek to provide us with an estimated cost for that project. It's probably something that could be done in engineering and design within the transportation division within minutes. It's something the minister should know about, unless he doesn't care about that particular section of road.

Anybody who drives that road in the morning coming in from the Carcross Road or down near the area where the minister lives will understand that there is a need to widen that section of road. The road on the north side of town toward the Mayo Road is the same situation. Again, it's later in the day when people are coming home from work.

This is the main transportation artery through Whitehorse, used by commercial highway trucks. It is the main road and sometimes the only road that people have to get to and from work. It should be a near term priority. Because of that, the minister should be aware of the cost in order to keep the number in his head so that, at budget time, should there happen to be extra money available -- such as there was this year with the \$85-million surplus -- then he could bring it to the budget table and say, "What about this project?" Obviously he struck out this year so far, but there is still hope for him for next year.

I am trying to see that he receives more kudos for his job as Highways and Public Works minister if he were to do projects such as this, in the minister's own words, in a timely time. I think that the time has arrived. The members of this Assembly should be aware of that project and the terms of where it is in the priorities of this government and what the anticipated costs

are. There are related factors, such as highway right-of-way infringement on private property and so on. They have to be planned out in advance.

I would like to ask the minister two questions. One is if he would seek to determine what the estimate is and provide it to us. The other: has he investigated the secondary measures with respect to highway right-of-way infringement on private property and commercial property and has he done anything about it?

**Hon. Mr. Lang:** That was quite a mouthful -- the weight of the nation on the Minister of Highways and Public Works' back.

Again the member opposite has forgotten the reason we are in here today. It is to discuss the budget of the Department of Highways and Public Works. It is not to put a wish list together.

The figures here as we go through this budget -- we will talk about real figures and we'll talk about how this government is directing their money toward the Department of Highways and Public Works.

We want to talk about factual figures on managing, not figures that somebody pulls out of the air or out of the top of their head. This government has to manage the funds, the taxes, the resources that the government has on a daily, monthly and yearly basis. The Department of Highways and Public Works is one of the biggest departments in this government. For us to sit around and talk endlessly about issues that really, at the end of the day, don't get us any closer to talking about this department line by line to address those issues the member is talking about -- factual figures, the direction of the department, investment in Yukon infrastructure -- is not doing the business of this House.

Yukoners expect us to stand up in the House and debate the budget -- debate the budget, line by line. I've brought these individuals into the House -- these knowledgeable individuals from the department -- to address facts and debate the actual factual figures.

We have been going on in this House for the last two and one-half hours and we are no closer right now to getting into line-by-line, talking about the money that this government is going to spend on the highways in the upcoming year. Those are what Yukoners expect us to debate this House, and that's what I am here prepared to do.

**Mr. McRobb:** Well, Mr. Chair, first of all, it has been less than one and a quarter hours, so once again, the minister is out by more than double in his time estimates, as he was last Wednesday afternoon. Mr. Chair, it's customary in budget debate to ask policy questions and priority questions, not just matters pertaining to budget lines. You know, this is the minister's fifth budget. I would have thought he would have learned this by now. And the departmental objectives clearly state, "To serve the public and support government departments by developing and maintaining building, transportation and technology infrastructure." We are permitted to ask questions pertaining to such objectives.

Now, Mr. Chair, I asked a simple question that's a priority for many Yukoners. Unfortunately, it seems like it's totally ignored by the Yukon Party government, and the minister

seems to qualify the question by saying that it's out of order. Well, Mr. Chair, only you can make that determination, and the question is not out of order. It's a legitimate question consistent with past practice in this Assembly, and I am unaware of any rule change, unless it is another one of these steps backwards in terms of democracy that we're experiencing under Yukon Party rule. So if the minister doesn't want to provide it, I think his answer speaks fully to Yukoners.

I want to ask him a question about the potential for flooding this year, and this should follow within his area of responsibility, Mr. Chair, unless he is going to argue that highway washouts, for instance, and washouts on other roads, aren't part of his jurisdiction, and somehow the question shouldn't be asked in here, because there's no line item that says "highway washouts". I'll leave that up for him to decide, if that's the tack he chooses this afternoon.

I would like to refer him to a document I have in my hand, entitled *Yukon Snow Survey Bulletin & Water Supply Forecast*, dated May 1, 2007. It's clear in this report that snow pack in the south, from Whitehorse to Watson Lake, is well above normal. That's the upshot of the report. We know in that section there have been highway washouts in the past and we want to ensure that the minister's not asleep at the wheel again. We want to ensure that he is aware of the situation and he's prepared to be right on top of it, should it appear that a washout could be imminent. I've been advised that in other areas, creeks are flowing very rapidly and that would coincide with some of my own observations. We know there has been a lot of snow in the past year in some areas. Our economy up here can least afford another highway closure because of a washout.

Is the minister aware of this situation? Can he assure us that he won't fall asleep at the wheel again?

**Hon. Mr. Lang:** We're talking about something this department does on a daily and monthly basis and we work interdepartmentally with the Department of Environment and EMO to make sure we monitor that. We have no record of when the last Yukon road was shut down because of a washout. My department says they can't remember when it was washed out last, so that bodes well for the department. The report card is 100 percent. I look forward to working with them in the next four years.

So the member opposite again is wrong -- there hasn't been a washout. We are very ready to respond at any time throughout the Yukon, and that's why we have these capable people stationed throughout the Yukon to address the issue. We have a working relationship with other departments to make sure we keep abreast of any issue that would happen in the Yukon Territory.

As far as major roads being washed out, I would request that the Member for Kluane send over his list. We look forward to it. Hopefully we can get that list before the fall sitting so we can go through it and debate it at that time.

**Mr. McRobb:** The question was based on the minister giving us his assurance that he is aware of this possibility and that he is prepared to do whatever he can. He avoided that part of the question.

I know that he has been in the Yukon for several years, as many of us have, and he will recall other washouts. We recall the mudslide at Kluane Lake that was induced by the heavy rains in 1988 and closed the Alaska Highway. We recall the one very near the Yukon border at Contact Creek about seven years ago. Those of us with a longer memory recall the washouts at the Racing River bridge back in the 1970s that closed the Alaska Highway for prolonged periods of time.

My follow-up question, which I will pose now to the minister: what is he doing to ensure that the Province of British Columbia is also aware of the severe probability of high water flow in the streams and rivers, and are they on high alert to the situation during the spring freshette? Can he assure us that he has had contact with them and that they are prepared to do whatever possible in order to head off a washout? That is part of the responsibility of the Highways and Public Works minister -- working with other jurisdictions. The Alaska Highway is a multi-jurisdictional, international highway. We know that if there is a washout, whether it is at Contact Creek, Racing River, Kluane Lake or elsewhere, it has the same impact on Yukoners and our economy here. What is his response? Has he had contact with the Province of British Columbia about this possibility?

**Hon. Mr. Lang:** I would want to remind the member opposite and the public that Iron Creek and Racing River are not in our jurisdiction, so we don't have a physical presence at either one of those sites. We work with Public Works and Government Services Canada on that section of the highway and they are aware of the management of those highways. Our department works in conjunction with Public Works Canada and, of course, the Province of British Columbia on the Atlin Road. These issues are being addressed in a very business like way at a very high level. Our primary highways have not had a washout in many, many, many years and we look forward to that kind of a record going forward.

Again, I remind the member opposite that Racing River and Contact Creek are in British Columbia and of course we don't have a presence there. We do talk to the B.C. government on many issues on many levels on probably a monthly basis. Of course Public Works Canada has a responsibility too. We do work with our partners and we work very positively with them to minimize any inconvenience to the travelling public on our Alaska Highway corridor and look forward to our partnership going forward.

