

Whitehorse, Yukon**Wednesday, June 13, 2007 -- 1:00 p.m.**

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

Prayers

DAILY ROUTINE

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

Tributes.

TRIBUTES**In recognition of Yukon Day**

Hon. Mr. Fentie: I rise today to pay tribute to Yukon Day. Yukon Day commemorates the birth of the Yukon as a political entity. One hundred and nine years ago, on June 13, 1898, Canadian parliamentarians voted into law the original law, titled *The Yukon Territory Act, 1898*.

The act gave the federal government of the day the power to appoint a leader, who was known as the Commissioner, and also to appoint up to six people to a council that would administer the affairs of the territory.

The Yukon's first Commissioner was James Walsh. He was a veteran of the North-West Mounted Police and, when he was appointed Commissioner on August 17, 1897, he took the chair as Yukon's very first Commissioner.

The current Commissioner, the Hon. Geraldine Van Bibber, is the Yukon's 28th Commissioner. Of course, the Yukon has developed significantly in the 109 years since the first Yukon act became law. We no longer have an appointed council; we now have 18 elected members of this Legislative Assembly. Yukoners have made substantive political and social progress in the decades since we first became a territory.

As of 2003, we have an updated *Yukon Act* that gives Yukoners control over land and water and resources such as minerals, oil and gas, and our forests. We now sit as a full partner at the table with the federal government and the provinces and, together with our sister territories, provide direction on the north's role when it comes to the national agenda.

Our pan-northern collaborative approach with Nunavut and the Northwest Territories has advanced our northern interests as never before.

The great success of the recent 2007 Canada Winter Games here in Whitehorse is proof positive that the Yukon and the north are truly coming of age. Our territory's continuing evolution as a jurisdiction promises to deliver an increasing range of choices and opportunities for all of us and for the next generation of Yukoners.

This is an exciting time to live and work in Yukon. Today is our territory's birthday. I encourage everyone to reflect on the history and the heritage and, of course, our rich culture of this land and its people. Yukon Day is an opportunity to celebrate our lives and the very tradition and cultures of all Yukoners, past and present.

I am pleased to let you know that our Minister of Tourism and Culture, Ms. Elaine Taylor, has announced a special celebration to commemorate Yukon Day together with the 10th anniversary of the Yukon Beringia Interpretive Centre. Festivities underway today at the centre included a welcome reception this morning, and there is free admission for the public all day, with a movie presentation, demonstration, an outdoor mini-safari and, of course, refreshments -- and a birthday cake, by the way, Mr. Speaker. It is a great way to celebrate everyone's birthday, and I invite everyone to attend.

Happy birthday, Yukon, and we certainly have many more birthdays and a bright future ahead.

Mr. Mitchell: Mr. Speaker, I rise today on behalf of the Official Opposition to pay tribute to the Yukon Territory on the occasion of its 109th birthday. It was on this day, June 13, 1898, that Yukon was first proclaimed as a separate territory in the original act, *The Yukon Territory Act, 1898*. The discovery of gold in the Klondike by George Carmacks, Skookum Jim and Tagish Charlie in August 1896 put Yukon on the world stage. In the spring of 1897, the cry was "gold." The rush was on, and 100,000 stampedeers headed north to the Yukon to seek their fortune, but less than a third made it to the Klondike. Many struggles, hazards, trials and tribulations awaited these early stampedeers, and most who finally made it to the Klondike found that all the gold bearing creeks were already claimed.

The Yukon was widely regarded as being a vast, empty wasteland of unexplored, uncharted wilderness. But until the late 1800s, the area we know as Yukon was inhabited by the First Nation people for many years. The word "Yukon" is derived from a First Nation word meaning "big river". Before 1896, only the hardiest of fur traders, prospectors, missionaries and the North-West Mounted Police ventured into the Yukon Territory. With Yukon's population under 5,000 people prior to the gold rush and soaring to over 30,000 in 1898, Dawson City was transformed into the largest and most cosmopolitan city north of Seattle and west of Winnipeg. With the North-West Mounted Police keeping Dawson City and the Klondike law-abiding, and preventing vigilante justice, Canadian law and order was introduced to our northern frontier.

In those early days, all travel in the Yukon was by river or rugged overland trails. In 1942, construction started on the Alcan Highway, known today as the Alaska Highway. It was built mostly by the U.S. Army as a supply route during World War II, starting in March 1942 and completed in October of that same year, with its completion celebrated at Soldiers' Summit on November 21, 1942.

For the first time, Yukon had an established land link to the rest of Canada. This brought many changes to our territory, making it more accessible for people to travel and opening many new areas. Today, we have visitors from all over the world who travel throughout the Yukon by car, motorhomes and bus tours. The Yukon offers its citizens a unique lifestyle with all the modern conveniences in a healthy frontier setting.

Since inception as a territory on June 13, 1898, we have come a long way. From the early gold seekers to today's modern Yukoners, the territory known as Yukon has become fa-

mous around the world for its scenic beauty and its pioneer spirit. We are a multicultural society with many traditions. We have a wealth of history and heritage. As we reflect on our past and celebrate our future, we give thanks to those pioneers who came before us. We rise today to commemorate the 109th birthday of Canada's true north, Yukon.

Mr. Cardiff: I'm very pleased today to join my colleagues in the Legislature and, on behalf of the third party, to pay tribute to Yukon Day, our 109th anniversary.

Yukon Day was declared on June 13, 1998 at a special sitting of the Yukon Legislative Assembly in Dawson City. It commemorates the creation of our territory in the beautiful northern corner of Canada.

Now, throughout the years, there have been many historic landmarks in our social and constitutional development. Many have been reflected on by the Premier and the Leader of the Official Opposition.

But constitutionally, I think, some of those would include things like the letter from Jake Epp, the signing of the *Umbrella Final Agreement* with First Nations, and the devolution of programs from the federal government to the territorial government and taking responsibility for those here in the territory.

As we continue to mature as a territory and as an Assembly here, developing and passing legislation that reflects the wishes of Yukoners and working toward intergovernmental processes, the future holds many challenges for us as politicians and for the Yukon as a society.

There is very complex work in creating true government-to-government relationships with First Nations, and that demands our commitment to confirming self-government agreements, and assisting in their implementation. I believe that when that's realized, we'll truly have a meaningful role and play a larger part in the Canadian federation that is truly progressive and responsive to all peoples in Canada.

Thank you.

Speaker: Are there any further tributes?

Address by Patrick Michael, former Clerk of the Assembly

Speaker: Members of the Legislative Assembly, it is my pleasure to ask the Sergeant-at-Arms to escort Mr. Patrick Michael to the Clerk's Table to address us today. There's a long-standing tradition in Canada that retiring Clerks be afforded the opportunity to address the House upon their retirement and, as Mr. Michael served this Assembly for 28 years, the tradition has not been exercised in the Yukon until today.

So please join me in welcoming Mr. Michael.

Applause

Mr. Michael: I must admit, this is one of the first times I've ever felt nervous coming in here. Usually, if I was nervous, it was only about what you folks might be up to. I also feel relatively undressed. I used to always have the clown suit on and felt good about that.

Mr. Speaker, Members and Table Officers of the Legislative Assembly, Mr. Sergeant-at-Arms, pages -- I should remark

that one of the pages, Molly Purser, I've known since she was about yay high. That's one of the signs of aging, I guess -- and all others present in the Chamber today, it's a very great honour and privilege to be granted permission to address you today. The occasion is enhanced for me by the fact that this is Yukon Day, and we are marking the 109th anniversary of Yukon as a separate territory in this nation.

There are innumerable people to whom I would wish to express my appreciation. I'm absolutely certain I'm going to leave out a great many of those who should be mentioned, but I'm going to take that risk anyway.

First, though, I wish to express heartfelt condolences to Carol Pettigrew and all the family and friends of John Ostashek on his passing. John was truly committed to Yukon and its citizens and will, as time goes by, grow in our remembrances, having been a very important and positive figure in our history. On a personal level, I greatly value the opportunity I was afforded to work with him.

As I've warned, there are a great number of people I have to thank, including all the members of the legislative assemblies I've experienced -- from the 23rd Legislative Assembly through to this, the current 32nd Legislative Assembly.

I would wish also to thank all the Speakers I have served, but in particular, I wish to mention two. Don Taylor represented the Electoral District of Watson Lake from 1961-1985. He was the Speaker when I arrived here in 1977. Don was devoted to this institution and continually promoted our constitutional development. He should be very proud of the part he played in the attainment of responsible government in 1979.

I would also wish to specifically mention Sam Johnston, who holds a place in Canadian history as being the first First Nations person to be elected Speaker of any parliamentary institution in this country. He's a very special person, and I will always have fond remembrances of our times together.

I must make an admission to members -- at least members of the past -- who thought that my many hours with Sam involved guiding him through the intricacies of arcane parliamentary tradition. I must now admit to the members who thought that, that a great deal of that time was spent much more valuably. In fact, it was Sam teaching me and my fellow Table Officer at the time, Missy Follwell, who has joined us in the Speaker's gallery, about First Nations and First Nations' culture. We were very fortunate to have had that experience, and I extend sincerest thanks to Sam for his patience and wisdom.

I'm afraid time doesn't permit me to make remarks about all the Speakers subsequent to Don and Sam, but I do wish to express my appreciation to Alan Nordling, John Devries, Robert Bruce, Doug Livingstone -- now, there's going to be an answer to a trivia question some day -- Dennis Schneider and, of course, the very capable and enormously well-respected Speaker of this current House.

As with all positions and jobs, it must be understood that the most important and vital people are not really those one works for but rather those one works with. I am not being unduly humble when I say that any successes I may have had during my time in office as your Clerk and as the Chief Electoral Officer of Yukon are a credit to my colleagues in the Leg-

islative Assembly Office and the Elections Office. I also freely admit that the failures were also entirely of my own doing, and usually entered into against the wise advice of my colleagues.

I do wish to mention some central characters in this regard. First are the two Deputy Clerks I have been privileged to have at my side for these many years. Missy Follwell was appointed in 1978 and served this Assembly until 2000. She was with me during the time that we dealt with the first House elected under political party banners. She was here when we attained responsible government and all through the changes that took place in this Chamber at that time. She was here at a time when committees were quite active and must be given entire credit for the behind-the-scenes work that led to our Public Accounts Committee coming to be recognized in the 1980s as one of the best in Canada.

There is so much more that could be said but, again, time intrudes. I will simply say that the members of this Assembly, the citizens of this territory and I were privileged to have been served by such a devoted and effective House Officer.

Floyd McCormick succeeded Missy and has obviously proven his value, as recognized by you choosing him as Clerk of this Assembly. Floyd, you are a pleasure to work with, and I have every confidence that your accomplishments as Clerk will soon cause members to forget that there was ever anyone in this position prior to your arrival. All the best.

The people behind the scenes in the Legislative Assembly Office also deserve great credit. The chief administrative officer who began working with me at the same time as Missy was Jane Steele, and she was succeeded by Helen Fitzsimmons, who remains in that position today, and I thank her for joining us here. Thank you to both Jane and Helen for their very capable and, I might add, scandal-free handling of the financial affairs of this institution.

The secretary/administrative assistants I have worked with over the years were the late Lily Schuler and her successor, Sue MacDonald, who I am pleased to see has been able to join us in the gallery today. Sue's commitment and capacity for the wide variety of duties she holds are to be commended and valued by all she serves in this Assembly. I thank her for all she did for me over the years.

During my time in this Assembly, we have had two *Hansard* contractors, Dave Robertson and Lois Cameron. And again, Lois has been kind enough to join us today. Lois was here as editor when I first arrived, both of us being children at that time, and has been a fixture to the present day. She and her staff produce one of the finest *Hansards* in this country. On top of the quality of the product, it is provided to users faster than any other *Hansard* I'm aware of and with fewer staff and lower cost than any other *Hansard* operation. Thank you to Lois and to all of her staff.

In terms of Sergeants-at-Arms, I would mention two. I was very privileged to work for my first years with G.I. Cam Cameron, who was really an institution in this territory. Those of you who were ever in my office would recall that I had a painting of Cam, which was done for me by Bill Sinclair. I'm happy to say that the permanent art collection has agreed to take that,

so it will be available and, I assume, shown to people as time goes on.

I would also acknowledge the current Sergeant-at-Arms, Rudy Couture, who happens to be my next-door neighbour. It has been a pleasure to work with you, too, Rudy.

Turning to the other position I held, Chief Electoral Officer, I was very fortunate to have had Jo-Ann Waugh as Assistant Chief Electoral Officer from 1983 until my retirement. Jo-Ann has been involved in every single election held in Yukon since the introduction of party politics, first as a returning officer, then as administrator of elections, prior to her appointment as Assistant Chief Electoral Officer.

Her appointment as Chief Electoral Officer this year was well-deserved, and I congratulate her for that and wish her every success in the future on that front. It should be noted that, since 1978, Jo-Ann has participated in the conduct of nine general elections, and I must admit I've forgotten how many by-elections. The mother of the current Minister of Tourism and Culture was returning officer for us for some years in Watson Lake. I recall the current Minister of Tourism and Culture at a much younger age.

Jo-Ann has also been a central figure in the work of all the electoral district boundaries commissions, and I see from a communication I received in my mailbox the other day that there's another one underway. She has also provided assistance to a number of organizations in Yukon, particularly including Yukon First Nations in the conduct of their elections. Her expertise has been recognized by colleagues across Canada in her work and attendance at conferences of Canadian election officials.

She has also been called upon to participate in a great number of international election observation missions, again a mark of respect for her expertise and effectiveness. I would conclude by saying Jo-Ann has done very well with the administration of elections. She deserves an immense amount of credit for that. We all owe her a debt of gratitude.

I think I've covered off my thank-yous with that. I hadn't really recognized how this would play out today, so I wasn't sure what I would be allowed to say. Maybe I'd better remain careful on that front. I'm hearing silent thoughts from House leaders that maybe I should wrap this up shortly. Mr. McRobb has always been very circumspect with the advice he has offered me -- I should have said the Member for Kluane, shouldn't I? Yes.

It has been an enormous honour to come here, and I have been so fortunate as to the timing of when I came. I first arrived here when this was a house of independent members, when the Commissioner was the chief executive officer as well as the head of state. In a short couple of years, we went through enormous changes, concluding with the Epp letter and the granting of responsible government in this territory. I know at that time there were many federal officials, particularly in the civil service, who felt that this was guaranteed for failure, that this was not going to be a success and it would be a short time before we would be back in the hands of the Commissioner. Had they heard that we would be facing a minority government by 1985 and subsequently going through the 1990s with four

changes in government in four elections, I'm sure they would have been totally surprised that it could have been made to work. It is to the credit of the members of this institution that it has.

I should say, upon reflection, that early on when responsible government was granted, members were very aware of how delicate the situation was and the potential for this to be a fragile institution and that they needed to take care of it.

We have seen such success with the institution that, on occasion -- I need to be careful how I say this -- I think there are times when we become casual about the respect for and care of this place. That is something that I would very much encourage members to understand -- that we do not have a long history of having responsible self-government here in the territory. It is something that is to be greatly valued. We are very fortunate in this kind of democracy. If you think about the number of places in the world that could have gone through any kind of change of government, let alone four in four successive elections, without there having been firearms involved or some kind of upset, it is quite incredible.

Members here have behaved very responsibly in those terms during the changes in government. We have always seen a very civil, peaceful transition. That is to the credit of all parties and all members of those legislative assemblies.

That's essentially what I will leave you with -- always keep in mind what a great place this is, what a great institution and what a marvel our democracy is. You are all people we should be proud of for having run, for having been here. I greatly value you, and I very much hope that feeling is shared by all the citizens of this territory.

Thank you for the experience, thank you for this day, thank you for this opportunity.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any other tributes?
Introduction of visitors.
Returns or documents for tabling.

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Speaker: The Chair has the 2006 annual report of the Yukon Ombudsman and Information and Privacy Commissioner for tabling.

