

**Whitehorse, Yukon****Tuesday, June 12, 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.

Introduction of visitors.

Returns or documents for tabling.

Are there any reports of committees?

Are there any petitions?

Are there any bills to be introduced?

Are there any notices of motion?

**NOTICES OF MOTION**

**Mr. Mitchell:** Mr. Speaker, I give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Yukon Party government to live up to its commitment to be an open and accountable government by accurately representing the positions of the other parties or members of this Assembly.

I give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Yukon Party government to live up to its commitment to be an open and accountable government by ensuring its ministers are available to respond fully to questions asked by reporters.

I give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Yukon Party government to live up to its commitment to be an open and accountable government by avoiding the repetitive practice of finger pointing at previous governments that no longer exist.

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

THAT this House urges the Yukon Party government to live up to its commitment to be an open and accountable government and uphold the tradition of this House by not refusing to respond to the essence of questions during Question Period.

I give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Yukon Party government to live up to its commitment to be an open and accountable government and uphold the tradition of this House by not refusing to provide contracts and agreements involving the Yukon government when requested to do so.

I give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Yukon Party government to live up to its commitment to be an open and accountable government by not refusing to consider the position of Yukoners who sign a petition presented in this Assembly before making a final decision on matters identified in the petition.

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

THAT this House urges the Yukon Party government to live up to its commitment to be an open and accountable government by ensuring its ministers do not engage in unnecessary repetition of speeches during budget debate in order to allow all members to make more productive use of the limited time available.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Yukon Party government to live up to its commitment to be an open and accountable government and uphold the tradition of this House by not refusing to comment on issues asked by the media or by deferring the questions to the public service.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Yukon Party government to abide by the long-standing agreement between House leaders, that tributes presented in this Assembly should be presented as tributes and not transformed into political statements, as exemplified again on June 5, 2007.

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

THAT this House urges the Yukon Party government to live up to its commitments to be an open and accountable government and uphold the tradition of this House by providing a breakdown for a budget line item when requested during line-item examination of the budget in Committee of the Whole.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Yukon Party government to live up to its commitment to be an open and accountable government and uphold the tradition of this House by not refusing to answer questions during the examination of the budget in Committee of the Whole.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Yukon Party government to live up to its commitments to be an open and accountable government by respecting the service of the Assembly to the public and by availing itself to questioning from other members of the House until 5:30 p.m. each sitting day.

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

THAT this House urges the Yukon Party government to live up to its commitments to be an open and accountable government and uphold the tradition of this House by not refusing to table documents and reports that are under its jurisdiction and are in the public interest.

I give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Yukon Party government to live up to its commitment to be an open and accountable government by ensuring the opposition parties are first provided with all budget briefing material requests made during departmental budget briefing meetings before calling that department

for budget debate, as it failed to do with the departments of Highways and Public Works and Economic Development.

I give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Yukon Party government to live up to its commitment to be an open and accountable government by not invoking closure of debate on private members' bills.

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

THAT this House urges the Minister of Justice to work with her counterpart in the Government of Canada to ensure that sufficient financial and human resources are available on a stable and predictable basis to meet the needs of Yukon people for legal aid services.

I give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Yukon government to evaluate the Department of Education's home tutoring program and, if the result of the evaluation warrants, to continue the program with assured and expanded funding.

## NOTICES OF MOTION FOR THE PRODUCTION OF PAPERS

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

THAT this House do issue an order for the return of the following documents: (1) *Review of Services to Children in Care*, by the Child Welfare League of Canada, 2002; and (2) *Their Future Begins Today: Yukon Residential Care Review*, by J. Anglin, 2001.

**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: Hospital Corporation Board chair

**Mr. Mitchell:** Mr. Speaker, on May 24, this Legislature passed a motion creating an all-party committee to make appointments to major government boards and committees. The motion was supported by all three political parties represented in this House. This committee will look after appointments to boards such as the Yukon Energy Corporation, the Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board, Lotteries Yukon and others. One of the major boards that is not on the list is the Yukon Hospital Corporation Board. Three members of that board are nominated by the Government of Yukon. Is the minister willing to include these appointments within the mandate of the all-party committee on appointments?

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** The member knows full well that, first of all, it was the Liberals that set the list in the Standing Orders identifying which boards would be covered by a standing committee on appointments to major boards and committees. The Liberals, of course, never came through on their promise to actually establish such a board. We have established

that board; we will call it when the boards identified in there have appointments that require that review.

We will see how cooperative the members of the Official Opposition are in actually working on that before we decide whether or not to even consider extending the list. Considering the member's behaviour in the past few weeks in attacking members of those boards -- and his colleague behind him has also attacked members on those boards -- it's highly questionable whether we will ever be able to have a productive meeting with the Official Opposition. The third party has been productive and the government has been productive; the Official Opposition once again attacks private citizens.

**Mr. Mitchell:** The Standing Orders to which the minister refers also indicate that such committee may review other appointments proposed by the Executive Council. If he's going to stand on a technicality, it's available for him.

Last year, the Yukon Party government used one of these three Government of Yukon seats on the hospital board to install their election campaign manager as chair of the board. He was appointed on September 7, 2006 for a period of six months. That appointment was extended in March of this year for another six months. His appointment is set to expire in September of this year. As stated, the Legislature recently passed a motion supported by all members of the Assembly to look after major government appointments such as this one.

Will the minister let the all-party committee make recommendations on this appointment, or is this one the Yukon Party government wants to keep to itself?

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** Once again the Leader of the Official Opposition is standing up here and attacking a member of the public -- a member, by the way, whose appointment was discussed with the Yukon Federation of Labour prior to the government making that appointment.

This member is well respected by employers and employees in his other work with the Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board. The members once again attack individuals and private citizens. It's not the first time. We've had a number of members stand up this session, including members attacking two of my constituents. They were personal attacks on individuals, private citizens, while the members hide from lawsuits for defamation behind the protection of this Assembly.

The Leader of the Official Opposition has resorted lately to a very pointed attack on the CEO of Whitehorse General Hospital, while crouching behind his legislative immunity in this Assembly. I challenge him to step outside, repeat his assertions, repeat his attack --

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

### Point of order

**Speaker:** Order please. Member for Kluane, on a point of order.

**Mr. McRobb:** On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, we ask for some consistency here. That point about accusing other people in this Assembly of "crouching behind his legislative immunity" has been ruled out of order before, and I ask that the member be called to order.

### Speaker's ruling

**Speaker:** There is a point of order. I would ask the honourable minister not to do that any more. You have the floor for another six seconds.

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** You can tell the Liberals are getting desperate when they resort to attacking private citizens.

**Mr. Mitchell:** It's pretty clear what the government's position is on this issue. They support an all-party committee on appointments, just not when it involves their election campaign manager. They want to make an exception for their campaign manager. There has been a great deal of problems at the hospital since the new chair took over. He has admitted himself that there are problems.

This Legislature has recently set up an all-party committee on appointments. Given the problems at the hospital, we think this appointment is a good one to start with. Why is the minister so reluctant to let anyone else have a say in this major appointment?

**Hon. Mr. Fentie:** Earlier this afternoon, the Official Opposition brought up the issue of representing accurately. Let me refer the Leader of the Official Opposition to his quote in *Hansard* on June 7 where, in speaking of the chair of the hospital board, he said, "Before the job could be offered to the top candidate, the chair of the board, who happens to be the former Yukon Party campaign manager, intervened and selected the person who is now the CEO. He short-circuited the process."

Lo and behold, on June 8 -- by the way, the members brought up media -- the *Yukon News* reported verbatim the very same quote.

Who's running whom? Are the Yukon Liberals running the *Yukon News* or is the *Yukon News* running the Yukon Liberals? What's worse, a senior citizen has been party to this sham, thanks to the Leader of the Official Opposition.

The member knows that statement is incorrect; it's an invalidated attack on a citizen who is serving on a board in this territory. The Official Opposition should stand on their feet, apologize to this House, apologize to the chair, apologize to the CEO and apologize to the media for misleading the media.

### Question re: Western Governors Association meeting

**Mr. Elias:** This week there is a meeting of the western governors of the United States. This is a regional organization that includes 19 U.S. states and the premiers of provinces in western Canada. The Yukon is a member of this organization as well.

One of the main topics of discussion at this meeting is climate change and global warming. Among those in attendance are the Governor of Alaska and the premiers of Saskatchewan and Manitoba. Once again, the Yukon is absent from this discussion.

Why did the Minister of Environment, the Premier, skip this meeting?

**Hon. Mr. Fentie:** Frankly, Mr. Speaker, this is not about skipping any meeting whatsoever. In fact, I'm here undertaking my duties and responsibilities to the Yukon public.

Frankly, we're not concerned about the Yukon's participation in climate change. We have a strategy and we're proceeding with our climate change action plan. I guess the question can be reversed: why didn't the Official Opposition go to the meeting?

These are examples of the Official Opposition's inability to recognize what their role is and what their responsibility is to the Yukon public. If they're suggesting that missing a meeting with western governors is going to compromise Yukon's climate change strategy and our ability to adapt to a global phenomenon, I challenge the member to provide the evidence.

**Mr. Elias:** In fulfilling my responsibility to this Legislature, if the minister had called me and wanted to pair so that he could attend the meeting, I would have done so in a heartbeat.

When we talk about climate change, I'll give an example. I just returned from my family's traditional area on the Old Crow Flats and we watched in shock as the largest lake in our family's traditional area was draining, a lake that has supported our family and surrounding ecosystem for generations, and now the water is gone. This may not mean much to the minister, but it means a lot to me, my family and constituents.

Why did the Premier pass up another opportunity to work with leaders from across the western half of Canada and United States on something he claims is a priority?

**Hon. Mr. Fentie:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I share the member opposite's emotional aspect toward this whole global phenomenon, considering the impacts -- the very real impacts that Yukoners are experiencing, including the Vuntut Gwitchin people. But I can say to the member opposite that long before the western governors were convening, wherever they're convening, this government had acted and protected 8,000 square kilometres of Old Crow Flats. The majority of that is under permanent protection. We also know that hydrology studies are going on right now in the area, and we are going to work on all those issues in north Yukon and central Yukon and south Yukon, in west Yukon and in east Yukon. We have a strategy. We are proceeding with the climate change strategy implementation action plan. I encourage the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin to join us in that work, provide the contribution. It will include a great deal of traditional cultural knowledge that we will be garnering from the elders of this territory throughout the Yukon, from all First Nations. This is important work. It is our Yukon-made solution to deal with climate change for all of us.

### Question re: Substance abuse action plan

**Mr. Edzerza:** Mr. Speaker, I spent some time this morning reviewing the Blues from yesterday's debate on Health and Social Services budget. I must say it was heartening to read some of the minister's responses with respect to the government substance abuse action plan. The minister gave some pretty broad hints that there are significant plans in the works to implement this part of the Yukon Party's platform from the last election. I realize the minister doesn't want to be too specific about timing or dollar amounts, but I would like to follow up on some specific aspects of that plan. Can the minister give his assurance that his government will honour its platform com-

mitments to support community planning on substance abuse and to provide more treatment centres throughout the territory?

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** Yes, the answer, of course, is yes. We are committed to implementing all areas of our election platform. The member is absolutely right in noting that there is significant work underway related to all areas of doing so, in honouring and fulfilling our obligations to Yukoners.

**Mr. Edzerza:** The substance abuse action plan states that policies and programs should be culturally sensitive, especially in cases where First Nation experiences, values and goals are concerned. The sad fact is that the limited treatment programs that are currently available are not sensitive to diverse cultural values and perspectives.

Let me use an analogy. I'm sure the minister would agree that any treatment program delivered in the language most of the clients didn't understand would have little chance of success. Cultural beliefs and practices are a form of language. To be successful, First Nation clients need program they can relate to, such as land-based treatment or healing programs with a strong cultural and spiritual dimension.

What steps is the minister taking to involve First Nations directly in designing policies and programs that meet the litmus test of cultural diversity and cultural sensitivity?

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** I appreciate the question from the member opposite. As he noted in his first question, and as I noted yesterday in debate in Committee of the Whole, we have significant planning work going on right now. Some of these steps do require approval by our Cabinet process before I can step out and make any commitment to the member opposite.

I can tell the member opposite that it was a priority in the substance abuse action plan, it was a priority in our 2006 election platform, and it will be a priority in what we deliver to ensure the programs -- the land-based treatment and increasing treatment related to substance abuse -- involves First Nations and respects the needs of those citizens of our territory in determining what the outcome is. I think the member will be very pleased when we are able to make those announcements.

**Mr. Edzerza:** I know the minister is trying to put the best face possible on this substance abuse action plan, but I'm not hearing a firm commitment to involve First Nations directly in designing culturally appropriate treatment policies and programs. I'm not hearing a commitment to the land-based programs that various First Nations have already worked hard to develop, and the issue goes beyond substance abuse. Many people are finally coming to grips with the emotional damage they suffered in the mission schools. They need mental health programs that address the cultural and spiritual deprivation they experienced, with counsellors they can relate to and trust.

What is the minister doing to meet that need, or can we expect one-size-fits-all programs based on how this government sees the problem without involving First Nation governments as equal partners in designing those programs?

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** I think the simple answer to the member's question is yes. We will involve First Nations in the design of culturally relevant treatment programs, and that will include the Department of Health and Social Services and the fine work being done by our Minister of Justice related to the

corrections action plan and the development of a new corrections centre, which focuses on programming that actually deals with rehabilitation, including programming related to substance abuse.

As far as mental health goes, that is a key component as I've announced earlier and as we discussed yesterday afternoon in Committee debate. We have already significantly increased the investment in mental health services, including a youth clinician in Whitehorse and a rural clinician based out of Dawson City to further improve the access of citizens to the treatment they need for such issues.

#### **Question re: *Children's Act* review**

**Mr. Edzerza:** The extensive and expensive process known as the *Children's Act* review finally looks like it is coming to an end. The drafting of a bill is apparently continuing as we speak and targeted consultation on it will take place this summer. We look forward to seeing the bill to revise the *Children's Act* in the next sitting, or perhaps next spring. By then, it will be four years since the Cabinet gave the direction to revise the act. Through those years, we've witnessed a serious decline in government relations with First Nations, with much of it focused on the review and the education reform process.

Can the minister assure the House that the new *Children's Act* will reflect, as closely as possible, the wishes of First Nation governments that have been made clear to everyone in the public consultation on this act?

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** I appreciate the member's question and I have to remind him that the whole reason the process began -- I reiterate to members that it's a brand new process, a landmark process, for the first time working collaboratively with First Nations in drafting legislation that is wholly under the Yukon's jurisdiction -- and the whole reason this government reached out in the first place to involve First Nations in this development was because we wanted to ensure their needs were fully considered and addressed wherever possible.

As far as the specifics, I'm not sure if the member is referring to a particular area. Ultimately, as the member realizes, we as public government are tasked with ensuring that, to the very best of our ability, the decisions, legislation and actions we take reflect the needs of the public as a whole, including First Nations but not limited to them.

I can't make the member any specific commitment in this area beyond noting that the whole intent of involving First Nations in the first place was to ensure the end product -- the new *Children's Act* -- reflects their needs, interests and the information they provide us.

**Mr. Edzerza:** I remind the minister that the majority of children in care are First Nation and that, without their commitment, this process will also fail.

First Nation governments are taking ownership of the complex problems of child poverty, health, substance abuse and parental care. They are clear on their concerns about current policies and changes to the *Children's Act*. There are many ideas that First Nations and others involved in the consultation agreed upon. Without waiting for this dragged-out review process to end, the minister could easily have directed his department to act on such things as establishing direct communi-

cation systems with First Nations and involving and utilizing First Nation extended families in placements.

Why has the minister not acted to ensure that policies and practices in the family and children's services branch would better respond to First Nation concerns?