**Mr. McRobb:** This is like beating your head against the wall. I've got better things to do. I give up. Somebody else can try.

**Mr. Edzerza:** I don't intend to beat my head against the wall here.

I have a few questions for the minister with regard to the Auditor General's report. However, before I start I want to say that I have had the privilege during the last four years of working with and getting to know a lot of the people who work in the department. I do know that they all do an excellent job. There are a lot of responsibilities and a lot of very stressful areas of management that they handle.



The Auditor General said that the government would need to spend \$3 million a year over the next six years to maintain present conditions of roads, but the capital budget shows a reduction from 40 percent to 93 percent in expenditures on seven out of nine highways. Could the minister explain that?

**Hon. Mr. Lang:** Certainly we appreciated the overview that the Auditor General did of the department and we are addressing some of the issues. A lot of the issues involve management of resources and we certainly take the Auditor General's report very seriously. The department is trying to work within their budget to address the Auditor General's concerns. So we look forward to the next period of time. It's not something, as the member opposite knows, that we can address overnight, but we are addressing the concerns of the Auditor General, the highway safety issues, and also the expenditure to make sure that we keep these highways at a high, modern standard. We're committed to do that.

**Mr. Edzerza:** I really don't know if the minister answered the question or not, but I'll go on to the capital expenditures for transportation facilities and equipment. It's down 40 percent in this budget. Is there an explanation for that?

**Hon. Mr. Lang:** I guess, in addressing the Member for McIntyre-Takhini, it depends on the projects, so I could commit to sending over to the member opposite a list of those projects, and he will understand how it unfolds.

**Mr. Edzerza:** There were also a number of bridges mentioned that need repairs. Could the minister tell me how many of the bridges are receiving some repairs in this year's budget?

**Hon. Mr. Lang:** The bridges that are getting resources this year are the Teslin bridge and it's going to have a complete deck replacement. That's a \$5.7 million commitment. Then of course we have the Lewes River bridge and that's going to be deck and bearing replacement -- a one-year project -- we have resourced that for \$500,000. The Donjek River bridge, which is a complete replacement -- the new bridge will be completed and the old one will be taken down -- and that's a \$7.1 million commitment. That will open this fall. The Duke River bridge is a new bridge, one year, and that's a \$3 million commitment. The Koidern River bridge -- we have to reseat the bridge girders and that's a \$50,000 maintenance cost that we're committed to. Takhini River bridge, we have to repair the bearings and that's a \$30,000 commitment. That again is this fall. Yukon River bridge at Carmacks: we have to repair -- there's a painting issue there -- and that's a \$100,000 commitment. That will be this fall.

Then of course, there's the North Canol where we look at Jeff Creek, Macmillan No. 3 and Macmillan No. 1. Jeff Creek -- we're going to replace the bridge with an \$80,000 commitment. Macmillan No. 3 -- we're going to replace that bridge, and that's a \$120,000 cost. Macmillan No. 1 -- replace the deck, and that's a \$10,000 commitment. Kusawa Lake bridge -- replace the abutments in the new deck, and that's a \$90,000 commitment, looking at completion on June 30, 2007. Liard River bridge on the Alaska Highway -- rehabilitation and design, and that's a \$220,000 engineering commitment.

That's going to be completed March 31, 2008; Tatchun Creek on the Klondike Highway, design, \$80,000 -- that will be March next year; Fox Creek, again on the Klondike Highway, design, \$80,000 -- March 31.

So those are our commitments of the money being spent on the bridge file for this upcoming year.

**Mr. Edzerza:** Speaking of the Teslin bridge, is there a walkway on that bridge?

**Hon. Mr. Lang:** Is he talking about the bridge at Johnsons Crossing or in the community of Teslin? There is no pedestrian walkway on that bridge.

**Mr. Edzerza:** I know several people in the community who, over the years, have mentioned it would be beneficial to have such an addition to that bridge, mainly because of the danger for people walking across it and for people who ride bicycles and want to cross that bridge.

Are there any plans in the future to make that addition?

**Hon. Mr. Lang:** We monitor those kinds of things -- traffic -- and, at the moment, those traffic numbers aren't where we could commit to doing the walkway. However, we'll look at it over a period of time.

If the traffic numbers go up, we would have to look at putting an attachment on the bridge. It's not something we're saying no to because, eventually, either this or the next government will have to put some kind of pedestrian access on that bridge as those numbers go up.

**Mr. Edzerza:** I don't know about that answer. In my opinion, there's a lot of traffic on the Alaska Highway, especially during tourist season. He might get away with that answer in the winter, but I think there is quite a heavy traffic load during the summer months -- from my own experience of being caught in a long line of motorhomes and whatnot. There's a lot of traffic in the summertime.

Another one of the auditor's main concerns was the long-term planning. Is there now a systematic evaluation of projects and programs in the department so long-term planning can be done and be reliable?

**Hon. Mr. Lang:** We are committed to addressing the issue that the Auditor General brought forward. So internally, the department is doing just that, and trying to modernize and bring us up to the high standard that the Auditor General is expecting from this department.

**Mr. Edzerza:** Mr. Chair, I'd like to go into corporate services with a couple of questions. The public tenders are estimated to more than double from 2005-06, from 45 to 100. Why has this happened, and how many are expected to be sole sourced?

**Hon. Mr. Lang:** Understanding the hour of the day, I'll commit to getting back to the member with something in writing, and clarify what he asked about this afternoon.

**Mr. Edzerza:** Well, maybe the minister can include my next question with the return. I would like to know how many sole-source contracts were made in each of these years: 2003-04, 2004-05, 2005-06, in which department were most of them made, and what percentage of the total were sole-source contracts?

From there, I'll go into the area and ask a couple of questions with regard to the ATIPP section of government. Now, the previous privacy commissioner said, and I quote, "... a trend toward secrecy in the Yukon government." He mentioned the need for a review and provided a specific list of amendments to be considered. As it stands, one that stood out for him was the definition of "public bodies". The current definition of a "public body" is limited to the Yukon government departments. The definition is problematic, because it doesn't include the Yukon Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board, the Yukon Mental Health Review Board and the Yukon Public Service Staff Relations Board. He considered this as one of the most in need of examination.

The previous commissioner made several recommendations that are quite valid. I won't go over all of them, because there is quite an extensive list. Will the minister make a commitment to review and implement these recommendations? Will the amendments recommended in the 2004 report by the former Privacy Commissioner be acted upon?

**Hon. Mr. Lang:** We are committed as a government to undertake a review of the *Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act* with a view to amending it to improve access to information, while ensuring the protection of personal information. We are committed to going forward with that.

**Mr. Edzerza:** So is the minister saying that he is committed to reviewing those recommendations and implementing some of them?

**Hon. Mr. Lang:** Mr. Chair, we are committed to reviewing the act, not specific issues like that. We are committed to looking at the whole thing.

**Mr. Edzerza:** Well, I would encourage the minister to really consider those recommendations, because they seem to be very relevant and quite important.

I would like to ask a question with regard to the highway equipment rental contracts program. The guidelines state that it applies to the whole territory. In which communities has it been used? Could the minister tell me the number of times it was used and where? Also, could he indicate the number of contracts and their amounts?

**Hon. Mr. Lang:** In reviewing this with my delegation, the program was piloted in Watson Lake on the south Campbell Highway. Of course it has been used in a couple of other communities, but what we have done now is take it into a standing offer for all equipment rentals in all communities. It is now part and parcel of how we manage our rental program throughout the Yukon in all the communities.

**Mr. Edzerza:** I don't believe the question was answered in that response.

However, I am going to go on to a couple of questions about government buildings. Twenty-seven percent of commercial buildings used by the government are leased, are fee-for-service. Is this higher than in the past? What is the total amount spent on buildings that are not owned by the government, and is this economical?