Hon. Ms. Taylor: I have for tabling the 2006-07 annual report of the Yukon Advisory Council on Women's Issues, as well as the 2005-06 annual report of the Yukon Geographical Place Names Board.

Speaker: Are there any other returns or documents for tabling?
Reports of committees.
Are there any petitions?
Are there any bills to be introduced?
Are there any notices of motion?
Is there a statement by a minister?
This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: School construction planning

Mr. Fairclough: Yesterday I asked the Minister of Education to table the Hold Fast report. Quoting from the Blues, I said, "Will the minister confirm that he has the report, and will he table it?" The minister responded, "When I get the final report, I will then be in possession of it, but I have not received the final report." In response to the first supplementary, the minister said, "When I get the final report I will comment on it."

Today local media are reporting, "... but the guy who wrote the report says the finished document was delivered last month." The article goes on to say that Hold Fast delivered the report -- it's called the *School Feasibility Study Final Report*. That's "final report", Mr. Speaker, and I cannot believe for one minute that a superintendent had the report since May 23 and did not get around to mentioning it.

Will the minister explain why he misled members of this Assembly?

Unparliamentary language

Speaker: That's a very serious charge -- accusing a member of misleading this Legislative Assembly. Retract it or...

Withdrawal of remark

Mr. Fairclough: I'll retract that and present it as "inaccurate information".

Hon. Mr. Rouble: It's my honour to rise as the Minister of Education and respond to the allegations of the member opposite. The member opposite is incorrect. The member opposite is not basing his question on fact. I have not received the final report.

Mr. Fairclough: The minister ought to do his job, Mr. Speaker. The media refers to people who have seen the report and the report has been seen by so many people except for the minister, and I can't believe that. For those who have seen the report, it recommends that the government do nothing for at least five years, and that should make the government happy. A do-nothing government gets a report that says to do nothing.

The minister has misinformed this House. He is the man --

Unparliamentary language

Speaker: Order. Did we not just discuss this? "Misinformed, misled."

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Speaker: Order please. I'll make the rulings here.

Withdrawal of remark

Mr. Fairclough: I'll retract that, Mr. Speaker. He is the one responsible for his department. He can't blame it on public officials. The buck stops with the minister.

I again ask the minister to table the report and apologize for the answers he gave yesterday.

Hon. Mr. Rouble: I have nothing to apologize for. It's the member opposite who has now had to apologize twice to

this Assembly for his inappropriate actions during Question Period today.

Unlike previous governments -- unlike the previous Liberal government -- this government will not make decisions based on drafts or half-done research or half-drawn conclusions. It will not make important actions or statements without involving Yukoners. This study is being done with Yukoners, with the Copper Ridge school advisory group, and we will listen to the stakeholders involved. We will listen to the research that is out there. We will listen to the facts and, when we have the information and we have a good solid foundation for making a decision -- not a half-done interpretation or half-gathered information or inaccurate information -- when we have the final draft and when we have the involvement of the community, then we will go forward and we will make the right decision.

Mr. Fairclough: Well, the minister has the report. It was handed in last month; the final report was handed in last month, so the minister has it. He can't be playing these games; it's a serious matter. He must table the report today, and he must report to this House in a forthright manner. He must make amends, Mr. Speaker. Will the minister table the report and apologize? He has the report; he cannot deny that.

Hon. Mr. Rouble: Mr. Speaker, twice now in Question Period this member has been called to order for breaking the rules of this Assembly and for making statements that are entirely out of order in this Assembly. He has now made another assertion that I am not honestly conveying the facts here. That is totally incorrect. We are working with the community. We will continue to work with the community, and we'll work with the facts.

Speaker's statement

Speaker: Order please. Prior to the next question, if the members do not want me in this debate today, I caution you all to control yourselves. We have two days left. Let's act responsibly.

Question re: YESAA process

Mr. Elias: At the recent annual meeting of the Association of Yukon Communities, municipal officials were reported as being very critical of YESAA. "The *Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Act* is inefficient, redundant and costing taxpayers' money," said municipal officials. A Haines Junction council member said he finds YESAA to be a burden. The council member went on to say, "This is a damn nuisance." The media report quotes the Minister of Community Services saying, "We as a government share your concern when it comes to YESAA." Can the minister clarify what concerns government has with YESAA or the YESA Board?

Hon. Mr. Fentie: Mr. Speaker, the YESA Board and its responsibilities rest with the Executive Council Office. I'm not aware of statements that the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin has just brought forward, but I find it interesting that the member would be articulating something of such importance that came from the land claims here in Yukon and describing it as a "nuisance". It is a legal instrument that has passed Parliament, Mr. Speaker, and it passed with the support of Yukoners, First

Nations and public government under the then Liberal government -- albeit short lived -- of the territory. So what it is for the government side is a legal instrument that is applied here in the territory to address applications, various types of applications to conduct an environmental and social assessment of impacts in those areas with respect to any of these applications. So for us, it's not a nuisance; it's a legal instrument. And by the way, it is Yukon made.

Mr. Elias: I will table the news article. It's the minister, and not me, who said these remarks: "The Yukon Party government likes facts, Mr. Speaker, and the public must be informed based on facts." The minister said, "For example, projects are delayed because we don't get the reviews on time."

When I checked with YESA officials, they claimed that they have always met their deadlines, as prescribed by legislation. This is a serious accusation, Mr. Speaker. If unfounded, these remarks undermine the effectiveness of this body, and they are undeserving of that. They are hard-working, and they're conscientious employees over there at the YESA Board.

Can the minister cite any specific instances where projects were held up as a result of the YESA Board being delayed in submitting evaluation reports?

Hon. Mr. Fentie: It appears that the member from the Official Opposition is taking his counsel and his information from the media. Can we compare this to a statement of this nature -- and this is to do with the hiring of the CEO of the hospital, by the way. "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 CEO." Well, in that matter, nothing of the sort ever took place, but it is in the media.

Now let's get to the issue of the YESA Board and its members. The Official Opposition has taken great issue with the appointment of the chair of the hospital board. Do they not then take issue with the appointment of the members on YESA Board who are former Liberal Cabinet ministers of this Assembly? They may not have been campaign managers, but they were candidates and ministers. Is that not an issue for the Official Opposition, in the same manner as they take issue with an appointment to the hospital board?

I think the Official Opposition has a lot of apologizing to do to the public for their conduct.

Mr. Elias: The Yukon Party's only recourse is to attack our credibility. We will listen to Yukoners and represent their issues as long as we are here in the Official Opposition, Mr. Speaker.

If I may be permitted to quote the media again, the minister said, "We incur difficulties on a regular basis." Now the YESA Board has denied being late on any project assessment. The minister has said otherwise. The minister must either provide this House with examples of where this has occurred or publicly withdraw his remarks. Will the minister provide specific examples to back up his claims, or will he withdraw his comments and apologize to the YESA Board members for his remarks?

Hon. Mr. Fentie: The government side and the minister have nothing to apologize for. But let me get into the list

where apologies are necessary when it comes to the Official Opposition. When will the Leader of the Official Opposition apologize to the Ombudsman and to the Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board for his remarks in this House, misrepresenting the Ombudsman's letter? When will this member stand up and apologize to the CEO of the hospital, to the chair of the hospital board --

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

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

Mr. McRobb: Mr. Speaker, you've ruled out or order the word "misrepresent" already, and you've warned members not to use it, and the Premier just repeated the word.

Speaker's ruling

Speaker: That's a valid point of order. Hon. Premier, don't do that. You have the floor.

Hon. Mr. Fentie: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Let me rephrase it by saying "incorrectly articulating" a letter from the Ombudsman's office.

When is the Official Opposition going to apologize to the CEO, the chair of the hospital board, and a senior citizen, whom they have subjected to this sham? When is the member opposite going to apologize to another resident they brought into this gallery and said that the government has cut out small contractors in the Yukon, when that very individual has \$100,000-plus of contracts from the government? When are the members opposite going to apologize for their position when it comes to other matters of this Assembly that they have incorrectly presented to the Yukon public? Apologize.

Question re: Radon levels in buildings

Mr. Hardy: How quickly we forget Patrick Michael's very wise words.

Mr. Speaker, 1,900 Canadians died of lung cancer last year due to exposure to radon gas. Health Canada has just announced a new policy that drastically reduces what it considers an acceptable level of radon in homes and public buildings.

Radon is a colourless, odourless gas that results from the decay of uranium-238 in the ground. Yukon Housing Corporation is aware that radon has been present in some Yukon homes for a long time. In fact, it even provides a free testing service for Yukon homeowners.

My question is for the Minister of Health and Social Services. Given the serious risk of lung cancer from prolonged exposure to radon, what is the environmental health branch doing to monitor radon levels, especially in public buildings such as schools, hospitals and chronic care facilities?

Hon. Mr. Kenyon: Radon is a potential risk, as the member opposite mentions. Homeowners in particular concerned that radon gas might be present in their homes are urged to contact the Yukon Housing Corporation at 667-5759. The corporation offers free-of-charge testing equipment that homeowners or any owners of any buildings can borrow. Homeowners who do have radon levels that should be mitigated are en-

couraged to talk with the Yukon Housing Corporation program officer about the home repair program.

The Housing Corporation and Energy, Mines and Resources are working to produce a map of the Whitehorse area that links known geological data of radon formations with instances where homes or buildings have tested positive for higher levels for radon. The map should be up on the Yukon government's Web site in the next couple of weeks.

Mr. Hardy: I'm trying not to cause any undue alarm but there is very great reason to be concerned about this. There's a growing awareness of how environmental factors are affecting the health of Canadians, especially in the high rates of many kinds of cancer. When it comes to radon, a lot of work is being done at the national level to identify high-risk areas for radon in homes, but apparently Yukon doesn't have very comprehensive data about how widespread it is.

Yukon Housing Corporation is apparently working with the Yukon Geological Survey to map out radon hotspots in Whitehorse, but that leaves a question mark about other communities in the territory. Why just Whitehorse? Is Whitehorse special compared to the other communities? Is this the attitude?

What plans, if any, does this government have to determine exactly how widespread the problem is so that homeowners and home builders can take appropriate action to reduce radon levels?

Hon. Mr. Kenyon: As the member opposite perhaps missed, we are preparing those maps and yes, Whitehorse is our first attempt, but we will be looking at other communities in the very near future. Mitigation work for radon is an eligible item for funding under the home repair program. Most mitigation work should cost in the range of about \$500 to \$3,000 and I would urge people to contact the Yukon Housing Corporation because it is a problem and it is not terribly difficult to mitigate, given the seriousness of this, and there is some funding available for that.

Homeowners with low income should also contact Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation in Whitehorse -- their phone number is 633-7532 -- to discuss their eligibility for wider spread Government of Canada programs.

Mr. Hardy: I was a little disturbed recently by a comment from a Yukon Housing Corporation official who seemed to shrug off the problem by saying we've lived with this forever. What he told a reporter was, "Just because somebody back east changes the policy does not change the rest of our lives." With nearly 2,000 lung cancer deaths last year directly linked to radon, I'm sure Health Canada had a very good reason to take action. We're going through a housing boom right now with no construction standards in place and incomplete data about where radon may be a problem. It already exists in Yukon homes and will cost homeowners between \$800 and \$2,500 -- different figures from the minister across the way -- to reduce those levels. Where are the people going to get the money?

The information is not available to the people. That's one of the big problems as well. We can get the answers in the Legislative Assembly, but it's not out there for the people.

When will this government come up with a plan of some kind to make sure all Yukon homes meet the new Health Canada standards, or is it content to leave it up to homeowners to deal with it, the same way it's ignoring the need for building standards and homeowner protection legislation?

Hon. Mr. Cathers: I think what needs to be pointed out to the member opposite is, first of all, the standards he is referring to, the change by Health Canada, is a recent change. This government, as other governments in Canada, is acting based upon the new recommendations from Health Canada. The minister responsible for the Yukon Housing Corporation and Yukon Housing Corporation are doing good work in their area of responsibility, providing the assistance to people and the testing equipment to do testing in their own homes.

This is clear evidence of what we are doing in this area. Again, as the minister responsible for Yukon Housing Corporation pointed out, we have stepped forward and the Yukon Housing Corporation and the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources are working on mapping areas where there is likely to be radon gas, to better inform people and government and policy makers where there is likely to be a problem. Those steps will be taken to assist them in this area.

These revised guidelines are very recent. This is strong action that is already underway. I commend the minister responsible for Yukon Housing Corporation and the Yukon Housing Corporation and the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources for their work in this area, as well as officials within my own Department of Health and Social Services.

Question re: Environment report

Mr. Hardy: I have a question for the Premier, who is also Minister of Environment. This government says it has an action plan to deal with climate change. We will wait and see, of course. This government promises territory-wide drinking water standards. We are going to wait and see, of course, for that as well. We are waiting to see this government's approach to mine reclamation. Now it's in charge of resource development, interestingly enough.

When it comes to territory-wide air quality standards, we are waiting for the government to say anything. Our environment faces many, many challenges, yet this minister can't even meet his legal obligation to issue a report on the state of the environment.

Following up on the question earlier today in that sense, is the final report complete? Why is the minister deliberately keeping this report under wraps until next fall, when he already knows what it contains? What doesn't he want Yukoners to know?

Hon. Mr. Fentie: Well, Mr. Speaker, if the members opposite want to take the wait-and-see attitude, that's fine, but that's not exactly why they were elected to the Assembly. Having said that, Mr. Speaker, the only way I can keep a report under wraps is if I have a report. I don't have a report, because it's not complete, and a thorough assessment for correctness has not been done. When the report has been thoroughly analyzed and its correctness and content is assured and it is complete, the report will be tabled. But that is only one small element of what has got to be done in addressing and managing, in a sustainable

way, Yukon's environment. That's why the government -- report or otherwise -- has taken the steps to go forward, implementing a climate change strategy. We have also now added climate change as one of the highest priorities with our sister territories through our northern vision initiative. So I can assure the Leader of the Third Party, who has a great respect for the environment, as we all do, that the environment is in good hands, and we will continue to manage, in a sustainable way, Yukon's environment for Yukoners of today and the Yukoners of tomorrow.

Mr. Hardy: You know, Mr. Speaker, maybe it's because the Premier and I sat side by side for three and a half years that I'm not totally comfortable with the environment being in his hands. Now, the Premier has no problem fast-tracking a new policy for outfitters without proper consultation. He has no problem issuing agricultural leases without proper consultation, overriding YESAB decisions on land use. He has no problems writing big cheques for railway studies and power lines with no consultation whatsoever. And he has no problems investing in the Dempster Highway resource corridor without proper public consultation. When will the minister start to show the same enthusiasm for protecting the environment that he has for promoting the industries that exist solely to take advantage of the riches that our environment contains?

Hon. Mr. Fentie: Well, isn't that interesting. The member is not comfortable with the environment being in my hands. Well, I would submit to this House and all Yukoners that the members opposite aren't comfortable with anything the government does. They're not comfortable with the situation the territory is in -- it's too positive. They don't like positive, being mired in their negativity.

But let me point to something to try to comfort the Leader of the Third Party and all members on the opposite benches. Yukon is second only to British Columbia in land base under protection and conservation under this government's watch -- over 13 percent.

Yukon is proceeding with a climate change strategy, unlike many other jurisdictions in the country. Yukon is undertaking a major investment in modernizing our biophysical database, not just our geophysical database, Mr. Speaker -- biophysical database.

The Yukon is working closely with First Nations under obligations of the final agreements for special management areas and habitat protection areas. And the Yukon recently protected 8,000 square kilometres of Old Crow Flats, given the advice from elders and others in the First Nation.

The environment is in a good state.

Mr. Hardy: We don't just criticize on this side. We're not just critics. The third party is not just critics, and the Premier knows that. We often offer suggestions for improvement. If the Premier really wants to earn his spurs as a progressive Environment minister, I do have a suggestion to offer.