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** Mr. Speaker, I'm very surprised and baffled at this specific question from the Member for McIntyre-Takhini, considering the positive debate that he and I had just a few days ago in this Assembly on this department when I informed the member that in fact, in advance of the *Children's Act* being complete, we had already revised the policies within family and children's services for dealing directly with First Nations. We had already changed the child welfare policy related to First Nation children and citizens. So, as the member full well knows, we've already acted in this area, and I would in fact remind the member that, as per my commitment to provide him with a copy of that policy -- and we will give him a copy of that for his information, demonstrating clearly that this government has already acted, even before the *Children's Act* review was concluded, to ensure the greater involvement of and information to First Nations prior to child apprehensions or actions in that area.

**Mr. Edzerza:** Mr. Speaker, I can appreciate the minister responding to the positive debate, because it was. But it also takes positive action, not just positive words. Some of my constituents believe that, quite to the contrary, there needs to be more positive action.

We have seen the results in the bumpy road that has been the act review. Time after time, First Nation representatives quit the process, saying they were not being heard. This government's position has forced First Nations to take a confrontational stance on the complex questions of jurisdiction. If some of the ideas that were suggested long ago had been acted on, this might have at least relieved the jurisdictional problems around who ultimately has control.

If the final version of a new *Children's Act* is still a year away, it's not too late. Will the minister commit to reviewing the recommendations that are already on the table and agreed upon and act on those things that can be implemented now, rather than a year from now?

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** This is a very strange question coming from the member opposite. I can't help but have the feeling that it may have been written prior to our debate the other day because it certainly does not seem to reflect the information I relayed then and right now to the member opposite on how this government has already acted in advance of the *Children's Act* review being completed, by revising the policies within family and children's services related to First Nation children. The changed policy was put in place in March of this year.

We have already acted in this area. We are continuing to work with the Council of Yukon First Nations as our partners in the development of the *Children's Act* legislation, so I'm not quite sure what the member is getting at. It certainly does not seem to reflect the facts, as I relayed earlier in this Question Period and in our very positive debate the other day, demonstrating clearly that this government has already acted posi-

tively in advance of the completion of the *Children's Act* review. We are continuing that good work and bringing it forward to completion with the Council of Yukon First Nations as our partner.

#### **Question re: Court recording contract**

**Mr. Inverarity:** In response to my questions last week about the court reporting contract, the Justice minister asked me to imagine how complex this issue is. This issue is not complex at all. A local business was cut out of a contract by this government. The owner of the local business has tried to engage the government in resolving this issue but Justice officials state that this local business never had a contract with the Yukon government.

That's exactly what the problem is: a local business was cut out of a \$1-million contract. We are aware of this government's limitless arrogance. We are told that the award letter signed by the Minister of Justice doesn't mean anything; it's just another benign legality. This local business owner wants justice and the Justice department said, "Go ahead, sue me."

My question for the Justice minister is: why does this government have to be forced by the courts to do the right thing?

**Hon. Ms. Horne:** As I said previously, this is a complex issue. I think it's important to understand the facts in this case before we proceed further.

There was no contract with the woman in question at Mega Reporting. The contract was signed with International Reporting. The letter the member opposite referred to congratulated the proponent on the award, using language that is descriptive of a "relationship" as opposed to a "contract".

The contract regulations and directives were followed according to government regulations. International Reporting had its contract terminated early due to performance issues. We don't know what the relationship was between the lady in question and International Reporting. That was an arrangement between them; we don't know whether she was an employee. That's between the two individuals.

**Mr. Inverarity:** Just so there's no confusion, I'm going to file some documents here, Mr. Speaker. Of the three documents I have, the first document is the proposal form A, which identifies the partnership with the bid contract that is in question. The second document is a letter signed by the Minister of Justice, awarding the contract to the partnership, and the third document is the contract in question. This contract was not issued to the partnership as it should have been; this contract was issued only to one party of the partnership. The local business was cut out of it -- a million-dollar contract, that's how much this contract is worth.

When asked to account for this apparent violation of contracting regulations, the government responded with, "So what? Sue me."

When will the Minister of Justice cease and desist this destructive approach when dealing with local businesses and fix the mistake? Here's the contract information for filing.

**Hon. Ms. Horne:** Mr. Speaker, again, the member opposite is totally incorrect on this issue. I cannot see the Justice department telling anyone to sue the department. This contract was not with Mega Reporting; it was International Reporting

Inc. International Reporting Inc. had its contract terminated early because of issues in performance. Subsequent to the termination of that contract, a settlement was reached between International Reporting and Mega Reporting on issues related to their internal dispute. The Yukon government was not a party to this dispute, nor will it be a party now.

Thank you.

**Mr. Inverarity:** Well, the documents are there, Mr. Speaker. This government's relationship with local business has a destructive impact on Yukon's economy. The current three-year contract for court recording services was awarded to an Outside company. As the Justice minister pointed out last week, this Outside company submitted the only proposal. Mr. Speaker, there are at least two other local companies that are qualified to do this work. It could have gone to a local business, but it has not. This begs the question: why not? Well, why is it that the qualified local company did not bid on this contract? Has the government mismanaged contracts once too often? Has the government antagonized local businesses and business owners? Has this government destroyed the trust of local businesses? Well, the answer is yes, yes and yes. Local business is not involved in the contract because they refuse to bid on it. They don't want to work for this government. When is the government going to clean up its contracting practices?

**Hon. Ms. Horne:** The answer is no, no, no. We do not do wrong to the Yukon people. This government is committed to contracting under the guidelines. We replaced International Reporting with the current contractor because of the problems we had with the contact. Court recording is an essential part of our court services. We have to have it done correctly, properly, accurately and on time. This was not being done; therefore, we cut the contract.

Our government is committed to providing the best possible services to our courts. As you know, that is essential. We have followed and will continue to follow the contracting regulations and directives in both performance management of contracts and in tendering contracts. That is taking care of the taxpayers' money.

#### **Question re: School construction planning**

**Mr. Fairclough:** Earlier in this session, the Minister of Education indicated that he was not yet in possession of the Holdfast report. This report was to study issues around school planning in Whitehorse. In checking the contract registry this morning, I confirmed that the report was to be completed by May 31. This is June 12, some 12 days later.

Whitehorse residents are anxious to hear and read the report. There are many issues swirling around education in the Yukon and especially around the Whitehorse schools. Will the minister confirm that he has the report, and will he table it?

**Hon. Mr. Rouble:** Immediately upon taking office, this government went to work on the Education portfolio. We started to work with a consulting firm that has a specialty in looking at facilities and with school planning. We also went to work with the community. We let a contract go that gave direction to a company to look at the issue of F.H. Collins, its current use and future use; to look at the school in Porter Creek, its current use and future use and how it could react to the growing

populations, the growing number of people and students in these communities. We also went to work in looking at the Copper Ridge area, which as we all know is a growing area in the City of Whitehorse. We went to work with the Copper Ridge school advisory group and sat down with them to look at the current situation and what is going on in the future and the future growth of that community. When I get the final report, I will then be in possession of it, but I have not yet received the final report.

**Mr. Fairclough:** Perhaps the minister could show some interest and get hold of this report. It's done; it's completed -- some 12 days ago. There's no reason why the minister can't table that report in this House. There are many concerns of Whitehorse residents over the fate of F.H. Collins, like the minister said. Will it be renovated? Will there be a new school built? Where will a new school be built? How much would it cost? Would there be a change in programming offered? There are many questions out there. The minister has the report. He needs to make this public.

Will the minister inform the House when his department will make the report available and when public consultation will begin on this report?

**Hon. Mr. Rouble:** The member is wrong and the member should base his statements on fact. The fact is that the final report has not been received. That is the fact; that is the truth. I am not in possession of the final report. There were issues we asked the contractor to look into, areas to further flesh out and examine. They did additional work and had additional meetings with the community.

And, Mr. Speaker, if the member opposite says it's so, unfortunately that doesn't mean it is.

When I get the final report I will comment on it.

**Mr. Fairclough:** I think the minister will get the final report right after this House stands.

During the by-election in October 2005, Yukoners were told by a Yukon Party candidate there would be a new school built in the Granger-Copper Ridge area. This was later confirmed by members of this government. In the election of 2006, the Yukon Party reaffirmed their intention to build a new school.

People want to know what the plan is. Will there be a new school? Where will it be built? What kind of school will be built? If there is to be a new school, then what is the plan? Will five-year-old children be bused out of the community to attend school in another place? What school will they be bused to? These are all questions the public has.

These are fundamentally important questions and we have patiently waited for the report. Now the deadline has come and gone. Where is the report? Why is it a big secret? Will the minister table it?

**Hon. Mr. Rouble:** I will tell the member opposite that we will continue to be responsive to the needs of the community. We will continue to listen to the community, and especially to the Copper Ridge school advisory group. We will continue to be responsive to the needs in our education system, just as we've done recently with increasing funding for experiential and vocational learning. We have announced an additional

\$370,000 that is going to have an impact in the classroom in the next school year. We will be responsive to the needs of the community, just as we are with the Individual Learning Centre, where, last week, I was tremendously happy to see the 25 students, who had been previously disengaged from high school, going back to school and getting their high school diploma.

We will continue to be responsive to the needs in the community, and we'll work with the First Nation programming and partnership unit that we have just developed to ensure that our curriculum is responsive to the needs of the community.

Mr. Speaker, education is one of this government's highest priorities. It is an area where we are continuing to make investment. It's an area where we've made an investment of over \$125 million in this budget, and it's an area for which we have a vision. The Yukon Party will continue to work with all Yukoners to enact our vision for education.

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

#### Notice of government private members' business

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** Pursuant to Standing Order 14.2(7), I would like to inform the House that, in the interest of facilitating debate on the budget, the government private member does not wish to identify any items to be called on Wednesday, June 13, 2007, under the heading "government private members' business."

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

#### ORDERS OF THE DAY

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

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

*Motion agreed to*

*Speaker leaves the Chair*

#### COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

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

The matter before Committee of the Whole is Bill No. 6, *First Appropriation Act, 2007-08*, Department of Health and Social Services.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

**All Hon. Members:** Agreed.

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

*Recess*

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

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

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

**Chair:** The matter before the Committee is Bill No. 6, *First Appropriation Act, 2007-08*, Department of Health and Social Services. We will resume general debate.

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** In rising today in resuming debate on the Department of Health and Social Services, I'd like to begin by referring to some of the comments that have been made previously in the House, and touching on some of that. To recap for those who are listening or reading this, we've had a significant amount of debate on this department to date. I think it's fair to say that there has been a very marked contrast in debate between certain members and certain other members. We've had very positive debate. I've had very positive debate with members of the NDP and with one member of the Liberal caucus, the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin. Unfortunately, this session, the remaining four members of the Liberal caucus have not been positive about anything. We have seen a session where the Official Opposition Liberals, the majority of the caucus, have been very negative about everything. They have involved private citizens in the debate, to an extent, I believe, that would be found to be unprecedented by anyone reviewing *Hansard*.

They have brought in private citizens when they are attacking them and have attempted to suggest a connection between that citizen and the government. Every time someone has not been successful in some contract, they suggest that somehow the government must have interfered in the tendering process, even if the government had no involvement or no awareness of the contract whatsoever. It's a very unfortunate approach to see the members taking. I know it is a sign of their desperation and the fact that they're having great difficulty --

##### Chair's statement

**Chair:** I would just like to remind all members to keep the debate focused on Health and Social Services.

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** Yes, I respect your statement. I would point out that the members' comments have reflected on Health and Social Services. They have applied that negativity to all areas of the government, that personalization of debate and that involvement of private citizens in the debate as props, for lack of a better term.

I would like to reflect on some other elements of debate on Health and Social Services, particularly the attack that the members of the Liberal Party -- particularly the Member for Copperbelt, their current leader -- have brought up in debate in the public as well as with the collaboration of one media outlet, the *Yukon News*, on a public sector employee.

The direct targeted attacks and criticism of the current chief executive officer of the Yukon Hospital Corporation is not appropriate nor is it fair to that individual, particularly since members choose to make them within these hallways, rather than outside the Assembly where the individual can make a choice about whether or not they feel a defamation lawsuit is in order because of criticism of their character and performance.

The government respects the work of all who are involved in the delivery of health care, both within the Department of Health and Social Services and the hard-working employees there -- and I want to express my personal gratitude to them for their work and support over the year and a half I have been minister responsible for that department. It has been a great pleasure working with them and we've accomplished a significant amount. I'm very pleased with what we've achieved in areas such as the health human resources strategy and the implementation of that, and in other areas such as increasing our investment and partnership with non-governmental organizations. That has been a very positive relationship and something I'm very thankful for. It would not have happened without the hard work and dedication of the employees of Health and Social Services.

We also appreciate the work of employees within the Whitehorse General Hospital, and within all areas of our health system. It is the dedicated professions who do so much to keep our system running. It is their dedication and work that provides people with the care that they need. We also extend that gratitude and support to members of the board of directors of the Yukon Hospital Corporation.

To do as members have and pick out individuals from that board and cast direct criticism on them is not very conducive to this government, or any government of the territory, getting people to volunteer for boards and committees. If you take a look at the boards and committees today, the number of nominations received through public advertisement -- for two positions there might be two applications in some cases, for certain boards -- has declined in areas. Why? Because members of the public have justifiable concern that, should they step forward to a board, they will be immediately accused by the opposition of having a connection to the government and of doing something inappropriate in any context.

This type of approach is certainly very unfortunate. This government has not been the root of these problems. I would point out and remind members that the Liberal campaign manager was on the recently concluded *Workers' Compensation Act* review panel. When he declared his party affiliation, we did not push him off the panel. We did not fire him. We allowed that individual to continue his work and we continued compensating him. He was compensated quite well for that work, I would point out to members. We let that individual do his work. I took the heat from members opposite for the delay in that work. This government did not point the finger at the Liberal campaign manager; we let him do his work.

We respect people regardless of their party affiliation, and there are people on boards and committees who have been appointed with known affiliations to other parties, or whose party affiliations are not known. This government considers it irrelevant. We appoint people based on performance, on their offering to do the work and on that dedication.

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

#### Point of order

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

**Mr. Inverarity:** On a point of order, what does this have to do with debate on Health and Social Services? It's more to do with the committee appointments.

#### Chair's ruling

**Chair:** There is no point of order.

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** What I want to point out to the members are the specific comments made by their current leader, the Member for Copperbelt, in reference to members of the board of directors of the Yukon Hospital Corporation and the CEO of the Yukon Hospital Corporation. The members have orchestrated a recent attack here in the House and in the media, particularly against the chief executive officer of Whitehorse General Hospital. I want to respond to the incorrect and damaging comments that have been made regarding that individual and regarding comments that the members have made and have orchestrated in this debate.

To begin with, in correcting the record, the former chair of the Yukon Hospital Corporation was a part of the hiring committee for the current chief executive officer. The Member for Copperbelt knows that full well. The current chair of the Hospital Corporation was not a member of that hiring committee and was only involved after the hiring committee had made the decision. His only involvement was meeting the individual immediately prior to the board confirming that appointment and that decision of the hiring committee. By extension, the member opposite has criticized everyone involved, not simply the chair of the Yukon Hospital Corporation. He has cast a pall on the reputations of all members of that board and suggested that they would allow decisions to be made and support decisions to be made that did not reflect the best interest of health care. In fact, those members, including the chair, are all committed to the work of the hospital and its provision of service to Yukoners.

I simply cannot miss this opportunity to set the record straight. The candidates for the position of CEO were interviewed and a decision was made about who would be the best CEO. As I have pointed out, several members of that board of directors were involved in the hiring committee, including the former chair, but it did not include the new and current chair of the corporation.

The decision of the hiring committee was not circumvented or interfered with in any way, shape or form by the new and current chair of the board of the Yukon Hospital Corporation. The new chair was appointed and he conveyed his support for the process that had been used by the hiring committee to select that CEO.