**Hon. Mr. Lang:** That's what the space plan will tell us as a government. We are looking forward to that overview of all the rental and all the space demands the government has

throughout the territory and what is the best route to go in with managing that file.

**Mr. Edzerza:** My final question for the minister: how is the government responding to the need for maintenance of government buildings pointed out by the Auditor General when the budget is down 27 percent?

**Hon. Mr. Lang:** We certainly were concerned about the Auditor General's overview of how we maintain the structures in our inventory. We are putting a road map together to answer that question for the Auditor General and also for Yukoners. We understand the importance of maintenance and keeping safe and maintained structures in our inventory. We are committed to moving forward and addressing that issue the Auditor General brought to light.

**Mr. Mitchell:** I just have a couple of questions for this minister on the Department of Highways and Public Works. They are very specific questions on behalf of constituents, and I am hoping we can get some answers. The rest I will leave to the critics.

I have constituents on the Fish Lake Road once it leaves city limits and becomes a territorial responsibility. That is part of my riding. The minister is pointing to one of the constituents, in fact. He is singling out a constituent. They both phone and drop by my office to tell me that there are difficulties with the level of maintenance in terms of the road surface. There is a lack of crush on the surface and the department is therefore forced, when they do maintain it, to literally pull whatever is left from the ditches and try to make the best of what is there.

This road not only has a number of people living a rural lifestyle on it, but there are also some businesses in terms of ranching. They obviously depend on being able to get back and forth along this road. It's used increasingly for recreational purposes, and we saw a year ago or so how many people are interested in living on this section of road. I am wondering if there is any money in this budget, or if the minister can indicate whether or not they can do some additional work on this road.

**Hon. Mr. Lang:** The member opposite is concerned about the Fish Lake Road, and I certainly have been on that road and understand that it needs a commitment from the government. We have looked at it through the rural roads program. We could use that avenue to address this issue. I commit in the House that I will be working with the department to see if we have room in our rural roads budget to do just that.

**Mr. Mitchell:** On behalf of my constituents, I want to thank the minister for that undertaking.

That went so well, I think I'll try one more. I also have constituents who live on the Squatter's Row road in the McLean Lake area. I recognize that the territorial government does not recognize that road as being its responsibility, because it is within the City of Whitehorse limits. Unfortunately, I also have found out that the City of Whitehorse does not acknowledge that road to be a City of Whitehorse road. My constituents point out to me -- again, I had a constituent in my office some 20 minutes ago raising this issue -- that they do pay taxes. They do pay property taxes. They certainly live within the City of Whitehorse and are bound by city regulations. They live within

the territory and are bound by all rules and regulations, but they are in this limbo.

I'm not asking the territorial government to maintain the road because I do believe that that's something that we're going to have to get the city to do. However, there is an issue that the territorial government can address, and that's the issue in the winter of the berm that's created when the Yukon government Department of Highways and Public Works vehicles are plowing the Alaska Highway, and nobody seems to be responsible for opening that up. I've had quite upset constituents phone me to say that they have just stopped in their car and had to shovel out the berm in order to drive through. I have written to the Minister of Highways and Public Works in the past, and also to the City of Whitehorse, and everybody sort of indicated it was someone else's responsibility. The concern that has been expressed is that in the wintertime, should there be an emergency -- either a house fire or a medical emergency -- it might be impossible for an ambulance or a fire truck to get up that road. Then we would have a human tragedy and then, no doubt, everybody would be quickly pointing the finger. We don't want to get into the sort of legal ramifications, but it's a danger to those people. They currently have to hire graders to do their own maintenance.

Could the minister, in this cooperative spirit that we've just heard on the Fish Lake Road, undertake to do two things: ensure that the berm created by the minister's department is then opened up so that the road has access; and would he undertake to meet with the City of Whitehorse and see if together they could find some solution to the road maintenance issues of that road? There are quite a number of people living up there. I was quite amazed last year, when I walked it, just how many people are living up there.

**Hon. Mr. Lang:** Mr. Chair, we don't maintain roads in the municipality. Mr. Chair, I live on one of those roads. I do grade my own road. That's a choice I made when I moved on to that road.

As far as our responsibility on the Alaska Highway, our first responsibility is to get the road open for school buses and the general public, and we work as hard as we can on the berms when we get the time to do it, Mr. Chair.

**Mr. Mitchell:** I recognize the minister is correct -- the road itself is not the responsibility of his department, and I understand that the first responsibility is to get the roads open -- but perhaps the second or third responsibility could be to ensure that there isn't a blockage of the road as a result of concluding his first responsibility, so to speak, that could endanger the public. That's all I'm asking on behalf of the constituents, because the City of Whitehorse clearly doesn't see that as their responsibility. It's not a big thing to have a grader or a truck open that up as it goes by, but it's extremely difficult for a person to do it with a shovel by themselves.

**Hon. Mr. Lang:** I appreciate the member opposite's concern about the safety factor, and I understand the pressure that's put on our Highways and Public Works department throughout the Yukon. Of course everybody has berms and everybody has access to the highways, so we have to prioritize what the department does. The first thing we have to do is open

the highways for the general public. We have to make sure our school buses get to the children and get safely back to the schools and then back home. The City of Whitehorse has the responsibility and I recommend that his constituent talk to them. I know in my case -- when I brought it up to the City of Whitehorse -- they were going to accept the responsibility but if they were to bring the road up to a certain standard, the taxes would have gone up substantially on our property, and I imagine that's an issue with the constituent of the member opposite. The City of Whitehorse would address the issue if the road were brought up to a certain standard. The individuals on the road would commit to having those improvements put on their taxes over a period of time. I'm just going by my experience, and that was the decision we made. We made the decision that it was not feasible for us to pay for the \$700,000 improvement on our road with our taxes over a 20-year period, so we, along with our neighbours, got together and hired graders to keep our access open. We also work with the territorial government. The territorial government commits to work on berms when they have time, and we'll do that. We've done it in the past, and we'll continue to do it in the future.

**Mr. Cardiff:** I have a few questions for the minister. I would like to go back for a second to the commitment the minister made to my colleague a few moments ago about the *Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act*. He has committed to a review. I introduced a motion in this House awhile back. The thing I want to ensure is that the consultation that is done when this act is reviewed includes people who have tried to use it: namely, people in the media who have tried to use it and have run into problems, as well as others who have made use of the act as it stands now. They see a need for improvement. I think it would be valuable to include them in the consultation around making changes as well as to observe and make note of the recommendations that the Privacy Commissioner made.

Would the minister commit to including people who have made use of the act?

**Hon. Mr. Lang:** Yes, those are the kinds of people we want to get involved in the review. Those are the people who will add quality, and that is why we are going to have the review: to involve people who have issues with the process the way it is, whether it is internal government or outside of government. We are committed to getting the act reviewed and those people will certainly be invited to participate.

**Mr. Cardiff:** I think a lot of the general questions have been answered to a large extent or there have been commitments to provide information. I would also be interested in receiving the information on the highway equipment rental contracts, if that is going to be provided.

I do have some specific questions with regard to issues that have been raised by my constituents. At this time I would actually like to thank the minister in advance, because I understand there has been money committed to do some work on the old Annie Lake Road to bring that up to a better standard so that it can be maintained properly -- and for the health and safety of my constituents on that road.

Some of my other concerns have been raised previously. I didn't have much success with the previous Minister of Highways and Public Works on this issue, but having moved recently to the point where I'm actually driving by this on a daily basis -- which actually brings up another point, too, that I'll raise later -- is bike safety at the Carcross Cutoff. Now, I'm just starting to see students and children crossing the Carcross Road and the Alaska Highway at various points between Cowley Creek and the Golden Horn School. There have been a number of near misses over the years. I observed some children on bicycles just the other day trying to cross the road in what I would consider to be an unsafe area.

