

Whitehorse, Yukon
Monday, April 28, 2008 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: I will now call the House to order. At this time, we will proceed with prayers.

Prayers

DAILY ROUTINE

Speaker: We will proceed with the Order Paper. Are there any tributes?

TRIBUTES

In recognition of National Day of Mourning

Hon. Mr. Cathers: Today, April 28, is the National Day of Mourning for workers who have been injured or killed on the job. This national day of remembrance was founded by the Canadian Labour Congress in 1984 and entrenched by the *Mourning Day Act* passed in federal Parliament in 1991.

As stated at today's Yukon Day of Mourning Ceremony which just concluded, we need to do more than remember those who suffered. We need to commit to keeping ourselves and others safe at work.

In 2007 alone, there were more than 2,000 injuries in Yukon workplaces out of a workforce of fewer than 16,000 people, and we lost another member of our Yukon community to a workplace fatality. Worst, these Yukon deaths were preventable. Injuries and deaths are not statistics; they are co-workers, loved ones, children, neighbours. Hundreds more will be injured in Yukon workplaces during the coming year, some will never fully heal, and some may die.

We must not let that happen. At today's Day of Mourning ceremony, we stood together as individuals and as a community to commit to doing our part in preventing these injuries from happening and keeping each other safe.

The commitment we all made at today's ceremony only has a meaning once it is put into action. When we gather at the Day of Mourning ceremony one year from today, let us be able to say we made a difference, that we kept each other safe, and let our reward be that not one Yukoner's life was lost in a work mishap in 2008.

Thank you.

Mr. Mitchell: I rise today on behalf of the Official Opposition to pay tribute to National Day of Mourning. April 28, 2008, is the 24th anniversary of the Day of Mourning for the workers killed and injured on the job.

We in the Yukon join with the rest of Canada and more than 80 countries around the world to honour the millions of lives that have been forever changed or lost to workplace injuries.

We mourn those workers who have been injured, killed or suffer illness as a result of occupational accidents and hazards.

Most workplace injuries are preventable. Although there have been some improvements to unsafe working conditions on the job, we still have far too many lives that are unnecessarily

lost or irrevocably affected by injuries because of workplace accidents.

We must do more to save lives and prevent needless suffering. All workers have the right to work in a safe and healthy environment. Safety on the job must be a priority for everyone and responsibility for safety belongs to each of us. Both employers and employees must follow workplace safety procedures. By working together then, and only then, can we hope not only to prevent and reduce, but to eliminate entirely, workplace deaths and injuries.

As we observe this Day of Mourning, we pause to reflect on and to mourn for the workers who have died or been injured at work, sadly, including another Yukon worker in 2007. We must renew our commitment to our workforce to improve health and safety conditions on the job.

As our youth enter the workforce we must educate them on how important workplace safety is, not only for themselves, but for their fellow workers. It is a sad fact that young workers are most at risk for workplace accidents. Since 2004 over 130 young Canadians have lost their lives to workplace accidents.

There have been 503 workplace injuries reported to date this year in the Yukon. That's 503 too many. Let us join together to eliminate all workplace injuries and fatalities. Show you care by wearing a Day of Mourning pin, pause for a moment to honour those Yukon workers who have been injured or killed on the job.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank the many Yukoners who have shown their support for our workers and their families on this National Day of Mourning.

Thank you.

Mr. Cardiff: I rise on behalf of the NDP caucus to recognize April 28 as the National Day of Mourning and to pay tribute to workers and their families whose lives have been lost or severely impacted by occupational injury or death.

This year's slogan from the Canadian Labour Congress is "Mourn for the Dead, Fight for the Living — Now more than ever". The principle behind the slogan is obvious. Grieve for those lives that have ended prematurely and get to work to stop preventable injuries and death. I don't think anything could be more important.

So far this year, 503 Yukoners have been injured on the job, and we're only a third of the way through the calendar year. As we speak, the Yukon Federation of Labour is holding a three-day symposium called, "Making It Work for Me! — Keeping Yukon youth safe at work".

One of the challenges the Day of Mourning forces us to reckon with as legislators is how we are working to safeguard the lives of young workers — a group that is disproportionately injured on the job. There is much to do to keep young workers safe and to keep all workers safe on the job.

Canada continues to have one of the highest workplace fatality rates of any OECD — Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development — country. In 2006, there were 976 workplace fatalities in Canada. That's up substantially. It's an increase of 18 percent since 1996. These numbers should be going down, not up.

It seems unfortunate that the principle that operates in our society is that things only change after there's a tragedy. Tragically, we lost another worker last year.

Legislators have made changes. The Criminal Code was amended in 2004 to hold employers responsible for health and safety offences that destroy workers' lives. This year, a company — Transpavé — was found criminally negligent of the death of a 23-year old labourer. They were fined \$110,000.

What is the price of a life?

It's only the first conviction under this change in the law, and the labour movement fought long and hard to win that amendment to the Criminal Code. It has come way too late for many people. It has come way too late for the 26 men who died at Westray, and it has come way too late for many of the others who have passed away, working on the job.

At least it's a law. We hope this change, born from the struggle to remember and say, "Never again", will save lives and protect livelihoods.

This is definitely a day to remember, but it's also, as was said earlier, a day to commit. We need to do that on a daily basis. We need to commit every day when we go to work to keep each other safe.

Thank you.

Speaker: Are there any further tributes?
Are there any introductions of visitors?
Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Mr. Cardiff: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have for tabling an invitation for all members of the Legislature to an event on Sunday, May 4, called "Dumpster Dining" at the Mile Nine Dump.

Speaker: Are there any further documents for tabling?
Are there any reports of committees?
Are there any petitions?
Are there any bills to be introduced?
Are there any notices of motion?

NOTICES OF MOTION

Mr. Mitchell: I give notice of the following motion:
THAT this House urges the Yukon government to remove the three-percent territorial premium tax it is currently charging on the funds paid into the Yukon Communities Insurance Association property reciprocal.

I give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Yukon government to provide the funds required to backstop a liability reciprocal for the Yukon Communities Insurance Association.

Mr. McRobb: I give notice of the following motion:
THAT this House urges the Yukon government to avoid forcing municipalities to cut programs or services or to increase taxes by allocating funds to each Yukon municipal government an amount equivalent to their shortfall due to the Yukon Party's cancellation of the rate stabilization fund until such time as that

amount is completely offset by the promised decrease to our electrical rates.

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

THAT this House urges the Yukon government not to cut any teacher positions, education assistant positions or remedial tutor positions in Yukon public schools for this upcoming school year.

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

THAT this House urges the federal Environment minister to direct Parks Canada management to negotiate a fair and equitable agreement with Parks Canada workers that does not include privatization or downsizing of public services within national parks and historic sites.

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

THAT this House urges the Department of Environment to mail one of its "Plastic Blows" reusable canvas bags to every household in Yukon, as an easy, concrete action that will reduce use of environmentally destructive plastic grocery bags.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to take decisive action to protect the environment by adopting strict and enforceable northern building standards requiring architects, designers, engineers and contractors to use materials, systems and construction practices that provide the most efficient use of energy available through existing and emerging technologies.

I give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to protect Yukon consumers by adopting strict and enforceable northern building standards requiring residential architects and builders to use the most energy efficient materials, systems and construction practices possible, in order to reduce the monthly and yearly costs of heating, cooling and maintaining Yukon homes.

Speaker: Are there any further notices of motion?
Is there a statement by a minister?

This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Teacher staffing

Mr. Fairclough: I have a question for the Minister of Education.

Given that the public schools branch has taken a budget cut this year, it's not surprising to hear some upset principals and school councils clamouring about taking FTE cuts for the forthcoming school term.

I know if I say "teacher cuts" the minister will say, "No," because he knows that with retirement and resignations, teachers will not be given their pink slips.

He also knows that vacancies created will not be filled, and that means fewer teachers in our school next year. Fewer

teachers mean the quality of our programs delivered will go down.

Will the minister confirm that the number of FTEs in our school will be reduced next year?

Hon. Mr. Rouble: I need to put the member's fears at ease. It's unfortunate that he wasn't out at some of the meetings where we have had public meetings and discussions on this.

We've seen investments in the public schools branch grow from \$69 million in 2003, to over \$92 million in 2007. That's an increase of 33 percent. Over the same period of time, the number of teachers has grown from 432 to 473 — a five-percent increase. The number of education assistants has increased from 86 to 111 — an increase of almost 30 percent.

Indeed, we have been trying to discuss the supplementary budget with the opposition, who refuse to go into the supplementary budget, which added —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Hon. Mr. Rouble: I'm sorry, Mr. Speaker, do I have the floor, or does the MLA from Kluane have the floor?

Speaker: No, you have the floor. Go ahead.

Hon. Mr. Rouble: We're trying to debate with the members opposite. They only have to look at the supplementary budget to see there was an increase of education assistants.