I personally find the criticism of the chief executive officer of the Yukon Hospital Corporation -- Mr. Aeberhardt -- that has occurred to this point in the House deplorable, and I would urge all members to refrain from attacks on all public sector employees.

I would point out that the members have also stood up and, in referring to a letter written by the former chair of the Hospital Corporation and with a full endorsement of that letter, have also attacked a hard-working employee in my Department of Health and Social Services. They're condoning and orchestrat-



ing an attack on two hard-working public sector employees who do not deserve this criticism.

These personal attacks lack the ethics that the Member for Copperbelt and his colleagues spoke about so much in the last election campaign. It does not reflect the code of conduct they presented to the public and claimed they would follow in the last election. It demonstrates a smallness and a nastiness that make Yukoners wonder how the Liberal Party would actually conduct itself if it managed to win government again.

It also speaks to a certain desperation. I think everyone here knows what's happening.

To recap, what we have seen in this session of the Legislature is the Leader of the Official Opposition Liberals has been experiencing increasing desperation. During the last election, the Liberal Party expected --

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

#### Point of order

**Chair:** Member for Porter Creek South, on a point of order.

**Mr. Inverarity:** What does this have to do with Health and Social Services?

#### Chair's ruling

**Chair:** On a point of order, I would like to remind all members to keep the debate relevant to Health and Social Services and not to personalize the debate.

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** I respect your ruling and I am pointing out that this is what the line of questioning specific to the members opposite is -- what they have been engaging in this entire session -- including today in the debate on Health and Social Services.

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

#### Point of order

**Chair:** Member for Porter Creek South, on a point of order.

**Mr. Inverarity:** If he's going to debate, debate Health and Social Services.

**Chair:** Member for Porter Creek North, on the point of order.

**Hon. Mr. Kenyon:** General debate normally will include all issues around this. The member opposite can't put things on the table and then try to claim that it's inappropriate to address them.

Also I would bring the Chair's attention to the Standing Orders. The ruling of the Speaker or Chair is final. The member opposite seems to be challenging that decision.

#### Chair's ruling

**Chair:** When we were actually debating Department of Health and Social Services on the previous point of order, I do believe it was not a point of order, but I would encourage all members to keep the debate relevant and not personalize the debate, please.

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** Certainly I respect your ruling. I'm not attempting to personalize the debate. I am pointing out that

the comments that have been brought forward successively, throughout the past weeks in this session by the members opposite, have taken a very specific tone. In relation to their questions, I am pointing out what the facts are related to those areas and, in fact, what the spin presented by members reflects.

Members are well aware that this government stepped forward to address the \$17-million pension plan deficit in the Whitehorse General Hospital employee pension plan, which had not been properly recognized and addressed by the corporation. We stepped forward and worked cooperatively with the corporation. The offer was made with the entire board invited into the Cabinet room. They sat down with the Premier and me as we discussed the problem and offered our solution -- a very cooperative working relationship indeed.

We were acting on the direction of the federal regulator, the Office of the Superintendent of Financial Institutions Canada, who is the regulator of the federal law that applies to public sector pensions. That federal regulator had informed the board of the Yukon Hospital Corporation that the corporation's decisions were not in line with the applicable federal legislation. They first advised the board of that fact in 2003, and issued warnings again in 2004 and 2005.

The government was required to step in, as the board didn't respect that ruling but tried to fight that battle through lawyers and delay tactics, rather than recognizing that federal legislation had been in place since 1995. It applies to all corporations. It applies to this government, and we respect it. The appropriate thing to do was to provide the money necessary to backstop the employee pensions and honour those obligations, rather than argue about whether it was necessary to allocate the cash to do so or if it could simply be funded in a future fiscal year for which it was required.

The approach of funding in a future fiscal year is what has been known to the Canada Pension Plan for years, which resulted in tremendous problems with continuing to fund it. It was the subject of national debate in recent years.

This government acted to protect employees and the members of the board of directors of the Hospital Corporation, who, if they had gone past the deadline given by the Office of the Superintendent of Financial Institutions Canada, would have been personally, jointly and severally liable -- individually and collectively liable -- for the total deficit, because the federal regulator had the authority to determine and had determined that if they extended past that deadline they would be in violation of federal law.

This government stepped forward with a solution: \$17 million -- not, as was indicated to me by the now former chair and now former CEO, in January 2006, that the problem would only require a promissory note -- no cash ever. A promissory note for \$1.3 million was what they had claimed, and they claimed there would never be a cash requirement.

An actual cash requirement was \$17 million over 10 years. We acted; we did not cast criticism on those who had made errors. We respected the direction of the federal regulator; we respected the advice of the Department of Health and Social Services and the Department of Finance and those experts who

have full understanding of these areas. We acted; we provided the solution.

I would simply reiterate that the members here, and the approach they have taken in attacking the chief executive officer and an employee of my department, are engaging in very inappropriate debate. I would urge them to debate the facts and the issues and not focus on their desperation to make the government look bad.

I think the line of questioning was inspired by the fact that the Leader of the Liberal Party was expected to sweep to victory in the last election and, in fact, gained a single seat and hung on to the former leader's seat by a mere six votes. We recognize the long knives are out within the Liberal Party. The member is getting increasingly desperate and the Member for --

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

**Chair:** Order please. I previously asked all members not to personalize the debate and to keep the debate relevant to Health and Social Services. I do feel the debate is deteriorating and becoming much more personal. I would like to urge all members not to personalize it.

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I will attempt to moderate my comments. I do have to point out that what has inspired my somewhat pointed comments is the fact that the members of the Official Opposition -- the Liberals -- have personalized the debate and drawn private citizens and public sector employees into this Assembly and have attacked those individuals when those individuals do not have the opportunity to defend themselves in this House. That is contrary to the basic principle and practice of this Assembly to not attack individuals who cannot defend themselves on the floor of this House.

Again, I look forward to substantive questions from the members opposite. I would thank the NDP, the third party, for the fact that they have actually been constructive in debate. I would thank the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin, who is the only member of the Liberal Party who has been constructive in debate. I would urge him not to be sucked into non-constructive, personalized attacks, as his colleagues so often engage in and hook the member into on a few occasions, but to continue representing his constituents as he has on a number of occasions by engaging in constructive comments, and this government will continue to be constructive with members of the opposition who engage in constructive debate, who engage in substantive questioning and do not simply sink and stoop to personal attacks.

**Mr. Edzerza:** Well, while we're on the wavelength of correcting the record, I feel somewhat compelled to set the record straight regarding comments made by the minister, and I'd like to do it in a positive fashion. He made the comments last week about me being negligent or not responsible in carrying out requests from -- I might say, comments that were made in Cabinet and caucus, which I always felt were confidential. However, they were brought to the floor, stating that I was given direction to immediately implement and start working on land-based treatment centres. For the record, I would like to

respect the confidentiality of the discussions in Cabinet and caucus. Otherwise I could really tell a good tale here.

I'll just say that the direction to take such action was given to me at the very end of the mandate, and the minister knows very well that there was no time to even start the discussions on that process.

One would have to wonder why the Minister of Justice would be the one responsible to do the Health and Social Services minister's job. Why was the Minister of Justice given direction to start organizing land-based treatment centres on behalf of the health program? I imagine it might have been because, as a minister, I was very successful at accomplishing tasks that were given to me and did so in a timely fashion. So I can understand why the Premier probably wanted to assign this very difficult task to me. I do thank him for his faith in me being able to accomplish it.

I'm going to continue with a couple of questions to end my line of questioning in this area. I'd like to focus just for a moment on the importance of First Nation involvement in any kind of a program that has to do with the healing of the spirit.

The government must recognize that there is a severe cultural clash when it comes to what process or what method would be used in dealing with drug and alcohol addictions. I would like to move some of the focus away from alcohol and drug treatment per se, because as First Nations we recognize that many, many years of abuse by government through the mission school process has created not only alcohol and drug abuse, but very severe mental health issues that are more primary to a person's deterioration of health -- as opposed to drug and alcohol addiction.

The government must realize and appreciate the fact that there is a very grave difference in the approach of dealing with the mental health issue in a traditional fashion versus the conventional method. I took a delegation just this morning out to the Jackson Lake healing camp that Kwanlin Dun has. I asked one of the people in the delegation: "If you were going to go for treatment, now that you've seen the Sarah Steele building and you have had a look at the Jackson Lake healing camp, and if you had a choice, which facility would you choose?" In an instant, the individual said, "There doesn't have to be much thought put into this decision. It definitely would be Jackson Lake."

It is important to have those discussions with First Nations. The minister can make comments about debate in every fashion that he so chooses. However, I will still continue to press for the inclusion of First Nation people when it comes to programs that are going to affect First Nations.

I know he has repeatedly said his responsibility is for all citizens of the Yukon. That's fine, but I believe there does have to be special consideration given to First Nation involvement in things that are going to affect First Nations. I believe the possibilities of achieving success would be much higher if there was a good partnership agreement made out where the First Nations are not totally dominated by the government's direction or wishes. A partnership, in my opinion, means that both parties are going to have a lot of authority and responsibility for putting something together that might work. A partnership means

that both parties are going to have to feel like they're being heard. Both parties are going to have to be flexible with whatever they decide.

As a citizen and as an MLA, my main interest is to not so much be the one who has the power and control to make things happen, but be one who focuses on a very positive outcome for the citizens whom we all represent. Far too often, programs are developed without the input of those who are going to be using the program, and that's why they are not successful.

I have two questions I would like to ask the minister. The first one deals with the land-based treatment. I already asked a lot of questions on this, so I'm just going to ask the minister. The minister is aware that the Community Wellness Court is now coming into play. It has the potential to create a large influx of Yukon citizens choosing to take treatment. How will alcohol and drug services branch cope with the clientele coming from the Community Wellness Court? Has there been any discussion between Justice and Health and Social Services? I am aware of a collaboration agreement between Health and Social Services and Education, and that document can be very helpful in this very issue of the Community Wellness Court.

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** In reference to the comments the member began his statement with, certainly, I was not attempting to get into a debate over what the member did or did not do. The member had referred to a previous question where I had noted that my responsibility for the land-based treatment components began in this mandate. In the last mandate there was an agreement between the member and me, as he was at that time in his role as Minister of Justice and the lead in dealing with that area. This is something that I've taken over at the start of this new mandate -- certain components of it, I should also point out. This is not to diminish the work being done by the Minister of Justice and her department because of their connection in relation to both correctional reform and expansion of services related to the Community Wellness Court. They are also involved in that with a different focus on certain components. It is focused more toward areas where someone might be sentenced rather than the options of voluntary treatment. Of course, the member will understand that there is a bit of a distinction between those who have been charged with a criminal offence and are currently incarcerated or in a period of court-ordered sentencing versus those who are, of their own free will, accessing a program to deal with an addiction or a problem.

With regard to the question the member asks, as far as support services within alcohol and drug services related to the community court, as I relayed previously in debate, we have one new position under alcohol and drug services specifically to assist with the operations of the community court. That's an outreach/community courtworker. As well, we've enhanced the basic operations within alcohol and drug services through a new intake worker. Those two new positions reflect an increase of \$161,000 in that area of the department, which is part of an overall seven-percent increase in funding in that area.

That is a specific example of what we have done to this point to enhance the services within alcohol and drug services toward supporting the Community Wellness Court. As I pointed out to the member when we engaged in this debate

yesterday, if it is found either within Health and Social Services or Justice that it needs to be enhanced in some way, that will be brought to the attention of the respective ministers. That was an area of concern I believe the Member for Mount Lorne had. If there is a need to enhance the support in this area, that will be brought forward to the respective ministers who will take the appropriate action. If further assistance is required through the Management Board process, we will undoubtedly make that determination.

As the member noted, some of this is based on a projection of how many people we expect will be sentenced to this area, which is largely in the hands of the judges. There is significant capacity within the overall system and the specific creation of a position within my department. There is also a larger amount of support within Justice, as the lead department in this area. The support they provide for this court is even larger than what we in Health and Social Services provide, which is the supporting department, not the lead department, for the Community Wellness Court.

On other areas, in response to the member, as far as involvement of First Nations, I want to point out that there has been a significant amount of time spent engaged in a significant number of processes, beginning in the last mandate and continuing in this mandate, to involve First Nations particularly in areas that have a significant effect on their citizens, disproportionate to their percentage of the population -- such as the *Children's Act* -- where we have worked in partnership with the Council of Yukon First Nations in this discussion of what are very emotional, important and critical issues. While there were some challenges early on in the discussions, we have continued forward and are now proceeding very well and are coming to the conclusions. As I mentioned to the member previously, we have, in advance of the act being completed, already amended our child welfare policy relating to First Nation citizens based on input from all First Nations, not just from the Council of Yukon First Nations.

An important part of that is our protocol and policy around informing a First Nation when there is a child apprehension case involving one of their citizens. We've already stepped forward and shown our commitment, and we have already begun implementing the good work as a result of this very positive and collaborative discussion.

Other joint reviews have gone on. Other joint consultations and processes involving First Nations include the corrections consultations and action plan, and the education reform process. Contrary to the assertions of certain members of the opposition, all these are very good work, although they have taken a little longer than originally projected, in some cases. These are processes that no other government engaged in with First Nations; no other government stepped forward to work together and try to achieve consensus to the extent we have. They did not involve First Nations as full partners in these areas, as we did.

The fact that new processes come up with unexpected challenges should not be a surprise. What the member should be focused on -- as this government is focused on -- is the fact that we've achieved very good work and results in these areas,

and the outcome will better reflect the needs of all Yukon citizens, including First Nations, than previous legislation, processes and associated areas under other governments.

We're very proud of what we've done here. I'm sure that if the members take the time to consider how much ground has been gained in these areas, they'll also be very positive toward what has occurred.

**Mr. Edzerza:** To follow up with a line of questioning today during Question Period with regard to the *Children's Act* review, I would like to put on the record that if some of the things I will mention were done by policy or protocol changes, it would relieve a lot of the jurisdictional problems.

Some of the recommendations I'd like to just put on record involve the extended family in decisions on child protection, children in care, foster homes and adoptions, using alternatives to court processes, mediation, child advocacy as a first choice, and support for caretakers.

Before I go on, with regard to child advocacy, I would like to know if the minister would consider making a child advocate a full-time equivalent position, rather than have the advocate appointed by a judge. I believe that this should be mandatory and that every child going before the courts and facing apprehension should have an advocate.

Other recommendations would be: support for caretakers and organizations dealing with FASD children; raising the maximum age for child services; hiring more family support workers; integrating Health and Social Services, Justice and Education departments when dealing with the children; making use of that protocol agreement and start making it do the job that it was originally intended to do; setting up an appeal process and a First Nation advisory committee for family and children's decisions; having direct lines of communications between First Nations and family and children's services branch.

Over the many, many years of being an advocate in this area, I noted that the lines of communication were always a barrier to being able to succeed in having a positive outcome from a lot of dealings with families and their children.

I imagine one could probably go on for many hours in this department, and a lot of the things that I would bring up are going to be suggestions that probably were made or are being looked at from the consultation process through the communities, because I believe the concerns right across the territory are pretty much the same. There will be an awful lot of recommendations coming forward with ways to change the *Children's Act*.

In the spirit of trying to get through this today, I am going to ask a couple of questions and then I will close my comments there. I have one that was brought to my attention again with the recruiting of health professionals. I know the minister has cited on many occasions on the floor of the Legislature the intense recruitment that the department is doing -- recruitment and retention of health professionals such as nurses. It was brought to my attention just as recently as three weeks ago that another nurse who was born and raised in the Yukon was not considered for a position as a community health nurse in Whitehorse. Even though the individual was not considered for the position, that individual has made comments that they will

still move back to the Yukon, hoping that once they move here they will be considered for a job. I believe the person in question even made the comment that it was stated they weren't a Yukon resident.

Well, Mr. Chair, the government can't refuse people positions in the health care profession in the Yukon because they don't have experience and then come back and say to someone who has seven years' experience in the community health nurse field that they're not a resident.