I honestly believe there needs to be something done. My constituents believe there needs to be something done. There needs to be, at the very least, a sign. I'm sure you could take one of those signs that the Member for Kluane was talking about the other day, and put up a sign that says "Caution: Students Crossing", and you can do it the same way as you have -- there's a sign on the Carcross Road that actually says -- I don't know if it's "Wildlife Crossing" or "Moose Crossing" or "Caribou Crossing," but it actually has the dates on it when you can expect to see the animals on the road. I'm sure that we can predict when we're going to see children riding their bicycles on the highway.

I would submit to the Legislature that it's probably between the months of late April to late October and maybe even into November, depending on what kind of a fall we're having. Before a child gets seriously injured or a motorist tries to take evasive action to miss one of these children, I would like to see something done, whether it's a crossing where there is a clear area and the students can feel safe, or some sort of signage. Can the minister address that issue, please?

**Hon. Mr. Lang:** In addressing the concerns on signage on the Alaska Highway, I know it's a busy highway in that area pretty much on a 24-hour basis. First of all, we have to start with education. We have to be conscious of how busy that highway is. We can certainly look at putting up a sign. We also have to look at educating people, and of course families and children, about the highway. I travel that highway. I see people on the highway who aren't wearing helmets. I see people on the highway who are too young to be on a bike on a highway, as far as I am concerned. These issues have to be addressed too.

I will commit to the member opposite to put up a sign. I'm not going to commit to putting times up. I am just going to put a sign up to address the fact that people are going to cross the road. The Highways and Public Works department works in our school system to address the question about bike crossings and pedestrian crossings.

Again, it's a busy highway. We will look at putting some kind of signage up to address the member's concerns. I will talk to my department internally. We have to put up a proper sign. It's a major highway and we just have to be aware that we have to work with our schools and with families to address the fact that it is important that these cyclists wear their helmets. It is very important that we look at bike safety and all these issues on a daily basis, especially in the spring when kids and people

are excited about getting out on their bikes. We have a school that people have to access.

I'll commit to the member opposite to take a look at an appropriate sign, but I don't want to minimize the education aspect to this, too.

**Mr. Cardiff:** The minister committing to a sign -- that's more than I got out of the previous minister. The education component was something that we previously talked about at length. I know that is being done at the school and there are other public education activities happening out there that the department is a part of.

I would just like to stay in the same area. A constituent recently raised this issue with me, and it's actually an issue in a few places. It has to do with the speed limits. There are two issues. When you leave the Alaska Highway and turn on to the south Klondike Highway -- or the Carcross Road, as it's known -- the speed limit is 50 kilometres an hour. Almost immediately it changes to 70 and then, at the top of the hill, it goes to 90. This was changed, I believe -- someone the other day used the term "around the turn of the century" and that's exactly about when it happened -- between 2000 and 2001. It is causing some concern for some of my constituents. Again, it's about young people riding bicycles to school. There needs to be some rigorous enforcement of the speed limit, because people are exceeding the speed limit in that area. There are children, again, on bicycles travelling to Golden Horn School along that stretch of road. People are travelling at excessive speed and there are children who live along that stretch of road.

I have received a request to see whether or not we can just remove the 70 kilometres per hour zone and just go 50 to the top of the hill and then they can do 90. Part of the concern is that people remember back to when the Anvil mine was running and there were ore trucks on the road. People are concerned because we are faced with the spectre of ore trucks on the highway again with the Minto project. On the Alaska Highway there is more room, but on the Carcross-Skagway Road or the south Klondike Highway, the shoulders aren't as wide as they are on the Alaska Highway. The surface is different and the visibility in some areas isn't as great. That is one issue.

The other issue that I am going to bring up again, because I've had it raised a number of times, is on the Alaska Highway just past the turnoff to the south Klondike Highway where the speed limit changes to 100 kilometres per hour. There are still entrances to Golden Horn subdivision; there are driveways; there are commercial establishments. In particular, there is an RV park and, in the summertime, there are tourists who are --

I'll wait for the Premier to give the minister his advice and then I'll -- thank you.

There is a tourist facility there; there are RVs turning in and out of this facility at all times of the day and, if the traffic is doing 100 kilometres per hour in the area, it does pose a problem.

Now there may be a solution. I see on my drive home that lots of new things are going to be happening along the Alaska Highway. Some of them are overdue; some of them have been raised here by me and other MLAs in the past. It looks to me

anyway like there are turning lanes slated for the area commonly known as the Utah loading area and the RV park there. That is basically to address the same issue -- and the speed limit is only 90 kilometres an hour there -- the issue of traffic going into the new subdivision to some extent, but in the way it's laid out, it's also to address RV traffic at the RV park there. I don't know if the minister could address those questions. I think I only have a couple more unless the minister would like to raise some more questions for me to bring 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*, Department of Highways and Public Works.

**Hon. Mr. Lang:** For the Member for Mount Lorne, I'll take his concerns under advisement. The answer is a lot more complicated than I can offer here this afternoon, but I will take his concerns under advisement and hopefully work with him to address some of them. Some of them are engineering. Some of them are issues that I as the minister -- I am not privy to that kind of information here today. But I will take that under advisement.

**Mr. Cardiff:** I thank the minister for endeavouring to do that. I look forward to hearing from him about what he finds out.

When I mention that I notice things when I'm driving by on the highway -- and this is an issue that I raised previously, and it has to do with when there is road construction taking place and where there is maintenance taking place on the sides of the road, as well, when they're clearing vegetation and the like. There are pieces of equipment often left on the side of the road. I've raised this issue before. I don't have the specific regulation, but it's in the occupational health and safety regulations. I'm sure the minister's officials are fully aware of this.

But the other night I was driving home, and on that stretch of road at Utah, where it looks like they're going to replace some culverts and widen the road and make some turn lanes, I don't know whether it was the government or a contractor who dropped a fairly large backhoe bucket on the shoulder of the road.

It's a hazard, especially when there is no beacon. Quite frankly, we couldn't put a beacon on it, because there is no battery on the bucket for a backhoe. If the backhoe is there, at least there is a battery and we can put a beacon in. It is a fairly large piece of equipment that's hard to miss. But this bucket is a large, immovable object and if it were hit by a vehicle, it would be --

I just want to bring that to the minister's attention. We need to be more vigilant when we are doing this type of work. We need to be more vigilant and notify the contractors who will be doing the work that they need to put beacons on the pieces of equipment or put them an appropriate distance off the highway

-- not on the shoulder. That caused me quite a bit of concern. I am glad that I remembered I had seen that.

I have one more request of the minister. Would he have his department look at a stretch of road in my riding? This was also raised previously. Along the Annie Lake Road, close to where the road comes to the end of the lake -- I believe it's in the neighbourhood of kilometre 16 to 18 -- there is a stretch of road and it's pretty much the worst part of the Annie Lake Road. The Annie Lake Road was reconstructed a number of years ago. There were concerns raised by residents at that time -- this goes back a long time -- about the type of material that was used. There was a lot of native material at the site that was used.

Proper material wasn't hauled in and it caused the road become full of potholes. There are sometimes large rocks coming to the surface. We had an issue like that last fall where people's vehicles were actually getting damaged.

There are also a couple of culverts there and sometimes the culverts become blocked. The request is to at least have somebody go out and inspect the culverts to ensure that they are not blocked.

This stretch of road is in such bad shape that a number of my constituents have raised this issue. They have a hard time doing 10 kilometres per hour across this stretch of road; it is in such bad shape. It does need to be fixed. It needs a permanent fix, not a temporary one, like let's go out and grade it off and pull some more gravel out of the bank down the road and put it on there and grade it off. It needs to be properly addressed.