As I mentioned earlier, there is growing evidence of how environmental factors are affecting people's health. We can do something concrete here in the Yukon that would not only help the present generation, but would leave a lasting legacy from this government to future generations.

It's simply this: we need a well-researched, comprehensive Yukon environmental health strategy. Let's engage all Yukoners, First Nation and non-First Nation alike, in the kind of dialogue that gives this territory some of the most progressive legislation ever in the 1990s. Let's look at all the elements of how we can manage our water, our air, our land, and how that impacts our health.

Will the Premier at least agree to explore this far-reaching and positive idea -- no politics, no strings attached? He has heard me say that before. I stand by it. Will the Premier do that?

Hon. Mr. Fentie: I will concur with the Leader of the Third Party that they have been constructive, unlike the Official Opposition.

Having said that, I want to point out to the Leader of the Third Party that recently we had the first-ever Yukon Environmental Forum, which I believe had over 180 delegates attending -- First Nations, environmentalists, conservationists, experts. It was a huge undertaking and there was a tremendous amount of input provided. We're going beyond that now.

These things will be happening much more regularly in the Yukon in engaging with the public on our environment and ensuring its sustainability under this government's watch.

On the last point, I don't want to earn spurs in this portfolio. I would much rather have something that leaves a softer footprint.

Question re: Electrical rate application

Mr. McRobb: We must be getting close to the end of the sitting, Mr. Speaker.

I'd like to ask the Justice minister about an energy-related matter that falls within her purview. The responsibility for the independent Yukon Utilities Board falls within the Justice department and, as minister, she makes decisions with respect to the board's hearings and the timing of those hearings.

To allow the board to review and set power rates, utilities are required to submit a general rate application, or GRA. The public review of a GRA assists the Utilities Board in deciding how much electrical consumers will be paying in the future for electricity.

The board has made several recommendations with respect to the need for a GRA. On January 15 of this year, it recommended to this government that the utilities should file a GRA by the end of October. The board reiterated its expectation in a subsequent order dated April 30, but so far there has been nothing from the minister. When will she be responding to the board's recommendation for the GRA?

Hon. Ms. Horne: I will be responding very shortly.

Mr. McRobb: The timing of the GRA public review and hearing seems to be in dispute. The Yukon Utilities Board would likely schedule the long hearing process to commence immediately after the applications are filed at the end of October. As she may know, an extensive examination process occurs before the actual hearing starts, and it usually requires several weeks to complete. It's important to allow sufficient time for that pre-hearing process to unfold in order for the actual hearing to be scheduled early in the new year. But the Energy, Mines and Resources minister, who sits beside her, has

already stated his preference to not even start the hearing process until next February.

My question to the minister is simply: who is she going to listen to, the Yukon Utilities Board or the minister who sits beside her and who represents the publicly owned utility that will be subject to the GRA review?

Hon. Ms. Horne: As Minister of Justice, I will not shoot from the lip, as the member opposite does. Of course we work with the Yukon Utilities Board on this matter.

Mr. McRobb: Will she confirm that she will issue a directive to concur with the recommendation of the Yukon Utilities Board that the utilities should file their application before the end of October? Is that what she intends to do? That's what we want to hear from the minister. Will she concur with the Yukon Utilities Board, which she is responsible for, or will she listen to the minister responsible for one of the applicants?

Hon. Ms. Horne: As Minister of Justice I will work with the Yukon Utilities Board.

Question re: Rate stabilization fund

Mr. McRobb: Let's ask the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources a question related to the rate stabilization fund, or RSF. The Yukon Party's decision to cancel this popular program will cost all consumers about \$400 each year. The minister has called the program a subsidy, while many Yukoners consider it as a dividend from the publicly owned Yukon Energy Corporation.

The minister has his own beliefs that it is a subsidy, that it is therefore bad, and should be abolished. Let's hear it straight from him: does he believe it's a subsidy or a dividend?

Hon. Mr. Lang: This government extended the rate stabilization fund.

Mr. McRobb: How does that answer the question? We firmly established that the minister is opposed to subsidies -- it's on the record several times -- and he's a firm believer in true price signals. So let's ask him about another large subsidy that's built into our electrical rates, known as the customer class subsidy. Currently the residential customer class pays only 80 percent of its true cost of service. This low rate is subsidized by other customer classes.

Yukon Energy Corporation officials and the independent Yukon Utilities Board have expressed the need to deal with this matter and bring the residential class up to 95 percent of its true cost of service. In fact, the board has asked for the utilities to bring full cost of service information to the upcoming GRA.

Does the Energy, Mines and Resources minister support the independent board and the concerns expressed by his own officials with respect to addressing this subsidy?

Hon. Mr. Lang: I find it amazing how important the Yukon Utilities Board has become for the Liberal Party. That was the board they went around when they built their Mayo-Dawson power line. We on this side work with the Utilities Board. We don't go around them.

Mr. McRobb: The minister is living in the past. He refuses to answer the questions that are extremely important and continues to point the finger. The minister has decided that consumers don't need long-term price stability and he abolished

the rate stabilization fund. A few moments ago, I referred to the customer class subsidy, which is another subsidy. It has been identified as a problem by the independent regulator and officials from the utilities.

If this subsidy is adjusted as suggested, residential consumer power bills will jump another 20 percent. Combined with a cancellation of the rate stabilization fund, bills could jump as much as 50 percent, but the minister has looked into his crystal ball and guaranteed us that bills will be going down. While we support the additional revenue from power sales to the Minto mine, it won't be near enough to compensate for bill increases, so how is the minister going to pull this rabbit from his hat?

Hon. Mr. Lang: I remind the member opposite that you learn from the past. Obviously the Liberal Party hasn't, with the \$40-million debacle that was called the Mayo-Dawson line. Mr. Speaker, those people across the way built a \$40-million power line from Mayo to Dawson that they told the consumers was going to cost \$17 million, with no Utilities Board participation at all.

The members opposite should look back in history to know where we're going to go in the future, because at the moment we're still in litigation over the decisions the members across the way made on the power line between Mayo and Dawson.

Speaker: The time for Question Period has mercifully expired, and we will proceed to Orders of the Day.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

Motion No. 143

Clerk: Motion No. 143, standing in the name of the Hon. Mr. Cathers.

Speaker: It is moved by the Government House Leader

THAT a select committee on anti-smoking legislation be established;

THAT the Hon. Brad Cathers be the chair of that committee;

THAT the honourable members Darius Elias and John Edzerza be appointed to the committee;

THAT Bill No. 104, entitled *Smoke-free Places Act*, be referred to the committee;

THAT the committee hold hearings for the purpose of receiving the views and opinions of Yukon citizens and interested groups on legislative options for banning smoking in public places;

THAT decisions by the committee require unanimous agreement by members of the committee;

THAT the committee report to the Legislative Assembly no later than the 15th day of the next regular sitting day of the Legislative Assembly:

(a) its findings, if any, related to public opinion on options for legislative change; and

(b) its recommendations, if any, regarding what form of legislation implementing changes recommended by the committee should take;

THAT, in the event the Legislative Assembly is not sitting at the time that the committee is prepared to report, the chair of the committee forward copies of the report to all Members of the Legislative Assembly, thereafter make the report public, and subsequently present the report to the Legislative Assembly at the next sitting of the Legislative Assembly;

THAT, during its review of public opinion on legislative options for banning smoking in public places, the committee be empowered:

(a) to invite officials from the Government of Yukon to appear as witnesses on technical matters;

(b) to invite representatives of the Canadian Cancer Society to appear as witnesses on technical matters;

(c) to engage a technical expert who is not a Member of the Legislative Assembly or an employee of the Government of Yukon to act as a facilitator at the public hearings;

(d) to invite such other persons as it deems necessary to appear as witnesses on technical matters;

(e) to hold public hearings;

(f) to print such papers and evidence as may be ordered by it; and.

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

Hon. Mr. Cathers: Mr. Speaker, pursuant to discussions at House leaders' meeting, we're prepared to call this for a vote.

Speaker: Are you prepared for the question?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Motion agreed to

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

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

Motion agreed to

Speaker leaves the Chair

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Chair: Order please. Committee of the Whole will now come to order. The matter before the Committee is Bill No. 6, *First Appropriation Act, 2007-08*, Department of Energy, Mines and Resources.

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 Energy, Mines and Resources -- continued

Chair: The matter before the Committee is Bill No. 6, *First Appropriation Act, 2007-08*, Department of Energy, Mines and Resources, Vote 53.

We will continue with general debate.

Mr. McRobb: When we adjourned debate yesterday, I was asking the minister about some energy-related questions. I would like to just continue where we left off. We talked about how the Yukon Party government is cutting the rate stabilization fund by 50 percent starting next month for one year, after which time the program will be abolished. I want to start by asking him if he understood that the RSF would have died a natural death when the promised rate reductions are implemented.

Hon. Mr. Lang: In answering the member opposite, before we left the House yesterday there were some comments made by the member opposite that I had agreed to micromanage the Yukon Energy Corporation on buying or selling or doing something with some generation units at Minto mine that he is fixated on.

I don't manage Yukon Energy Corporation and Yukon Development Corporation; I represent them here in the House. I certainly don't pretend to manage them on a day-to-day basis.

As far as the member saying that I either was agreeing to or not agreeing to selling or buying assets for the corporation -- of course, he's wrong again, Mr. Speaker. That's not my job here. The Leader of the Official Opposition said the other day that somehow, in protecting their investment in the Mayo-Dawson line -- he said, "How come you have the same individuals in place there that were there when they built the line?" I'd like to clear that up too, Mr. Speaker. The individuals who built the line under the Liberal government are no longer running the Energy Corporation today. We have a new team in place, very capable and competent individuals, and we certainly look forward to the next four years working with them. So I'd just like to correct that for the member opposite.

As far as the rate stabilization fund is concerned, we extended it for 12 months, starting July 1, and we're looking forward to a rate application, a rate reduction in February of next year. Certainly, if that comes into place, that would certainly mitigate any need for the rate stabilization fund, understanding that any rate reduction would involve all consumers and would be a benefit to all Yukoners.

Certainly when we look at the customer base that we're going to look at -- we're looking at Minto mine, which is going to be a large customer, and then we're going to be working with Pelly Crossing to put them on hydro. That, in turn, will give the Selkirk First Nation the opportunity to look at economic opportunities in the area. That will address the issue they have in Minto Landing, which has been a traditional home for the Sel-

kirk First Nation. With energy there and hydro there, it will be of benefit to the group. They can start looking at it from an economic point of view and I think a lot of the Selkirk First Nation would look forward to moving back to Minto and living in Minto at Minto Landing. If I had a choice between living anywhere between Mayo and Pelly, Minto Landing probably would be the preferred area.

Without power, it's hard in this day and age to build a home and have what we expect as family units if we don't have access to power. With hydro power, they would be benefiting again from the investment made by, not only this government -- which has put in \$10-million worth of investment, which is an investment in our infrastructure and our energy infrastructure and will be given to Yukon under Yukon Development Corporation to invest in the line. That reflects on an investment that the asset base would go into the corporation and, of course, there wouldn't be the debt on it that would come with a \$10-million investment on their part.

Of course, we have the commitment of the corporation, and the corporation had looked at this from a business point of view. But I remind members that the Minto mine business plan encompassed diesel. That was part of their business plan. They were going to run on diesel for the life of the mine.

This investment we're putting in, matched with the corporation -- \$7.2 million that they're going to put into the capital costs of this project, in partnership with the Yukon Energy Corporation, is a good partnership. Of course, the mine will be responsible for the line between the highway and the mine site itself.

This will certainly be a benefit to the mine, and I know the members opposite feel -- what's the wording? -- that the mine shouldn't benefit from this hydro power, because they're a mining company and should not benefit. But this side of the House thinks there is a potential partnership there and that the mine should get some benefit from this hydro power.

Mr. Chair, with the mine going into production -- and I think the members opposite are lost with their negativity on this mine -- the energy that will be created by diesel will double the carbon in our environment.

That is a very important thing for Yukoners, understanding we are living in Canada. I sometimes wonder if members opposite do live in Canada and understand we all have a responsibility to the environment. It's not just Saskatchewan.

If we can, in a small way, minimize our carbon output, we can become an example for Canada. We have a very small population and a very large land mass. Ninety-five percent of our customer base is on hydro. With the expansion of this new investment, there's work to be done to finalize the decision making on whether or not the line will go forward. There's a business overview that has to be done to justify the expenditure, and I would imagine that's being done through the corporation as we speak.

Again, we don't want to repeat the Mayo-Dawson line, which had no Yukon Utilities Board overview at all; there was no sober second thought on that project. We are very concerned that this business deal makes sense for all Yukoners.

I remind the House that the Member for Kluane, when he was sitting with the NDP, was the member who stood up in the House many, many times and asked for a public inquiry on the Mayo-Dawson line and was very critical of the Liberal government of the day for their management of the project. Of course, I have to agree with the Member for Kluane that it was poorly managed and, of course, cost Yukon citizens approximately \$25 million to \$30 million. Mr. Chair, we're not even out of litigation. The Mayo-Dawson Liberal fiasco is still in court. Yukoners will somehow either pay for that fiasco out of their front pocket or their back pocket. A project that was touted as a lifesaver for the Yukon went from \$17 million to -- we don't know where. It was very badly handled. The Liberal critic, the Member for Kluane, stands up and defends it, stands up and says to not look to the past, to look forward. I always think that if you don't look back, you're doomed to repeat it. In other words, if you don't learn from history, you're doomed to repeat it. I'm very aware of that, Mr. Speaker, and the Yukon couldn't afford another Mayo-Dawson line.

I know the Member for Kluane has to defend it now, since he moved over to the Liberal Party, but in fact he knows, and we in the Yukon all know, the cost of doing a hydro line and badly managing it. With a population of 30,000, is very, very, very dangerous to get into. That's why this government -- the member opposite was talking at great length today about the Utilities Board and how the GRA should work and how we should --

Chair's statement

Chair: Order please. I would like to urge all members not to personalize the debate today. In previous debates it has become quite personal, and today I would like to see it remain general on Energy, Mines and Resources.

Hon. Mr. Lang: I'm sorry if I personalized it, but on the energy side of things, I am concerned that people don't realize the improvements we have made in the Yukon Energy Corporation with the capable people this government put in place immediately after taking office to not only address the future of the corporation but to address the issue of the Mayo-Dawson line. Those individuals have been working very, very hard to bring this corporation back to a sound foundation and to put it into a position where it could even sit around a table and contemplate the future expansion of the Carmacks-Pelly and Pelly-Stewart line.

I would like to compliment that group of individuals. When they took over, the Leader of the Official Opposition said they are all the same people but, in fact, he is again wrong. They aren't the same people; they are a whole new team and they are doing a fine job. I am looking forward to the report that is going to come out on the business end of this and see what exactly the cost of this line would be and what timelines are in place.

Of course, they are working very hard with the YESAB to move it forward in the process so they can get some start-up dates and some firm dates in place. They do have a bit of an obligation to the Minto mine on start-up and when they would plan on being on-line and producing wealth for Yukoners,

which would gravitate back into Yukoners' pockets in the form of a rate reduction.

As far as the member opposite talking as he did yesterday about these generation units at Minto mine, I am sure the corporation will make a good decision on them. I certainly will not be involved in that decision at that level. The member opposite tends to want to micromanage these corporations. I leave it up to the corporation to run on a daily, monthly and yearly basis. Whenever they have concerns, my door is open. We certainly work in a very positive way with the corporations, but we are a government that makes sure the corporations run independently, as they were set out to do.

The corporation is independent of the government and, as far as me picking up the phone and giving it directions on asset purchase or how many feet of wire we're going to need or any of those kinds of pertinent details -- which I know the member opposite would like to be involved in -- my position is very clear. I represent the corporation here in the House. We bring the chief executive officer in once a year in the fall so they can address the House, and that will, I imagine, happen again this fall. A lot of the questions the member opposite has will be answered by those individuals, because they are, in truth, the operators of the Energy Corporation.