The government is actively in the process of recruiting people from the south. They're not residents, if you're recruiting them from the south; however, I believe that people who do have family roots here in the territory and want to move back to the territory should have priority, especially when they have the experience.

We chase nurses out of this territory on the basis that they aren't experienced and have just come out of college or university. We send them south to get experience and then want them to come back.

When someone does have experience and are from the north, I certainly hope we aren't jeopardizing our chances of having those individuals come back and live here for the rest of their career. Word of mouth, in my opinion, could be one of the most influential ways to have people not even consider coming to the Yukon. The old saying is quite true, "Bad news travels like wildfire." I've already heard some things down south about how the Yukon treats its nurses.

I don't want to end on a positive note with that, because I think the government has the know-how -- and I would say the will -- to ensure we do not start having bad rumours going around about the Yukon. One thing I know is that positive news also travels when lots of good things are said about how differently professionals are treated in the Yukon. When good things are said outside the territory, they have the same effect; people will inquire about employment in the Yukon just because of the good things that are being said.

I believe the minister is writing the questions down. That is two that I've asked now. I just have one question about seniors and it has to do with Macaulay Lodge and Copper Ridge Place. The number of months on the waiting list for Macaulay Lodge is estimated to increase to eight months. The average number of persons on the waiting list is estimated to increase by 30 percent. How is the department going to deal with that?

For the Copper Ridge Place, the average number of persons on the waiting list is estimated to increase 100 percent, from two to four. The number of months on the waiting list is estimated to increase 300 percent, from one to four months. How is the department dealing with these issues?

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** First of all, I think I can clarify the member's understanding related to continuing care. The stats he is referring to in the budget related to the waiting lists at Copper Ridge Place and Macaulay Lodge -- the budget, of course, was printed prior to the Management Board approval of opening the remaining wing at Copper Ridge Place with the new 12 beds in the process of being opened up. Those numbers reflect the statistics prior to those 12 new beds coming on-line. That's what we've done right now to deal with the problem. As

pointed out, that will address the bulk of our waiting list and reduce it to below what it has been typically over the past 10 years in average numbers of people on the waiting list.

With regard to other areas raised by the member opposite, the member raised the issue of extended family involvement in cases where children are apprehended. I think the member is particularly referring to custom adoptions and that type of approach of involving members of an extended family and providing them with options to take over the guardianship of the children if they have to be taken away from the parents and if there is an appropriate and willing member of the extended family who wishes to take on that responsibility.

That is one of the issues considered under the *Children's Act* review. I point out as I did before in the House on this issue, once the legislation is finalized, all of the *Children's Act* review still has to be approved by Cabinet and then tabled in the Legislature. The direction has been given from the Cabinet level and from me as minister from the beginning, but the final product still has to be reviewed. So I can't make any grand pronouncements on the final text of that legislation, but it's one of the issues that is likely to be addressed in a new *Children's Act* -- that there would be some change related to that area.

Alternatives to sentencing in cases of family violence -- steps have already been taken in areas such as the domestic violence treatment option and the operations of that process through alternative options in community court. That has already been stepped forward to make some improvement in that area -- not saying that more can't be done, but it has already been acted upon.

Family support workers -- the member raises that issue as well. I can tell the member opposite, in this budget we have an increase for 3.4 FTE positions for new family support workers. That number does not include the contribution that we've made to the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation to assist them with a worker position. That's a worker they're hiring and we are simply providing them with funding to assist in that area.

Last year, during the first budget that I was the minister responsible for the department, we did increase the budget to create new family support worker positions. I don't have that number in front of me. I was trying to pull that number from the budget and determine from past years' numbers where we were. I believe there were three or four new positions. I believe it was discussed in debate of the 2006-07 main estimates. I could stand to be corrected on that number, but I believe there were three or four new family support worker positions in the last fiscal year, so we are adding incrementally to this area. We added last year. We added further support in this year to address other areas of capacity, and we will continue to monitor and to look at areas where we might need to enhance support.

As far as support for NGOs and groups dealing with assisting people who have fetal alcohol spectrum disorder, I point out to the member that we've provided significant support to Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Society Yukon, to the Child Development Centre and to Options for Independence -- just three of the key NGOs we work with in relation to this area. So again, we have already stepped forward, and we will continue to take a look at what the needs are in this area.

In regard to the mental health end of things, we also work with Yukon Family Services Association and have enhanced the support to them. They work in certain communities where the Yukon government doesn't have offices where we are able to provide mental health services directly. They provide counselling support, other issues related to the mental health challenges people face, including substance abuse. Last year, I believe the increase that we provided them with was just slightly in excess of \$100,000 to assist them in further expanding that role. So again, we're working with the organizations and associations as well as enhancing the services within the department. I previously pointed out the increased support through the creation of a clinician position within Whitehorse related to youth mental health issues. As well, we increased support by \$116,000 for early psychosis intervention under the territorial health access fund, which is a new program.

\$160,000 is specifically focused toward young people, as well as the support within Dawson City for the new clinician position for rural Yukon based out of Dawson City, where we have another individual to assist in that area.

Those are a few examples for the member of how we're dealing with this area and the associated challenges. As the member is well aware, issues related to substance abuse are not simply related to the alcohol itself. They're often connected to mental health challenges, to a person having fetal alcohol spectrum disorder, to a person having been abused when they were a child, or other problems. There's usually something else, a related problem, that causes someone to be addicted to alcohol or another substance. It's not usually purely the physiological response to that substance.

The member has also raised the issue of nursing. I know the member and his family experienced great frustration when his daughter was not hired for the position she had hoped for.

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

**Chair:** Order please. I would advise the member not to personalize the debate.

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** I wasn't attempting to personalize but I do respect your ruling on that. I was simply pointing out that, related to nurses, the issues in this area are operational matters. I have no involvement, as minister, with hiring nurses other than that we have provided increased support and funding. We have increased programs such as the health human resources strategy; we have doubled the pre-existing nurse bursary and doubled the number of applicants accepted under that area.

The creation of the new nurse mentorship program, which had been requested for many years -- in fact it is focused on an area related to what the member is asking for, which is having Yukon nurses, Yukon citizens being trained to fulfill roles such as in community nursing.

For the community nurses, particularly those in rural Yukon where they are sometimes the sole health care provider, there is a requirement for a high level of experience in this area because of the fact that they are forced to step into what is sometimes referred to as an extended practice area. I think it is most accurately portrayed as acting at the very high end of the

scope of practice of nurses. They are forced to take on a very significant responsibility and somebody fresh out of grad school simply has not demonstrated that ability and experience to handle what is extremely challenging for any individual in any profession, particularly in the health care profession where they are the sole point of contact in a community. That creates a tremendous load on their shoulders and there must be a demonstrated ability to handle not just the competency related to health issues in there but also the ability to handle the pressure of being that sole person in that community.

What we've done with the nurse mentorship program -- it is focused on three areas of training nurses to a higher level of care, helping them gain that knowledge transfer from experienced nurses in those positions. It is focused primarily on acute care, on community nursing, and on continuing care. This step is being taken to enhance our ability to train our own people. Should someone operating out of a Whitehorse facility be mentored to a level where they are able to take on a position in a community, it would leave a position in Whitehorse that would then require filling. This is part of addressing issues such as the member referred to in staffing.

What causes some frustration for nurses who are seeking jobs in this area is that there are certain positions that do require a high level of experience or qualifications that nurses applying for positions may not have. Then there is the determination through the staff of either Health and Social Services or the hospital. If the staff do not believe that the person is qualified to take on the job, based on the hiring process, then they look for other options such as what we have been required to do sometimes in the community -- bringing in nurses on temporary positions from Outside to assist us in the areas where we've not been able to recruit anyone yet. We are stepping forward in this area. We are working to improve what is being done in this.

The other area that may cause some frustration for members as well -- we could engage in endless debate of whether or not the member thinks staffing levels should be increased and personal opinions related to that. There has not been a problem -- with the exception of specialty positions such as community nursing and operating room nurses -- for the managers to actually hire those nurses they need to date, with a few rare exceptions.

On the issues related to overall staffing -- if the members attempt to go there next -- we've stepped forward to increase already, both within our operations and as well as enhancing the contribution to Whitehorse General Hospital -- based on the request of nurses and concerns that have been brought forward, I have asked the managers in both areas to take a look at how the operations are being done and if there are any areas requiring further assistance from us, in terms of, for example, something like the total financial contribution, we're prepared to consider that. The areas related to the hospital are through the direction of the board. They're working on working with all the health professions involved and taking a look at how their operations are managed in that area overall. I'm confident that they will do very fine work in that area.

What I have stressed and will continue to stress in both areas is that this government is committed to working with them, to supporting them as needed, but we need them to identify if there is a problem, particularly one that might involve financial resources. If they identify that problem to us, we can go to work with them on it, but we need to have that identified to us before we can be aware that there is a problem.

The other thing that I would point out to the member -- and to other members, in fact -- is that although there are always challenges within every health system and there are always differing opinions from people inside and outside the system and how it should be dealt with -- but if you compare us nationally in the area of nursing, a national survey by the Canadian Nurses Association found that only 53 percent of nurses working nationwide have full-time employment and the number in the Yukon is significantly higher than that. The member should reflect that in fact, while we do have some challenges and areas where people have suggested we take another look -- and we are taking another look, of course -- we are significantly better than the rest of the country in providing stability and security to our employees, particularly nurses in this area.

**Mr. Edzerza:** Mr. Chair, I feel obligated, just for the record, to state that the personal things that were mentioned about me and my family members are water under the bridge. I would like to state for the record that the person in question has already advanced to the ER section of the hospital she works in. The Yukon lost a good nurse.

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

**Chair:** I just made a comment about personalizing the debate, and we are personalizing the debate again.

**Mr. Edzerza:** Anyhow, Mr. Chair, having said that, the reason I raised this to start with was that I did have a citizen ask me to raise this on the floor, with regard to being someone who was born and raised in Yukon and who went Outside, got the necessary training to become a community health nurse, has worked in the field for seven years outside the territory in Alberta, applied to come back and was told that one of the reasons for not hiring her was because she wasn't a Yukon citizen.

So I just raise it. What happens from there is whatever happens. All I am saying is that I certainly hope that people who are from the Yukon and want to come back here aren't discouraged from doing so. That's all I am saying. This individual asked me to raise it as a concern that they have. It has been raised; my job is done. I certainly have all the confidence that the health professionals and those in charge of hiring will make every effort to ensure that Yukon people have that opportunity to come back to the Yukon whenever they want if they are qualified to fill a position.

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** I am not going to get into a personal debate with the member, particularly on individuals whose record of hiring and applications I have no knowledge of, nor should I have any knowledge of. There is very good reason why ministers are not involved in personnel matters. I do not involve myself in personnel matters, nor attempt to involve myself, and I have no intention of ever doing so. These areas are dealt with appropriately by the department and by the

hospital in its area of authority, and I have confidence that they do the job. I tell them, and will continue to tell them, that if there are issues that I need to be aware of where they require my assistance they can bring those to my attention any time. I am never going to get involved in deciding which nurses are hired or not hired, nor any other professional in that area. Those areas are dealt with appropriately by the department and are supported by the minister, which is exactly the way we do things here.

That being said, I do agree with the member on the desire to see Yukoners who are trained in health professions return to the territory, where there are jobs available for them, and that an attempt is made to enhance the training of Yukon citizens to benefit communities and have our own citizens return home to take care of their friends, family and community.

This is one of the reasons why we have stepped forward with the health human resources strategy, why we have created the new nurse mentoring program and significantly increased the nursing education bursary, and why we have created other areas such as the health profession education bursary for various other health professionals and programs specific to attracting family physicians -- the family physician incentive program for new graduates. This is focused on attracting recent graduates of medical school for a five-year commitment in the territory in exchange for \$50,000 in funding, staged in three payments over that period. There is also the creation of a new medical education bursary, providing \$10,000 in support per applicant, specific to Yukon students attending a medical school. If those students are successful in completing medical school, there's an additional \$15,000 available for them if they take their period of residency in a family practice here in the territory.

We have also enhanced that through a step taken in April of this year: the creation of a stipend for those qualified Yukon physicians who preceptor such a student during their period of medical residency. There is also the creation of new funding available to family practice doctors to expand an existing medical clinic building to create space for at least one new physician and thus enhance our ability to attract those physicians to the territory.

As well as, of course, the new program created to attract experienced physicians will be worked on with the YMA in administering that program. Of course, there is the continued focus on new marketing and recruitment strategies in our partnership with the Yukon Medical Association in that area. These are but a few of the areas that we have invested in. Through the health human resources strategy, we will continue to work on strengthening our relationship and our planning with the health professionals and the associations representing those health professionals to address the long-term needs and planning of the Yukon and Yukon citizens.

We certainly see how poor decisions that were made in the health system, such as reducing the number of seats in medical schools and reducing the number of seats in nursing schools back in the early 1990s, caused a significant problem in today's system. That's one important reason why this government is focused on working with the health professionals and their as-

sociations to do a long-term planning and prepare for the needs, not only of the next five years but also the next 10, 15 and 20 years, to ensure that there is some long-term thinking going on, rather than the typical government practice, which led us to the challenges we face nationally today of dealing with things on a five-year term focus. We're talking the long-term view. We're working with the health professionals and we will continue to roll out other elements of the plan, both in the short term and by doing the planning to work together to determine what the needs are and how to address the needs of the future in the Yukon.

**Mr. Edzerza:** I believe one question I asked the minister that wasn't answered was on whether or not the minister would consider funding a full-time child advocate position.

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** I'm not going to prejudge elements that may come out of the *Children's Act* review, but I will note that that has been proposed by individuals before. I know there are those who are strong proponents of that.

I want to stress that we have a very good system today. Staff do an excellent job of fulfilling their responsibilities.

As to having a children's advocate, one of the reasons that it seems to have been proposed is to monitor and to watchdog the work that is done by the staff. I don't see a need for that. I think the staff do an excellent job. I think their managers and the director do a very good job in fulfilling their responsibility. I'm not going to rule out the member's suggestion, but I will simply point out that the existing structure, I think, works far better than it's often given credit for. The areas of concern that members bring up are often related to the act itself and policies related to that, rather than how staff perform their duties within that area. I will not rule out the member's suggestion at this point, but I don't see a glaring need for that position.

**Mr. Mitchell:** Earlier in his opening remarks, the minister raised a series of issues. Respecting your ruling, Mr. Chair, and also, in the interest of time, I have no interest in responding to any of the more personal remarks made regarding my performance or that of the Liberal Party.

However, there are a few things I do want to -- specifically related to the Health and Social Services debate -- respond to in the interest of accuracy. First of all, regarding questions about Whitehorse General Hospital, I want to point out that this issue arose because the president of the Yukon Medical Association publicly stated that there was a crisis in effect at the hospital. Those were his words when he used the word "crisis". The president of the Yukon Registered Nurses Association pointed out difficulties they were having with morale and such with the hours that nurses had to work. The head of the hospital's union made comments regarding difficulties that they were working under at the hospital, including the shortening of holiday time.

When these things occur, we as the Official Opposition are going to ask questions about whether there are difficulties arising at Whitehorse General Hospital. If the hospital is run by a board, then we will ask -- since it was the CEO of the board who was cited by the Yukon Medical Association's president, we raised that issue. I want to just put into the record that that's our job. We certainly weren't criticizing the health care work-

ers, because, in fact, it was the health care workers who were raising the issue.

Rather, we were asking if we were heading for difficulty, and is the excellent quality of health care to which we've become accustomed, something that is in jeopardy? We certainly think that's a legitimate thing and that's why we raised it in Question Period.

Regarding another issue, having stated we were personally attacking officials, both the Finance minister previously and the Health minister this afternoon, in making reference to the Office of the Superintendent of Financial Institutions Canada indicated that things were occurring under the former chair's watch, and they had to come forward with a \$17-million plan over 10 years to correct those. First of all, several of the board members who are serving now were serving during that former period of time. Again, it's the minister who is criticizing them. He is certainly criticizing the former chair.