Just to let the minister know how serious this matter is, it was only a couple of years ago that one of my constituents was riding a motorcycle on that road and the road conditions were so rough he lost control of the motorcycle and was seriously injured. I actually had the opportunity to visit him in the spinal unit in Vancouver when I was down there a little over a year ago.

I'm happy to say that he's coming along well -- his injuries still affect him. But when we see injuries like that, to a large extent caused by road conditions, I think it's imperative that we take steps to address that. I'm sure they don't mind slowing down if the road conditions warrant it, but having to slow down to 10 kilometres an hour seems a little excessive. I'd like the minister to commit to having his officials inspect the culverts, for one, and look into making some improvements to that road in the near future -- and not just making some improvements to it this summer, but let's not get into the habit of making this an annual event in the Legislature where I have to ask to have this piece of road looked at. If we can deal with it so it's dealt with on a permanent basis, it's reconstructed in a proper manner -- and, just like I was mentioning on the Carcross Road, right now there seems to be lots of activity happening up that road right now. The minister is aware of this in his other portfolio as Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources. The mine project that's up there is in full swing. I've been on that road and I've met numerous fuel trucks, water trucks, lowboys with pieces of equipment on them, empty trucks coming out. There a lot of traffic on that road -- and it's about public safety.

I would ask the minister to please have his officials look into that.

**Hon. Mr. Lang:** I will commit to do that. It is important that we maintain our roads to a standard that the general public has accepted. I understand the pressure that is being put on that road because of the exploration and the prospects of the Skukum mine going forward into production stage.

I thank him for that information and I will make sure that my department gets back to him on a go-forward plan.

**Mr. Cardiff:** I don't really have another question. I'd like to thank the minister and the officials for undertaking this. I just want to make note with regard to this last issue that the department will be receiving correspondence from some of my constituents in this matter. So, they can look forward to receiving that correspondence. I thank the minister and the officials for their time today.

**Hon. Mr. Lang:** Another thing to add to that: I am working with the mine itself and their requirements over the next period of time. So, it's not just the Department of Highways and Public Works or the residents, but the mine has some concerns too. Between the residents and the mine, I think we can put a plan together.

**Mr. Cardiff:** I thank the Legislature for their indulgence. The minister just raised another question that I had in the back of my mind and that popped out to the front. The minister just mentioned that he's working with the mine on their requirements — I believe the Skukum mine is actually Tagish Lake Gold Corp.

I am just wondering, what is the department's policy on providing highway infrastructure to resource projects?

Is there a policy in place in the Department of Highways and Public Works about providing infrastructure and building roads to some of these projects? And how is that done? What kind of a cost recovery basis is that done on?

**Hon. Mr. Lang:** In my discussions with Tagish Gold, it's more what the demand is going to be on the road than what we are going to do for the mine. So we understand that the road is going to get more use, and we want to get a heads-up on what the mine will be producing as product for the road. So we are working with them.

Energy, Mines and Resources is the lead, with the Department of Highways and Public Works, putting some policy together as we grow into this situation that we are addressing with Tagish Gold and all sorts of production requirements out there in the Yukon. We're getting more pressure for exactly what the member opposite is discussing here in the House.

We are hopefully putting a policy together and will have something in place in the near future -- this fall or maybe next spring -- on how we are going to move forward and address these questions that are being asked of us as a government by prospective developers out there in the field.

**Mr. Cardiff:** Just a quick question, then, for the minister: when that policy is finalized, would he please ensure that members on this side of the House are informed of that and a copy of that policy is delivered to our offices?

**Hon. Mr. Lang:** Anything we do on policy, I think, would be a public document. So, certainly, it would be there for all Yukoners, not only the opposition. We would have it avail-

able not only to industry, but ourselves as government and also the general public.

**Mr. Cardiff:** I guess the point I'm making is that we're not always aware of these things. I mean, unless the government puts out a press release and says that there is a new policy, we don't necessarily know about that. I'm asking if, when the policy is finalized, the minister would notify us that that has been done and provide us with a copy of the policy.

I realize it's a public document, but we don't monitor that on a daily basis, and not necessarily even on a weekly basis. We don't have the resources to do that. All I'm asking for is a notification -- if they notify us that there is a new policy, we'll find it. But if they don't notify us that there is a new policy, we won't know to look for one.

**Hon. Mr. Lang:** Yes, Mr. Chair, that would be done through Energy, Mines and Resources. When Energy, Mines and Resources is up for debate and the delegation is here, the member could bring it up and remind me of that commitment. We would lead through Energy, Mines and Resources.

**Mr. Inverarity:** I have just a few questions on ICT and a couple of other things that are outstanding. I noticed that the budget for information technology and information communications technology has been increased by about \$680,000. I was wondering if the minister could tell us what this increase is going to be directed at this year.

**Hon. Mr. Lang:** Is the member referring to capital?

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

**Hon. Mr. Lang:** Yes.

To make this a little simpler, do you have a page number? Does the Member for Porter Creek South -- no?

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

**Hon. Mr. Lang:** Okay.

#### Chair's statement

**Chair:** Order please. Could I get all members to direct questions and answers through the Chair, and please wait until I recognize you.

**Mr. Inverarity:** I believe it is on page 12-4. It is actually \$658,000 plus the \$85,000 for office furniture. The total is \$743,000, if I am not mistaken. It was actually mentioned in the budget highlights in the original budget throne speech.

**Hon. Mr. Lang:** The figures sort of threw us off with the question.

In addressing the computer equipment systems of \$658,000, this request will support three major elements in the department's information strategy. There is \$465,000 for system development, which will provide new computer systems. New computer systems will be implemented for the real property management, which will be used to manage government facilities and upgrades, enhance and replace several small information systems and plan for a larger, obsolete system replacement. There will be \$158,000 to replace older model desktop computers, laptops and monitors, and \$35,000 to replace aging and failing printers, server switches and servers.

The large increase this year relates to the phase 1 investment in a new, integrated real property management information system. When completed, this system will provide infor-

mation management for asset management, project delivery, space management and operation management.

**Mr. Inverarity:** How much is going to be spent on individual departments and how much is actually allocated to ICT central services of the budget?

**Hon. Mr. Lang:** In talking to my delegation, we have \$6.5 million, which is the public part of this for renewal and upgrading of our systems. Then, to remind the member opposite, every department has a line item they work with in ICT, so every department has its own budget and, also, we have the fund put together to work with the public on expanding our systems.

**Mr. Inverarity:** My understanding is that, yes, I agree that each individual department has its own breakdown or budget line items for ICT; however, there is a portion of the overall budget within Highways and Public Works, and some of that does get allocated out to the department to help them build their systems or do their work. Do you have any kind of breakdown as to what portion remains within ICT for -- if you want to call it -- the universal systems, and what portion would then be delegated out into the departments to supplement their individual line items on systems?

**Hon. Mr. Lang:** The information and communications technology budget of \$3.823 million -- there are three systems here for the development of projects: corporate recording management software development and rollout of corporate records management, and software and rollout of document management solutions; electronic service delivery -- this funds application Web site infrastructure required for departments to proceed with efforts to offer service electronics.

Then we go from there to the bigger ones: corporate financing management system. This includes various improvements to purchasing, contracting, accounting, receiving, receivables, accounts payable, budgeting and reporting for all of YTG. That's a \$285,000 budget. That's a territory-wide investment.