As we move forward in this new expanding economy that we see in front of us as a territory and how the environmentally friendly component of hydro power can work hand in hand with our economy, I think it's a compliment to the territory that we could have that kind of access to hydro and also to economic expansion, which we see in the Carmacks-Pelly grid. This not only just involves the Minto mine, which we know is going to go into production any day now and, of course, we'll have an opening date in September. We're looking at other prospects -- Pelly, of course, would be where the line would go to in the first phase. The second phase would be from Pelly to Stewart. Then from Stewart to -- that would tie in the Mayo and Dawson line. As I said before, when the Liberal Party put the line in, it was undersized so we have to look again at redoing some of that project, which was mishandled by the Liberal government of the day.

We are a government that faces challenges every day. We have four years here in front of us that I think will benefit all Yukoners because hopefully, in the energy end, we will have rate reduction and rate reduction means more customers paying for more power, more power being produced, managing our hydro facilities, modernizing, putting the third wheel in at Aishihik and doing all the things that are necessary to get the money back into the consumers' pockets.

I think that's important. I think that the member opposite sort of loses track of whom we're trying to benefit. We're trying to benefit the consumers. We're trying to get more customers on-line -- a larger customer base -- and, in turn, as the member opposite knows, the corporation can only make so much money on their investment. At the end of the day, the rest of the money has to go back to the consumers. And it goes back to the consumers in the form of a rate reduction, and it goes to all customers. That's what this government is bent on doing.

Now, as we move forward with this -- and I certainly will be working with the member opposite. I'm sure he's going to have more questions as we go into our term here and, as we see the realization of this power grid, we'll look forward to the chief executive officers coming into the House here in the fall, spending an afternoon and asking some of the operational questions that are there.

But by that time, we hope part 3 will be over. The rate for the mine has been set, and that has been agreed to by the Yukon Utilities Board. The Yukon Utilities Board has looked at the line and has agreed with the concept. We're quite comfortable with their decision. We can work within that decision.

Now, the corporation has to put the business plan together to come back and do an in-depth overview of the costs of the day and of the YESA Board so that, again, there's another overview of the line, another opportunity for individuals to get involved and ask questions. That is going forward. As we move forward, this will be a very large job. It's going to be in the millions of dollars -- this contract that's going out.

But I'm quite comfortable with the team we have in place. Again, I remind the member opposite and you, Mr. Chair, it has nothing to do with the team. I hope Yukoners realize that we are not going to march out the same team that the Liberals had in place when they built the Mayo-Dawson line. So, I'm very concerned that the Leader of the Official Opposition would put that on the floor here and walk out of the room when, in fact, it's not a factual --

Chair's statement

Chair: Order please. I previously mentioned not to personalize the debate. I would like to urge the member not to personalize the debate.

Hon. Mr. Lang: So anyway, Mr. Chair, I will sit down now and take another question from the member opposite.

Mr. McRobb: As mentioned yesterday, we're hoping for a constructive debate, and we're hoping for a constructive debate again this afternoon. The minister spoke for 20 minutes and avoided the very question I asked him.

We are approached by Yukoners who feel these are important questions. We're asking questions on behalf of Yukoners. The minister has his grand thesis and he has presented a case that must meet the test of accountability. That is also why we're asking these questions. The minister avoided the question entirely.

This is Committee of the Whole budget debate; it's not Question Period where the minister can choose to avoid the very essence of questions. In here, at this opportunity, we expect some answers to the questions.

The question I asked was: does the minister understand that the rate stabilization fund would have died a natural death at the time these promised rate reductions come into effect? We didn't hear an answer to that question. It's a very good question. Why didn't he answer the question?

I'm going to ask him again: does he understand that the rate stabilization fund would have died a natural death in the event his promised rate reductions materialize?

Hon. Mr. Lang: Yes, I think the member opposite is mixed up with the Utilities Board and the government commitment. I think what is happening here is the reduction of the rate itself would come from the Utilities Board, which we're looking forward to putting an application before in February of this coming year. Of course, that's why we as a government extended the rate stabilization fund for another 12 months. So one is the Utilities Board and one is a government directive -- the member opposite is mixing the two up.

But as far as the rate stabilization fund, Mr. Chair, we're working to make sure that, as we move forward with this, we work hand in hand with the consumer to make sure that we minimize any impact they have on the consumer. Of course, there are programs in place already but, as the summer rolls through, we will have more programs out there for the consumer.

The member opposite is sort of fixated on the rate stabilization fund, and I find it interesting that debate would grind down in this huge department to discussing the rate stabilization fund for two days. We only have another day and a half, Mr. Speaker, and, of course, we are concerned that all members in the House get an opportunity -- the third party too -- to participate in the discussion.

Now, as far as the time it takes individuals in the House, we all have an allotted time to answer questions. My job is to answer my questions thoroughly -- it's not dictated by the member opposite; it's dictated by the House. So as far as the timelines are concerned, I think it's very clear how much time an individual or a minister has in answering a question.

As we go on to energy and all the intricate parts of energy and conserving energy -- the member opposite somehow visualizes this rate stabilization fund as a form of conservation. With the communications I got from groups and individuals -- and, of course, conservation groups have been after government to eliminate the rate stabilization fund because they feel it's not a good way to manage our energy and that people should pay a truer figure for their energy and they would then respect that cost.

We are probably the only area in Canada that has a rate stabilization fund in place at the moment. Of course, this government extended it for many years. It was put in place when the economy collapsed under the NDP and there was an urgency to stabilize or subsidize the general energy cost because, at that point, Faro was the biggest customer Yukon Energy had. There was some political motivation to minimize that impact on the consumer.

In a new age, we're in 2007 and in an economy where the population is growing. In our Yukon exploration development survey, we see that this is a huge year for exploration development. Last year we forecast \$67 million in exploration and \$40 million in development. Actual expenditures in 2006 were approximately \$83 million in exploration and \$53 million in development. That's how our economy has turned around in five short years.

When we came to power, and when we talk about energy and general debate in Energy, Mines and Resources, the Lib-

eral Party was fixated on a land strategy that would make industry very nervous.

At that point, we had no exploration. We had \$6 million, Mr. Chair. The argument the Liberals use across the floor is that our exploration -- the whole world -- was in a slump. It wasn't. They weren't as high as they had been in the five years prior to that, but Alaska at that time had \$100-million worth of investment, the Northwest Territories had \$90 million, and B.C. had \$100 million. All these figures reflected badly on our position in the world as an investment area, for investors to come and invest their money in our energy, in our mines, in our exploration. Those are the kinds of things we are working on. We are working forward.

I am sorry that I can't throw a lifeline to the member opposite on the rate stabilization fund. Its day is done. We are going forward. We are going forward by extending it for 12 months. We are going forward by putting programs together to minimize the impact on consumers. The figures thrown on the floor here by many individuals have no bearing in fact. What we are doing with these figures is a form of tactics that don't bear any fact on the actual light bill. So, what is this government going to do?

It doesn't matter if we talk about this for five years in this House, Mr. Chair, the rate stabilization fund will be extended for 12 months. This government is committed through the Yukon Energy Corporation, through the Energy Solutions Centre, with programs coming out to minimize the impact on consumers. We are working with the Yukon Energy Corporation to move that power line forward, get that customer on-line and get those dollars back in the back pocket of the consumers. That's what this government is going to do. We are going to work very hard with the corporation to realize rate reductions for all Yukoners -- not subsidization; not a hidden amount of money that is given out every month. It's going to be a realistic rate reduction that will benefit everybody, on top of the conservation programs we are going to put together internally as a government.

Yukon Housing Corporation has strong, strong programs out there for conservation of energy.

Programs regarding energy for low-income families and how they can retrofit their homes -- programs on new home building, expertise to come out and say, "How can we put a conservation part into this construction site?" All those things will be done by this government.

As far as the member opposite debating about this rate stabilization fund, I've been very clear. I'll talk here until 5:30 about the rate stabilization fund. I can talk about the rate stabilization fund for weeks.

But the facts are here. It doesn't matter what the Member for Kluane says. The fact is this: the rate stabilization fund will be extended at a 50-percent level until July of next year.

In that interim, there will be hard work by this government to move forward on the power line, get the customer base we need -- Pelly and Minto mine -- to generate the resources we need to have the rate reduction that will benefit all Yukoners. Hand in hand with that is the part of intergovernmental relations that we have with Yukon Housing Corporation, Energy,

Mines and Resources -- and in Energy, Mines and Resources there is the Energy Solutions Centre to come up with a conservation package, an education package that will benefit consumers so they can manage their power, their energy, in a better way.

There is a way individuals can conserve power. There is a better way that we can manage our environment, and this is only one part of it.

The third wheel in Aishihik will minimize what the diesel consumption on standby power is. It's going to benefit all of Yukon. At the end of the day, as we manage our hydro throughout central Yukon, we can look at other opportunities. What about the opportunity of moving hydro down the Campbell Highway? That's a novel idea -- eventually tied to northern B.C. so we can manage a west coast grid. Wouldn't that be something? Eventually buying power and selling power as you need it.

Now, there is forethought. The member opposite is stuck -- and I remind the member opposite again that I'll stand up here and talk about his rate stabilization fund until tomorrow at 5:30 p.m. But it's not very fair to the members in this House to have one member to -- yes, Mr. Chair?

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Hon. Mr. Lang: Mr. Chair, I'm just reminding everybody in the House. Let's get down and let's talk about this budget. I was very clear on what's happening with the rate stabilization fund. The government is here. It doesn't look like it's going anywhere. This is our go-forward plan. He knows what it is. As far as he and I debating back and forth on something that he knows we've made the decision on -- we're going to go to work with the industry and we're going to go to work with the corporation and what we're going to do, at the end of the day, is to get our rates down, get ourselves paying a realistic price for power here in the territory, plus work with the individuals, the homeowners and the businesses to learn how to manage our energy in a better fashion. That's what this government is committed to doing. That's what we're going to go forward with.

And we're going to cut back on our carbon emissions into our environment. That's what we're going to do. But we are in a position where we can do that. We've got a very solid government here, and I think that this government is on the right track.

So, as far as a rate stabilization fund is concerned, there is a 12-month extension starting July 1. In that extension -- concentrated workshops on conservation management of energy. The next thing -- very positive -- is to look at next February for an application so we can go forward with a rate reduction for all consumers in the Yukon, and we can move forward on finalizing the line from Carmacks to Pelly. Then the next business decision is: what is the business decision between Pelly and Stewart? That would be step 2. That's where we're going with the power line, that's where we're going to go with the rate stabilization fund, and that's how we're going to look at rate reduction here in the coming year.

Mr. McRobb: Woeful, woeful, woeful. Another 20 minutes wasted. I'll agree with the minister on one point.

Chair's statement

Chair: Order please. I do believe those are not proper terms that members should be using in this Legislative Assembly to criticize. Basically the language to determine debate in this Legislature isn't dependent on members. We are debating back and forth the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources and commenting on the quality of debate from other members is definitely not in order. I would like to urge all members not to personalize the debate.

Mr. McRobb: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I am trying to the best of my ability to have an intelligible discussion. Again the minister avoided the very question. It was a very clear question. I am finding difficulty trying to come up with a way to break through this. If we ask questions that are completely avoided, what good is this whole process?

These questions are important to Yukoners. The minister has a responsibility to answer these questions. I will agree with him on one point -- that one member should not dominate debate. There are other members who have questions. By not responding to the essence of the question, which was very clear and put twice to the minister, he is not abiding by the very words he has preached this afternoon about one member wasting time -- that is essentially what he said.

It is painfully obvious that the minister does not understand the mechanics of the rate stabilization fund and how it was set up as a long-term program to provide bill stability for all electrical consumers in the territory.

If his rate reductions materialize, the program would have died a natural death. He does not understand that. Now, he has mentioned how he doesn't like subsidies, and I raised these questions this afternoon in Question Period and received no answer. I want to follow up with the minister about his view of another subsidy, and it's a customer class subsidy.

This has been raised by the Yukon Utilities Board. It wants to deal with this subsidy. The utility officials agree. The Utilities Board wants the utilities to provide this information at the next general rate application by the end of October.

Now, earlier today, the Justice minister failed to confirm or deny that she would be following the board's recommendation for that hearing. We know the Energy, Mines and Resources minister prefers a later hearing, perhaps after the occasion when the officials from the corporation are in here to respond to our questions. Well, that might be convenient for the minister, but it's not convenient for everybody else. There is more he should consider.

I want to get back to his view on the subsidy and this other subsidy. Will he be supportive of addressing this other subsidy, or is the only subsidy he's against the rate stabilization fund?

Hon. Mr. Lang: The member opposite, again, goes on, but the Utilities Board makes decisions and recommendations, and the Utilities Board and the corporation are going to set up timelines for when this general rate application will go forward. We're optimistic that it will go forward in the near future, but for me to stand up, as Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources, and tell you what I'm going to tell the Utilities Board

is not my responsibility. The Utilities Board is going to look at all aspects of power rates in the Yukon and make decisions.

So the member opposite will have to wait for that decision.

Mr. McRobb: I'll save the transcribers in the *Hansard* office some trouble and just say "ditto." Now, there's an important point to make in response to what we just heard. That is, the Yukon Utilities Board relies on directives from this government, so this government dictates what occurs. That validates my question. So the minister can't skate away from the question.

Will the government be in agreement with the board when it issues the order for the hearing in the form of an order-in-council? Will it be in agreement with the board to allow that to happen? I'll repeat it in case the minister didn't hear it -- to allow it to happen. Does the minister agree with that?

Hon. Mr. Lang: Some of these questions should have been asked to the Minister of Justice. The Minister of Justice has the Yukon Utilities Board under her watch. We, as a government, would work with the minister and the Utilities Board and I guess the minister would give the Utilities Board instructions on timing. I imagine she will take advice from the individuals who work in her department and work with the Utilities Board and I will work with the corporation to make sure that, when the Utilities Board makes those kinds of decisions, we're ready to work with the Utilities Board to come out with a decision.

I remind the member opposite that I'm the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources. The reason they have the Yukon Utilities Board under a different minister, which happens in this government to be the Minister of Justice, is just for that. They have to be independent. For him to expect me to direct the Yukon Utilities Board would be inappropriate. I'm sure the member opposite realizes that.

The Minister of Justice has that under her watch and she has a capable staff who understand the Yukon Utilities Board and how it works and will give it instructions when this thing moves forward. For the Member for Kluane and me as Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources to sit in here all afternoon debating the pros and cons of the timing of this next move by the Utilities Board -- which we've all agreed we'd like to have sooner than later, but want to give it enough time to do its job -- would be inappropriate.

I cannot and will not interfere with the Yukon Utilities Board at any level. That is not my job. My job is representing the corporation. The corporation will have to go in front of the Yukon Utilities Board and present a case that the Yukon Utilities Board will address. Again, that's why they are independent of each other. They have to be independent of each other so that they're open and transparent. That's what this government is about. We are the ones who worked with the Yukon Utilities Board on the Carmacks-Pelly line. We are the ones who worked with the Yukon Utilities Board on the power contract with the corporation. We are the ones who made sure the Yukon Utilities Board had a part in it -- a very big part. The Yukon Utilities Board is put in there to protect the consumer. They are a second sober set of eyes on any of these projects. That is what the basic problem with the Mayo-Dawson line

was. The Liberal government of the day did not involve the Yukon Utilities Board. They short-circuited the second sober thought.

Today we are still in litigation on that power line. The power line went from \$17 million -- I remind the member opposite -- to \$35 million or \$40 million? We don't know because we are still in litigation. I am pretty sure that if the Liberal government had involved the Yukon Utilities Board, some of these decisions they made would not have passed muster. As far as the member opposite mixing up who is in charge of what or getting me to commit to meddle with the Yukon Utilities Board at any level -- it is inappropriate and I will not do it, Mr. Chair. I am sure the Minister of Justice would be very concerned if the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources managed the Yukon Utilities Board. We all have our jobs to do, and we do our jobs.