I would point out that what does happen and what has happened is that actuaries change the amount at various times. They have come forward at different times. They previously told the board a number of years back that the plan was in good standing. Pension plans go up and down, and actuarial reports go up and down based on the performance of funds. The amount that has been required has been suggested at different times by actuaries to be different amounts. As an example, I would say that previously, earlier on in the term of this government, the same situation occurred in this Legislative Assembly with the pension plan for the MLAs. An actuarial report came in, and our Speaker came forward on April 9, 2003, and explained a large amount that was going into the supplementary budget for retirement allowances and death benefits of some \$2.6 million and said that an explanation of the need for additional funding in 2002-03 was provided to the House during debate on the supplementary estimates. The central reason set out at that time for this expenditure was an actuarial evaluation that had been received indicating a deficiency in the funding of the liabilities in the MLA pension plan.

So certainly neither the government nor us would be blaming the Speaker for being responsible for that -- of course not. It came to light under his watch that that was now the new report. So blaming the previous chair as having somehow been deficient -- or the board, for that matter -- is questionable. I think that to chastise us for raising the question about the performance currently under a CEO when that had been raised by the doctors, the nurses and a union official -- and then to turn around and start trying to challenge the veracity of that chair's statements based on an actuarial situation that occurred over a large number of years and was no doubt developing before that member was the chair of that board -- is operating on two different wavelengths. I guess that is the best way I can say it.

As far as the Office of the Superintendent of Financial Institutions -- yes, those rules now state that the pension plan has to be fully funded to the extent that if the institution were to close tomorrow, all monies would be there and payable. But the minister knows full well that many, many institutions over many years prior to the Enron debacle operated based on the anticipated retirements in a period of time. To suggest that

people were at risk because they might have all retired on the same day created a level of concern in the public that was unwarranted. Is the member correct that that's what's now required? Yes, the minister is. So I agree with him that that's now required. But I would suggest that to somehow blame the former chair for all of this was an unfair thing to do.

There were a number of other things we asked about previously but we didn't get very specific answers. One had to do with grandparents and other relatives who are looking after children. The minister made a generalized reference to reviewing the funding for foster care.

I would ask it again, because the specific issue raised to me by a constituent and by a number of people is the requirement for those people to be formally declared foster parents in order to get any assistance. I just ask the minister if there are any other options being looked at.

I recognize that this is an option that is there. I've been told by people in this situation that they don't always want to be declared a foster parent in order to receive some assistance.

Just because time is limited, I have one other question here that is very specific and the minister can probably provide the information or indicate he will forward it.

We previously heard about a number of orphan patients and we now have a number of programs put in place to try to deal with shortages of family doctors. Does the minister have stats as to whether the problem is alleviating or if the number of orphan patients has gone up or down? If he has those statistics, we'd be interested in hearing them.

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** It's interesting to see the Leader of the Official Opposition is now attempting to backpedal on some of his statements and words here. I have to remind the member opposite that, contrary to his statements and the work they have done with the *Yukon News* in spreading certain assertions, the hospital pension plan was within mere days of being decertified by the federal regulator, the Office of the Superintendent of Financial Institutions Canada.

That is a fact. The Office of the Superintendent of Financial Institutions Canada had already extended the deadline for the Yukon Hospital Corporation to make its required contribution once. The extension of the deadline was through the intervention of the Yukon government in attempting to get them to delay yanking -- or dropping the hammer, so to speak -- on the employee pension.

As far as whether employee pensions would have been put in jeopardy, what the member is failing to realize or is failing to recognize in his comments is that as soon as the Office of the Superintendent of Financial Institutions decertified that pension plan, that would be an official determination by the federal regulator that there was not enough money to honour the pension obligations to employees.

Further, the member has raised the suggestion previously, and in their whole spin of messaging related to this, that the hospital made a decision to let employees take a break on their contributions to the pension plan. That is false. In fact, the corporation took a contribution holiday. The employer -- Yukon Hospital Corporation -- took a contribution holiday. They did so after a long chain of events. First of all, the hospital had re-



ceived an actuarial evaluation identifying that they had a deficit in the pension plan, based on what was at the time considered the prudent rate of return. I point this out because the member has tried to suggest that this happened in all pension plans.

No, the stock prices did affect a number of pension plans, including, to a small extent, the hospital employee pension plan. The bulk of the problem with the hospital employee pension plan was caused directly by specific decisions of the Yukon Hospital Corporation.

Now, we're not pointing to members of the board or blaming members of the board for the decision. No doubt, they thought they were making the right decision. However, it was a wrong decision; it created a problem.

That decision specifically related to an actuarial evaluation of the pension plan; it identified to the Hospital Corporation that they needed to increase the level of the corporation's contribution to the pension plan. Instead, they directed the actuary to restate the assumed rate of return to the maximum rate of return they were legally allowed to consider it might return at -- far above the prudent level. I believe the rate of return they determined they would receive was seven percent, if memory serves, which was far in excess of what was considered a prudent calculation at that point, and it was the maximum amount they were legally allowed to assume. That was a deliberate decision; it was a bad decision.

In 2003, the Office of the Superintendent of Financial Institutions Canada informed the Hospital Corporation that they were making the wrong decisions and directed them to cease the contribution holiday -- that is, to once again begin making the employer's required share of pension contributions.

The Hospital Corporation made a decision not to abide by that direction from the federal regulator. The same occurred in 2004 and in 2005. At the end of 2005, the Office of the Superintendent of Financial Institutions Canada made it very clear that, if the employer -- the Yukon Hospital Corporation -- did not resume their contributions and address prior years' deficits, they would be forced to decertify the employee pension plan.

Despite that fact, in January 2006, the former chair and CEO identified to me as minister that we would never be required to make a cash contribution to the pension plan; the Yukon government would never have to assist them with anything; it was entirely a paperwork exercise; there was no cash deficit and it required only a promissory note for \$1.3 million.

In fact, the cash deficit that the Yukon government had to step forward to assist them with was \$17 million. Those individuals, for whatever reason, did not inform the minister of the known pension deficit as of January 2006. This government never cast blame on why those decisions were made and why those assertions were made. We did move to address the problem. We provided the \$17-million cash commitment over a 10-year period, a significant portion of which was upfront and is included in this year's budget. We acted to ensure that the leadership at the Hospital Corporation respected the direction of the federal regulator and complied with the legislation. Contrary to the assertion of the Member for Copperbelt, it was not a new legislation or a new requirement. The piece of legislation, the federal legislation, has been in place since 1985.

Contrary to the member's assertions, this has nothing to do with Enron and such determinations. This is based on standard accounting procedures and the direction of the Public Sector Accounting Board of Canada and the determination of the federal regulator, the Office of the Superintendent of Financial Institutions Canada.

So what we have seen in questioning that has unfolded recently has been rather bizarre and unfortunate. The members, I know, are desperate as always to attack the government, but to use a senior citizen in that process and to engage in comments and statements that do not reflect the facts is very inappropriate. I have to remind members that the key obligation here is protecting the employees and their pension plan. I stress once again that the federal regulator had issued a firm warning that they would not extend the deadline for decertifying the pension plan beyond the end of April 2006. This government stepped in days before, after months of discussion with the hospital, after months of the hospital engaging legal counsel in an ill-advised attempt to argue with the federal regulator about federal law and refusing to recognize the extent of the problem and the need to work with the Yukon government and accept our assistance to fund that employee pension plan.

Therefore, we were forced to take action and we did take action. The offer was made to the board of directors in the Cabinet room. That offer was made by the Premier and me. I remember the board of directors was invited. We informed them of the problem and advised them of what had not been done to address it properly, and informed them what needed to be done in the future.

I point out that this direction originated from the federal regulator, the Office of the Superintendent of Financial Institutions Canada, which, I would remind members is for pensions, and is the counterpart of the Auditor General of Canada. Attempting to argue with the Office of the Superintendent of Financial Institutions Canada is as fruitless as attempting to argue with the Auditor General of Canada, as was proven by the ill-fated result of the Yukon Hospital Corporation, for three years, trying to fight the direction of the federal regulator, which, of course, they did not succeed in. Instead, this government was forced to step forward with \$17 million in cash.

The member also, in part of his pattern of selectively quoting certain pieces of information, referred to comments by the Yukon Medical Association president. I would remind the member opposite that I have a very positive relationship with the president of the YMA. I would remind him that the YMA president -- contrary to assertions made by the Member for Copperbelt -- made it very clear that he was not blaming problems at the Yukon Hospital Corporation on the Yukon Party or the board or current CEO. He noted that some of those matters had been years in developing. It was also noted that some of the doctors have an issue with the CEO and with certain decisions that have been made and with the manner in which they have been made. That, as has been clearly stated, is a matter among those individuals on which the CEO has committed to work. I believe the doctors will also be productive in working with that individual to resolve what is essentially a communication problem among them. That is a board matter.

Rather than making comments that inflame such matters, the member would be better to state, as the government has, the need for all individuals in this area to work together to make the decisions with regard to health care and respect their obligations to Yukon citizens.

We know who has orchestrated this whole debate we've had over the past few weeks. I know the Member for Copperbelt thinks they have been quite cunning in this approach and --

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

**Chair:** Just a little while ago, I did call the member to order for personalizing the debate. I would like to remind the member not to personalize the debate.

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** I will respect that, although I have to point out that the essential part of this area I'm attempting to point out is that members have engaged in personalization of debate toward private citizens, and I don't believe that has precedence in this Assembly -- certainly not to the extent the members have been doing it. I would urge them to focus on the issues and discuss those, rather than criticize public sector employees.

I would also note that the member made reference to the Yukon Registered Nurses Association. I will make one comment related to that. The Yukon Registered Nurses Association informed me that they have some concerns with representation made by members of the opposition, including the Leader of the Official Opposition, with presuming to speak for them and express their concerns when they have not ever met with that member to relay those concerns.

I will not presume to speak for the YRNA. They're very capable of speaking for themselves. I work with them and they will relay to the media any comments they wish to make. I would simply point out to the member that that concern was relayed to me directly -- that they have some concern with him presuming to speak on their behalf when he has never spoken to them directly about what their opinion might be.

I point out and want to reiterate that with the Yukon Registered Nurses Association, the Yukon Medical Association and the board of Whitehorse General Hospital -- I work with those individuals. I work with those associations. I don't personalize debate toward them. I don't criticize them. Where there are challenges we must address them together. We focus on addressing those challenges together. The members know full well that every health system in this country -- and indeed the world -- has challenges. Our challenges in the Yukon health care system and in the hospital are in fact far less than the challenges within most hospitals and most health care systems in this country. We're set up very well. Our system is second to none. That does not diminish the need to work together on addressing the challenges, but we have never, not for one moment, suggested the challenges did not exist or diminished the need to work together on addressing them. That's the approach this government takes, not attacking individuals involved in this. We focus on working with the associations, working with the board of Whitehorse General Hospital and together coming up with a solution that addresses the problem.

The suggestion made by the member opposite that we were somehow criticizing the board members individually for the decisions that were made, particularly in 2003, 2004 and 2005, related to the funding of the employee pension plan and their decision to stop giving the corporation's required share of contributions to that plan -- we never criticized any one of those board members individually. We did note, as we must, that the decision was a poor one. It had caused the bulk of the problem and it created a deficit, which the hospital had no means to dig itself out of. This government had to step forward.

Although we had no legal obligation to that plan, we have an obligation on behalf of Yukoners to ensure a sound health care system, and for employees to have the sanctity of their pension plan not only put into question but, by determination of the federal regulator, determined to be insufficient to pay them what their benefits package and their pension required -- would have been a travesty. It would have caused a tremendous problem within our health care system, within our efforts to recruit individuals and to retain the professionals that we already have hired.

The members need to get their facts straight. They need to stop selectively pulling out facts and relying on their imagination for other facts. This is a matter of great importance. This government demonstrated the great importance of it by stepping forward with a \$17-million contribution and by making that offer, not through officials, letter or some e-mail or other flippant manner of communication. We did so at the highest level. The Premier and I gave the board members the courtesy of sitting down with them directly in the Cabinet room to inform them of the government's understanding of the problem, inform them of the work done to date, inform them of the direction of the federal regulator, the Office of the Superintendent of Financial Institutions Canada, inform them of the government's commitment to funding that pension plan deficit to protect employees' contributions, inform them that the hospital must, in future, as a corporation honour its obligations to fund its required share of pension plan contributions, and inform them that, in the future to prevent such problems from occurring and such poor decisions being made, one of the conditions of the contribution agreement would be the Auditor General would become, as for all other government corporations, the auditor of record, auditing the annual financial statements to provide the highest level of accountability and oversight available within Canada for their budget and finances and that area of great importance.

With that being said, I hope that has corrected the matter for the members opposite. The only thing left now is for the member to stand up and apologize to the CEO of Whitehorse General Hospital and to the employees within the Department of Health and Social Services whom he has personally attacked in this House.

**Mr. Mitchell:** Well, Mr. Chair, in his zeal to carry on attacking, with a single-minded focus, the members of the opposition for doing their job, the minister did a couple of things. One, he was previously commenting on the one newspaper, the *Yukon News*, because they don't like the *Yukon News*. I will point out that it was on the CBC where both the president of

the Yukon Medical Association and the head of the Yukon Registered Nurses Association made their comments. So perhaps he would like to criticize the CBC as well. Eventually, we'll just reach the point where we won't have any media because none of them say things that are appreciated or agreed to by the government. So perhaps nobody should be allowed to bring things into the public arena.

Again, we'll do our job when issues are raised that are of concern to Yukoners. I will remind the minister that again, in his zeal, I asked him two specific questions, one of which I had asked him last session and he hadn't answered, having to do with the situation where grandparents or other close relatives are looking after children because their parents are unable to. He had previously made comments about reviewing foster care. I asked him to be more specific about this issue.

He didn't respond to the question at all, and I asked him if he had the stats on the orphan patients and whether that has continued to be a problem or whether in fact the problem has been mitigated and, if the news is good, I would think he would just answer the question.

So perhaps the minister can answer those two specific questions and we can stay on focus, if the minister can remember two things at a time.

**Hon. Mr. Fentie:** Mr. Chair, before the minister answers the questions, I have to respond to the Leader of the Official Opposition, who has just made a comment about bringing issues forward.

In the context of the health care debate, I'd like to ask the Leader of the Official Opposition if the member stands by the statement delivered here in the House June 7 with respect to hiring the CEO of the hospital. That's an important fact to be dealt with here, Mr. Chair, because that statement on June 7 resulted in a litany of issues attacking the CEO through a media outlet -- in this case, the *Yukon News*, who verbatim responded in the news with, word for word, the statement the member brought to this House.

When it comes to bringing issues forward, I look at it on the basis of whether the member understands two things: the public must be informed of the facts and, second, are we in this House going to attack citizens and professionals in this unwarranted manner, subjecting them to this kind of thing based on a statement made in the House by the Leader of the Official Opposition with respect to hiring the CEO?

The Leader of the Official Opposition stated clearly that there was an intervention in the hiring of the CEO and the member pointed to a citizen in the territory who had been appointed chair -- and who, by the way, had nothing to do with the hiring of the CEO. It was done by a hiring committee.

Does the member stand by a motion read into the record about accurate representation on issues here in the House? Does the member stand by that statement of June 7, which is written in the pages of *Hansard*, reflecting the member's position on the hiring of the CEO and which resulted in this disgusting attack on a citizen of professional integrity, a gentleman who decided to come to the Yukon and apply his skills and credentials to lead a corporation -- in this case, the Hospital Corporation -- for the benefit of Yukoners? Will the member

enlighten this House? Does the member stand by that statement, or will the Leader of the Official Opposition do the right thing, correct the public record, correct the record in the House and apologize to the CEO, to Yukoners, to the media -- which, by the way, picked up on the member's statement -- and to a senior citizen for involving them in this sham?