Geomatics Yukon, corporate geospatial data in partnership to improve mapping -- that's a territory-wide investment of \$272,000. Human resource management system -- various system upgrades and reporting system to improve the overall information on human resource personnel management matters -- that again is a territory-wide investment of \$150,000. Other applications consist of various smaller applications, such as data warehouse infrastructure, mainframe statistical analysis system -- SAS -- conversion and the help desk. That's an investment of \$108,000.

**Mr. Inverarity:** Within the local IT industry -- as we know, there are a lot of skilled individuals who work within the industry here in the Yukon -- of the funds available for ICT, it might be difficult to answer, but can he identify what portion would be available to local ICT individuals or companies they have, as opposed to stuff he may have to farm out outside of the territory? Would he be able to give us an estimate on that? These are questions that are being asked of me by some of the constituents. They're curious to see how much of the budget will remain locally.

**Hon. Mr. Lang:** We try to maximize Yukon content with any investment we make in the Yukon, but in the IT industry, as the member opposite understands, there is a certain part of it where there isn't the facility here to supply the product. I don't have those figures, but we do as a government try to maximize the internal investment in Yukon.

**Mr. Inverarity:** I know it was touched on a little earlier, but I wasn't particularly happy with the answer. Perhaps I could get more clarification on what's happening -- let's call it the Fox Lake road -- on the road between the Mayo Cutoff and just past Fox Lake or Braeburn. Is there some development work planned for this summer? What is it? I also believe there is some -- this might fall under Energy, Mines and Resources with regard to the burn area, but if it is, then we'll just stay with the highway.

**Hon. Mr. Lang:** The only money in this budget that is being designated for that section of road is doing some redesign on the Fox Creek bridge. We are committed to doing that this year, out of this budget.

**Mr. Fairclough:** I have a couple of questions for the minister: I would like to know whether or not the department has any plans to do some upgrades to the Silver Trail. I don't see any money here to do any reconstruction of the Silver Trail. The Chief of Na Cho Nyak Dun is interested to know what improvements are going to be made to that road.

**Hon. Mr. Lang:** In addressing the member opposite, of course there will be the investment in the ongoing maintenance, and we are committed to monitoring that road, with the increase in traffic, to see what would have to be invested in the long term on the road between the Silver Trail between Mayo and Keno City.

We are aware of the growing demand on the highway, and we are monitoring to see where and when we should invest money to upgrade the road as the potential in that part of the country unfolds.

**Mr. Fairclough:** I'd ask the minister to look into this. Some constituents of mine have raised it. The road between Stewart Crossing and Mayo is one that is raised more to me than the road from Mayo to Keno City. Although I know that there is increased traffic there, there were about 35 to 40 people in Elsa this past election. So there are a lot more people living up on that road. I know that the surface, for example, has been graded off and it's hard to maintain a good road on that. So if the minister could look into that, I'd appreciate it.

The other matter is that community people from Pelly Crossing have asked whether or not highways could be improved on the Klondike Highway, on both sides of the bridge. One was that, as you come south, down the hill toward Pelly, there is an intersection on both sides of the road. What they're looking for is to have two more lanes for turning on both sides, and that would take care of a lot of the traffic going through.

So if the minister could do that -- there is another one regarding the bridge. This is with pedestrians. I'm not talking about the walkway on the bridge itself but, after the bridge on both sides, can Highways and Public Works do some improvements to address the safety issues of pedestrians walking along that highway? I ask the minister if he can do that.

**Hon. Mr. Lang:** I will certainly take that under advisement with the department.

**Mr. Fairclough:** I have asked this question of the previous minister quite a few times in regard to the Silver Trail. I have also raised this issue in this House with the minister in the past. I am hoping the minister will take that seriously. It is a safety issue.

Here is another one that I have raised with the minister in the past and no work was done. Again, it is a safety issue. It's in Stewart Crossing and has to do with the streetlights. Are there any plans for this government to add more streetlights -- it's usually going north into the community, coming down that hill -- to light up the highway a bit? It is a safety issue. Can we have more streetlights in that area?

**Hon. Mr. Lang:** I will commit as minister to work with the department and monitor the situation to see if the demand is there.

**Mr. Inverarity:** I request the unanimous consent of the Committee to deem all operation and maintenance lines in Vote 55, Department of Highways and Public Works, cleared or carried, as required.

**Unanimous consent re deeming all operation and maintenance lines in Vote 55, Department of Highways and Public Works, cleared or carried**

**Chair:** Mr. Inverarity has requested the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all operation and maintenance lines in Vote 55, Department of Highways and Public Works, cleared or carried, as required. Is there unanimous consent?

**All Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**Chair:** Unanimous consent has been granted.

**On Operation and Maintenance Expenditures**

**Total Operation and Maintenance Expenditures in the amount of \$79,185,000 agreed to**

**On Capital Expenditures**

**On Corporate Services**

**On Computer Equipment and Systems**

**Computer Equipment and Systems in the amount of \$658,000 agreed to**

**On Office Furniture, Equipment, and Space**

**Office Furniture, Equipment, and Space in the amount of \$85,000 agreed to**

**Corporate Services in the amount of \$743,000 agreed to**

**On Information and Communications Technology**

**On Corporate Computer Equipment and Systems**

**Mr. Inverarity:** Could we have a breakdown, please?

**Hon. Mr. Lang:** The figures are \$1.459 million in systems and development to cover new corporate and department applications or modulars, legacy system replacements, upgrades or enhancements in information management system plans. ICT provides support resources to other departments. \$1.149 million is for network infrastructure to upgrade, replace or repair printers, servers, business continuity off-site facilities, network connectivity and other hardware and network components. In addition, there is another \$30,000 being allocated for the replacement of aging micrographics equipment and another

\$20,000 being identified to purchase computers for specialized technical positions within the information technology branch.

**Corporate Computer Equipment and Systems in the amount of \$2,658,000 agreed to**

**On Telecommunications**

**Mr. Inverarity:** I would like a breakdown. It might be worthwhile to say that I'm looking for a breakdown on all these items.

**Hon. Mr. Lang:** The \$365,000 telecommunications is: \$100,000 for voice-over-Internet protocol; \$100,000 for MDMRS inventory management system and equipment replacement; \$65,000 for community and radio television tower upgrades and equipment replacement; \$50,000 for MDMRS consulting; \$25,000 for telecommunications and strategy; and \$25,000 for wireless communication research and development.

**Telecommunications in the amount of \$365,000 agreed to**

**On Mobile Communications Solution**

**Mr. Inverarity:** I would like a breakdown, please.

**Hon. Mr. Lang:** This request will cover the second year of a seven-year subsidy payment to Latitude Wireless for the cell service agreement -- a 12-year agreement.

**Mobile Communications Solution in the amount of \$800,000 agreed to**

**Information and Communications Technology in the amount of \$3,823,000 agreed to**

**On Transportation Division**

**On Transportation Facilities**

**On Transportation Facilities and Equipment**

**Mr. Inverarity:** Breakdown, please.

**Hon. Mr. Lang:** Projects include: handling and storage facilities, \$150,000; power source generators, \$120,000; Whitehorse weigh station windows, \$70,000; purchase of two grader slopers, \$60,000; loader ramp replacement, \$60,000; wash pad and oil separator, \$50,000; replace engine, \$50,000; trolley and track capital maintenance, \$50,000; site miscellaneous minor repairs, \$50,000; plan design contract preparation and monitoring identified projects, \$44,000; purchase two stainless steel sanders, \$40,000; emergency health and safety items, \$40,000; purchase follow-me wobbly packers, \$30,000; purchase loader-sweeper attachment, \$30,000; oil separator, \$30,000; ventilation upgrade, \$30,000; repair kitchen back wall, \$30,000; septic tank, \$30,000; remove CARS trailer, \$25,000; purchase two attachments for tool carrier, \$20,000; Eagle Plains grader station phase 2, \$20,000;

There is a replacement for the Tuchitua complex for \$20,000. There is weigh station inspection for \$20,000, a ground-mounted air conditioner for \$20,000, complete landscaping for \$20,000, accessibility issues for \$20,000, an explosives storage shed for \$15,000, the purchase of tidy tanks for \$15,000, a steam cleaner at \$15,000, a water pump for \$15,000, major appliance replacement for \$10,000, replace overhead and main door at a grader station for \$10,000, electrical work for \$10,000, purchase of a welder for \$6,000, lighting upgrades for \$6,000, and emergency furnace replacement for \$5,000. The total is \$1,236,000.