All this has happened while the number of children in our system has reduced from 5,430 in May of 2003 to almost 5,000 today. We're making a commitment to Yukon students and to their future.

Mr. Fairclough: The minister is getting better and better at avoiding the question. Let's see if he can be direct on this one.

Last weekend, the minister attended YTA's annual meeting. That would have been a good time to hear first-hand from those on the front line about the impact of cutting positions in Yukon classrooms. He chose not to do that. Parents, school councils and educators tell me every day how taxing it is to meet the ever-increasing demands being placed on our schools.

Principals experience the frustration on a daily basis. They attempt to deal with children with learning disabilities, new programs requiring staff expertise are difficult to acquire, and parents who are rightfully demanding better for their children. This is no time to be cutting staff positions.

In just a matter of days, the Department of Education will be announcing a reduction in school staff. Why is the minister cutting FTEs at a time when we need more?

Hon. Mr. Rouble: The Member for Mayo-Tatchun is wrong. It's as simple as that. The member is incorrect.

Saturday was a great time to talk with teachers and educators from across Yukon. So was Friday night, at the excellence in education awards. So was last Tuesday, when the president of the Yukon Teachers Association and I co-taught a course together. Another great time to talk about education in the territory was the previous Friday, where other members of this Assembly and I were at the opening of the new Tantalus School.

This government listens to teachers; we work with them every day. The Department of Education works with them. As I said, there will be no teacher cuts. Under this government, the number of teachers has increased.

We recognize there are changing demographics and changing needs in our community, and that government must be responsive and address growing schools and areas where there is increasing pressure. We'll continue to do that; we'll continue to work with our educators and our administrators to ensure we have one of, if not the best, student-teacher ratios anywhere in Canada.

Mr. Fairclough: The fact is, Mr. Speaker, that the public schools branch in this budget is reduced from last year. Last year, the minister's department predicted a decrease of 89 students across the territory. There was in fact only a decrease of 4. This year, the minister is predicting a decrease of 77, but based on the previous year we need to be very suspicious.

You don't cut staff and then wait and see how many students show up and hope you are right.

Let me be very clear, Mr. Speaker. This minister is cutting staff, because the minister cut the budget for the public schools branch. Somebody has to pay for mishandling the \$36 million, and it's unfortunate that our children are the ones.

Will the minister go back to the Premier and ask for more money to reinstate the cuts before serious damage is done to our education system?

Hon. Mr. Rouble: It's unfortunate that the member opposite has not been listening to some of the explanations going on in here; or at least hasn't been choosing to reflect in his line of questioning the information and the facts that have been presented in this Assembly, and this one is out there too.

Mr. Speaker, what he has not recognized is the movement of the Property Management Agency and how that is reflected in our budget; what he hasn't recognized is that a major capital project, the Tantalus School — with which I am sure the member opposite is familiar — has been completed; a construction project is done, save for some minor incidental work, and now we are working on the planning stage for the next school.

Mr. Speaker, we have an awful lot to be proud of in the Department of Education. This government has consistently invested in teachers, in programming, in partnership, and we are continuing to work with all our partners in education in order to make a great system even better.

Question re: Carmacks bypass route

Mr. Fairclough: I have a question for the Minister of Highways and Public Works.

The community of Carmacks has been dealing with the Casino bypass road for many years now. Both the Village of Carmacks and the First Nation are saying that in no way will they support industrial traffic through the residential part of town.

This road running through town is what the government wants to use for a truck route. It belongs to the Village of Carmacks, and they are the ones that must build a road that can hold the traffic it is designed for. They do have a say. The community of Carmacks wants a bypass road. When will the voice of the Village of Carmacks be heard?

Hon. Mr. Lang: The bypass road has been on the agenda for awhile, and we are waiting for confirmation that Western Copper will go ahead. At that point we will be discussing the issue with the Village of Carmacks.

Mr. Fairclough: The Yukon Party has been in government for going on six years now. This issue should have ranked very high on the Yukon Party's priority list. This bypass road is intended for heavy road traffic to and from mines. People in the community do not want hazardous goods going through the residential part of town. The mayor articulated that very clearly this morning. The bypass road had government money put into it. The route was chosen, surveyed and partially built. In six years this government has done nothing.

Is the government interested in completing the bypass road? Yes or no?

Hon. Mr. Lang: I would like to remind the member opposite that we did build a very nice school in Carmacks over the last five years. All previous governments had not done that, and we will certainly work with the Village of Carmacks as we move forward with any expansion of the Freegold Road. We are committed to do that and we will do just that.

Mr. Fairclough: Wow. That answer can't satisfy the residents of Carmacks, Mr. Speaker. They want to be heard. The village wants to be heard.

This government is sitting on a \$108-million surplus, and perhaps if we're able to access the \$36 million of frozen money, we might not have this problem. Trucks hauling dangerous goods through the town pose safety concerns, and I know the members opposite believe that. Having heavy trucks running through a very peaceful part of town is not what the community wants. Their concerns should not fall on deaf ears. The bypass road is partly built and there is a lot of mining interest along the Casino Trail in the Mount Nansen area. The bypass road needs to be built. The Village of Carmacks has an official community plan and an integrated sustainable community plan with the view of a healthy, vibrant, sustainable community. That plan doesn't include a truck route through the town —

Speaker: Ask your question, please.

Mr. Fairclough: This government says it wants to work with the communities. In the case of Carmacks, how long do they have to wait?

Hon. Mr. Lang: We certainly will work with the community on any issues the community has. We certainly have finished up the school we started five years ago. We're looking forward to working with Carmacks on many levels, the access road only being one of those issues.

Question re: Psychiatric treatment and assessment

Mr. Hardy: I have a question for the Minister of Health. Last year the newest version of a very helpful pamphlet called, "Yukon psychiatric patients' rights" was published. The first edition of this charter of rights for psychiatric patients came out in 1995.

I have a related question for the Minister of Health and Social Services on this. Is the minister familiar with this publication and does he support the principles it outlines, including the right to consent or to refuse consent to any treatment?

Hon. Mr. Cathers: It has been some time since I've looked at that pamphlet. I think the member is referring to something specific, but I will inform him that we have obligations under the *Care Consent Act*. The adult protection deci-

sion-making legislation sets out the structure for how the Yukon government — and professionals operating with Yukon government and the Whitehorse General Hospital — must fulfill their obligations to Yukon citizens in need of such services. If the member has a specific question, I would be happy to answer it.

Mr. Hardy: Yes, Mr. Speaker, I do have a specific question that — well, I wrote to the minister on February 20 and again on April 11 about a case in which a constituent of mine has had both mental health and addiction treatment services terminated.

The Second Opinion Society has also written several letters on her behalf. I'll just refresh the minister's memory, because he had these letters addressed to him.

About a year ago, after a critical event, a group of professionals decided, without involving my constituent, that she must follow specific treatment options. When she refused part of the plan, she was cut off both mental health services and addiction services. Even worse, she lost access to her physician at the time when she was tapering off certain medications.

Now, my question is this: why is this patient being penalized for exercising her right to refuse a treatment option that was determined without her input and consent?

Hon. Mr. Cathers: I appreciate the member's concern, and I would be happy to discuss it with the member of course. We have had correspondence on this issue, but to discuss sensitive case files on the floor of the Legislature is very difficult for me to respond — as the member knows — without risking compromising patient confidentiality. In some cases, that information includes matters that the Minister of Health and Social Services is not privy to without the consent of the individual Yukon citizen who is affected by that.

On that issue, the member knows very well that he's posing a question that — due to my legal responsibilities — I cannot answer for him in this venue.

Mr. Hardy: That's the wrong answer, and this minister knows it. I wrote two letters to this minister. I've been waiting for a response for almost two months — nothing. These are important principles being ignored here. Addicted and mental health patients must be given the opportunity to make an informed choice. They must have the right to agree to treatment plans or to refuse them. If they don't agree with part of the plan, which is the case in this situation, other options must be sought. Imposing treatment simply doesn't work.

If services are cut off, a written discharge plan must be prepared and shared with the patient. None of that happened in this case. This minister knows that. He hasn't responded to the written questions. I'm asking him on the floor now to help this person.

Why is the minister ignoring our request for help for this patient, who has been abandoned at a very vulnerable stage in her treatment, without even access to a physician?

Hon. Mr. Cathers: The Member for Whitehorse Centre, the Leader of the Third Party, is making the assertion that he has made a request that I haven't responded to. We'll double-check on that. As the member knows, I do respond to letters in as timely a manner as possible. The timelines he's indi-

cating — I deal with a great number of casework so I can't recall the facts of this one off the top of my head. However, we will check into that for the member opposite.

I would be happy to discuss it with him but, again, I remind the member that these matters are confidential in nature. He knows very well that, as Minister of Health and Social Services, I cannot discuss confidential matters pertaining to a file, even if I have access to that information. Such confidential matters require the consent of the individual involved for even the minister to be informed, and for me to discuss that with the member opposite is the same situation.