**Mr. Mitchell:** When board members, past or present, come forward to us and express their concerns and relay information, we will bring it forward. If the member opposite has information that indicates differently, then he should bring that information forward and table it.

That was the information that was brought forward and presented to us. Obviously the member opposite has information that he believes is more accurate and he should bring it forward. Again I would ask the Health and Social Services minister to indicate whether he intends to answer any of the specific questions about health care.

#### Chair's statement

**Chair:** Order please. I would like to remind all members that we are debating Health and Social Services. I would like to keep the debate relevant and not personalize matters.

**Hon. Mr. Fentie:** Yes, this is very much relevant to Health and Social Services because it has to do with an institution in the territory -- in this case, the hospital and its corporation that is charged with the responsibility of delivering health care.

Given the fact that this statement of June 7 reflects something that did not happen in the hiring of the CEO, I guess the question to the member opposite is: who brought what forward? Who came to whom? Who went to whom in this matter? We want to clear this up because it has had an impact on the CEO who leads the Yukon Hospital Corporation, on the board, on the hospital, on its employees, on Yukoners, on this House, on the media and on a senior citizen.

Will the member stand up, do the right thing, correct the public record, apologize to all these individuals, and apologize to the senior citizen and to this House? Do the right thing.

**Mr. Mitchell:** I will inform the Premier that what I will do is remind him that it is under his watch and the watch of his Health and Social Services minister that these problems have arisen at the hospital, to the point where we have health care professionals, from doctors to nurses, to union heads, to patients who are trying to get chemotherapy treatment and to all kinds of other specialists coming forward and saying there is a problem, and it has happened under this government's watch.

Instead of chastising the opposition for pointing it out, fix the problem. That's what the minister was elected to do. Fix the problem instead of pointing at everybody else and saying there are no problems, we do everything fine and it must be somebody else's fault.

**Hon. Mr. Fentie:** Well, here is the crux of the problem. The member has just brought forward more issues to the floor of the Legislature. How do we accept it on this side of the House? Is it reflecting an accurate accounting of the issue, or not? Considering what was in *Hansard* on June 7, the govern-

ment side has to be very cautious in accepting what the Leader of the Official Opposition is articulating in the House.

Now, Mr. Chair, the member has just stated that all these problems occurred under a new minister's watch. Well, I have to disagree with the Leader of the Official Opposition. The Leader of the Official Opposition knows full well that the problems on the operations side in any hospital can be varied and many. In this case, what the member fails to recognize is this is an entity in Yukon run by a corporation, a board of directors that is charged with the responsibility of making decisions and dealing with issues in the hospital.

Here's another convenient approach by the member: if he had all this information that he has brought to the floor of this House, where is the missing piece that is very important to this matter? That is the fact that the board, the doctors and the CEO are working on issues.

Well, Mr. Chair, if the Leader of the Official Opposition doesn't understand that that's due process and the way things are supposed to work, this debate is moot. But if the member will stand up and admit, yes, that's how the Hospital Corporation is supposed to operate, that's why there is a CEO, and that's why there's a board of directors, then we can move on. But we still have to clear up this matter on the hiring of the CEO, because this is the individual who accepted the responsibility to do exactly what we're talking about -- deal with issues, deal with problems, and ensure that the hospital is delivering a standard of health care that Yukoners expect and deserve.

And Mr. Chair, not one time has the member opposite said anywhere that I can find that the hospital is not delivering health care, that the hospital is incapable of delivering health care, or that the hospital is not functioning. None of those things have been said.

What the member has done relates back to what the Official Opposition has brought to the floor of this House: accurate representation of issues. I go again to the point. Will the member now correct the record on the hiring of the CEO? Will the member at least establish a shred of credibility for the Official Opposition? Correct the record.

**Mr. Mitchell:** If there is going to be an issue of credibility, it's the issue of what credibility the Minister of Health and Social Services has, the minister responsible for the Yukon Hospital Corporation, when we hear a litany of complaints from doctors, nurses, and union officials about the working conditions at the hospital.

Yes, we bring it to the floor of this Legislature, because all of those health care workers have spoken out publicly, as well as privately, about their concerns that an excellent institution is falling apart under the leadership of this Health and Social Services minister. So yes, we bring it forward, because we want to know what this Health and Social Services minister is going to do, besides pointing the finger at everybody else and every government that has come before him, or every board member who existed before he appointed them -- or in this case, reappointed them -- to the board.

The questions we asked are these: what is the minister doing to improve the working conditions at the hospital? What is he doing about ensuring that nurses are not overworked and

stressed out and told that they can't take their holiday time? What is the minister doing to recruit additional doctors and not drive them away or to the point of frustration where they're signing letters, and they sign the letters demanding or asking for a CEO's resignation? That's what this Premier should be telling. He should be telling his new Health and Social Services minister, "Do a better job."

**Hon. Mr. Fentie:** The member has just stated that the hospital is falling apart. That's an interesting statement by the Leader of the Official Opposition, who promotes the aspect that, possibly one day, he could be leading the territory. I can assure this House that Yukoners are very pleased that that is not the case these days.

What is the minister doing about health care? Let's start with the Hospital Corporation.

Under our watch, including the new minister's watch -- who, by the way, is doing a very good job on behalf of Yukoners in ensuring the health care system, to every extent possible, is the best we can deliver -- has increased the O&M capacity of the Hospital Corporation by some \$14 million. What that means is that, when we took office, the Hospital Corporation's allocation from government under the former Liberal government was a mere \$18 million. The member knows full well that the former chair said there have been ongoing shortages of resources for years.

What did this minister and this government do? We injected more resources into the O&M and operations of the hospital. We raised the resources available for the operations of the hospital from \$18 million to \$33 million. That's what the minister is doing.

When the board of directors and the chair could have been held personally liable for an insolvency issue of the pension fund, because of decisions like contribution holidays taken by the corporation, we stepped in and assisted the board and the hospital and ensured the employee pension plan was solvent and there for them when they retire.

The minister invested \$17 million in resolving that issue. The minister has increased travel allocation for Yukoners who need to travel Outside to receive health care. The minister has invested in a whole modern and new approach to recruitment and retention of health care workers.

I ask you, Mr. Chair, given the conduct of the Official Opposition, what professional in their right mind would come to the Yukon if they're subjected to that type of accuracy when it comes to representing issues?

The minister is doing his job; the minister is also ensuring we're helping out young Yukoners who have gone to school to take on the challenges of health care and work in the nursing profession. The minister is helping them.

Every time a Yukoner has an issue with health care, the minister is there to assist, whether it be at the Yukon Hospital Corporation or any community in this territory. The minister is investing in areas -- in helping seniors, for example, with assisted living. The member has to recognize all the NGOs that the minister is assisting when it comes to the social side of the ledger.

Let's begin with women's shelters. The member asks what the minister is doing. The minister is doing everything he possibly can. The issue here is what the Leader of the Official Opposition is going to do to re-establish some credibility for the Liberals in this territory being elected to this House when it comes to the CEO, the chair of the board, the Yukon Hospital Corporation and their responsibility to the Yukon public? What is the member going to do? Is the member going to correct the record or not?

**Chair:** Is there any further general debate? Seeing none, we will proceed line by line.

***On Operation and Maintenance Expenditures***

***On Policy, Planning and Administration***

*On Deputy Minister's Office*

*Deputy Minister's Office in the amount of \$1,464,000 agreed to*

*On Policy and Program Development*

*Policy and Program Development in the amount of \$529,000 agreed to*

*On Human Resources*

*Human Resources in the amount of \$1,687,000 agreed to*

*On Finance, Systems and Administration*

*Finance, Systems and Administration in the amount of \$2,107,000 agreed to*

***Policy, Planning and Administration in the amount of \$5,787,000 agreed to***

***On Family and Children's Services***

*On Program Management*

*Program Management in the amount of \$4,614,000 agreed to*

*On Family and Children's Services*

**Mr. Mitchell:** Can we get a breakdown on family and children's services, please?

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** This area of family and children's services consists of 31.65 FTEs. Funding for those FTEs is \$2,571,000. Funding to Autism Yukon -- I remind members, this is the second year of our funding contribution to that fine organization -- amounts to \$71,000. Funding for direct support and services to families of children with autism is \$460,000. Community development contributions amount to \$10,000. General supports to families, \$53,000. Other general support costs, \$56,000. The \$110,000, or four-percent increase, is due to a new family services social worker and new auxiliary after-hours social workers.

*Family and Children's Services in the amount of \$3,221,000 agreed to*

*On Child Placement Services*

*Child Placement Services in the amount of \$5,122,000 agreed to*

*On Early Childhood and Prevention Services*

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

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** Early childhood and prevention services, \$6,966,000, 19.8 FTEs, funding for those FTEs of \$1,450,000; childcare subsidies, \$2,894,000; contributions to childcare operators, \$2,415,000; healthy families materials and training, \$132,000; general support cost, \$75,000.

I have to point out this area is another one reflecting the significantly increased contribution to childcare under this government's watch, which amounts to \$900,000 in increased annual funding. The average funding per child enrolled in childcare last year was \$5,462 -- once again, the second-best funded system in the country, which will be further enhanced by the end of this mandate by a further \$1.2-million annual contribution, raising the total level to \$6.5 million.

**Mr. Mitchell:** Not speaking to any monies that may appear in supplementary budgets, was there any increase in the funding for childcare subsidies within this line item in this year's main estimates that would be reflective of more people receiving the subsidy or more money per child?

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** The Leader of the Official Opposition should be aware that the announcement of increased funding was made after the budget was tabled and right after Management Board had approved that announcement, as we announced at that time. So, no, it does not include the further increase we have committed to in this fiscal year. It will be added -- and I thank the member for pointing that out -- by an additional \$500,000 in this area in increased support and contribution to families.

*Early Childhood and Prevention Services in the amount of \$6,966,000 agreed to*

*On Youth Justice*

*Youth Justice in the amount of \$3,950,000 agreed to*

*On Children's Assessment and Treatment Services*

*Children's Assessment and Treatment Services in the amount of \$8,377,000 agreed to*

***Family and Children's Services in the amount of \$32,250,000 agreed to***

***On Social Services***

*On Program Management*

*Program Management in the amount of \$1,640,000 agreed to*

*On Alcohol and Drug Services*

**Mr. Mitchell:** I would like a breakdown, please, of that line item.

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** Alcohol and drug services -- 3,682,000, 41.95 FTE positions, includes detoxification treatment, both live-in and outpatient, prevention, training. Funding provides for 41.95 FTEs, \$3,185,000. Facility management and operational costs, \$97,000; non-personnel costs of providing in-patient treatment services such as doctors, mental health supplies, et cetera, \$120,000; outpatient treatment materials and support \$44,000; prevention program materials and contracts, \$96,000; and other general support costs, \$139,000. The \$244,000, or seven-percent increase, is the result of two new positions -- \$161,000 for one intake worker and one outreach/community courtworker resulting from the Yukon substance abuse action plan for the support for the community court, and \$72,000 due to increases resulting from reclassifications and merit increase for addictions counsellors and their supervisors.

*Alcohol and Drug Services in the amount of \$3,682,000 agreed*

*On Adult Services Unit*

**Mr. Mitchell:** Could the minister provide a breakdown of that item?

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** Adult services unit, \$17,617,000: 42 FTEs employed, which includes social assistance, senior services and adult protection, and services to persons with disabilities. Funding consists of 42 FTEs, \$3,117,000: Head Start wage subsidies of \$300,000; Pathways subsidies of \$90,000; social assistance grants are \$7,990,000. The total amount for social assistance is \$10,285,000. Pioneer utility grants are \$1,397,000. This, of course, is an area that I would remind members we increased by 25 percent in the last mandate and have indexed it to inflation since that time to support seniors.

Yukon seniors income support grants are \$228,000; contracts providing assessments, life skill training and residential supports for \$284,000; contract Challenge providing vocational training for \$503,000; vocational rehabilitation supports for \$15,000; full-time residential care contracts for \$1,617,000; funding to Teegatha'Oh Zheh for \$946,000; and Options for Independence for \$226,000 to provide day programming for clients.

Specialized contract services out-of-territory, \$649,000, and other general support costs are \$255,000. The basic allotments within this area, for ease of the members, for seniors services and adult protection, are \$2,038,000. Services to persons with disabilities are \$5,294,000.

The \$898,000, or five-percent increase, in this line item is primarily the result of new positions for a social assistance worker, a residential coordinator, supported independent living workers, a seniors services liaison worker, an adult protection worker, a supervisor and secretary for the seniors program and adult protection, a \$46,000 increase to Options for Independence for an evening position, \$26,000 for additional support for supported independent living contracts, \$238,000 for the cost of new clients requiring full-time residential care, and a \$56,000 inflationary increase to the pioneer utility grant.

*Adult Services Unit in the amount of \$17,617,000 agreed to*

**Social Services in the amount of \$22,939,000 agreed to**

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

*Recess*

**Chair:** Committee of the Whole will now come to order. We will proceed with line-by-line debate on Health and Social Services.

**On Continuing Care**

*On Program Management*

*Program Management in the amount of \$1,359,000 agreed to*

*On Extended/Complex Care*

**Mr. Mitchell:** Mr. Chair, can the minister provide a breakdown of that line, please?

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** Extended complex care, \$12,990,000 -- 143.9 FTEs includes Copper Ridge Place. Funding consists of 143.9 FTEs, \$9,753,000; food, \$423,000; pharmacy, medical and nursing supplies, \$1,088,000; facility costs,

\$1,253,000; and other general support costs. The increase in the line item, the 12-percent increase, the \$1,342,000 increase in the line item, is largely the result of funding for positions, drugs, program materials, et cetera. As well, I should point out for the member's information that the announcement we made for the funding for opening the remaining wing of Copper Ridge Place and the new 12 beds there will be added to this area of the budget. That cost, of course, annually of \$1,474,000 for operating those 12 beds -- but considering it is coming partway through a fiscal year -- will be appropriately pro-rated.

**Mr. Mitchell:** The minister explained that the bulk of the 12-percent increase was due to new positions. Does he have any details he can provide on how many positions, what particular areas they are in and what types of positions they are?

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** They are general positions related to fully opening up the last wing that was opened up and those beds coming fully on-line. I don't have the breakdown of the exact positions in front of me, but they're related to the increase that occurred in this fiscal year. I am comparing this to the mains last year, for the member's ease of understanding. The positions were created last year. The increases from the mains last year are largely due to new positions in that area.

*Extended/Complex Care in the amount of \$12,990,000 agreed to*

*On Intermediate and Community Care*

*Intermediate and Community Care in the amount of \$9,361,000 agreed to*

**Continuing Care in the amount of \$23,710,000 agreed to**  
**On Health Services**

*On Program Management*

**Mr. Mitchell:** I would appreciate if the minister could provide a breakdown and explanation for the large percentage change.

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** The increase that the member is seeing is related to the territorial health access fund and the expenditure occurring in this area. Of course, under this area, we receive \$4.3 million annually, beginning in the 2006-07 fiscal year, or \$21.6 million over the term of the territorial health access fund agreement.

However, the bulk of expenditures in the first year did not have as much expenditure in this area. A significant amount of things coming on-line in this area related to THAF includes: support toward nursing education; contracts, materials and other support for a variety of projects under the territorial health access fund, including the health human resources strategy; emergency preparedness planning; risk management and quality assurance; planning for a nurse information line; dental health enhancements at the community level; improved mental health supports at the community level; early psychosis intervention; improved tuberculosis support; advance directives implementation; telehealth; community supports; palliative care; support for persons with serious mental health problems; and healthy living health promotion.