*Transportation Facilities and Equipment in the amount of \$1,236,000 agreed to*

*On Environmental Rehabilitation*

*Environmental Rehabilitation in the amount of \$232,000 agreed to*

*On Aviation/Yukon Airports Operations Support Equipment*

**Mr. Inverarity:** I would like a breakdown on that.

**Hon. Mr. Lang:** There is \$2,530,000 for the Whitehorse Airport to be used for the following two items: a \$2.3-million fire truck and a \$230,000 truck with a mounted plow. There is \$600,000 budgeted for the Old Crow Airport to be used for a truck ramp, hog and spray bar. The remaining \$85,000 is requested for the following items: Batwing mower for \$40,000, tar kettle for \$30,000, emergency rescue service for \$10,000 and a precision approach path indicator for \$5,000. That totals \$85,000 and the whole total is \$3,215,000.

*Aviation/Yukon Airports Operations Support Equipment in the amount of \$3,215,000 agreed to*

*On Transportation Planning and Engineering*

*Transportation Planning and Engineering in the amount of \$1,490,000 agreed to*

*On Highway Construction*

*On Non-YG Funded:*

*On Alaska Highway*

*On Shakwak*

*Shakwak in the amount of \$29,750,000 agreed to*

*On Canada Strategic Infrastructure Fund*

**Mr. Mitchell:** Could we get a breakdown on that, please?

**Hon. Mr. Lang:** There are two items that we're investing in: the Teslin River bridge at Johnsons Crossing for \$6.235 million, and the second investment is the Lewes River bridge, kilometre 1393 -- that will be an investment of \$500,000, which will give us a total of \$6,735,000 invested in those two projects.

*Canada Strategic Infrastructure Fund in the amount of \$6,735,000 agreed to*

*On YG Funded:*

*On Alaska Highway*

**Mr. Inverarity:** Could we get a breakdown and just an explanation on the variance, please?

**Hon. Mr. Lang:** There are three major projects planned for this year. Investing in the Alaska Highway, major highway rehabilitation, \$750,000; there's \$150,000 invested in the Alaska Highway subsurface improvement, kilometre 1218, Strawberry Creek; there will be \$55,000 invested in wheelchair accessibility to outhouse facilities in rest stops, improved territory-wide.

The major issue in the variance is that this project involved reshaping and sections of reconstruction on the highway in the Beaver Creek area that have been moved and distorted due to changes in deep permafrost.

**Mr. Mitchell:** Can the minister let us know whether any of the work done under this item would address some of the issues that were in the Auditor General's report regarding road surface conditions?

**Hon. Mr. Lang:** Yes, it certainly will address parts of it. Certainly, on the north Alaska Highway, it will address some of the issues brought up by the Auditor General.

**Mr. Mitchell:** In those sections that are being addressed, would it then bring the highway up to the paving standard index that the department considers at least to be the minimum acceptable standard?

**Hon. Mr. Lang:** In addressing the member opposite concerned, this will certainly bring it up to a higher standard. But the member understands we still have a permafrost issue and going forward with a paving program would have to be addressed. But it would certainly be an improvement and I could see BST or something else being used. Pavement is a question because of the foundation.

*Alaska Highway in the amount of \$955,000 agreed to*

*On Klondike Highway*

*Klondike Highway in the amount of \$60,000 agreed to*

*On Campbell Highway*

**Mr. Mitchell:** Can the minister provide a breakdown of that, please?

**Hon. Mr. Lang:** There are three points brought up by this budget line. Of course, we are investing in the Campbell Highway -- a total of \$875,000. The majority of this request, \$800,000, will fund the application of BST on a recently completed section between kilometre 10 and kilometre 58 to reduce the maintenance expenditures required to preserve the otherwise gravel surface -- and also to replace culverts at Watson Lake and McDonald Creek. There will also be two culverts replaced in this budget line -- \$25,000 to design for culvert reconstruction and grade repair at kilometre 64. Then another \$50,000 is going to be invested in Star Creek culvert replacement. This will be at kilometre 312.

*Campbell Highway in the amount of \$875,000 agreed to*

*On Dempster Highway*

**Mr. Inverarity:** I would like a breakdown, please.

**Hon. Mr. Lang:** On the Dempster Highway, we will invest \$1,348,000 for two significant projects. There will be \$775,000 invested in the Dempster Highway gravel production and the production of surface aggregate for application on the Dempster Highway. Work will be carried out in gravel pits at various locations along the Dempster by contract forces. There will be \$541,000 invested in the Dempster Highway surface maintenance branch. This initiative has been developed to bring the road surface to a gravel standard that can be adequately bladed. In addition, there will be \$32,000 for Dempster Highway erosion control between kilometre 95 and kilometre 115. This project is to evaluate future needs for the replacement of protective rock blankets and rip-rap on the side slopes of the Dempster Highway where it is routed along the shoreline of the Blackstone and Ogilvie River and, of course, Engineer Creek.

*Dempster Highway in the amount of \$1,348,000 agreed to*

*On Atlin Road*

**Mr. Inverarity:** I would like a breakdown and an explanation on the variance.

**Hon. Mr. Lang:** For the Atlin Road there is \$600,000 as a continuation to complete the reconstruction of the Atlin Road between kilometre 1 and kilometre 6, including guide

rails and BST surfacing. The resulting road will meet the 80 kilometre-an-hour standard with a light-duty asphalt surface BST. The variance is work we have done in the past, which was an investment of \$105,000 for design and regulatory approvals. Of course, the large investment we made in the Atlin Road was in the amount of \$2.632 million for reconstruction of that road from kilometre 1 to kilometre 6.

*Atlin Road in the amount of \$600,000 agreed to*

*On Top of the World Highway*

*Top of the World Highway in the amount of \$400,000 agreed to*

*On Pavement Rehabilitation*

**Mr. Inverarity:** Could I have a breakdown on that, too?

**Hon. Mr. Lang:** This is part of the commitment this government made to keep our paving program and rehabilitation up to the mark, which the Auditor General brought up in her report. This project provides rehabilitation of the existing pavement by full pavement overlay or by recycling the pavement into base course and resurfacing with BST. Work for this year will focus on the north Klondike Highway close to Whitehorse. The pavement overlay will be from the point where previous overlays left off, near Burma Road, kilometre 204 to approximately Horse Creek, kilometre 212. \$160,000 is for the personnel costs. The pavement rehabilitation total is \$2 million.

*Pavement Rehabilitation in the amount of \$2,000,000 agreed to*

*On Bridges -- Numbered Highways*

**Mr. Inverarity:** I request a breakdown, please.

**Hon. Mr. Lang:** Again, this is an investment in our bridges throughout the Yukon. This is a total expenditure of \$660,000. Included in this request is \$300,000 for the repair of old timber bridges on the North Canol Road, which include approach work and abutment replacements at Macmillan No. 3 and Jeff Creek, and other possible deck replacements as bridge inspections indicate are necessary.