Before the House is not the place to discuss a sensitive matter.

Question re: Economic development

Mr. Hardy: I have a question for the Premier, who also happens to be the Minister of Finance. At the start of the sitting, I asked the Premier what he was doing to prepare for the inevitable downturn in our economy as a result of what is happening in the U.S. and elsewhere in Canada. As I recall, the Premier regaled the House once again with a lengthy recital of all the wonderful things the Yukon Party has done for the economy.

Well, if the Premier has been paying attention I'm sure he's aware that Canada's economic forecast is not nearly as rosy as it was even a month ago — listen to the news.

What specific measure has the Premier taken right now to cushion Yukon people from some of the worst impacts of Canada's declining economy?

Hon. Mr. Fentie: Mr. Speaker, I'm flattered the member would suggest that I regaled the House with the many things that the Yukon Party government has done to make a better quality of life reality here in Yukon. I think, in answer to the member's question, the member should look at the budget and he'll quickly recognize that one of things we're doing is creating a very healthy net financial position. That gives us options in the event that we may get some downward pressures in the Yukon with respect to economic growth.

I'm pleased to say that is not happening at this time. The trends and the indicators show that we're not going to experience any major downturn in the foreseeable future — in the near future. We have to be very vigilant about these matters as is the national government. One of the steps, of course, is our fiscal strength, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Hardy: Well, it is interesting that the minister brought up the national government, because I'll tell you right now they are failing in this area. Let me review a few facts for the Premier. Fact one — the cost of housing has risen alarmingly in the past few years — out of reach of most people. Fact two — the housing bubble has burst and jobs are going down the tube across the country and it is starting to affect the western side now. Fact three — the cost of gas, oil and heating fuels is soaring. Fact four — basic goods such as flour and rice are beginning to skyrocket. Fact five — our electric bills will be taking a huge jump in a few weeks' time as a result of an action of this government. Fact six — over \$36 million of taxpayers' money is tied up for the next nine years — most governments actually put money aside for a rainy day and this government

has not put any money aside, it has lost money. Fact seven — there is very little wiggle room in the current budget to deal with unexpected events.

Speaker: Order please. Ask the question, please.

Mr. Hardy: What is the Premier doing right now to give Yukoners a sense of economic assurance?

Hon. Mr. Fentie: I think the short answer is the Yukon government continues to work on growing and diversifying our private sector economy and continues to have one of the highest investments in capital compared to any jurisdiction in the country. But I want to go back to one of the member's so-called facts, and there are a number of them that aren't actually facts at all; they are nothing more than the member's opinion.

With respect to the asset backed paper investment, and the comment of loss — frankly, we haven't lost anything. We've made money. What is more and what the member doesn't recognize is what is in the budget itself with a net financial position and indeed a year-end surplus as booked. By the way, this government is not cash-poor as we were under the former Liberal government. We have in excess of \$180 million cash of available today.

So not only do we have the cash to invest for our future, we also have the necessary fiscal strength to deal with challenges ahead.

Mr. Hardy: I still don't see a vision for the future if things start to go wrong up here, and I want to see that. I think the people of this territory deserve that.

And another point, Mr. Speaker — this \$36.5 million — I've stood here and listened to both leaders of both parties put information on the floor that is incorrect about that. The people of this territory deserve a lot better. One says, "You are not going to lose money", and the other says, "You are going to lose all of the \$36.5 million." I heard that last week. That member can shake his head, but I heard it; it is in *Hansard*. That is wrong information for the people of this territory. We have to admit what the truth is in that area.

Very simply, where are the new green jobs? Where is the regional economic development to keep rural Yukon communities alive and well? I don't see the investment there. What is the support for locally grown or locally made products?

Does the Premier have any new programs in the wings to help stimulate local enterprises and to help Yukoners, especially the working poor, who are stretched to the max?

Hon. Mr. Fentie: I would provide some advice at this juncture for the Leader of the Third Party: don't listen to the Leader of the Official Opposition when the Member for Copperbelt makes presentations in this House. That's the simple solution to the member's problem with the information received.

The government has a plethora of programs out there that are addressing our economy. There are all kinds of assistance available in the Department of Tourism and Culture and in the Department of Economic Development. The issue of a green economy is very much on the radar screen. In fact, it was a high priority this weekend, as I understand it, at the tourism conference.

We recognize that and concur with it. This government has always said that there's tremendous opportunity in dealing with our environment and the economic well-being we can glean from the measures we bring forward in appropriately managing and conserving our environment.

I think the member has to look at the facts and look at what's happening in today's Yukon. I understand the nabobs of negativity will never admit there's a positive trend in today's Yukon. There's population growth, increased investment in the private sector, a very low unemployment rate and a sense of well-being in this territory, which hasn't been there for a long time.

Question re: Nurses, workplace violence

Mr. Mitchell: The Yukon Registered Nurses Association held their annual general meeting this past weekend. One of the topics of discussion was violence in the workplace. The Canadian Nurses Association recently released a statement on workplace violence. Their research demonstrates that, among health care personnel, nursing staff are most at risk of workplace violence.

In 2005, three in 10 nurses who provide direct care in Canada said they had been physically assaulted by a patient in the previous year. On a local level, the lack of psychiatric nurses at Whitehorse General Hospital has resulted in several dangerous situations in recent years.

What is this government doing to improve the security and safety of our nurses?

Hon. Mr. Cathers: First of all, as the member knows, when he refers to the hospital, he is referring to hospital jurisdiction. As I have indicated extensively in the past in the House, we have acted in a number of areas to assist the hospital, including acting specifically to assist them with recruiting some of the specialty areas, and training operating room nurses.

As well, as I have reminded the member opposite previously, this government significantly increased the annual funding provided to Yukon Hospital Corporation by roughly 50 percent from the level it was at under the Liberals, or approximately \$10 million per year. So we have significantly increased the resources provided to the Yukon Hospital Corporation to run the hospital, and that includes psychiatric nurses.

But, as the member knows, there is a significant shortage nationally, particularly in specialty areas of nursing. This is a challenge that every jurisdiction — including the very wealthy jurisdictions such as Alberta — are facing in attracting nurses.

Everyone is facing some level of challenge and, through the good work of the Department of Health and Social Services staff and the Yukon Hospital Corporation, we are actually far better off than most jurisdictions in Canada in terms of retaining key professionals and bringing in new ones.

Mr. Mitchell: The chair of the Yukon Hospital Corporation does not appear as a witness in this Assembly, so we'll ask our questions of the minister responsible.

Mr. Speaker, the challenges that nurses face in the work environment — excessive workloads, high rates of overtime, high rates of illness, injury and burnout — are detrimental to the health of nurses, the quality of patient care and the health

care system's ability to retain and recruit nurses. Add in the potential for violence and the problems are magnified.

When there is an incident at the hospital, members of the emergency response team or ambulance attendants are often called in to help. This is not something in their job description or something they are trained for.

How does the minister intend to address this particular situation?

Hon. Mr. Cathers: As I've mentioned before to the member opposite, the Yukon Hospital Corporation is working on a plan for changes within the facility that they will present to me and then I will present to Cabinet for funding approval. However, they are working on solutions to address the internal challenges, such as improved security around mental health and when patients are in there, ensuring they have an environment that is safe for them, other patients and the staff.

As part of their strategic planning that they're undergoing right now, the Hospital Corporation is in fact developing a plan to deal with these concerns — recognizing that the challenges there, particularly in physical layout, have been status quo at the hospital since the building was built.

Mr. Mitchell: Violence and safety on the job is not just an issue for nurses working at the hospital. It is also a problem in Copper Ridge Place. We have had several complaints about nurses spending part of their shift basically doing the work of security guards. Instead of doing rounds, checking on patients, they're doing rounds, checking outside for locked doors and any other security problems. While they're doing this, they are forced away from patient care, which is and should be their top priority.

There is a new emphasis on protecting nurses from violence in the workplace across the country and it's obviously a priority for the Registered Nurses Association. Indeed, just today, we were paying homage to injured workers in the workplace.

Is the minister aware of this concern at Copper Ridge Place and what is he doing to address it?

Hon. Mr. Cathers: Again, as the member ought to be aware, for nurses and other front-line staff, there are risks to safety and that is one of the reasons why this government acted, under me as minister, to put in place a director of risk management and quality assurance within the Department of Health and Social Services. That program has been developing and reviewing areas of the entire operation of Health and Social Services because it is our desire to ensure that the best practices, policies and procedures are in place to protect the safety of our staff, including those at Copper Ridge Place, including those in communities, and including those in every single area of the Department of Health and Social Services. That work is being done internally and the review is underway, and that includes working with staff to identify the concerns that they have.

Question re: Elk, winter tick infestation

Mr. Elias: I have some questions for the Minister of Environment.

Last week I asked him about the winter tick infestation and he assured us he has got everything firmly under control. However, we have since learned some rather disturbing information.