As well, it consists of the territorial health access fund operation secretariat, one FTE, which is a \$78,000 allotment, plus other administrative support costs for all three territories -- \$235,000 -- because we are the operational secretariat portion

of the funding under THAF. The Yukon is the banker for that portion for the three territories, so we have one FTE position and administrative support related to that, and that part is fully recoverable and funded by Canada through the territorial health access fund.

So the \$3,762,000 increase, or 88 percent in this area, is related to THAF and the tri-territorial operational secretariat.

*Program Management in the amount of \$8,027,000 agreed to*

*On Insured Health and Hearing Services*

**Mr. Mitchell:** Again, could the minister provide a breakdown of that line item? It's a significant amount of money.

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** Insured health and hearing services -- \$51,635,000. There are 21 FTE positions under this. It includes: activity management, \$510,000; health care insurance plan, \$35,170,000; medical travel program, \$7,043,000; chronic disease program, \$3,353,000; Pharmacare, \$3,483,000; extended health care program for seniors, \$1,389,000; children's drug and optical program, \$97,000; and hearing services, \$590,000. This area includes areas such as: physician claims and contract positions \$17,824,000; contributions toward YMA insurance, education bursaries, retention and recruitment incentives and rural incentives, \$2,389,000; out-of-territory hospital claims, \$14,435,000; 2,117 scheduled and 225 medevac flights at a cost of \$6,039,000; pregnant women's accommodation in Whitehorse and travel subsidies, \$937,000; drug costs, \$6,146,000; medical supplies and equipment, \$1,879,000; hearing aids, \$250,000; contracted services, \$77,000; other general support costs, \$137,000;

The \$470,000 increase in this line item compared to the fall of last year is primarily the result of increases to hospital claims, \$88,000, and medical travel subsidies, \$382,000.

*Insured Health and Hearing Services in the amount of \$51,635,000 agreed to*

*On Yukon Hospital Services*

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

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** Hospital services in the amount of \$27,313,000 -- the hospital is currently funded on a global funding basis, so zero FTEs are reflected in this line item as they are all employees of the Yukon Hospital Corporation -- all hard-working employees of the Yukon Hospital Corporation.

The Yukon Hospital Corporation will receive a total of \$25,165,000 for base operations for the hospital in the 2007-08 fiscal year, with an additional \$1,485,000 for the second funding portion of the pension shortfall, which I remind the member is a total cost of \$17 million. There is \$663,000 also in here for the First Nation health program.

The change in this line item is primarily due to a change in the amount provided for the corporation's pension funding, as we had to provide a significant amount at the front end, which occurred in the 2006-07 fiscal year. That number would have been about -- I don't have the exact figure in front of me -- \$4.5 million. It would show up in the supplementary estimates that were tabled before the House this session.

The 2006-07 pension contribution included a one-time contribution to cover the 2003, 2004 and 2005 contributions shortfalls and related interest, which I remind the member were years when the Yukon Hospital Corporation took a contribution holiday on the corporation's share of contribution, contrary to the explicit instructions of the federal regulator, the Office of the Superintendent of Financial Institutions Canada.

Pension contributions of \$1,485,000 for 2007-08 cover the deficit for this year alone. Other decreases are due to operating shortfalls that were covered in the 2006-07 fiscal year prior years' shortfalls and funding for additional knee surgeries that occurred in 2006-07 that are not expected to necessarily occur at that level in this fiscal year.

While we're on this line item, perhaps the member would take the opportunity to apologize to the CEO for the personal attacks.

**Chair's statement**

**Chair:** Order please. We are discussing, line by line, Yukon hospital services. I would like all members to not personalize the debate. We are here debating that line item only, please.

*Yukon Hospital Services in the amount of \$27,313,000 agreed to*

*On Vital Statistics*

*Vital Statistics in the amount of \$76,000 agreed to*

*On Community Health*

*Community Health in the amount of \$6,851,000 agreed to*

*On Community Nursing*

**Mr. Mitchell:** If the minister could provide a breakdown of this line item and any changes in the numbers of FTE community nurses that are expected this year versus the previous year.

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** Community nursing, \$13,724,000 for 101.04 FTE positions. This includes all community health centres, Watson Lake Hospital, and community nursing stations. Funding for the 101.04 FTE positions is \$9,964,000; travel throughout the Yukon, \$618,000; recruitment and retention of permanent and temporary nurses to Yukon, \$155,000; facility maintenance and operation, \$1,372,000; medical supplies and equipment, \$1,202,000; Yukon Registered Nurses Association memberships, \$52,000; and other general support costs, \$361,000.

The \$629,000, or five percent, increase in this line item is primarily the result of increasing all clerk receptionists in community nursing stations/health centres from part-time to full-time, increasing service and security, which came at a cost of \$447,000 and adjustments to enhance the funding for managing and operating facilities.

**Mr. Mitchell:** Is the 101.04 FTEs a status quo, an increase, or a decrease? And how many of those FTEs are actually community nurses?

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** I don't have a breakdown on the personnel in front of me here. I can inform the member that this number of 100 FTEs is primarily nurses. There are a small number -- typically one per community -- of administration

staff, so the bulk of this is for nurses, but I don't have the exact number in front of me.

**Mr. Mitchell:** I'll ask if the minister can forward that information as a legislative return once he receives it from the department; that would be good enough.

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** I can also inform the member that the number of community nurses has been maintained but not increased in this fiscal year. The increase that was identified as an issue is to the clerk receptionists in community nursing stations and part-time health centres. Again, the majority here is nurses.

*Community Nursing in the amount of \$13,724,000 agreed to*

*On Emergency Medical Services*

*Emergency Medical Services in the amount of \$4,280,000 agreed to*

**Health Services in the amount of \$111,906,000 agreed to**

**On Regional Services**

*On Program Management*

*Program Management in the amount of \$2,424,000 agreed to*

*On Family and Children's Services*

*Family and Children's Services in the amount of \$930,000 agreed to*

*On Social Services*

*Social Services in the amount of \$955,000 agreed to*

**Regional Services in the amount of \$4,309,000 agreed to**

**Total Operation and Maintenance Expenditures in the amount of \$200,901,000 agreed to**

**On Capital Expenditures**

**On Policy, Planning and Administration**

*On Integrated Health and Social Services Facilities*

*Integrated Health and Social Services Facilities in the amount of \$30,000 agreed to*

*On Office Furniture and Operational Equipment*

*Office Furniture and Operational Equipment in the amount of \$285,000 agreed to*

*On Systems Development*

*Systems Development in the amount of \$1,893,000 agreed to*

**Policy, Planning and Administration in the amount of \$2,208,000 agreed to**

**On Family and Children's Services**

*On Foster Home Equipment*

*Foster Home Equipment in the amount of \$30,000 agreed to*

*On Child Care Services Development*

*Child Care Services Development in the amount of \$100,000 agreed to*

*On Program Management*

*Program Management in the amount of \$10,000 agreed to*

*On Young Offender Facilities - Renovations and Equipment*

*Young Offender Facilities - Renovations and Equipment in the amount of \$323,000 agreed to*

*On Residential Services - Renovations and Equipment*

*Residential Services - Renovations and Equipment in the amount of \$215,000 agreed to*

*On Women's Shelters - Renovations and Equipment*

*Women's Shelters - Renovations and Equipment in the amount of \$15,000 agreed to*

*On Prior Years' Projects*

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

**Family and Children's Services in the amount of \$693,000 agreed to**

**On Social Services**

*On Social Services - Renovations and Equipment*

*Social Services - Renovations and Equipment in the amount of \$44,000 agreed to*

*On Mental Health/Alcohol and Drug Services - Purpose Built Space - Planning*

*Mental Health/Alcohol and Drug Services - Purpose Built Space - Planning in the amount of \$49,000 agreed to*

**Social Services in the amount of \$93,000 agreed to**

**On Continuing Care**

*On Continuing Care - Renovations and Equipment*

**Mr. Mitchell:** Could the minister please provide a breakdown of that line item?

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** Continuing care, renovations and equipment, \$1,132,000. The funds requested are primarily for ongoing replacement to maintain the program, including furniture and equipment, at a level that properly accommodates program services to residents and satisfies the national and municipal codes and standards.

Renovations and equipment for home care, \$20,000; Macaulay Lodge, \$411,000; McDonald Lodge, \$166,000; Copper Ridge Place, \$535,000, is included in this budget as well. The Macaulay Lodge expenditures consist of replacement for the Handy Bus of \$150,000; equipment and furniture, \$83,000; irrigation system/grounds, \$115,000; flooring, \$30,000; painting, \$20,000; and window upgrades, \$13,000.

McDonald Lodge expenditures consist of: equipment and furniture, \$29,000; flooring, \$20,000; painting, \$29,000; re-leveling of building, \$18,000; upgrades to heating and ventilation controls, \$20,000; renovations to the tub room, \$50,000.

Copper Ridge Place expenditures consist of: equipment and furniture, \$225,000; irrigation system/landscaping, \$120,000; flooring, \$10,000; painting, \$85,000; rebuild loading dock, \$50,000; and ventilation and lock upgrades, \$45,000.

*Continuing Care - Renovations and Equipment in the amount of \$1,132,000 agreed to*

*On Multi-level Care Facility - Watson Lake*

**Mr. Mitchell:** If the minister could provide a breakdown on that item.

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** This year's funding will be used to continue construction on a multi-level care facility in Watson Lake.

**Mr. Mitchell:** The minister has been quite forthcoming in his line-by-line breakdowns this afternoon up to now. He has just now simply told us what it's for and, again, I'm wondering whether he can provide any details of the progress of what portion of the project this funding will accomplish.



**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** We have discussed this quite extensively, which is why I didn't repeat previous information. I advised the members previously that they have misunderstandings around this entire procedure. They fail to see the distinction between a single general contract and the construction management approach that was taken in this area and has been taken on some other contracts, although a general contract is more common.

I would also point out to members that because of that approach and the manner in which it was taken with construction management, contracts are dealt with -- of course, we broke this project down into a number of tenders to enable local contractors and small contractors to have the opportunity to bid on this job, as well as the larger players. Of course, if there are increases in certain areas, the members should be well aware that building costs are going up significantly. Items such as steel -- although most of that portion of structural steel is erected at this point. That, of course, came at an additional cost to what had been originally estimated. Members should be well aware that the cost of building materials such as plywood and OSB is also rising on a regular basis. Should that continue, there might be increased costs for that equipment. We can't predict what that market does any more than anyone else in western Canada can. This basis, right now, reflects the most recent estimate for continuing the project forward to completion.

I believe that addresses that area. I think that, if members would refer to our previous debate in this session and even to the budget speech, they will note more information on what has been done, what will be done and how it will continue to proceed.

**Mr. Mitchell:** Can the minister give us an updated forecast on when he now anticipates or expects the facility to be completed and in service?

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** We expect the facility to be in service some time next year. That's the most recent projection.

**Mr. Mitchell:** Will that include addressing any outstanding issues of the National Building Code, in terms of the associated hospital building?

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** I hope members will excuse my frustration with this in noting that these issues have been addressed previously at some length in the Legislature, and I have clearly informed members, and will clearly inform them again that in the initial phase of the project there was contemplation of connecting the two buildings -- connecting the new multi-level care facility with the existing hospital.

Thus, at one point, engineering work was done to determine what would be needed to connect those two, which included some structural review of the existing hospital. It was determined, based on the result of that and the cost identified to bring the existing hospital up to current building codes, that it would necessitate separating the two projects, which has been done through a firewall.

The new multi-level care facility will be a separate building. Although it is immediately adjacent to the existing hospital, it will be done in compliance with the code. It will not be considered the same building as the existing hospital.

The existing hospital is not in need of code upgrades. Code upgrades to the existing hospital would be contemplated in a future project. They are not part of this project. This project is only a multi-level care facility, as per our previous commitment and announcement.

*Multi-level Care Facility - Watson Lake in the amount of \$86,944,000 agreed to*

*On Prior Years' Projects*

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

**Continuing Care in the amount of \$8,076,000 agreed to**  
**On Health Services**

*On Chronic Disease Benefits - Equipment*

*Chronic Disease Benefits - Equipment in the amount of \$65,000 agreed to*

*On Extended Health Benefits - Equipment*

*Extended Health Benefits - Equipment in the amount of \$65,000 agreed to*

*On Hearing Services - Equipment*

*Hearing Services - Equipment in the amount of \$15,000 agreed to*

*On Insured Health Services - Renovations and Equipment*

*Insured Health Services - Renovations and Equipment in the amount of \$10,000 agreed to*

*On Yukon Hospital Corporation - Equipment*

*Yukon Hospital Corporation - Equipment in the amount of \$425,000 agreed to*

*On Community Health Programs - Renovations and Equipment*

*Community Health Programs - Renovations and Equipment in the amount of \$76,000 agreed to*

*On Community Nursing - Renovations and Equipment*

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** On that line item, I would just like to provide some information, particularly for rural members. This line item for community nursing is \$880,000. The line item includes \$750,000 for repairs to the 13 health facilities throughout the Yukon. This funding is used to maintain community nursing facilities to the standard at which we want to see those buildings. As well, there is \$130,000 to provide health care professionals with more equipment to assist them in performing their duties related to care.

*Community Nursing - Renovations and Equipment in the amount of \$880,000 agreed to*

*On Emergency Medical Services - Vehicle Replacement, Renovations and Equipment*

**Mr. Mitchell:** Can the minister provide information as to which communities are getting replacement vehicles?

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** What I have done, as minister in this area, under this \$392,000 line item -- there is \$253,000 for the cost of two new ambulances and \$52,000 to maintain and renovate ambulance stations, as well as \$105,000 to purchase other medical equipment and supplies. As far as where the ambulances go, I am not directly involved in determining that. I have asked officials to work directly with the ambulance supervisors in communities to determine the area of greatest need and to inform me afterward of where they go. I am not going to be personally directing the location of that equipment.

*Emergency Medical Services - Vehicle Replacement, Renovations and Equipment in the amount of \$392,000 agreed to*

*On Prior Years' Projects*

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

*Health Services in the amount of \$1,928,000 agreed to*

*Total Capital Expenditures in the amount of \$12,998,000 agreed to*

*Department of Health and Social Services agreed to*

**Chair:** Do members wish to take a brief recess while waiting for officials?

**All Hon. Members:** Agreed.

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

*Recess*

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

**Department of Energy, Mines and Resources -- continued**

**Chair:** The matter before the Committee is Vote 53, Energy, Mines and Resources. We'll proceed with general debate.

**Mr. McRobb:** Given the time, with only 35 minutes left in the day, I'm hoping that we can make some progress here this afternoon. It's rather unfortunate this department has been pushed to the tail end, with two days so far and it looks destined to carry over to a third one.

I would like to start off with where I left off and that was with some energy-related questions. With respect to the rate stabilization fund, can the minister provide the annual cost reports for this program that he has received?

**Hon. Mr. Lang:** We don't have those figures from the corporation.

**Mr. McRobb:** I'm not asking for figures. I'm asking for the reports.

To refresh the minister's memory, those reports have been required to be produced for the minister in accordance with the orders-in-council related to the rate stabilization fund in the past. Is he saying that the reports haven't been provided?

**Hon. Mr. Lang:** The reports for the corporation will be tabled either today, tomorrow or the next day when I get them in my possession.

**Mr. McRobb:** I'm not sure if the minister is now speaking about annual reports for the corporation or the reports I've requested. Can he clarify this for us?

**Hon. Mr. Lang:** We don't have the information today for the member opposite. I will be talking to the corporation and asking them if they have the reports. If I have access to the reports, they'll be tabled with the annual reports in the next couple of days.

**Mr. McRobb:** I think we're on the same page and I'll accept the undertaking from the minister. Can he indicate how

much the rate stabilization fund escalated after the Yukon Party abolished the conservation incentive part of the program?

**Hon. Mr. Lang:** I don't have those figures here today, so I would have to work with the corporation to get them.

**Mr. McRobb:** That's fine. I take it the minister has undertaken to provide that information. If that's not the case, I would expect to hear otherwise.