The community of Ross River -- the remaining \$360,000 is requested for the work identified as priorities by the bridge assessment program. There is a bridge inspection component to this of \$150,000. Of course, that is spent territory-wide. Corrosion protection is a \$100,000 investment. The Takhini River bridge design on the Klondike Highway and the repairs to the bearing pedestals has an investment of \$30,000. The Fox Creek bridge at kilometre 228 design is for \$80,000. That gives us a total of \$360,000. If you were to add the two up, that makes a total of \$660,000 invested in our bridges this year.

*Bridges -- Numbered Highways in the amount of \$660,000 agreed to*

*On Other Roads*

**Mr. Inverarity:** I would like a breakdown, please, and a reason for the variance.

**Hon. Mr. Lang:** We are looking at an investment of \$915,000. The projects are right-of-way vegetation control, which will be territory-wide, with an investment of \$550,000. The rural road upgrading program is a territory-wide investment of \$250,000. The Kusawa Lake Road bridge is a rehabilitation for \$90,000, and the North Canol Road at kilometre 248

is a \$25,000 investment. That is a grand total of \$915,000. The reduction in the 2007-08 budget from the 2006-07 budget is due to other priorities and management of requests from the Highways and Public Works department.

*Other Roads in the amount of \$915,000 agreed to*

*On Prior Years' Projects*

*Prior Years' Projects in the amount of nil cleared*

*On Aviation/Yukon Airports*

*On Airports*

**Mr. Inverarity:** Can I have a breakdown, please?

**Hon. Mr. Lang:** Again, we are looking at an investment of \$10,067,000. The majority of this request is related to planned improvements at the international airport in Whitehorse. That total will be \$9,561,000. Those projects are the air terminal building -- ATB -- Canadian Customs expansion of \$6 million, ATB parking lot improvement and finishing the parking lot for \$3,164,000, airport capital assistance program -- ACAP -- installing air-side signs for \$197,000, extending the taxiway G to leased lots for \$100,000, temporary in-transit area for \$50,000, airport building security system upgrade for \$25,000, paving apron 2 -- gravel surface at the moment -- is for \$25,000. That total is \$9,561,000.

In addition, \$325,000 is requested to preserve the integrity of the Burwash airport infrastructure through resurfacing of the runway, taxiway, apron and airport road. EK35 is a dust suppressant that will be applied to the runway, taxiway and apron in the first of the three-year application cycle.

That will affect the community of Burwash. \$101,000 is requested to correct deficiencies and to maintain a certification and registration standard at Yukon aerodromes. Transport Canada conducts annual inspections and audits to determine if YTG, as the airport operator, is meeting federal regulations and standards.

Projects and funding for 2007-08 are as follows: certification of Auditor General deficiencies, investing \$50,000; for air-side brushing and field improvements, we're investing \$26,000 throughout the territory; navigational aids, \$25,000. That total is \$101,000.

*Airports in the amount of \$10,067,000 agreed to*

*Transportation Division in the amount of \$60,538,000 agreed to*

*On Supply Services*

*On Acquisition of Used Assets*

*Acquisition of Used Assets in the amount of \$5,000 agreed to*

*On Prior Years' Projects*

*Prior Years' Projects in the amount of nil cleared*

*Supply Services in the amount of \$5,000 agreed to*

*On Real Property Management*

*On Building Development*

*On Tombstone Visitor Reception Centre*

**Mr. Inverarity:** Breakdown please.

**Hon. Mr. Lang:** The Tombstone visitor reception centre is an allocation for phase 1 construction of the new Tombstone visitor reception centre that will include: the main floor and public gallery and viewing space; reception and interpretive displays; a small workshop area for the interpretive pro-

gram staff; the basement is storage space, utility space, and an area crawlspace; road access from the Dempster Highway; the installation of a gravel parking lot for visitors and tour buses and two outhouses; a service road to the centre on the basement and main levels.

*Tombstone Visitor Reception Centre in the amount of \$1,511,000 agreed to*

*On Building Overhead*

**Mr. Inverarity:** Could we get a breakdown on that, please?

**Hon. Mr. Lang:** Building overhead -- out of that figure of \$2.516 million, we have a personnel cost of \$1,912,000 and then other for a total of \$604,000. The \$604,000 is invested in building development overhead, which is \$138,000, and pre-engineering studies for \$100,000, and design for \$366,000, for a total of \$604,000 invested.

*Building Overhead in the amount of \$2,516,000 agreed to*

*On Building Maintenance*

*Building Maintenance in the amount of \$2,186,000 agreed to*

*On Project Management Services*

**Mr. Inverarity:** I'd like a breakdown on that and why it is such a nice round number.

**Hon. Mr. Lang:** The \$1 million in project management services -- this program manages projects on behalf of the external clients to enable the project sponsors to achieve desired outcomes of projects in terms of quality, cost and timelines. All dollars spent are on behalf of the external client and are 100-percent recoverable from the clients. External clients may include the federal government, Yukon Liquor Corporation, Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board, and Yukon College. The only one we have on the books at the moment is the reception area renovation for the Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board. That total is an investment of \$220,000.

**Mr. Inverarity:** In the Public Accounts Committee report, there was some mention of a space plan study or document that had to be done. Would that have been included in this particular area or is it a different area, and which area would it be?

**Hon. Mr. Lang:** The answer to that is no. It is in operation and maintenance in the department.

*Project Management Services in the amount of \$1,000,000 agreed to*

*Real Property Management in the amount of \$7,213,000 agreed to*

*On French Language Services Directorate*

*On Computer Equipment and Systems*

*Computer Equipment and Systems in the amount of \$10,000 agreed to*

*French Language Services Directorate in the amount of \$10,000 agreed to*

*Total Capital Expenditures in the amount of \$72,332,000 agreed to*

*Department of Highways and Public Works agreed to*

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

*Recess*

**Chair:** Committee of the Whole will now come to order. The matter before the Committee is Bill No. 6, *First Appropriation Act, 2007-08*, Department of Health and Social Services.

### **Department of Health and Social Services**

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** It is a pleasure to rise here in the Assembly today to begin the debate in Committee of the Whole on the Department of Health and Social Services.

The Department of Health and Social Services, as members will notice, is a very significant chunk of the total 2007-08 budget, comprising over 30 percent of the O&M total and 24.8 percent of the overall budgetary figures.

The total requested for the Department of Health and Social Services in the 2007-08 main estimates is \$213,899,000. The total O&M requested is \$200,900,000.

This is a very significant increase, of course, representing an increase of \$25.27 million over last year's operation and maintenance budget. The capital allotment proposed in this budget is \$12,998,000, which is an increase from last year's main estimates of \$7.9 million.

This represents an increase of \$5 million or a 62.9-percent increase over the last fiscal year.

The operation and maintenance expenditures, if broken out by allotments, show a personnel allotment of \$66,463,000. Other allotments are \$68,361,000 and transfer payments to third parties are \$66,077,000. The Department of Health and Social Services is a major contributor toward the government's goal of increasing the quality of life for all Yukoners. It is ingrained in the mission of the department and this is achieved by helping individuals acquire the skills to live responsible, healthy and independent lives and providing a range of accessible, affordable services that assist individuals, families and communities to reach their full potential.

The focus of the department is on maintaining the level and quality of services that we provide, which already stack up very well in comparison with other jurisdictions in this country, as I am sure members are aware. Also its focus is on enhancing those services where possible, particularly when we can do so in a manner that will reduce future costs and improve the quality of life for Yukoners.

Mr. Chair, seeing the time, I move we report progress.

**Chair:** It has been moved by Mr. Cathers that we report progress.

*Motion agreed to*

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

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

*Motion agreed to*

*Speaker resumes the Chair*

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

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

**Chair's report**

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

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

**Some Hon. Members:** Agreed.

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

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

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

*Motion agreed to*

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

*The House adjourned at 5:27 p.m.*