The minister's plan was to pen the elk at a bison ranch and medicate them with corn, but now we have learned how unsuccessful this plan really was. Apparently there are still some 20 elk on the loose, and each one of them carries thousands of ticks. This presents a serious danger to our territory's moose and caribou populations. This is of great concern as we were led to believe that effective action would be taken during this window of opportunity.

Can the minister tell us, on record, exactly how many elk are still on the loose?

Hon. Mr. Fentie: I want to correct the member opposite's assertions. Last week, this was not the position the government took at all. We leave this in the hands of the experts. As I said all along, we on this side of the House are not experts; we're not biologists. The plan has come forward. I know the individuals and officials responsible in this area have been working hard and diligently on addressing this issue. This is another example of migrating species we're dealing with, and it's something that, going forward into the future, we will continue to derive management plans and tools to deal with.

I will again assure the House that the biologists and others responsible within the department, to the extent possible, have done everything they can and they will continue to work on addressing this particular problem.

Mr. Elias: The minister needs to take ownership of this issue. That's what needs to happen. The Environment minister isn't telling us the whole story. There are too many unanswered questions and Yukoners deserve to know the truth with respect to the threat to the moose and caribou populations.

The minister's plan to pen the elk sounded like a reasonable option at the time, and less extreme than eradication of the elk or doing nothing at all, which would have been unacceptable.

We supported the plan, if it was only given sufficient priority by the political level to be successfully carried out — that didn't happen. The whole plan looks like it has flopped. In fact, we've heard that none of the elk were medicated.

Can the minister tell us on record exactly how many elk have been medicated?

Hon. Mr. Fentie: You know, Mr. Speaker, once again it is clear that the approach being taken by the Official Opposition now puts in question the veracity of the statements from this side of the House. I would challenge the member on that. There is no evidence being brought forward by the member opposite. Right now we're listening to what I would call idle conversation. We will let the biologists and those responsible for this matter deal with the matter.

To suggest that there was no priority placed on this is complete nonsense. The highest priority was given to deal with this particular challenge and that is exactly what is taking place today.

Mr. Elias: Mr. Speaker, I asked the minister last week about this very important issue to Yukoners. He should have the information here and table it in this House. Once again the

Environment minister is not telling us the whole story. Yukoners are concerned that the minister does not have control over this potential ecological disaster. This whole exercise has been badly handled.

First we learned how the minister failed to ensure that all the elk were penned. Then we have heard that none of the elk were medicated and the whole exercise was a flop. Now it turns out that most of the elk were already in the corral but the gate wasn't closed and, by the time the minister's department made a decision to close the gate, the elk were gone.

What is the minister going to do now that his plan has failed in order to protect our moose and caribou populations?

Hon. Mr. Fentie: Once again the Official Opposition is demonstrating how little faith they have in the government employees, right to the point where they are suggesting that professionals in the department are shirking their duties. I want to make sure all officials in the government are listening to this debate, because the government side doesn't agree with the member opposite at all.

The information was provided to the member in this House last week and again today. As far as the government side is concerned, our officials are doing the best they can under the circumstances and they will continue to do so.

Speaker: The time for Question Period has elapsed. We will now proceed to Orders of the Day.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

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

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

Motion agreed to

Speaker leaves the Chair

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Chair (Mr. Nordick): Order please. Committee of the Whole will now come to order. The matter before the Committee is Bill No. 11, *First Appropriation Act, 2008-09*, Department of Education.

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. 11 — First Appropriation Act, 2008-09 — continued
Department of Education — continued

Chair: The matter before the Committee is Bill No. 11, *First Appropriation Act, 2008-09*, Department of Education. We will now proceed with general debate.

Hon. Mr. Rouble: Mr. Chair, it is my honour and pleasure to continue to debate the Department of Education's budget today. The Department of Education is clearly a very high priority for this government. Educating our students, our youth, our folks in post-secondary institutions and our lifelong learners is a priority to ensuring that we have a healthy productive community — one that is made of people who can participate in employment opportunities, participate in local governance, and participate in really all that we aspire to be as Yukoners.

As we wrapped up debate last Thursday, there was a question on the floor regarding education reform. Mr. Chair, the government recognized that there was an awful lot of good things going on with the Department of Education, that there were many successes and many great things happening in the Department of Education. Just as we won't shy away from our successes, we also need to recognize that there are areas that need to be improved or reformed or evolved, if you will.

As I have said before, Mr. Speaker, I have very rarely met a teacher who has done the same thing twice. They are always seeing how it affects the students, looking at new ways, looking at making it better for the next time.

Education is one of those things constantly in a state of evolution. I would caution members, in here anyway, of measuring today's education system by the system they went to when they were students. One only has to go into some classrooms today to see the difference — to see the different approaches, to see the different curriculum and to see, to a degree, the different makeup of our classrooms.

I recognize that there is always a change in things; systems do grow and change, and indeed our education system is responding to those changes.

One of the things that this government did in response to these growing changes and to the needs of the community was create the education reform project. The education reform project was a project that was jointly managed and directed by the Council of Yukon First Nations and by the Government of Yukon.

We worked very closely with our partners on the education reform project, which would be the Council of Yukon First Nations and other Yukon First Nations.

The education reform team was tasked with going out and identifying the common goals in education that all Yukoners had and to identify any roadblocks in accomplishing them and then strategies for overcoming those barriers — strategies in order to accomplish our common goals in education.

Late last year we received the final draft of the education reform project report. This was then reviewed with the Council of Yukon First Nations, who adopted a motion to see it released publicly. Immediately upon the motion from Council of Yukon First Nations to release the document, the document was released; we invited as many of our stakeholders as we could, partners and those who have shown an interest in the education

reform project, to come to a release, where they were given copies of the education reform document.

Also, the education reform document was translated into French and provided to the Commission scolaire francophone du Yukon and to other Yukon citizens who prefer to work, as is their right, in the French language.

We presented the document to them, and then the Government of Yukon and the Council of Yukon First Nations started looking at ways of proceeding and looking at how many of the ideas, concerns and issues brought forward in the education reform document could be integrated into our system. How could we go about making these implementations? How could we go about making these changes? How can we move toward the desires that were expressed by people when they spoke with the education reform project team?

Mr. Chair, we are continuing with our good work in reforming education. There are many initiatives that the Department of Education has undertaken over the last several years. These include the creation of the First Nation program in partnership unit, a stronger working relationship with organizations such as the First Nation Education Advisory Committee. It includes cooperative work on curriculum changes — these range from everything from Grade 10 governance programs to Grade 5 programs to the early literacy documents and primary school readers that I shared with members in this Assembly.

We are proud of the changes we are making in order to improve the education system for all Yukoners, and we are working forward.

The department and the Council of Yukon First Nations are working together on a project called "New Horizons". That's how we will go about implementing the ideas and concerns and address the issues brought forward in the education reform project.

This is co-chaired by representatives of both CYFN and the Department of Education. The co-chairs have made several presentations to many Yukon organizations, ranging from the Council of Yukon First Nations to the Association of School Administrators to the executive of the Yukon Teachers Association to the recent school councils meeting. They also made a presentation at the recent literacy forum that was part of the Pan-Canadian Interactive Literacy Forum. The forum was held in Whitehorse, and there was a presentation to literacy groups.

We'll continue to work with all our partners, orders of government and stakeholders, with our students, parents, teachers, administrators, Department of Education officials and non-government organizations in an effort to implement the changes and address the issues that have been raised for us.

We realize that education is not something that is stagnant, or should be allowed to become stagnant, and we will work with the community to address the many needs.

I have also talked to the Yukon Association of School Councils and expressed a sincere desire that we see the school councils fulfill a role that was originally envisioned for them in the *Education Act*. If one takes a look at the responsibilities that are expected out of the school councils, one will find that they are far ranging and very involving.

There are many opportunities for school councils to have input to the creation of locally designed curriculum, toward the selection of school administrators, for calling on — well, the number one responsibility, I believe, is to endorse and to be part of the school plan.

There are exercises underway right now for all school plans. As well, there is an exercise with some representatives of education — I believe I listed them the other day so I won't do that again today — to make the school planning process quicker and more responsive to the needs of the school, and really, a better one that is more involving of people.

We're going to continue to work with all of partners in education in order to build the best education system possible. When we left off Friday, I mentioned that the New Horizons people met with the secondary program advisory committee. I'm afraid, Mr. Chair, that when I read what I thought was a list of participants was actually a list of other people who had been met with.

The secondary program advisory committee, who is looking at secondary programs in the Whitehorse area, has an intention of creating a vision of working with stakeholders to create a secondary system that will address current needs while providing flexibility for continuous improvement and the ability to respond to the demographic needs.