The reason that things are in place the way they are is for exactly that: the independence of the decision. How could I be the chair of a corporation that is going in front of the Yukon Utilities Board and be able to phone up the Yukon Utilities Board and orchestrate a decision?

Do you think Yukoners want that? Is that how the Liberals have sober second thoughts -- a back-door deal with the Utilities Board? I'm shocked, Mr. Chair, that the member opposite would even stand up in the House and bring that up. I don't have anything to do with the Utilities Board -- not a thing. I am the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources, responsible in government for the utility companies, Yukon Development Corporation, which owns Yukon Energy. That's what I'm responsible for. I will do my job. The Minister of Justice will do her job, and her job is to work with the Utilities Board on the timing and how this thing moves forward. That's how it will work.

We all want things to go faster, and that's important, but they have to be done well, and I'm sure that we're all very anxious, as this power line moves forward, that we move forward with the Utilities Board and the rate reductions and all that. I'm very anxious to see that happen, but a couple of steps have to be taken here, and certainly one of the steps is a decision on the power line. The Member for Kluane will have an opportunity in the fall to talk to the executives of the corporation and critique them on the management of the corporation. At that point, there should be some decisions in place about the power line and how it's moving forward. I'm certain he will have two hours of questions. But to stand up in the House and question me on the makeup of the Utilities Board or how I was going to manage the Utilities Board is inappropriate. I've made it very clear this afternoon that my job is the Energy Corporation. I will answer any question pertaining to the Energy Corporation, as long as it doesn't involve meddling in anything called the Yukon Utilities Board, which, I remind the member opposite, is under the Minister of Justice.

Mr. McRobb: Well, obviously, the synapse containing backdoor deals is close at hand for the minister. And just like it was with the backroom deal that cancelled the rate stabilization fund without consulting anybody, or spending \$5 million of our climate change money on the Aishihik third turbine -- no public

consultation or disclosure of intent before the decision came down.

Now, the minister stands up and fires what is basically political mudslinging. I'm attempting to get away from that and trying to get to the bottom of some of these questions important to the public this afternoon. The minister failed again to respond to the question of how he's going to treat this other hidden subsidy. He's the minister responsible for the corporation -- the utility, the applicant, in this case. He can stand up and say what he believes in.

This is not interfering with the Yukon Utilities Board. It's completely separate from that process, but how do we make that clear? How do we make the minister realize that?

Well, we've come to realize that it's impossible to get the minister on the same page, never mind the same chapter. So, in recognition of that, let's move on and ask him about the new conservation programs he promised us would be combined with his announcement on the rate stabilization fund that occurred two months ago. There hasn't been a peep about any new conservation programs.

The other day, the minister recited a list -- in Question Period, I think it was -- and every one of those programs he identified were brought in by previous governments. There was not one new initiative or program on that list. I recall when I was Energy Commissioner, giving birth to the green power program that he mentioned.

Let's try to make the discussion a little more productive. What new programs did the minister create that he promised he would? What new programs?

Hon. Mr. Lang: Talk about mudslinging, Mr. Chair -- the comments from the member opposite, after the many years he has been in opposition.

As far as the programs are concerned, they are unfolding as we speak. Over the next 90 days we will be unfolding programs. The minister responsible for the Yukon Housing Corporation is working with his department. I am working with the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources and internally with the Yukon Energy Solutions Centre and the federal government. As far as this third wheel and this idea that it's some kind of backroom deal -- that was funded by the federal government. We put a proposal in front of the federal government that they agreed to. If they didn't agree to it, we wouldn't have the project.

As far as the member opposite sitting here negatively looking at the third wheel at Aishihik, it speaks well for the opposition and how they feel the Yukon is going to go forward. How can the Yukon go forward with that kind of attitude? How can we sit in this House and have that negativity thrown at us at every moment -- the mudslinging and the personalization of these debates?

We are here for all Yukoners, not just for the member opposite and his political career. We are here to serve the Yukon. My job in government is to make decisions. My decisions go hand in hand with Yukoners, so that we move forward. The Yukon elected this government to do just that. They elected the member opposite to critique it and stand up here and ask questions. I appreciate that.

Talk about answering questions -- I've answered every question the member has asked. We do what we can with what we have to work with. That, Mr. Chair, is fairly questionable. I would like to move on in this department and involve other members in asking questions. Remember that I answer the questions, so I have to be involved in the debate of this department. That's my job and my job description.

I'd like to involve the third party. The third party in this House has been very positive in the House as an opposition. They have certainly been factual in their questions and have not personalized any level of our debate. I appreciate that, Mr. Chair because that's important. That's what Yukoners put us in here to do. My job is to oversee the Yukon Energy Corporation.

As far as federal money being invested in the third wheel, that decision was made by the federal government. They are the ones that are going to put a \$5-million investment in the third wheel in Aishihik. What does that mean to the Yukon? That means that we won't be burning diesel in Riverdale at peak times. That means we will be putting fewer carbons in the atmosphere -- doing our part in Canada to minimize our impact on the environment. The member opposite forgets that.

The positive thing about the third wheel is that we'll be looking at more power for consumers in the territory, more customers and, in the end, lower rates, because we're setting the corporation up in a position where they will have investments brought in that won't cost the corporation the resources. All Yukoners will benefit. Will this happen overnight? No. At the end of the day, we will be very astute at managing the project as it unfolds. We will listen to the Utilities Board in the future and we will work with them on any decision they make on the rates for Yukoners, independent of the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources, independent of any individual in this House.

This government believes in not micromanaging. This government believes in managers who can do their jobs and do their jobs well. The corporation has a team in place that can move forward with this project, and I'm confident that, at the end of the day, the project can be done within budget and timelines. That's where my confidence lies.

As far as making day-to-day decisions at the corporation, that's not my job. As far as diesel plants at Minto or anything like that, Mr. Chair -- that, again, is not a decision I will make. Those decisions are corporate decisions, management decisions. That's where those responsibilities lie -- inside the corporation. Now, as far as the member opposite talking about, again, the rate stabilization fund or the length of it or about the shortness of it or what we as a government are doing for conservation or what our conservation plans are, we certainly have them and we're working on them. As the summer rolls out, we will have programs in place and we will have education programs, and people can take advantage of them. We will do that. We will, at the end of the day, have a hydro grid that will benefit all Yukoners and enhance our economic development. That's a fact. All the conversation in here, Mr. Chair, does not mitigate the fact that we have an economy out there. We have an economy in the Yukon now; we have a growing population.

Five years ago, when we came to this House, we had a mass exodus of individuals. U-Haul was the biggest business in town. Today, Mr. Chair, we have exploration, we have a future in oil and gas, we're looking at our agricultural organizations and where investments are growing, and we certainly are looking forward to other economic benefits. Tourism -- this is one of the only areas in Canada where tourism has not dipped.

Why? Because this government, three years ago, understood the nature of the business, and we put things in place so we could mitigate any downturn in the economy. We did that through our Minister of Tourism and Culture, and it has paid dividends.

So, when the member opposite talks in the House here of all the negativities and everything else, it doesn't bear fruit when you walk out the front door. There are things happening outside. There is optimism in the air with the energy programs that are going on, the future of the mining community -- all those things that make a community better are happening. It's not just happening in Whitehorse. Mayo, which is home to one of our hydro plants, is seeing a huge exploration amount being spent there. If you go to Dawson City, to the placer claims, to the exploration groups that are there -- huge, Mr. Chair. Then, you go to southeast Yukon -- millions and millions of dollars are being spent on the ground in southeast Yukon: Howard's Pass, Macmillan Pass, Ketzka, Logan -- just reams of investment is going on there. It is growing by tens of millions of dollars a year. At the end of the day, we are looking at development and corporations that are committing resources so they can invest in the Yukon and in the future of the Yukon.

As we move through this debate this afternoon, and as we move in this small department -- it's not a large department -- I would like to see some positive feedback from the members opposite. I look forward to working with them to get through this budget and have other members involved in the debate.

Chair's statement

Chair: Order please. Before we proceed, I would like to ask all members to keep the debate relevant to the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources.

Mr. McRobb: Well, that was another question unanswered, and another 20 minutes wasted.

Chair's statement

Chair: Order please. Members should not express their opinion that the debate is a waste of time. I would like to remind all members that all debate in this Assembly is valuable, and I would ask all members to respect that.

Mr. McRobb: The minister said he put a proposal to the federal government with respect to advancing the third turbine, which the federal government agreed to. Can he indicate if there were any other options presented, or was it just this single option?

Hon. Mr. Lang: Again, the member is wrong in that statement. It was the Environment department that worked with the federal government. It wasn't Energy, Mines and Resources, so I was not involved in the negotiations at all.

As a Yukoner and as Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources, I saw the benefits of the third wheel. The member opposite might not understand the engineering of the Aishihik project, but it's engineered for a third wheel, and it will benefit the grid and give us an opportunity to look at the diesel generation in the City of Whitehorse that is backup as well as a peak-power additive, which creates a noise factor in the community of Riverdale. I lived beside the plant, and I knew when it was on.

From an environmental point of view, if we can minimize any kind of carbon exhaust from diesel generation, it's wise for us as a community to do. I don't think the member opposite realizes the price of our fuel is going up, and it doesn't look like it will get any better. As our power goes up and these communities are dependent upon diesel, it will cost more and more money to generate this power.

So the investment we can put into the ground on hydro will benefit the communities. Our more remote communities like Old Crow and Watson Lake, and little communities like Swift River -- those communities that are on diesel -- will continue to be on diesel. Hopefully over the next period of time we can be more innovative with those communities to see what we could do on the ground to benefit them and minimize the cost of diesel. Watson Lake has highways to it, so there's access to product but, when you look at a small community like Old Crow, they're not only looking at the product but also at getting the product to the generator, which is not only a complicated process but also a very expensive one.

At the end of the day, I'm not quite sure that we have to become more innovative. We have to look at options. I mean, in talking about the diesel consumption in a community like Old Crow or Watson Lake, Watson Lake has done some interesting, innovative things with the heat from the diesel generation. They heat one of the schools and their community complex off the diesel plant, which is a benefit. I mean, it's innovative in that we're doing something secondary with the plant. Certainly, that's a benefit and a cost-saving, so you have to take that cost-saving and put it back into the operation of your diesel plants.

But, in turn, as we manage our energy and we manage our environment, we have to be more innovative. I, as Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources, and this government, understand the necessity to go to work and look at innovation in a place like Old Crow, and in Watson Lake, and how we could get communities -- like Swift River -- that are consuming diesel and try to find some innovative way we could mitigate some of that cost.

Not only do you have the cost of the diesel, but you are running engines that have a time life on them, which costs money too. So, it's a bit of a challenge. I know in Old Crow, for instance, they did an extensive wind survey in the area. They moved the wind survey to three or four different locations within the surrounding area of Old Crow to inventory the wind, timing and all the things they do.

Now, I'm not pretending to know anything about that science, but I know that the information is available. Whether that's an alternative, I couldn't tell you, Mr. Chair, but the

Yukon Energy Corporation did those kinds of inventories in the Yukon to see about wind and the ramification of doing something with wind.

I do know that governments in the future are going to be tasked with coming up with innovative ideas to mitigate cost and ideas for how we manage our energy, how we produce our energy, and what we do with our energy after we produce it. That's going to be very, very important.

The Yukon is blessed with three larger dams and a fourth one, which is owned by Yukon Electrical, but we are blessed with those three infrastructures that exist today. I am told through the Yukon Energy Corporation that they've done an audit on the three dams. The third wheel at Aishihik is one. The Mayo dam could be modernized to produce more power. The dam here in Whitehorse could be modernized for very little investment, and it could produce more power. That's good news, because we're always going to be looking for more power. There isn't a jurisdiction in Canada that isn't concerned about their energy. I was talking to the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources from Prince Edward Island where they were working on a wind farm to supply power to the island, which was quite impressive. They were looking at, I think, 40 percent of their power being produced by wind. Those are all things that have been looked at in other jurisdictions. We're open to ideas, and we look forward to the challenges of going forward.

As the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources, I encourage the Yukon Energy Corporation and the department to be innovative and try to work with our communities to see if we are burning diesel and how it can be used as the secondary source. How can we heat a complex or how can we maximize the use of the product instead of letting the heat go up the chimney? How can we capture that and make the community a little bit more environmentally friendly while looking at the economics of it?

In answer to the member opposite, we are quite prepared to meet the challenges of the day. There are large challenges out there. We all understand that and look at working with the communities. As the member was talking about -- our conservation programs, the appliance rebate and energy-saving tips -- we're doing programs on that. We're looking at energy efficiency.

Those are all things that are unfolding now. I think it's very important that we -- and I will certainly work with the department and Yukon Housing Corporation to make sure that we get the information out into the communities and into the hands of the consumers so they can benefit from any program that we put forward as a government, and that's why I think it's important for Yukon Housing Corporation and ourselves, in Energy, Mines and Resources, to work together so we don't tend to duplicate programs. We work together to get positive programs out there to educate people on a better way of managing their energy, which in turn manages our energy, Mr. Chair. At the end of the day, it's about all our energy.

So we're looking forward to the programs that are going to come forward, and we certainly are looking forward to working with our other departments and certainly looking forward to the

challenges of the innovation that we're expecting to do with other communities that are too far away to benefit from this investment that we're making in the hydro line. We understand the needs of those communities. So we aren't turning a blind eye to the communities that are not going to be impacted by the hydro line here, and we're going to work positively with them to see -- and also, Mr. Chair, Yukon Electrical is a big player in this market too. It's a corporation that has been here for 100 years and has certainly invested in the Yukon, both on a social level and a business level and been a very positive corporation for the territory. Of course, they come with all the qualifications of ATCO, a group of companies that has a very extensive portfolio of energy at every level. So they are part and parcel of how we as a community could move forward in managing our energy. I'm sure that Yukon Electrical will be a part of that, and we will take advantage of their expertise and their level of commitment to this territory. We certainly look forward to the coming years and the future of the territory as far as energy is concerned.

Mr. McRobb: The minister answered the question about 19 minutes ago. The rest of that long speech wasn't required.

His answer was quite unbelievable. He said he wasn't part of the decision to bring forward the Aishihik third turbine. That's quite unbelievable. He's the Energy, Mines and Resources minister for the government; he has a close relation with the Member for Watson Lake, the Premier and Environment minister. It's quite unbelievable.

He went on to talk about how it was the best option, and so on and so forth. However, the independent regulator, the Yukon Utilities Board, recommended in its decision with respect to the 20-year resource plan of the Yukon Energy Corporation that a better option would be the twinning of the line from the Aishihik generating plant to Whitehorse.

A prime reason for that is, when there's an outage at the Aishihik generating station, it doesn't matter how much capacity is there -- the diesels in Whitehorse are on. People in Riverdale suffer a deteriorated air quality and expenses for the fuel go up. The board's recommendation would have alleviated that to a great extent. But the government, in its haste, overlooked the better options as advised by the independent board, the watchdog of the utilities, and came up with an inferior option.

Mr. Chair, several other options were identified that were also better, like helping people reduce their energy consumption. We're talking about both residential and commercial, as well as government, in building efficiency; we're talking transportation and all areas of energy. Obviously the government had its own idea.

I want to ask the minister about the Minto power purchase agreement. The failed agreement the first time around, which was rejected by the Yukon Utilities Board, cost a lot of time and money for a lot of people, not to mention the grief for many Yukoners who hoped this project would proceed.

As we in the Official Opposition have noted, it's a very beneficial project to the whole territory, both in terms of mining development and economic development and benefit to the entire Yukon, but it is also a benefit to ratepayers, because es-

entially this customer would be using electricity from our generating facilities that is otherwise wasted.