Can the minister indicate how much he estimates the rate stabilization fund to cost in its final year? I'm referring to the period from July 1, 2007, to June 30, 2008.

**Hon. Mr. Lang:** I don't have the exact figure but it's somewhere between \$5 million and \$6 million. Those are rounded figures.

**Mr. McRobb:** Can we get a more precise figure from the minister? If he wants to provide that along with the other information, that's fine with us.

**Hon. Mr. Lang:** All the figures we have would be an estimate anyway, Mr. Chair, so I'm telling the member opposite it's around \$5 million to \$6 million for the last year -- those are rounded figures. There will be actual figures as we go through the program.

**Mr. McRobb:** I don't think the minister's on the right page with that answer. I asked how much the reduced program is expected to cost. We knew the full program cost was estimated at \$4.8 million per year. He is essentially giving the same response. We know he's reducing the program by half so we would expect the new figure to be less than the former figure, but we're not getting any indication of that from the Energy, Mines and Resources minister.

Once again, I would like some assurance we'll get that information, unless he has it now, along with the other material.

**Hon. Mr. Lang:** The program I was talking about was the total program, so it would be roughly half of that figure. So, you're looking at between \$2.5 million and \$3 million. Again, those are rounded-off figures, and the factual figures will come up at the end of the program.

**Mr. McRobb:** Well, just before we leave that aspect, I'd like to put on record -- for the first time in this House, at least -- that the new program that has been continued for one year starting July 1 in a reduced form has an entirely new basis upon which the rate stabilization fund is disbursed to the consumers. It's no longer pegged to rates based in, I believe, January 1998.

So that reference has been abolished and there is an entirely new formula. I'm just wondering how the government can be so sure that the cost will indeed be half of the former cost because the goal posts have been changed on this program.

I would be satisfied if the minister would undertake, in his written response, to provide us with a bit of detail with respect to the equation that arrives at the estimate of half the cost, given the new parameters of the program. Would the minister undertake to provide that information to us?

**Hon. Mr. Lang:** Again, the Member for Kluane is wrong. We're working on the same premise. The figures are just a 50-percent figure. So, as far as changing the base on that, that's not correct. We're working with the basic figure, which is

what was put in place many years ago, and we're continuing that at a 50-percent level.

I've answered the question of the member opposite. These are all round figures because, at the end of the day and at the end of the program, we'll have actual figures.

**Mr. McRobb:** I don't have the OICs with me at the moment, Mr. Chair, but I will have time to review them and come back to this in the third part of debate on this department.

I would like to ask the minister what he plans to do with the funds that were formerly appropriated to the rate stabilization fund.

**Hon. Mr. Lang:** Those are corporate funds. That would be decided by the corporation.

**Mr. McRobb:** I will try to illuminate the minister a little bit. Those are Yukon Development Corporation funds, which are subject to directives from the government with respect to how they are spent. At least in a lot of cases, that has certainly been the history. I am asking the minister what will be done with the funds. For instance, we know that the corporation, either Yukon Development Corporation or Yukon Energy Corporation, has expressed interest in buying the old diesel generators at the Minto property. I would like the minister to confirm that, in fact, could be where some of this money is spent in the future.

**Hon. Mr. Lang:** Again, the member is wrong. There have been no discussions to use this fund for anything but the corporations' well-being. The member opposite is insinuating an investment of something that the government is leaving up to the corporations to manage.

The corporations manage the energy in the community. They are moving ahead with plans to expand the hydro between Carmacks and Pelly. I am working in partnership with the corporations. I know that the member opposite has been fighting the issue of the partnership that has grown between the government and the corporation, investing in our infrastructure. We leave the management of the corporation up to the capable board of directors and the executive. They will make the call on the profits from the corporation.

The government will work with that corporation to make sure that things are done in a business-like fashion. As far as the member opposite stating in the House that the corporation has taken the rate stabilization fund and is going to invest it in purchasing two generators at the Minto mine, that is not factual.

In the plan that the corporation put forward, there is a commitment by the corporation, by the mining company, that they would pay for 100 percent of the cost of the line between the Dawson road and the mine site and also contribute over \$7 million to the capital costs to building that line from Carmacks to Pelly. Our government took infrastructure money and committed \$10 million. This will all add to the asset base of the corporation. The asset base of the corporation would mean that the corporation would owe less money, virtually no money on the investment, and we're looking forward to a general rate application that will give money back to the consumers. At the end of the day, that will be a rate reduction for all ratepayers in the Yukon.

So, I would like to remind the member that the corporation is run by a board of directors and a capable administration. They are making a business case and a business deal that will benefit all Yukoners. It will certainly mitigate the diesel situation at the mine site. The mine site going on diesel would double the amount of diesel consumed in the territory from what it is today -- and we're of course looking at the community of Pelly. This is very timely for us to move forward with this hydro project. I compliment the corporation on the hard work. We have certainly utilized the Yukon Utilities Board. As we said in last year's election -- that we would commit to make sure that any investment would not repeat what the Liberals did with their Mayo-Dawson line and that the Yukon Utilities Board would be involved in every level of the decision-making process. That has been done.

That has been done very successfully. We look forward to the project moving forward. Of course, there are now economic considerations to be made for the line. There is also the YE-SAA process that has to be done, but we are looking forward to the benefits that this will bring to Yukoners. Again, I remind the House that there will be a reduction in our electrical bills. It will mean a reduction of everybody's electrical bills in the territory. I think it's a very positive thing.

This also gives us the opportunity, in the next stage, to tie in the Pelly-Stewart line, which would give us access to the management of the hydro facilities that are in position in Mayo, and of course the Mayo-Dawson line. Another business argument has to be put forward, but I think Yukoners are prepared for that business proposal because of the management of our energy, management of our environment and all the issues that come along with clean energy.

The members opposite have commented continually on this project. We spent two weeks talking about the environment and how responsible the Liberal Party was. Then, the next chapter is how this doesn't make any sense. By managing the whole hydro picture in the territory, there would be a net benefit to all Yukoners and to the environment. This decision that was made by the corporation in partnership with us, with infrastructure money, is a good business deal for Yukon.

The member opposite fought the idea of a third wheel. He said that we didn't need it until 2012. I think he forgets that we are in 2007, and it would take probably until 2009 to get the third wheel at Aishihik up and running.

That would alleviate the problem we have with the diesels here in the City of Whitehorse. And again, that would put another environmental peg in place in the master plan of how we are going to deal with our energy in the future and then the modernization of the facility we have here in Whitehorse. We can maximize the output of hydro at the local dam and improve our situation in the territory.

We take a look at the Mayo operation. That can be modernized so we have more power. And as companies like Western Copper come on-line and these other small improvements in our economic structure come on-line, we can service them too.

So for the Liberal Party to argue that they have an environmental conscience, and then argue the fact that this govern-

ment is going ahead, in conjunction with the corporation -- and, by the way, having a partnership with a corporation that's willing to put over \$7 million into the line between Carmacks and Pelly. That's a great investment; that's a great time to expand the hydro system in the territory.

Partnerships like that, as we move forward with industry and create the market for our hydro power, will be a net benefit to the consumer. That's because, as the Yukon Utilities Board dictates, the corporation can only make X amount of dollars into the investment. All the other money has to reflect back on the consumer and that is good news for the consumer.

I think the members opposite forgot about the consumer. This government is looking forward to the consumers receiving the net benefit, and the net benefit is lower light bills. That's what we're looking at. We're not looking at hidden subsidization. We're looking at putting money in people's pockets, having a realistic price for our energy, which is set by the Yukon Utilities Board, independent of government. We will be working with a very sound corporation; enhancing their position because, with the partnership, there isn't the situation we find with debt servicing.

We have corporations stepping up to the plate and investing. We have infrastructure money we're putting in place as an investment. There is \$5 million for the third wheel coming from infrastructure money and energy money from Ottawa. We're improving our hydro foundation with investments by the territorial government, as well as by industry and the federal government. The member opposite forgets that. He forgets about the partnerships, the partnerships that create wealth for Yukoners.

The Minto mine employs 125 people today. There are 125 people going to work every day at the Minto mine. They will soon be in production. That mine will be in production and will run on diesel for the first 12 to 18 months. That will mean that we will double our consumption of diesel for generating electricity. That means that we are putting tonnes and tonnes more pollutants into the air. The member opposite forgets that. He forgets that this is a net benefit to the environment and to the community of Pelly: one more community on the hydro line and a cleaner Yukon.

When the member opposite gets up and questions the logistics of the government or the corporation's capabilities or direction, I think he should remember that we in this House represent all Yukoners. All Yukoners are going to benefit from this line. I look forward to working with the communities. I look forward to the partnership we are going to create with our partners, the corporations -- particularly the Yukon Energy Corporation, which is making this move.

Under the directorship of the individuals who work as executives in the Yukon Energy Corporation and Yukon Development Corporation, I think we're in good hands. I understand the member from the Liberal Party and his experience with hydro lines. He does have concerns. We all have concerns and we don't want to repeat the Liberal fiasco of the line between Mayo and Dawson. The cost overruns were horrendous -- millions and millions of dollars of misspent funds of consumers and of taxpayers on the Mayo-Dawson line.

I don't like to repeat that and the member opposite, who is in the Liberal Party, understands exactly what went wrong because he was the member who stood up when he was a member of the NDP and in opposition during the last government and was concerned about a public inquiry. He went on the record demanding a public inquiry, another huge expenditure of money to find out that someone misspent the money.

This government didn't think that was a positive thing to do. We brought the Auditor General in. The Auditor General did good work and we got the report. The report was very damning.

The member of the Liberal Party is concerned. I would be, as a Yukoner, if the Liberal Party was in power. I would be concerned if they were thinking of building a hydro line anywhere.

With the government we have in place today, the corporation in the place it's at and the industry out there investing, I think under good business practices -- I know the Member for Kluane doesn't understand that concept, but I'd like to remind him that we will insist and we will learn from the Liberal fiasco that that was not the way to move forward on an expansion of our hydro facilities. We have to work with what the Liberals did.

The line between Mayo and Dawson is too small, badly engineered. When we get to Stewart, we will have to take a look at the line between Mayo and Dawson and manage that challenge as we get there. That will be another cost -- another unnecessary cost to Yukoners that should have been done in the first contract, but wasn't.

It wasn't done. They didn't have the foresight to understand that the line between Mayo and Dawson, in actual fact and from a business point of view, should have been from Mayo, tied into Carmacks and then gone to Dawson. That would have made more business sense. I think what happened with the Liberal Party of the day, Mr. Chair, is that they made political decisions; they didn't make business decisions. I think the member opposite understands that.

The Liberal Party made a political decision to go from Mayo to Dawson. At the end of the day, all consumers of the Yukon can reflect on the bottom line for the territory. When the member talks about the concerns from Carmacks to Pelly, I have concerns but I think that, from a business perspective, it is a good business decision. It is not a political decision. It is a business decision.

What happens with a business decision is that we have to put a business plan together. What did this government do? The Yukon Utilities Board started from day one and worked themselves to a part 3 so that, at the end of the day, we have some comfort that this is not going to reflect negatively in any way on the consumers of the territory. That is important from a business decision process.

Is there a decision to build the line from Carmacks to Pelly? Well, there's work being done. That work involves making a business case because, as we all know, costs go up. We have to go back to the board and look at what things cost. Then they have to take that business plan, analyze it, come back and

say what the power line from Carmacks to Pelly is going to cost the corporation.

That's what they're doing now. They're going through the YESAA process, which is another step communities, First Nations, stakeholders and investors can contribute in the decision-making process on the final lap of this decision-making process.

As the member opposite talks about power lines, rate stabilization and all the things that he's very much concerned with, I'm concerned with moving ahead with the Yukon. I'm concerned with moving ahead with the hydro potential of this territory. I'm concerned about the environment in this territory and how we can mitigate it by working with industry and our hydro potential to work in partnership to solve all the issues out there. There are issues out there on the environment.

The member opposite discusses the merits of the Carmacks-Pelly line and the "just say no" attitude -- and that's what he carried over from the NDP -- well, we're not going to just say no.

### Chair's statement

**Chair:** I would like to remind members not to personalize the debate. This debate is becoming more personal in manner as we proceed.

**Hon. Mr. Lang:** I apologize, Mr. Chair, if I did that.

But, anyway, in answering the member's questions about the power line and the Yukon Energy Corporation, this government lets the Yukon Energy Corporation do its good work and, of course, we will be there when they need assistance and some government expertise. But we certainly don't run the Yukon Energy Corporation on a daily basis and we certainly look forward to the profits from the Yukon Energy Corporation flowing back to the back pockets of the consumers of the territory.

With the good decision-making process in place today, I feel confident that in the next 12 months we'll be looking at a rate reduction for all Yukoners.

**Mr. McRobb:** Well, that was really something. Here I asked the minister a simple question -- whether the RSF money would be spent to purchase the old diesel generators at the Minto property, as expressed by the Yukon Energy Corporation officials recently, and the minister launched off on a long canoe trip down the Yukon River that took us up to Carmacks and to the Minto mine. Somehow he made it through Five Finger Rapids and then on to Stewart Crossing and Mayo, and then I'm not quite sure what river he took there to get to Mayo. But he ended back up in Dawson again, and then I think he circled a couple more times around the territory on these other issues.

Mr. Chair, I have to wonder not only about the minister changing focus away from the question, but also about a number of things I heard him say this afternoon. We will get to some of those other issues in due course. To fully respond to this minister, we would have to extend this sitting probably another month or two to hash through these matters. Unfortunately -- or perhaps fortunately -- there won't be an opportunity to do that before 5:00 p.m. on Thursday afternoon.

Now, we will get to some discussions on the third wheel and the transmission line and so on. I want to start off with a couple of matters that were relevant to the question. First, the minister declared that everything is separate in the corporations and the board of directors make the decisions about how to spend the money and so on. Well, the previous question I asked the minister related to how the Yukon Party abolished the conservation incentive aspect of the rate stabilization fund. It is a good example of how that contradicts the minister's own assurances. We need to examine it to point this out. The conservation incentive was abolished through an order-in-council. That proved my previous point about how the government dictates to the corporation on how to spend the money.

I assume from what the minister said that no Yukon Development Corporation money will be spent on those old diesel generators.

If that understanding is wrong and the minister somehow wants to get out of that commitment, I would expect to hear from him. The way it stands right now, the Yukon Utilities Board is quite dubious about the prudent expenditure of rate-payers' funds going toward those old diesel generators. If they're bought, how will they be paid for?

The logical alternative is to use funds from the Yukon Development Corporation; however, we just heard the minister say that won't happen. I guess we'll have to wait and see, along with a lot of other questions about energy issues under this minister's control.

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

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

**Some Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**Some Hon. Members:** Disagreed.

**Chair:** The motion has passed.

*Motion agreed to*

**Chair:** I await your pleasure.

**Mr. McRobb:** On a procedural matter, Mr. Chair, I believe that we're in the midst of this motion -- currently, my time clock isn't ticking here -- and you acknowledged that the yeas have it, and I'm just waiting for the motion to finalize.

**Chair:** The motion to report progress has passed.

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

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

*Motion agreed to*

*Speaker resumes the Chair*

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

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

### Chair's report

**Mr. Nordick:** Mr. Speaker, Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 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.

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

*The House adjourned at 5:32 p.m.*

**The following documents were filed June 12, 2007:**

07-1-24

Court recording service contract: letter dated (Feb. 13, 2004) from Minister of Justice, Elaine Taylor to Barry E. Prouse, International Reporting Inc., and Joyce Bachli, Mega Reporting Inc. re awarding contract (Inverarity)

07-1-25

Court recording service contract: Proposal Form "A" (dated November 18, 2003) from International Reporting Inc. and Mega Reporting Inc. (Inverarity)

07-1-26

Court recording service contract: Contract (dated March 4, 2004) between Government of Yukon and International Reporting Inc. (Inverarity)