Their committee membership includes the assistant deputy minister of the public schools branch, Whitehorse area superintendent for high schools, principals from F.H. Collins Secondary School, Porter Creek Secondary School and Vanier Catholic Secondary School, or their designates, a First Nation programming and partnership representative, the director of programs and services, facilities project managers, the assistant deputy minister of advanced education or designate, the chairs from F.H. Collins Secondary School, Porter Creek Secondary School and Vanier Catholic Secondary School councils, and from the Commission scolaire francophone du Yukon, or their designates.

This committee also includes one representative from the First Nation Education Advisory Committee, the Yukon Chiefs Committee on Education and the Council of Yukon First Nations.

I understand that Kwanlin Dun has been asked to participate but has yet not attended any meetings. However, should they choose to participate in this, the door certainly is open.

We recognize that we have a very good education system in the territory. One only has to look at some of our indicators, for example: the per capita O&M funding, which is among the highest anywhere in Canada; the student/teacher ratio, which is among the best, if not the best anywhere in Canada; the amount of investment made in things like computers, where we have one of the best student-to-computer ratios anywhere in Canada; the willingness to work with our local organizations and to ensure that we have curriculum that meets local standards.

We also have a sincere desire to work better and to look at improving the system. That could mean things like the First Nation program in partnership unit, things like the experiential programs that we have such as the ACES program, the OPUS

program — many of these are held at the Wood Street Annex. The MAD program is another example of that.

Also we have seen increases in vocational dollars to provide schools with additional funding so that they can provide additional experiential, vocational and educational opportunities.

We're also looking, or have looked, at other models out there. The department certainly hasn't been shy to look at good ideas in other jurisdictions and look at how these can be applied here in our situation. These could include looking at, for example, the North American International Baccalaureate program or the intensive French program. As well, Mr. Chair, more than one of our schools are looking at gender-based classrooms.

It has been said that if you do the same thing over and over again, you'll get the same results. Our parents, our other stakeholders and our school councils have told us they want to see some different results. Well, that will involve doing different things.

So the Department of Education will continue to work in the best interests of the students. We will continue to try different models where it's reasonable and responsible. We'll continue to involve our stakeholders. We'll continue to see one of the best, if not the best, student/teacher ratio in Canada, and we'll look at ways of working to address our changing classroom composition in order to ensure Yukon continues to have one of the best education systems in Canada.

Mr. Cardiff: I wish I could get my response to that on camera. The minister got all that down on camera. If I was the minister's teacher, "F" wouldn't even be good enough — I'm sorry.

The minister went on for 20 minutes and did not answer the question. Go back, read the Blues; it's simple.

Will the minister ask the deputy minister and the person — the Council of Yukon First Nations education technician — whether or not they will provide a briefing to the NDP caucus?

Hon. Mr. Rouble: Yes.

Mr. Cardiff: Was that hard, or what? Give me a break. I had to listen for 20 minutes and then it was that easy. Holy smokes.

Let's see if we can keep this up, Mr. Chair. We're on a roll now.

The literacy strategy review report that we've been asking for over the last two or three years — we've asked for it in the Legislature, at the briefing, we've written letters for it — where is it and when can we have it?

Hon. Mr. Rouble: This is a document that has been publicly available. I appreciate there was a request at the briefing for another copy of this. I do recall there was a list of questions the opposition members had asked during the briefing. That has been signed off by me.

I don't want to upset the opposition by stating this, but I believe it's in the mail, if it hasn't already gotten to them. We will ensure the member opposite gets a copy of that by the end of the week. I'll check; I'm pretty sure it has already been sent out. I want to double-check, but the letter was signed off, so it should be on its way.

The literacy strategy was completed last November, I believe, and it deals with a broad number of issues, including adult literacy, early childhood and family literacy and other areas. Literacy is obviously a very important part of participating in our community. Having the skills necessary to read and analyze, to synthesize new ideas and communicate them to others, is very important.

I am very proud that this government has been able to support different initiatives to work, not only within our education system — for example in the K to 12 program and in the advanced education areas — but also working with other organizations: Yukon Learn or the Yukon Council on Disability and other organizations that we have in our community. There is quite a list of them and I won't read the whole list today.

We are continuing with literacy initiatives, starting with full day kindergarten and with reading programs that are culturally relevant — for example the readers that I presented to members last week, to adding, continuing and building on programs such as the Reading Recovery program and the Wilson Reading program. These are great tools that we have in almost all our schools, that build upon the reading skills of students at a very early age, when some experts tell us they can learn the most and the fastest.

We are working on those kinds of literacy initiatives as well. I know there are initiatives going on through many of our non-governmental organizations, and we are continuing to make progress in this area.

I should note for the member opposite that the Council of Ministers of Education have made literacy a priority across Canada. That was one of the reasons behind having the Pan-Canadian Interactive Literacy Forum that was held a couple of weeks ago. Yukon participated in that, and we brought together a wide range of people from across the territory to raise awareness about literacy initiatives, to look at different programming that was going on, to look at best practices across Canada, and to look at how we could all work together in the future to ensure that Canadians and Yukoners build very high literacy levels.

Mr. Chair, some of the literacy initiatives for the 2008-09 year include funding for Yukon Learn for the home tutor program, Reading Recovery program, literacy for math, full day kindergarten, Yukon essential skills program, Yukon Literacy Coalition, Learning Disabilities Association of Yukon, Literacy Action Committee, the Whitehorse Correctional Centre and the Kwanlin Dun House of Learning.

I should add, Mr. Chair, that the Wilson Reading program currently has 25 learning assistants who have been trained and participate in our schools on a daily basis. The department continues to train staff on an ongoing basis. The Wilson Reading program is a very good program that we have in our schools, and it supplements our Reading Recovery program and our other normal literacy programs.

Also, members should be aware that schools provide two hours of uninterrupted literacy education a day and one hour a day of uninterrupted math in all kindergarten to grade 3 classes.

I will ensure that the member opposite receives copies of the strategy. If he has any other questions about what we are

doing to develop literacy programs, I would be pleased to answer them.

Mr. Cardiff: That was just a little lengthy, and I don't think the minister understands. I'm going to clarify it for the minister. If he looks on page 3.2 of the education reform document — the 2006 review of the literacy strategy — that is the document that we haven't been able to table. I know that the report was done. It was given to the minister, I believe, in the spring of 2006. I will take a copy of the new literacy strategy — that would be great. It was the review that was done in 2006 that we've been asking to have for two or three years. I would appreciate getting an update on that.

I hope we can move this along a little faster and that the minister won't give me a whole bunch of information I'm not asking for. I know some of it is being repeated.

I'd like an update on the committee the minister was talking about a little bit earlier, on how the secondary program review committee is going. When does he expect a report? Are there any preliminary results in? His being brief would be appreciated.

Hon. Mr. Rouble: I provided the member opposite with the makeup of this committee a moment ago and I will expect their report. They're working with a consultant group on this project. I expect to receive the report by the end of summer this year. Before they do that, they will be using a variety of additional analysis tools, including surveys, additional interviews, focus groups, community meetings and meeting with other stakeholders in education. They've been doing that since their inception.

It's a very productive group. I've received a couple of different briefings on the work they've done so far and I'm very encouraged that these different groups are working together and having a dialogue about how they are developing a common vision for secondary school programming here in the territory.

Once we receive that document, it will guide the designers and architects in creating an appropriate structure that would then accommodate the programming.

It's not our approach to start with bricks and mortar, but instead to look at the programs that are needed and then design space around meeting the programming needs. This will also look at demographics, the number of students we have, the different ages and their location, and all that will be factored into their decisions and recommendations.

Mr. Cardiff: I have another quick one for the Minister of Education.

There was an article in the paper last week — I don't know whether it was on Wednesday or Thursday — about the release of the report from the Human Rights Commission. The report is about the struggles that women and young women have with human rights violations.

My question for the minister is this: one of the suggestions was that there is a need for human rights education in public schools because, among young women, there is a lack of awareness of their human rights.

I'm just wondering if the minister supports that and whether or not there are any new initiatives coming shortly in light of that report?

Hon. Mr. Rouble: One of the things I have really started to appreciate in my year and a half as Minister of Education is the far-ranging breadth and depth of subjects that people count on for our education system to provide. This creates significant pressures in our public schools branch. We know the priority is for literacy and numeracy.

Also, in our school day, we are also expected to include science, history, art, music, cultural appreciation, religion and social studies —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Hon. Mr. Rouble: Yes, Mr. Chair, the Member for Mount Lorne says, "Yes, that's the one." Social studies and social justice is another component in our education system.

Social justice studies teach and allow students to learn about important concepts such as human rights and how to be good citizens in our communities.

We take great notice of the information that has come to us from the Yukon Aboriginal Women's Summit that was held fairly recently and from the human rights information that the member opposite put forward. This information will be shared with our curriculum people and, where possible, it will be shared with educators to ensure that it is incorporated into our curriculum and into the teaching in the classroom. This will also be part of the high school visioning exercise in looking at what additional types of programming will be needed.