In the first agreement, the minister clouded the whole issue about the independence of the Yukon Utilities Board. It included a number of requirements that were outside of the very purview of the Yukon Utilities Board. Consequently, the board could not deal with these extraneous matters, simply because it doesn't have a mandate to deal with them. So the minister at the top of the food chain didn't understand how the board works, and it cost a lot of time and money and grief. We haven't heard from the minister about that.

Why didn't the minister get it right the first time? The government has a responsibility to promote economic development. The Yukon Development Corporation has a mandate to do that. When the agreement was revised, the roles -- insofar as sponsoring any subsidies outside the board's purview -- were assigned away from the regulated utility, as it should have been done in the first place. I would have expected the minister to know better, but instead, a lot of cost and wasted time and grief were imposed because the government didn't get it right the first time. I would like to ask him, why not?

Hon. Mr. Lang: The facts on the floor are incorrect. I did not put an application in front of the Utilities Board. The Energy Corporation did and I was not involved at any level with that application. So for the member opposite to insinuate I as minister stood in front of the Utilities Board with a presentation is factually wrong.

Now, we go from no economic development to how it's important for the members opposite to see economic development. We go from no third wheel somehow to me as the minister on the third wheel. This money came in from the federal government through the minister, John Baird -- joined by the Premier and Minister of Environment, Dennis Fentie -- to support provincial and territorial projects to help reduce greenhouse gas emissions and air pollutants. That's what the money was for.

When the member opposite talks about the Utilities Board, when they made their overview, the \$5 million wasn't in place -- it wasn't in place. When the member opposite stands on his feet and talks about the minister going in front of a Utilities Board hearing, presenting a project, that again was what was wrong with the Liberals' attitude on the Mayo-Dawson line.

When they understood what the Utilities Board was going to do, they short-circuited it and their minister wrote a letter saying that they didn't have to go in front of the Utilities Board. That's what we did. We knew the hard work was there. The corporation presented a business plan to the Utilities Board. They brought it back and had to critique it and bring it back again in front of the Utilities Board and then, at that point, the board accepted the business proposition that the Energy Corporation put in front of it.

So the member opposite again is standing across there, taking our time, talking about things that I as the minister didn't have anything to do with. Let's go through this again. Let's see where the member opposite is dead wrong.

I went in front of the Yukon Utilities Board, as Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources, with the business plan for the

Mayo-Dawson line. Mr. Chair, the member is wrong. The Yukon Energy Corporation put a proposal forward. We put it in front of the Yukon Utilities Board, expecting, I imagine, some questions on the proposal. It wasn't a slam-dunk. That's why we have the Yukon Utilities Board -- sober second thoughts.

And when the Yukon Utilities Board came down with their decision, the Yukon Energy Corporation was notified that they had to make some changes. The changes were made, and they went again to the Yukon Utilities Board to make sure that the Yukon Utilities Board was comfortable with those decisions.

The Yukon Utilities Board is there to protect the consumer. That's why we don't want to repeat the Mayo-Dawson line. The Liberals put the Mayo-Dawson line in place and put our Yukon Energy Corporation in jeopardy. We do not want to see that again. How they did that was by ignoring the Yukon Utilities Board and getting around behind the Yukon Utilities Board and making a political decision instead of a business decision.

It was a political decision to build the Mayo-Dawson line. It was done upstairs in the corner office by the Liberals of the day. This is a business decision done by the corporation, blessed by the Yukon Utilities Board, and is moving forward.

As far as the third wheel is concerned, we're the government that invested in new buses in Whitehorse. We're the government that, with the Yukon Housing Corporation, put housing programs together for individuals who need some help. We did that. We're going to put more conservation plans and programs together to benefit Yukoners, and we're also going to put the third wheel in place. We're going to do everything the member opposite is talking about -- or recommending.

In fact, half of what he recommended, we already did. We're the ones who put just about \$1 million into city buses last year. This is the government.

We also were brave enough, through the corporation, to go in front of the Yukon Utilities Board; we put the Yukon Utilities Board to work doing what it is set up to do. That's what we as a government did. For the member opposite to stand up and insinuate that we are not doing our job, whether it's buses in Whitehorse, the window program, appliance rebates -- we are doing all those things, Mr. Chair, and we are going to continue doing them. The good work that Yukoners elected us as government to do is what we are going to do.

We are not going to be deterred by the negativity from the opposition. When we get into forestry -- if we can ever get into forestry -- they will insinuate that small business is being cut out of the Yukon. The individual they brought into the House had \$146,000 worth of contracts within the last 12 months.

Chair's statement

Chair: Order please. I have to remind members that we are debating the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources.

Hon. Mr. Lang: What I am doing is pointing out that negativity doesn't work. This government is still going to go to work and do the job we are elected to do, and we are going to do it with or without the opposition. There is a lot of work for all of us to do in here -- a lot of work to do in the Yukon. The

challenges are large, whether they're in Education, Economic Development, Justice, Energy, Mines and Resources, Tourism and Culture -- those are all big portfolios and they impact all Yukoners. For Energy, Mines and Resources, the energy portfolio is only one very small part. It is independent of government.

The executive will be sitting over there in the fall and will answer all the questions, from a management point of view, for the member opposite.

The Leader of the Official Opposition stood in this House and made another statement in the House pertaining to the Yukon Energy Corporation, which you can read in the Blues, that all the management is still in place from when the Liberals built the Mayo-Dawson line fiasco. There he sits, Mr. Chair, again wrong on that statement. We have a new team in place, a new well-versed team. The member opposite shakes his head. Well, read the Blues, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Chair, I would like to move on. I would like to take the energy -- we are not getting anywhere with the member opposite. I would like some input from the third party. They are part of this House, and they should have an opportunity to stand up and ask questions, and we should move on with this very extensive department.

I have my staff here, willing to answer questions with me. The management team from the Energy Corporation aren't sitting here. So this conversation, Mr. Chair, is going nowhere, as the member opposite said. I'm willing as a minister to stand here and tie up the day today and tomorrow, Mr. Chair, if that's what the member wants. But is that fair to Yukon? I don't think so.

Mr. McRobb: Well, Mr. Chair, I'd remind the minister that the clock is ticking away every second he stands up and goes on and on about matters that are unrelated to the question. Now, as a result, I pared back my questions. I have only two more to ask, and then we can proceed. But I want to respond briefly to his comments, because I think there was one germane aspect: of course the minister doesn't stand up in front of the Yukon Utilities Board. We know that, and if he ever did, you could count on me getting a front-row seat. He gave thumbs up to the original failed power purchase agreement that was brought forward by his corporation. We know that.

Now, my penultimate question on this penultimate day pertains to governance. Officials who were in here in December 2004 told this House they had delivered to the desk of the minister a new governance relation document. This has been asked about on several occasions in the three and a half years since then. So I would like to take this occasion to follow up one more time.

When will the minister be doing anything about that governance relationship between the Yukon government and the Crown-owned utility and the Yukon Development Corporation? When is the minister finally going to roll up his sleeves and do something about that matter?

Hon. Mr. Lang: In answering the member opposite, we are doing things about it. We have some detail on it, but it isn't complete. As we know, the Yukon Energy Corporation has been very busy with the lawsuits going on between it and the

Mayo-Dawson line -- that hasn't been settled -- and the day-to-day operation of the corporation. We encourage the corporation to move ahead.

As far as the member's comments about me giving the green light to the application, that was not fact. I did not look at the application before it went in front of the Yukon Utilities Board, so that is not a factual statement.

As far as the government is concerned, we're moving ahead with it but we're doing it in a timely fashion. With all the other management things we have going on in the corporation at the moment, we are prioritizing the corporation's time. We look forward to some product in the next year to two years.

Once we get the Mayo-Dawson line behind us -- it's in court now and I think a decision has been handed down. The corporation's hands have been tied, not only financially because of the debacle of the Mayo-Dawson line, but time has been consumed with the fiasco, which was led by the Liberal government of the day.

They're busy trying to get us straightened out. When you're in the middle of a court case and you have a public corporation, it's hard to manage the future when you don't know what the investment obligations will be at the end of the day.

This government will have to address those shortfalls, and we will. That's what we were elected to do.

I would remind the member opposite that the corporation is very busy at the moment. I'm sure they're rolling up their sleeves and working. One of the biggest situations is all the legalities of the court case between the corporation and the ill-fated corporation that worked with the government to build the Mayo-Dawson line.

The consumers of the Yukon should be aware of the fact that there is still a cost to the Mayo-Dawson line and, of course, that cost will be known once the court case is over and all the negotiations are done. That was a five-year work in progress.

Certainly, when this government took over from the Liberal government of the day, which had a 24-month stay in office, we took over a power line the company had left -- the company had abandoned the site and people weren't being paid. It was a huge issue to contractors in the Yukon and was certainly mismanaged.

Now, as far as the member opposite and his questions on the Yukon Utilities Board, I want to make it clear again that the Yukon Utilities Board is independent. I think that is where they get off the tracks. They somehow think that the government can manipulate the Yukon Utilities Board, or they insinuate that in the House, and I think that's where he's wrong.

I don't think the member opposite understands -- of course, the Liberals don't work with the Yukon Utilities Board and haven't in the past, so they wouldn't understand the legality of the actual independence of that board and the fact that it provides a sober second thought or second set of eyes on the project.

Of course, when you put something in front of the Yukon Utilities Board, questions always come back from the Yukon Utilities Board. For the member opposite to insinuate that somehow the wheels fell off the Yukon Energy Corporation because the Yukon Utilities Board had some questions -- that's

what the corporation went in front of the Yukon Utilities Board to do. It was to get those questions.

Then, of course, that decision came back, and then the Yukon Utilities Board waited for a reply, which was done. The reply answered the questions of the Yukon Utilities Board. Now, as far as the member opposite's conversation on the third wheel and the Yukon Utilities Board, he forgot to mention in his dialogue that, when the Yukon Utilities Board made their decision on the third wheel, it didn't involve a \$5-million investment by the Minister of Environment.

The member opposite was talking about the Yukon Utilities Board saying it wouldn't be profitable until 2012. As we move forward with the wheel, we will move that date ahead by three years. That's not a long time. Instead of 2012 we are looking at 2009. Plus, the \$5 million is coming from the federal government through their environmental program, and the environmental department went to work with the federal government to see if we would qualify for that investment. The federal government said, yes, you will. Because, in fact, in conjunction with your diesel consumption at this end and the third wheel mitigating that, and eliminating all that carbon, it does involve the investment of that money.

I would like to thank the Minister of Environment Canada, Mr. Baird, for putting his trust in us and investing the \$5 million in the third wheel. I am not quite sure he would buy buses or if the buses would qualify. We as a government spent \$1 million last year on buses. We have been working with the City of Whitehorse in a very positive way on their busing issues. We have been working with the City of Whitehorse on other energy conservation and investment issues.

As far as the member opposite thinking that the third wheel -- in one sentence, we are talking about economic development and how we need it, and the next thing he brings up is, what are you doing with the third wheel?

The Carmacks-Pelly line is not needed. We're more progressive than that. The Member for Klucane can't have it both ways. You can't be against business in one speech and for business in another. We have to make decisions on this side. The decisions are made. We're going to go ahead with the third wheel in conjunction with an investment by the federal government. We are going to work in partnership -- which might be foreign to the member opposite -- with industry as an investor and the Energy Corporation to complete the line between Carmacks and Pelly. We'll get Pelly off diesel -- and it is a small user compared to this mine -- and what are we going to do then? We as a government and the Energy Corporation are going to work in partnership with the next mine to tie in the Stewart River section of this line.

We've been at this for two or three hours or whatever. I think that -- as far as the Utilities Board is concerned -- we're going to involve them in any decision we make that's going to impact the consumer. I'm sure we'll put other proposals in front of the Utilities Board, and they will send them back and we will look at them and address their issues and send them back and see where we go from there. That's what the Utilities Board does. It's not a failing grade because the Utilities Board had a

question. It's called business. It's called what the Utilities Board does.

The Utilities Board is there to protect the consumer. And by the way, Mr. Chair, the Utilities Board has access to very highly qualified individuals. So they're not without their capabilities. They have a group of individuals who come from Alberta to work with them on any proposal that we put in front. Is that a bad thing? That's a good thing for Yukoners.

It's an independent review of our energy. When they see an issue with it, what do they do? They send it back to the applicant, which is Yukon Energy/Yukon Development Corporation, and say, "You've got to fix this; this will not wash." And what do the corporations do? They sit down with their many people and say, "How can we mitigate these questions that the Utilities Board has put in front of us? How are we going to address the concerns of the Utilities Board?" -- which, in essence, are the concerns of the consumer, the ratepayer? And they went to work. The Utilities Board said they'd appreciate a reply by the 14th of the month or whatever, and the Energy Corporation needed a time extension. They got a time extension. And guess what? The Utilities Board was comfortable with the new proposals, and they moved forward with the decision.

So it's not a failing grade for the corporation. It's what they're going to have to start getting used to. This is how we're going to manage our energy and our energy costs in the Yukon under this government.

Now, when the Liberals were in, they didn't use the Utilities Board because they knew the Utilities Board might be quite harsh on their decision. So the government of the day short-circuited the Utilities Board and came up with a deal for which Yukoners will pay and over which they have been in litigation for the last five years. The member opposite says, "You can't point your fingers back." Point my fingers back? We're still in the mess. We're still in litigation. The corporation is weaker because of it -- millions of dollars misspent on the Mayo-Dawson line. Mr. Chair, they went from \$17 million to \$20 million to \$35 million to -- I don't know how much. I won't know until this litigation is done. The Liberal government of the day took our corporation and did that to it. That's what happened when they were in power. That's what happened when they short-circuited the Utilities Board. But we're not prepared to do that. We're prepared to learn from the past, utilize the Utilities Board, utilize YESAA, and work within budgets and get jobs done.

The group that's in the Yukon Energy Corporation now is a very capable group of individuals who, by the way, have all the credentials to build the line between Carmacks and Pelly.

What are we going to do? We have gone through the Yukon Utilities Board. We have answered their questions. We have the blessings of the Yukon Utilities Board -- but that's not the end of it. The next step is a business plan. What are the costs going to be? What are the new costs going to be and what are the new dates? Yukon Energy Corporation is doing that today. They have to put a realistic price on this power line. Prices have gone up, Mr. Chair: you understand that; everyone in this House understands it.

We are going to make a business decision that will benefit all Yukoners. As far as the members opposite debating the energy portfolio for hours on end, I think that they are standing on thin ice. My issue is that we are going to learn from the Liberal fiasco and move ahead in a very business like way. We have built a power line from a political decision process, which was the Mayo-Dawson line. We built that because it was politically astute at the time to build one. It kept people busy when they weren't busy.

What we are going to do is make a business decision. We are going to tie in the grids and benefit all Yukoners because, at the end of the day, we will know the cost as we come out of the gate, and we are going to monitor the costs as we build it. That's what they do all over the world. It's not a new form of science. This is how the contracting world works. They look at the contractors. They put things out for bid, and then they follow the budget on a daily, weekly and monthly basis, so at the end of the day, we are within budgets and timelines. Timelines are very important on this project, because the quicker we get to the mine in Pelly, the quicker the resources start rolling in, so we can go to work and lower the rates for the consumers in the territory. It's good news for everybody.

All the discussion here about the rate stabilization plan and the debate about third wheels, fifth wheels, sixth wheels, doesn't mean anything in this House. I imagine the member opposite will not be involved in the decision-making process on how we are going to go ahead with the project. He can ask questions and I will answer the questions. That's my job here in the House. I would like to move on with my portfolio and move into other parts of the portfolio. I would certainly like to involve members of the third party. This is not how I expect this kind of discussion to go. It's very unfair to the other members. I am looking forward to opening up my department's books and talking to the members opposite about what I do as the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources.