As I said, it is quite a list of programming expectations. For example, Yukon students are involved with the Yukon Federation of Labour's workplace safety awareness program. That is an important initiative to be involved in. Also, there are lengthy other topics and subjects that the Department of Education works with.

The short answer for the member opposite is, yes, we will work with human rights; we will work with the recommendations from the Yukon Aboriginal Women's Summit to include social justice and human rights information in our programming.

Mr. Cardiff: I would like to thank the minister for that answer. I would like to draw the minister's attention to page 7-8 of the budget document under "Program Objectives". One of the objectives is to cooperate with self-governing First Nations to implement the relevant obligations of Yukon government under the terms of the land claims settlements.

I am wondering what the Department of Education is doing as far as responding to the potential First Nations draw-down. Are there any negotiations happening?

How many First Nations are negotiating? Is there money from either the minister's department or from another department available to First Nations for research? I'm just wondering if the minister's approach here is the same as the Minister of Health and Social Services' with regard to no sharing of jurisdiction?

Hon. Mr. Rouble: Mr. Chair, members will recognize that program objectives have been updated since our last discussion. This is due to the ongoing discussions that the De-

partment of Education and I have been having with our partners and stakeholders in education. It is one more step in ensuring that we're being responsive to the needs of our community.

As the member has correctly stated, one of the program objectives is to cooperate with self-governing First Nations to implement the relevant obligations of Yukon government under the terms of the land claim settlements and the self-government agreements.

I'm very pleased to see the processes and progress that we're making with much of our First Nation programming and partnerships, as well as the creation of the program and partnership unit and the ongoing work with the First Nation Education Advisory Committee. We are also seeing some tangible changes in the classroom. These include different resource materials such as the readers that I provided and the grade 5 module on First Nation governance, citizenship, language and clans. As well, there is a grade 12 course on land claims and self-government. There is the aboriginal language teacher trainee program, the elders in the school program, the cultural inclusion program funding, community orientation program, the First Voices aboriginal language project, new teacher orientation and the master apprenticeship program.

Mr. Chair, what we have heard from many of our partners and stakeholders in education is that they want to see academic excellence in a culturally meaningful way.

Just as with many things in education, that will mean different things to different people. What they do want to see, though, is something that is relevant to them, which means we have to provide a variety of different pieces of information and ways they're presented.

One of the things in particular to make Yukoners more aware of the reality of the self-government agreements and what that will mean for them is for all Yukon high school students to have the opportunity to take a history course — in this case, the grade 12 course on land claims and self-government — so students will have the opportunity to learn about the environment we live in and to give all students an opportunity to find out about the history of First Nation government development and the different First Nation government structures. This will allow all Yukoners to have the knowledge needed to understand the variety of different governance structures we have here in the territory.

We're going to work at all ages through the continuum of public school education, from early literacy programs through to high school programs, to ensure that information is presented in a culturally meaningful manner and that the information included is relevant to Yukoners and relates to the unique situation Yukon finds itself in.

One thing we're doing to accomplish the objective the member has asked about is to educate all Yukoners to ensure they are aware of the environment they live in, so they can better participate in it.

We'll also continue to work with all our committees. I believe I've stated them on the floor numerous times now — whether they be school councils, the First Nation Education Advisory Committee, or the Chiefs Committee on Education,

to ensure we're building an education system that is responsive to the needs of Yukoners.

The member opposite has also asked about self-government provisions. I certainly recognize that Yukon First Nations, in their agreements, have included education as one of the services that, should they choose, they can draw down under a PSTA, in order to provide their own education system.

Much as Yukon has devolved considerable jurisdiction from Canada to Yukon for local decision-making, it is envisioned — or I believe it was envisioned — in the self-government agreements that many Yukon First Nations would draw down the authority and jurisdiction on a variety of different areas that range from education to health care, to justice, to many other areas.

As we continue to see the evolution of Yukon and Yukon First Nations, I believe these duties and areas of responsibility will likely change. Why else would these powers have been put into the programs and services transfer agreements in the first place, if it was not expected that one day they would be acted on?

Mr. Chair, one of the first steps under section 17, should First Nations wish to negotiate various aspects of a PSTA is to make formal notification to Canada and to Yukon. I believe that is done by several different First Nations. There will be a process of negotiation that would include the Executive Council Office. Of course, there would be significant dialogue and discussion with the Department of Education, but those discussions and negotiations are housed in the Executive Council Office; that is the area of government that is responsible for these. It would probably be most expeditious and best if the member directed questions of this nature to the Executive Council Office, as that is the department that has the responsibility for working on and negotiating these agreements.

Mr. Cardiff: The most direct answer would have been for the minister to say, "Ask the Executive Council Office."

The minister talked a lot about curriculum and that question is yet to come, so we'll get there. He didn't answer that question either, but I haven't asked it.

Last week we had a nice debate about education, and there were some comments made by the Minister of Highways and Public Works talking about apprenticeship programs and opportunities in communities for apprentices. I will draw the minister's attention to page 7-17, where it shows the Yukon government supports four apprentices.

I would argue there are ample opportunities for this government to show far more support for Yukon apprentices. The first one would be through the Property Management Agency where they actually have tradespeople with trade certificates. We have plumbers, electricians, painters and carpenters working in the property management area, and the minister is going to tell me that this is a Public Service Commission question, so we will ask this question later this afternoon when we get to the Public Service Commission because this is about succession planning for the government.

There is the central workshop, where they fix the vehicles that service our highways: the graders, the dump trucks, the packers, the loaders, the sand spreaders, the under-body plows

that don't get installed on trucks because they don't have the right bolts, or whatever — I know the Member for Kluane was excited about that one too.

There are ample opportunities. There should be a zero behind that number. We should be able to support 40 apprentices.

The only other question — and I know this is a Public Service Commission question — but the Department of Education is implicitly implicated in this, and that's because apprentices who work for the most part for the Department of Highways and Public Works, work through a contract with the Department of Education. Therefore, apprentices who are working for the government aren't treated the same as the people they're working with. They're not members of the bargaining unit, they're not union members, they don't receive the same benefits, they don't get holidays, and they don't get all the same benefits that would accrue to others.

That's my understanding; this is the information that has been brought to my attention. I just think we could be doing a lot more to support apprentices. When I hear all members on that side of the House last week stand up and talk about all the good things they do for apprentices, I would draw their attention to page 7-17.

Hon. Mr. Rouble: I recognize in education sometimes there's a background that needs to be added so that people can fully appreciate the situation. I have tried to be succinct with at least one question for the member opposite and I will try to continue —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Hon. Mr. Rouble: Sorry?

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Hon. Mr. Rouble: I got an "A+" for that one. I got an "A+" and an "F", so I'm getting about a "C" right now. I'm not going to divulge my permanent record here on the floor, but I will try to answer the questions the member hasn't answered yet and I will try to answer the questions that are for another department.

With our apprentice situation, Mr. Chair, in the Yukon we currently have —

My neighbour, Mr. Yukon, would be quite upset. Bucky and Shirley Keobke, as we all know, are this year's Mr. and Mrs. Yukon and should not be confused with Mr. Chair.

As of February 29, 2008, there were more than 380 Yukon residents registered as apprentices in 31 of 48 trade designates in Yukon —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Hon. Mr. Rouble: I know but they are worth repeating, Mr. Speaker. It is important to recognize that we have the highest number of apprentices ever in our apprentice system, and there are growing opportunities for them to be hired as registered tradespeople and that Yukon students are recognizing that it is important to enter into a skilled trade as a profession.

Mr. Chair, we do have programs within the Department of Education. The Yukon government apprentice program is a special program for the hiring of apprentices, and it is, as I understand it, a bit different from the regular hiring involved through the Public Service Commission. This is an educational

support program, similar in some ways to the student training and employment program — STEP. It is recognized that it is part of an education and training program, and it is a bit separate from the Public Service Commission.

Mr. Chair, it should also be recognized that other government departments do hire apprentices in the normal course of employment. The other departments are certainly recognizing that it is important to train and develop our youth and to bring their skills along.

It is a bit of a challenge. I believe the minister responsible for the Public Service Commission can probably elaborate on this a little bit more to address how apprenticeship programs will work in conjunction with the current contract that is negotiated with the Yukon Employees Union. We must recognize that we do work under the Yukon Employees Union contract and that it does affect how we do the hiring for some of these positions. The Department of Education will continue to strongly support the development of apprentices in a wide variety of trades and skill areas, and we'll work with the Public Service Commission and the other departments to make sure they're aware of the importance of hiring apprentices and contributing to their employment and training. As they gain skills in an area, they can be a valuable employee who contributes a lot to the organization.

Yes, we do have people under the Yukon government apprentice program, but there are also apprentices hired in other areas in government.

Mr. Cardiff: I don't know if the minister has access to the numbers but, if he does, I would appreciate seeing those. The numbers at the top of the page are definitely improving, as far as how many registered apprentices there are in the territory. There's no doubt in my mind about that. My concern is the number at the bottom of the page. It almost sounds like we'd be better off anyway if that number were zero because that would mean the apprentices would be being treated like employees, they would all have the benefits and wouldn't be treated like they were in the STEP program.

I'd like to ask the minister a question about the home tutor program. Apparently it was evaluated last year. We'd like to know where the report is and if it is available. Is the program still being monitored? I assume the evaluation was completed. We'd like to see a copy of it, and we'd like to know whether or not there is any continued monitoring and what type of training is available for tutors in the home tutor program?

Hon. Mr. Rouble: Mr. Chair, the home tutor program is a pretty interesting program. I understand it first started in Old Crow in 2003, and it has grown and changed. It is interesting how it has evolved in different schools and different communities.

Funding for the home tutor program is available to support all students in all 14 rural communities as well as students in Whitehorse schools. The funds for hiring tutors can be administered by the local First Nation, the school council or other community agency or the school. There are funds available to all rural Yukon schools as well as high schools and the Gadzoosdaa residence.

Yes, there was a review done, and I expect that it is paper-clipped to the other report that the member has requested. Additionally the department will be conducting a review of this program again this coming fall to ensure that it is meeting the needs in the communities. It has changed and morphed in a couple of different areas to respond to different community needs.

As for specific training for tutors, we'll have to take that one under advisement for the member opposite. I'm not sure if there really is any special training or train-the-trainer type of courses that are provided to tutors.

In some instances, it's a case of an older student — probably a high school student — working with younger students to help them along. In some cases, it's other people from the community who already have an education background working with others.

But I'll ask the Department of Education to look into this, to find out if there is anything more formal by way of training for this. As well, we will continue to evaluate this program and support it where we can. It's important we take a look at these programs from time to time to ensure they're meeting the original intent. This is generally speaking. Sometimes when we look at some of our programs, we recognize they are accomplishing a different goal than we originally intended to address. If that's the case, then we do need to re-evaluate the program and the delivery model that we're using.

Mr. Cardiff: On page 7-21 of the budget, I'm wondering whether there was a one-time increase — basically it's about education support and the Council of Yukon First Nations — it's a transfer payment. For some reason, it's down 25 percent.

The reason I'm asking the question is that the recommendations in the education reform report — to my understanding — are to increase funding for education support in these areas. I'm just wondering why it's down.

Hon. Mr. Rouble: When we embarked on the education reform project, one of the ideas behind that was that it wouldn't stop the department from making any progress in a variety of different areas we're starting initiatives in. So when the education reform project started, there was a different environment from what exists now. There were programs that hadn't been started and different divisions that had not yet been created.

So when the education reform document made a recommendation — there are several instances in the document where you can go through and say, yes, they should be doing that; indeed they are doing that, because that is a change that has been made in recent years to respond to many of the issues the department was aware of.

The education support and the support for the worker and the program manager is an effort to work with the Council of Yukon First Nations in order to ease the transfer and transition from rural life to life in Whitehorse. It provides a support worker and program manager, as well as dealing with many educational issues.

The Department of Education and the Council of Yukon First Nations provided me with a list awhile ago of all the

committees they're asked to participate in, and it's well over 110 different committees relating to education. We do have many committees and we need to make best use of them before we create new committees, especially if we're creating a new committee to do what a current committee is already mandated to do.

The education support worker — I had a brief discussion with officials here and the previous figure also includes a revote for an accountable advance that was done under a previous year, so there was an accounting entry that creates the discrepancy. We're very happy with the progress that we're making with this program and indeed with the relationship with the Council of Yukon First Nations education department.

Mr. Cardiff: I'd like to ask the minister a question again. I'd like to go back to the topic of literacy. I know the minister provided me a whole bunch of information — I don't know if "bunch" is the appropriate word but stack of — he says "plethora." Well, one of those words will work, anyway.

There was a list of all of the monies that the government spends on literacy and it included all of the money that gets spent in our public school system. I think if you look at the problems around the Yukon, one of the concerns that we have — and I know the minister shares this — is adult literacy in communities.

Our numbers are skewed by the fact that there is a whole bunch of highly or, in some instances, over-educated people in Whitehorse, working here in Whitehorse. In the communities, I'm not saying that they are less educated, what I'm saying is there are people who have gone through the system who haven't been well served by the system for a variety of reasons and their literacy skills are below what our territorial numbers are — well below in a lot of instances — and that is a concern.

It impacts on those communities, it impacts on their families, and I am talking about adult literacy. There are funds. The government provides money to Yukon Learn — a substantial amount of money. There are other funds that are provided to the Yukon Literacy Coalition and other groups, but we need to respond to communities and ensure that their needs are being met.

I am wondering — this is strictly on an adult literacy level, and there is lots in the education reform document about literacy — the minister can read up on that — and there are recommendations.

But I would like to know whether or not some of these adult literacy programs are being evaluated, what statistics there are on the training and retention of volunteer tutors — because a lot of this is provided by non-governmental organizations and community groups who want to improve the lot of the people in their community. We all know that volunteers — and it is Volunteer Week and we'll be hearing more about that later this week — but volunteers give a lot of themselves and often aren't able to continue.

I am wondering what information we have on training and retention of those volunteer tutors, if the government is planning on expanding any of these adult literacy initiatives in communities, and whether or not there is any consideration in the department, or in talking with NGOs, to actually have some

paid paraprofessionals in communities to deliver some of this literacy training — working with the NGOs of course.

Hon. Mr. Rouble: Unfortunately, I am going to have to start this response by disagreeing with the member opposite over the statement that we have people in the territory who are over-educated. Mr. Chair, I am certainly not going to stand up and endorse that people in this community are over-educated. I think many people, indeed most Yukoners, have embraced the concept of being lifelong learners and continuing their education throughout their lives, and that this will happen in both formal and informal settings.

While we might learn something that is of particular relevance and importance to us at one stage in our life, we could change and find ourselves in a different situation where that previous learning might not be as applicable, but I believe it still has an influence on an individual's decision-making. I am not going to endorse the concept or the realization that people can become over-educated.

However, I do appreciate the member opposite's comment about some members of our community being very well educated, and have attained significant levels of formal education. When we do take a look at the educational outcomes that Yukoners have, we find that there are many at the extremes. We have a system that does produce many who do go on to significant post-secondary education, and we do have at the other end of the extreme, individuals that have not attained, in some cases, basic literacy levels. One of the objectives of any kind of education reform will be to close the gap between the level of low performance and the level of high performance.

We're not going to do that by diminishing the performance levels of those at the high end, but moving those who are underperforming up. The other challenge that educators face is not only closing the gap, but raising the bar — diminishing the gap between the high achievers and the low achievers, and then raising the average level of achievement for all.

Those are a couple of the guiding concerns for education in the Yukon, that of closing the gap and raising the bar. We see this in our public school system and also in advanced education.

In our public education system there are a number of different programs. I listed a few earlier for the member opposite. Not all of those are housed in our public schools branch. I should mention to the member opposite that that is not an exhaustive list, by any means, of what we do for literacy in our public school system. It does not include all the other costs or programming or the allocation of resources we have in our public school system for literacy levels. That would include the salary of practically every individual in the Department of Education, as we're all working toward those goals.

The initiatives housed in advanced education branch typically deal with those individuals once they've left the public school system. It includes the Yukon essential skills program, funding for the Yukon Literacy Coalition, the Learning Disabilities Association of Yukon, the Literacy Action Committee, Whitehorse Correctional Centre funding, and Kwanlin Dun House of Learning.

Not included in there is the variety of programming that is offered through Yukon College, both here at the Ayamdigut Campus and also at our rural campuses.

We do have a wide range of programs geared toward individuals after they have left the public school system. We recognize there are certain pressure points in our community: for example, at the Whitehorse Correctional Centre, the level of literacy among many of the people incarcerated is low and we need to make a significant effort to help them turn their lives around. One of the best ways for doing that is to increase their education level, so we're working with the Whitehorse Correctional Centre on literacy programs.

Also, we work with the Learning Disabilities Association of Yukon and some of the other non-government organizations that deal with specific target groups or people with a recognized characteristic or need, so they can identify programs that will help.

We do work with all of our NGOs. There is a strong relationship between the Government of Yukon and those groups that we provide with funding — whether through contributions or grants — with ongoing measures, both formally and informally, of their successes and challenges in accomplishing their intended outcomes.

A moment ago, I spoke briefly about the Pan-Canadian Interactive Literacy Forum. The theme for Yukon's portion of that was "Building Literacy Communities through Technologies". This reflects the important role that technology plays in helping planning and programming, promoting dialogue, or communications among people in the north.

I was reminded awhile ago that, if someone is going to jump on their Skidoo and head out on the land, if they do have a problem with that Skidoo — I shouldn't use brand names — that snow machine, that they often have to read a manual.