I look forward to having the executive arm of the Energy Corporation sitting right there and giving him the floor here for an afternoon where they can discuss with those individuals all the energy concerns. I look forward to that. We're prepared to do that. Why don't we move on, get into the department, which is quite large, and move ahead with line-by-line and have the third party participate? Let's move on with the debate.

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

Recess

Chair: Order please. Committee of the Whole will now come to order. The matter before the Committee is Bill No. 6, *First Appropriation Act, 2007-08*, Department of Energy, Mines and Resources.

Mr. McRobb: Again, there is only one germane part of the minister's 20-minute speech that I care to address. Once again, the question pertained to the governance relationship policy between the Yukon government and the Yukon Energy Corporation and Yukon Development Corporation.

I pointed out how it was delivered to the minister's desk nearly four years ago and nothing has happened with it since. The minister pointed out how the Yukon Energy Corporation officials did their work. Well, I agree. The Yukon Energy Corporation officials did their work four years ago, before they turned in the draft policy for the minister's purview. It's the minister who hasn't done his work in the four years since -- not the officials.

Now, as promised, I'm going to limit my questions to only one more. I know the minister is going to stand up with a long, protracted 20-minute reply. He can fill his boots but, again, he is depriving other members from having time to ask their questions, if he chooses to do so again.

My final question pertains to the development of the energy policy that he has revealed will occur this summer. The Energy, Mines and Resources minister's intention is to go out and consult over the summer months with the energy stakeholders and others. On several occasions in the past, we've discussed the whole concept of consulting during the summer, especially on matters like this. I thought we were unanimous in disapproving such an approach. The reason is that our Yukon summers are too short and we can't expect people to give up their summers to participate in these long, complicated workshops and meetings.

The other day, in his response to the petition on the power rates -- which is a whole separate matter also deserving of questions, but there isn't time to ask them today -- the minister shed some light and here's what he said: "The Yukon government has also initiated the work required to develop a comprehensive Yukon energy strategy. The strategy will address a wide range of issues including energy management, supply, demand, security, affordability, energy efficiency, renewable energy and reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. The strategy will be developed in consultation with stakeholders, the public and other governments, and we look forward to hearing from Yukoners on key energy issues." Those were the words of the minister the other day.

Each one of those components is extensive. If the minister intends to hold a two-hour meeting to just hear any input from Yukoners and the energy stakeholders, I would suggest that process is a lark, especially during summer. We have to be more respectful of Yukoners' time and allow proper time when dealing with such important matters. It's okay for the minister; he probably won't be at the meetings or workshops or whatever. He will be out on his boat on the lake with his line in the water while he expects everybody else to attend these meetings. That is simply not fair.

As recently as last spring, I believe, when I questioned the minister about the development of this policy, I pointed out this very matter and warned the minister to try to avoid a summer consultation. What is the net result? A summer consultation.

The minister says he listens to suggestions on this side, but in this case, at least, he completed rejected the suggestions.

This energy policy has been in development under this Yukon Party government for more than four years. Now it wants to start a mad rush to do it in July, August and so on. That just doesn't make sense. I think that the minister, at the

very least, should put this off to start in September, which is a more reasonable time of the year. Furthermore, the process should clearly spell out the timelines, including the informational papers that should address each and every one of these matters. There should be enough time to allow people to review those papers.

Mr. Chair, we've heard nothing from this minister in terms of the process. He has decided to use the summer months for the development of this policy. Already we have had a primary energy stakeholder come right out in very clear language and refuse to take part in this minister's summer process. This is the very group -- the only group in the territory -- that represents the electrical consumers. Yet the minister is marching right along, insisting this process has to take place this summer. Again, I would put on the record that this is very disrespectful. How does he hope to develop a policy that is inclusive of all representation, particularly from consumers, under such circumstances?

This reminds me of Judge Veale's ruling -- about the "courtesy consultation", because that's what it's shaping up to be. And it's not just here; it's everywhere. Just about every consultation this government is doing is a "courtesy consultation", that doesn't give Yukoners the opportunity to fully engage. There is always a shortcoming -- at least one in every process.

So I want to, hopefully, end my questioning and give the minister an opportunity to respond to this question. I hope he takes it seriously. Will the minister set back the start of this process until at least September to allow proper respect for the people out there and not take away from their summer, as he otherwise expects?

Hon. Mr. Lang: Talk about a 20-minute tirade, Mr. Chair. The member opposite --

Unparliamentary language

Chair: Order please. I would ask the member to retract that comment, please.

Withdrawal of remark

Hon. Mr. Lang: Yes, I'll retract that statement.

Again, the member was wrong in his assertions and what we're going to do with our strategy plan. Here is the proposed schedule for the development of the energy strategy. Write this down, Mr. Chair. Over the next month, the government will be having an informal dialogue with stakeholders and other governments to identify what they think the key Yukon energy issues are and what topics could be included in the strategy.

From these discussions we will develop a brief *What We Heard* report. In the fall, we will hold a workshop to identify the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats regarding the energy sector. This process will help us identify policy gaps and key principles and action priorities for the strategy. Once this is complete, the department will prepare a draft Yukon energy strategy. Broad public consultation will occur on the draft Yukon energy strategy during the winter of 2008. It is anticipated that the Yukon energy strategy will be finalized in the spring of 2008.

Again, the member opposite is wrong. He is wrong on his dates; he is wrong on his figures. He is just plain wrong. As far

as the Yukon energy strategy we have been working on, we committed to work on it and we are moving forward. Consultation will be held in the fall. We understand the merits of a summer season for individuals in the territory. We want to minimize our profile in the communities in the summer, understanding that people have things to do and places to go in the summer. That's why we put this schedule together.

Mr. McRobb: I don't have a question -- just a brief comment. This is the first time we've heard anything other than what the minister has put on the record to date with respect to the summer consultation. It's news to us, and if the minister had been more forthright in the information, perhaps it would have alleviated any misunderstanding. It seems we have to try to get this information out of the government through questioning, and even then there is never an assurance --

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

Chair: Mr. Rouble on a point of order.

Hon. Mr. Rouble: I am compelled to stand here. I recognize that the Member for Kluane -- who was just standing -- is holding a digital camera in his hand, and I'm wondering if he's intending to take photographs in the Assembly. He has now put it in his pocket. There was an issue raised, I believe it was by that member, about a person in the gallery with a tape recorder. It was blown into a large issue. Now it appears that I've disturbed the member and he is now, maybe, re-taking his statement.

Chair's statement

Chair: On the point of order, I will actually come back on a point of order. I will have a ruling tomorrow.

Is there any further general debate?

Mr. Edzerza: A wise old philosopher called Confucius once said, "Blessed are those who go around in circles for they shall be called wheels." The last I heard, the debate was on the third wheel somewhere and I certainly hope the minister catches up to it, because I would like to take this debate in another direction.

I know the Official Opposition would like the third party to basically stand up and clear the lines. However, if a lot of the time is going to be used up by the Official Opposition, I hope they understand that the third party also has a lot of questions that need to be asked and, if we want to stay on one program for a week and a half, so be it.

I'd like to start out by asking the minister about alternative energy. I know that the government provided a well-drilling program for citizens who are not hooked up to the water system of the city. I'm just wondering -- there are a lot of people who live outside the electrical grid also -- if the minister is aware of any program that the government might have in operation that would assist citizens who are not on the electrical grid and would like to maybe use some sort of alternative energy versus a diesel generator.

Hon. Mr. Lang: I will read it for the member opposite. I can't answer the question about individuals and what we could do for individuals, but I can get a communication back to

the member opposite about what is available for individuals who are not on the grid or are not on a local power source and what we can do as a government. I will commit to get back to him.

What we have done as a government is look at solar hot water and air heating studies on commercial buildings in Whitehorse under that program. We have looked at alternative fuel pilot studies, biodiesel and waste vegetable oil. We are looking at, as a supported pilot feasibility study, the collection, filtration and use of waste vegetable oil on diesel vehicles in Whitehorse. The study is intended to evaluate the financial and environmental benefits of using this fuel to displace diesel. That program has been highlighted in other jurisdictions. I am sort of interested myself to see what the outcome will be.

Another is to support a partnership between a local producer of biodiesel and the City of Whitehorse. The goal is to provide biodiesel for use in single city vehicles, for example a bus, for use in a financial, technical and environmental evaluation over an annual cycle. In other words, there is a project going on for that. There is a ground source heat pump study at a residence in Whitehorse. We are looking at that. There are wind and solar electric demonstration projects at Yukon College in Whitehorse. This is a hybrid system that the Energy Solutions Centre has provided financial support to re-develop. The system will be on-line to help reduce Yukon College demand from the grid within a couple of months.

The Energy Solutions Centre will also be working with the Northern Research Institute to develop a public demonstration education component for the project in the coming months.

Those are some of those things we're doing inside the department to look at alternative power. I know there have been projects in other communities. Haines Junction has a ground source heat pump next to their community complex. I'm not quite sure where that's at. One of the schools in Riverdale has alternative plans for a heat pump. We will work with them on some kind of endeavour to look at that science.

Heat pumps are coming of age. They are being used in other jurisdictions and, as the science and technology grows, it becomes more feasible and economical for individuals in areas to utilize that science. It's something that's on the horizon. In the next 10 or 20 years, I think it will become a big part of our heating and cooling systems. They use them in jurisdictions not only to heat buildings, homes and businesses, but as a form of air conditioning as well.

Mr. Chair, I just got a note here on the rural electrification program. It covers solar power systems -- I didn't know that. I would bring that information back to the member in the coming days.

Mr. Edzerza: I thank the minister for that response. I'm certain that a substantial number of citizens don't live within city limits and do have access to the electrical grid. It would be good to have some kind of assistance through the government on an alternative source for energy.

I'm going to go on to another issue now that has to do with land use planning. With regard to land use planning and agricultural leases, is the YESA Board responsible for making recommendations to the minister?

Hon. Mr. Lang: I didn't quite understand that. We went from land use planning to YESAA. Land use planning is an obligation we have under the final agreements. We are working on north Yukon's land use plan, which I am optimistic will be in front of us this fall. The Yukon is divided into eight areas. Once we get the north Yukon plan put together, we will look forward to moving into the next area of land use planning.

As far as the YESAB is concerned, YESAB makes recommendations. There are levels of participation in the YESAA process. In other words, there are some projects that have to go to the YESAB and some that don't. That's all laid out in the YESAA process, and the board makes recommendations to the government. Whether it's the Carmacks-Pelly power line or a question about a mining road, or whatever, it's all done by the YESAB, and they recommend to the government regarding the decision.

Mr. Edzerza: I believe I was trying to get out of the minister whether or not his department has the YESA Board make recommendations to the government on certain issues. I understand that the YESAB does give recommendations to the minister on different issues. I was asking that question, because I would like to know why the government didn't take the recommendations given by YESAB with regard to the controversial agricultural lease on Shallow Bay.

Hon. Mr. Lang: In addressing the member opposite, YESAB is a federal board and it's under the Executive Council Office. As we go through with the Executive Council Office, some of these questions could be asked of the minister responsible for the Executive Council Office.

Mr. Edzerza: Maybe I will ask those questions when we are in Executive Council Office if that is where they belong, I guess.

I do have another question for the minister: with regard to land use planning -- and I am talking now about north Yukon -- why has the government opened oil and gas parcels in the Eagle Plains and Peel watershed to work bids? Would this not be included in the land use plan before such an action could be taken?

Hon. Mr. Lang: Yes, it is part of the land use planning. Economic development or whatever we do is all part of land use planning in north Yukon. We work in partnership with the resident governments. Of course, that is done under YOGA -- the Yukon *Oil and Gas Act*. All of that has a process. It is all part of land use planning wherever it happens in the territory.

Mr. Edzerza: I understand that. However, the minister appears to have skirted the real question. Would that not be somewhat putting the cart before the horse when you say you are actively working on a land use plan in a specific area but, before that plan is completed, areas are opened up to oil and gas drilling? Is that not just going around the whole process of land use planning?

Hon. Mr. Lang: Land use planning has been on the books here in the territory for many, many years. As we move forward to get these finalized, the Yukon itself moves ahead as a community. YOGA, which is a partnership between us and the First Nations, sets out the process. The process is adhered to as the dispositions go forward.

So, as far as land use planning is concerned, the dispositions are part and parcel are of the eventual land use plan. I mean, it's a process that was set out in the Yukon *Oil and Gas Act*. It was a joint partnership between public government and First Nation governments on how we would manage the resource in the territory.

It's a process that has been set out. It will certainly impact land use planning and, of course, will be part of that land use plan.

Mr. Edzerza: I would just like to put on record that the third party does have some concerns and issues with a government that will go ahead and open up areas for development, regardless of whether or not the land use plan is completed. That could raise serious issues in the future, because what if the people in the area really don't approve of the plan? It gives the government the opportunity to start development that can't be reversed, and that's the problem with it.

I think that if you're going to do a land use plan on any specific region, that plan should be completed before any of the land is given up for development.

I'm not going to stay on this issue. I'm going to be jumping around a fair bit, because there were a lot of different questions asked by the Official Opposition so I'm going to be moving from one area to the other.

I'd like to ask the minister what's happening in southeast Yukon with regard to forestry, because it has been very quiet and we haven't really heard much about any kind of development that might be taking place in that area. If the forestry is active in that area, I would like to know if raw logs are being shipped south.

Hon. Mr. Lang: In addressing the member opposite's question about the gas dispositions, with YOGA there is always room for public involvement. So when the member thinks that the dispositions are in fact the finale, it is not factual. With YOGA there are steps in the disposition process where people, individuals and governments get involved and have opportunities to question the process. There were questions about the last dispositions, and the government and YOGA took out part of this wetland that was being looked at. So there have been people asking questions and we've been answering the questions, obviously, by taking out certain sensitive areas, which we understand there are. We're very sensitive about the Turner wetlands. We understand the merits of sensitivity and we react accordingly, but there's always room, in whatever we do, in the dispositions for the public input. That's the way YOGA is set up. It's not something that YOGA is not aware of and not concerned about. It is part and parcel of consultation on many levels in the oil industry and in the disposition process.

In southeast Yukon, understanding that it's an unsettled First Nation area -- it is Kaska traditional territory -- we and the Kaska set up a resource stewardship council that went into a regional forest management plan, which we recently received. I have not seen that document. It was just received within the last week or 10 days. We look forward to working through the forest management committee for the southeast to coordinate the review of the plan. In other words, we will have to take the plan and take a look at it. The committees are jointly estab-

lished by the Yukon and the Kaska to provide such oversight and coordination.

We will be implementing this partnership with the Kaska First Nation and approval of a regional forest management plan for southeast Yukon will be facilitated. There will be a determination of sustainable harvest levels and economic opportunities to the southeast.

We are making steps forward in the forest industry in southeast Yukon in partnership with the Kaska and the stakeholders in that area.

Mr. Edzerza: One question I would like to have the minister answer: is the minister aware whether or not raw logs will be shipped out of the Yukon to be processed?

Hon. Mr. Lang: We certainly don't encourage that. We have an agreement with the B.C. government on resources on either side of our border, understanding that the eastern side of southeast Yukon is accessible through Fort Nelson with the road access. Of course, Blue River, French Creek and the Dease Lake areas are accessible to the Watson Lake market. Of course, there is some potential for Teslin in the Atlin area.

Those agreements have been signed between us and the B.C. government on how we could manage the forest on either side of our border. We certainly, as a government, would not encourage that kind of management of wood. Moving raw logs would not benefit Yukoners like we would like to see from a secondary industry and moving forward into forest management.

I know that some areas do that. There are all sorts of reasons for it. There is the potential, I guess. I wouldn't want to shut out the opportunity for people to build log homes. Those involve logs that sometimes are trucked. I see logs coming into Whitehorse all the time. Those logs come from some forest.

There are all sorts of reasons, but I certainly wouldn't want to see truckloads of logs going to an offshore market so we would only benefit from the actual harvest, not the management of the wood on a secondary basis.

Mr. Edzerza: There has been a lot of discussion in the Legislature over the last week with regard to processes being set up where just the bigger outfits have the potential to be successful bidders. The question I have for the minister is with regard to the southeast Yukon and even the Teslin area. Is the process set up so that the bigger operations wouldn't cut all the little guys out? Would the process support the smaller operations?

Hon. Mr. Lang: The facts bear out that we do work with the whole industry. I know that the conversation went around about how this government cut out the little people and only catered to larger engineering firms or forest management teams. Here are some details of the facts. We should deal with facts.

In the southwest Yukon, there have been 19 contracts since 2003. There were eight contracts to a forest engineering firm, Borealis, which is a local firm. Five of them went to Duke Wilderness Shows. Three contracts went to EDI, Environmental Dynamics, which is a local contractor. Three contracts went to an environmental forest service in Prince George. The facts were not correct on the floor, Mr. Chair. The facts are that, out

of 19 contracts let in the area that the members opposite were talking about, 16 of them went to local individuals.

They brought in one of the complainants on the contracting. These are facts: the member who said in the news he had been shut out of contracting had total contracts for one year worth \$131,756. That's more than the member opposite makes.

I think the facts speak for themselves. People are getting contracts. This contract was let to Duke Wilderness Shows, and this individual does the work himself. He made over \$10,000 a month on contracts from Energy, Mines and Resources.

I remind the member opposite that there were eight other contracts. We can't shut other people out. Other people have the opportunity to bid. In this process, eight contracts to Borealis; Duke, which was the \$131,000 guy, and he got five of the contracts; three contracts to EDI, Environmental Dynamics Incorporated; and three contracts to an environmental forest service from Prince George, which is a larger firm that has more capability to do some of the work these little individuals can't.

We have done our job; we have taken a look at the contracts; we have opened them up to individuals. These people are benefiting from the management of the forests.

In a realistic world, we'll always be involved in some way with Outside firms that have a bit more expertise for what we need as a community, but we want to maximize the benefits locally.

Another thing is that it is an open bid process.

The facts speak for themselves. The individual who said he didn't get any contracts actually got \$131,000. Out of the 19 contracts, three went to a company from Prince George because of their capabilities.

We learn from these people. This is how we mature in business.

As we bring these people into the territory, they hire locally. In the next couple of years, you're going to see these people who have worked for these corporations going out, as we create the work, and doing the work that Outside companies were originally doing. So this is all part and parcel of managing the force. The facts speak for themselves.

Mr. Edzerza: I'd like to state for the record that, as an individual, I don't intend to and never would put anything on the floor that I thought wasn't factual. Our job in the opposition is to draw the facts out of the minister. That's exactly why the line of questioning is going the way it is.

The minister has at his fingertips the facts about who is doing logging in specific regions, and that's merely what we're asking about. There are some citizens in that area who have said to me that they had concerns about some of the actions that the government was taking in that area with respect to contracting.

Again, for the record, I asked a question. It was asked of me to do so, and it's done.

I'm going to move on from the forestry issues into mining. Does the government have a policy in place with respect to uranium mining? Are there any active uranium mining claims in good standing in the Yukon?

I know that there is a lot of concern in our sister territories with respect to uranium mining, and I don't know if there is a

policy in the Yukon regarding that. That's why I'm asking the minister this.

Hon. Mr. Lang: In addressing the member opposite on the questions on forestry, we have an obligation to deal with facts on the floor all the time. In the last two weeks, we have seen where the opposition has brought individuals' names on the floor, which is very inappropriate, I think, because we shouldn't deal with names of individuals or personalities on the floor when they can't be on the floor to defend themselves.

I would point my fingers at the opposition. This is no way to get at a government, if that's what they think they're doing. What we have to do is deal with facts. The facts are that, in the southwest Yukon, people are getting contracts. Individuals locally are getting contracts. Individuals who have gone into the press and said they had no access to it, actually got \$131,000 worth of contracts last year, which is one of the largest ones that were let in that area.

To go on with your question about uranium, there certainly is some interest in uranium. Uranium prices have gone from whatever to whatever, but there is a demand out there. In Canada, it is regulated by the federal government under the *Nuclear Safety and Control Act*, which is administrated by the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission. Uranium mining in the Yukon would require assessments under the *Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Act* and the *Canadian Environmental Assessment Act*. It would also require federal and territorial permits.

In answering the member opposite's question, it is overseen by both governments. There is a worldwide interest in nuclear energy, so there is a demand out there. When the member opposite asks about claims and uranium interest, in north Yukon the Wernecke Mountains are reported -- I couldn't tell you how many claims, but there is some interest in uranium in that area.

Okay, here are some statistics for you: there are six mineral exploration companies actively exploring 12 uranium properties in Yukon. The main areas of interest for uranium are in the Wernecke Mountains -- see, I was right -- and the Ogilvie Mountains north of Mayo. There are higher demands for uranium -- now here's the price difference -- doubled over the last year. It went to \$125 a pound -- more than double. Saskatchewan is the only jurisdiction in Canada that is actively mining uranium. Saskatchewan is the largest producer of uranium in the world. They supply approximately 30 percent of the total of the world production. Demand for uranium is expected to increase as countries such as China, India, Japan and Russia continue to expand their nuclear energy programs.

In answering your question, there is a federal component to this and it falls under the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission and there's our local government and YESA Board and all those safeguards in place, but the *Canadian Environmental Assessment Act* would be a big part of any permitting, if in fact a mine would go forward in the territory.

Mr. Edzerza: I know there is some interest from citizens in the territory who would like to know whether or not the government intends to be proactive and hold some information

sessions or educate the Yukon people about what the hazards are and what is involved with uranium mining.

Hon. Mr. Lang: I appreciate the member opposite and I would recommend that kind of communication because, as we move forward -- or if in fact these uranium deposits become a reality; we're just in the exploration stage now -- as it moves forward, and if in fact there is the potential, then I would say to the member opposite that we will have to do education. I would take that under advisement.

Mr. Edzerza: I would like to move off uranium mining and ask a question with regard to the coal mine fire at Carmacks. Is there any potential health risk or hazard with that coal mine burning in the way it is?

Hon. Mr. Lang: It has been burning for years. I guess when I talked to individuals many years ago, before I became the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources, I didn't realize that these coal mines have a tendency to catch on fire and they can burn for hundreds of years. We monitor the situation in Carmacks. There doesn't seem to be a danger posed to the community or to the surrounding landscape from the fires, because they are underground fires. Similar coal fires occur, as I said, in other parts of the country.

We do monitor it and we are concerned about it, but I guess it is Mother Nature doing what she does. All we can do is make sure it doesn't become a threat to the community of Carmacks and that it doesn't affect individuals who go near it or around it. We do not encourage building or anything else that would happen where it could become a danger to individuals.

In answering the question, the fire has been going for 10 or 20 years. It is being monitored by the department. The Little Salmon-Carmacks First Nation is sensitive to it as are the residents of Carmacks. Coal fires in the area started by lightning or spontaneous combustion over 30 years ago. These kinds of things are outside our management skills. It doesn't mean we don't monitor it and minimize any impact it could have on the community.

Mr. Edzerza: One of the questions asked was whether or not the government was monitoring what was happening there. I'm sure now the individuals who wanted to know that would be pleased to know that, yes, they are being monitored by the government. So, that's good.

I'd like to ask a couple of questions about placer mining. I have a constituent -- actually, a couple of them, who have active placer claims down the South Canal Road, that go in off of Sidney Creek. They were wondering if it is their responsibility to put in a washed-out culvert or whatever on that existing mine road. They feel that there is a lot of difficulty sometimes trying to repair the road that already exists there because sometimes they are told that they can't dig dirt from any particular place on the road, that they have to have permits, and all these issues come to the surface.

So, when there is an active mine, does the Yukon government assist these placer miners with ensuring that the road is passable?

Hon. Mr. Lang: In the licensing of a placer mine, that kind of question could be answered. But if the member opposite and I are speaking about the same road, I think the mining

company that has an investment at the end of the road is looking at an enhancement of that road.

So, in answering your question, I would have to do some homework on our responsibility to the road, and I certainly wouldn't commit the department to do anything on the floor today. But I would commit to get back to the member opposite and clarify what our position is on enhancing a road or replacing a culvert or doing things like that. I'm not sure if rural roads or any of these programs would fit in there, but I'll get back to the member on our responsibility as a government.

Mr. Edzerza: I thank the minister for that. I will pass that information on to the individuals who were asking about it.

I am going to move on to the oil and gas section a little bit. With regard to the oil and gas and mineral resources, in the O&M it states that there is \$262,000 for First Nation royalties. Is this for the entire Yukon? Why was there a 68-percent decrease?

Hon. Mr. Lang: That's not hard to explain. They are running out of oil, or gas. The Kotaneelee field is drying up. We have had a marked slump in the product. All settled First Nations share in the resource in southeast Yukon, so until there is more drilling and more investment in that area, eventually the field will -- I would say in the next 24 months. To give it fair due, that was the most profitable and productive field ever drilled in North America. So it has been a big producer for this territory for many, many years. That area of the Yukon, as we move forward, is a proven area of gas potential. The Kotaneelee field was the most profitable and productive in North America for many years.

Mr. Edzerza: With regard to royalties, I would like to ask the minister if royalties would only pertain to oil and gas, or would royalties also be allowed for First Nations for minerals and mines?

Hon. Mr. Lang: There is an agreement. Oil and gas is very clear -- or the oil industry -- on how we share the resources. It's settled among settled First Nations. Royalties for minerals have the same -- I don't know how it's tallied or how it's scored, but there is a mechanism in place according to which the royalties are shared.

As to the Selkirk First Nation, Minto mine is on category A land, so they get 100 percent of the royalties from that mine. Selected land, category A land, is surface and subsurface rights, and category B land is surface rights. The Selkirk First Nation will benefit 100 percent from the resources from the Minto mine as it moves forward into production.

Mr. Edzerza: I'd like to move on now to some comments that were made with regard to the Alaska Highway pipeline. This debate took place probably a week or so ago, and it ended before the third party had an opportunity to engage in that debate. I know the minister made note of his pipeline dream and the fantasy he actually had, as a young child, to work on it. That's how long it has been in the making. I dare to comment on the minister's age, but I think it has been a few years.

It almost sounded to me like the minister believes it still might be coming. I'm not sure. For the sake of argument, supposing the pipeline did become a reality, I would like to know

if the minister, or the government, has done any studies on what kind of social impact such a project would have on the Yukon Territory.

Hon. Mr. Lang: Yes, speaking to the member opposite, his hair was a lot darker when the pipeline was announced. Both of us were just out of high school. We've been out of high school for a couple of hours, and we've talked about the pipeline for the last 30 years. I am paid to be optimistic. That's my job, to be optimistic. I am very optimistic that the pipeline is in the future. Are we as a government prepared for the pipeline? Well, we certainly are working with the Aboriginal Pipeline Coalition to make sure that we have the First Nations that are directly affected by the pipeline -- I think there are seven First Nations -- and putting that forward.

I think they did a study about five years ago, that I would like to see again, on the impacts from internal social and economic opportunities for the pipeline. That was done before I became minister. As we move forward with this pipeline concept, and as it gets moving, I would recommend we update that study, because time changes everything. I don't think it is time-expired. I think it could be worked on and modernized. Those impacts and economic opportunities would be shown in that project.

No, I haven't done anything recently on that, the department hasn't, but we have in the past. I certainly understand the dilemma. When I look at the Mackenzie Valley pipeline and all of the ups and downs of the Alaska Highway pipeline and all of the discussion around those, we as a government took a different view than the Liberal government of the day. We didn't hang all of our hats on the pipeline; we went to work to create an economic opportunity for Yukoners with the attitude that if, in fact, the pipeline came, that would just be another thing we would work on.

I wouldn't say that the pipeline is a sure bet, but I am optimistic that someday the Alaska Highway pipeline will be realized and it will go through our jurisdiction. Down the line if we are in government, we would definitely upgrade that study. Of course, that would be part and parcel of the internal workings that we would do in our work with Yukoners to make sure that we minimize the impact of the pipeline from a social point of view. We would also highlight the economic opportunities for our people, because of the fact that whatever we do as a small jurisdiction would be beneficial.

If we were to look at the size of this investment and job, it is something that really one would have to see to appreciate. It's a 52-inch pipe. There are only three places in the world that can even make this pipe. It is many thousands of kilometres long. The investment is huge and growing by the day. If we listen to the Mackenzie Valley pipeline from when we took office, it has gone from \$5 billion to \$11 billion. All of those costs go up. I guess eventually the question is: is it economical? From a jurisdiction point of view, is the Alaska Highway pipeline and Mackenzie Valley pipeline feasible from a consumer point of view? It is the consumer who is going to pay for the pipeline, and the consumer will be in southern Canada and the Lower 48.

Those are business decisions that have to be made. To be honest, the Governor of Alaska is working on it, as are the corporations, because they own the product. Any decisions that are pertinent will be made in Alaska. We will be, I guess, part and parcel of the Canadian part of it, but we are not going to be making the decision or even be part of the decision-making process in Alaska. Until that is done, there is no pipeline.

Mr. Edzerza: On comments to the colour of my hair, I'd like to state for the record that I don't use Grecian Formula - - and I believe someone across the way might.

Anyhow, I know the social impact studies are something that is a very serious issue that has to be taken into consideration. One only needs to do a little bit of research on history to try to understand what the impacts of the Gold Rush of 1898 were.

Now, a lot of First Nations would compare a pipeline project to that gold rush. I believe there are a lot of concerns with respect to even the possibility of such a big project coming through the Yukon again. A lot of people are wondering if they're going to have to re-live a lot of what went on in the gold rush days.

Now, we all understand that progress does happen. And if I'm not mistaken, when our neighbours in Alaska and in the United States decide to proceed with a project, it's done at the drop of a hat. That's why I'm asking these questions now -- because I think that in the event that a pipeline ever does mature, we are going to be faced with the humongous change within all of the society in Whitehorse -- actually, right through the whole Yukon Territory.

I know that over the years Kwanlin Dun took on a task at one time of actually doing an impact study on exactly what it meant for the biggest First Nation living in the capital city, where a lot of the big impact would probably be almost immediate because of the airport being in the City of Whitehorse.

Again, there were numerous meetings over several years. I was a councillor in the Kwanlin Dun government at the time, and I know that one doesn't even begin to visualize what it means to have a project like the pipeline -- or even a railroad, as far as that goes -- constructed in the Yukon Territory. People just don't give it any in-depth thought. When the discussion actually comes to the table and people start to talk about what it means to have an additional 10,000, 15,000 or 20,000 people working here in the Yukon and massive loads of pipe coming through the territory, no one really gives that much thought until the time comes. People are just not prepared for it.

That's why I'm raising it today. I certainly wouldn't hold my breath waiting for this project to start. I remember when I was a young man, I heard about it. It sounded so good that I was almost prepared to go and buy a welding rig so I could weld on this pipeline. I'm glad I didn't wait for that job. I would still be waiting.

I think that the problem with all of this is that it's an emotional roller coaster. People don't know if it's going to happen. There's the possibility that it will. Everybody sits and waits, but the fact is that the world is going to run low on oil and gas someday. It may be difficult to even get oil and gas from other countries. It probably will be a reality someday.

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

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

Motion agreed to

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

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

Motion agreed to

Speaker resumes the Chair

Speaker: I will now call the House to order.

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

Chair's report

Mr. Nordick: 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?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Speaker: I declare the report carried.

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

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

Motion agreed to

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

The House adjourned at 5:26 p.m.

The following Sessional Papers were tabled June 13, 2007:

07-1-27

Ombudsman and Information and Privacy Commissioner 2006 Annual Report (Speaker Staffen)

07-1-28

Yukon Advisory Council on Women's Issues 2006-2007 Annual Report (Taylor)

The following document was filed June 13, 2007:

07-1-24

Yukon Geographical Place Names Board 2005-2006 Annual Report (Taylor)