Well, reading a manual is one thing, but often now you'll find yourselves turning to the Internet to download a PDF of an instruction manual. So it's quite interesting to see, when people do get out on the land, they also need the literacy skills to read manuals and now need the technical literacy skills in order to download appropriate information from the Internet.

Literacy doesn't stop with learning how to read and write at a grade 8 level, but indeed, it is much broader than that. It is learning how to communicate and share information and ideas in our society. As we have so many drastic changes in technology, it is important for all Yukoners to keep up on that.

We will continue to work with our literacy partners — again, the Pan-Canadian Interactive Literacy Forum was a great opportunity to bring together many of our literacy partners to discuss the different programs that they have in place and how they are effectively addressing the needs in their community.

Also, Mr. Chair, at the recent Pan-Canadian Interactive Literacy Forum, there was a joint presentation by the New Horizons team that included representatives of the Government of Yukon and the Council of Yukon First Nations on the education reform document. It was brought out and discussed among the literacy NGOs. With their involvement we're now discussing how to develop strategies to address the issues brought forward, the education reform document and to achieve the

intended outcomes of improving literacy levels for all Yukoners.

Mr. Cardiff: I don't know that I really got the answer to the question that I asked. I didn't hear any answer about whether or not there was any consideration given to having paid paraprofessionals deliver some of this literacy training in communities. I think it is an important issue facing our communities.

I know that some of this will be addressed in the secondary school programming study, but communities need for more resources for training, and what an advantage it is to have students attend school in their own communities with the support of their families. There are examples and recommendations in the education reform report about providing more resources to rural communities for public schools. There is a section about secondary schools in rural communities and the advantages to that as opposed to having students come to Whitehorse.

I am wondering whether or not there would be an appetite to make improvements — not just improvements — but to increase the level of programming in communities so that they would attend those secondary courses closer to home as opposed to coming to Whitehorse. I would like to know how the minister feels about that.

We are running a little short of time today, so I am going to load up a couple of other questions here.

The resources here in Whitehorse aren't available in every community, and we can take some of those resources and information out to the schools in rural Yukon. There are also people working hard in rural Yukon communities who could be beneficial to the students, to our education system and to the educational outcomes of those students in rural Yukon.

There is some mention made of community education liaison coordinators in the education reform project. I know they go into schools and provide counselling and advice to students in the public schools in rural Yukon, and it would be beneficial for the department to work with those people and to give them more training in counselling skills so they can be advocates, so that they can help rural Yukon students make decisions about their future.

It's about the path that they choose, and giving them options and providing the opportunity for those CELCs, community education liaison coordinators, to actually work with others in their communities. We are talking about addressing a capacity issue in communities at this point. Whether it's trades — which we talked about earlier — or administration, First Nations have employment and training officers — ETOs, I believe they are called. If there was a liaison and a connection provided between the schools and the employment and training officer, the CELCs could be that link. I don't think it would take a lot of resources to provide that connection, and it would assist.

The CELCs would be able to do a better job of guiding students through career-planning exercises that would actually possibly be more relevant to their community situation, so that they could see and work with that employment and training officer from that First Nation or the municipality, in some

communities, so that they can see and get the advice about what jobs and what skills are needed in that community.

I think we're missing an opportunity to do a good service not only to our students in the school system but we would be doing a service to our communities, to the municipalities and the First Nation governments, so they can work with students and say, "These are career paths. If you want to come back to our community and live here when you're finished your education, work in the community you grew up in and be there with your families and your clan, these are opportunities you should look at."

If we're not able to do that at an early stage, a lot of times young people end up without having those goals set in front of them. If they have something tangible they can work toward, it improves their chances in the secondary and post-secondary school system.

I'd like the minister to give me a few comments in response to that.

Hon. Mr. Rouble: Yes, I agree. I believe the member opposite would probably like me to continue on that a little bit more.

I see the number one responsibility of the Minister of Education as working to ensure that Yukoners have the opportunities they need to learn in order to become successful, contributing members of society. I share many of the ideas and thoughts and concerns the Member for Mount Lorne has just put out on the table.

It starts with recognizing that we need to have an education system — both public education and advanced education or post-secondary — that is responsive to the needs of Yukoners.

I will approach this in a couple of different ways. One of the important messages that we received from the education reform project was the need for community involvement and more community input. With the New Horizons project, that is exactly what we're going to build on — that being, ensuring that we have a school system that is responsive to the needs of individual students and to the community that provides an individual with the education, curriculum and material that they need in order to grow up and lead a happy, meaningful life — however they define "meaningful".

We also recognize education plays a role in the community to ensure that we are developing the next generation of Yukoners who will have the ability and capacity to participate fully in our community, employment, local governance and in leading happy, healthy, meaningful lives in the territory.

I think a lot of what the member is talking about means working with our rural communities and looking at all the assets they have and all the resources that are available. That means bringing together the school councils, Yukon College and the First Nation. That means bringing together the resources of the Department of Education, the CELCs — cultural education liaison coordinator — some of the programming under the federal labour market agreements or under ASEP — assistance to small enterprise program.

Mr. Chair, it means bringing together a lot of these difference resources and ensuring these resources turn into opportunities for the students.

A couple of ways that we see these developing are through additional distance education courses, either delivered through the Internet or through video conferencing and Web-based education, working not only with the Department of Education system but also with the college system, and with regulating and normalizing the relationship between the school in the community and the college. In some instances we have students in our high school system who are taking college courses. It could be that college instructors have the programming and the skills available to them in order to provide that information, and that is done in some cases. But what we need to do is to work to regulate and normalize that.

Mr. Chair, in some cases students will be receiving dual credit so at the same time as completing a high school credit they will also be earning college credits. We have got to work with the variety of different resources that are already available in the community. It means working with the CELCs and the First Nation education and training officers. I have asked for a dialogue with the Chiefs Committee on Education on this very topic. The Chiefs Committee and I, along with the Department of Education and the First Nations Education Commission, have had many discussions regarding public schools, and now we need to further those discussions and include post-secondary education and training to ensure that we are maximizing the benefits from all our resources. Of course, we will need to incorporate Yukon College and other institutions into this.

It comes down to training Yukoners for Yukon opportunities and recognizing what we need in our community. It is very interesting. I've had discussions with people in Carmacks, and they have done inventories of the skills and the positions that they have in their community. They want the next generation of students to fill some of these roles.

I remember a presentation recently at the Yukon Women in Trades and Technology conference, where one of the speakers — who has now gone on to have a very positive political career — looked at her community and said, "Boy, there's no place for men to get haircuts — why don't I become a barber?"

So she recognized there was a need in her community, went out and received that training, and then could satisfy that need in the community.

So, what we're really working toward doing through programs such as New Horizons — and indeed throughout the whole Department of Education, including advanced education in the labour market framework — is to look at what opportunities we have in the Yukon, what skills are necessary, who are the people we have available and how do we marry all these things together to ensure that Yukoners have the skills necessary to take advantage of Yukon opportunities.

We have a variety of different tools. These include Yukon College with the First Nations programming and federal programming — for example, the labour market framework and the labour market development agreement. Also, there is the other programming in the Department of Education's advanced

education branch. We are going to continue to work together in order to address community needs with community-based solutions.

Mr. Cardiff: I'd like to thank the minister for that answer. The first answer was pretty much sufficient, I suppose, without all the expansion. I think we're probably on the same page.

I think the point I was trying to make is that the employment and training officers are the ones who work with the community — with the First Nation — and they're the ones who can identify those opportunities for the CELCs and the students. I'm glad to hear the minister is working on some of that and talking with the Chiefs Committee on Education.

I think that bodes well for Yukon communities and rural schools and rural students.

There is a section in the education reform report about early childhood learning. Recently in the news it was suggested that the Aboriginal Head Start program — I don't know a whole bunch about the Aboriginal Head Start program but what I do know is fairly positive. It is a positive program, and it is aimed at giving young children a head start in the education system and in First Nation communities especially. Lately, it was suggested that it be implemented for all children. One of the statements made, actually, was that education should begin at birth or even before and then we'd have lots of well-educated people.

It is my understanding that the younger we are the more capacity we have to learn, which doesn't bode well for many of us in this room, because we're all getting older. I think that we can still learn a few things and we can learn by listening to some of these people.

The idea of early childhood learning, and the idea of the Aboriginal Head Start program being implemented for all children, was something that was suggested in the news recently. I'm interested in whether or not the Department of Education has done any evaluations of that program's impact here in Yukon. Have there been any longitudinal studies of this program, because apparently it started in 1995? So if it started in 1995, it would make sense that a lot of those students who started in that program would be in high school now. What assessments are there of the program?

If the minister doesn't have that information, he can provide it by legislative return.

Hon. Mr. Rouble: I appreciate the member opposite's question. Yes, educators are recognizing the value of early childhood education as part of the whole continuum of lifelong learning. Just to put the member's fears at rest, we're never too old to learn. We can always continue to learn; in fact, continuing to learn is one of the best ways of keeping the capacity of learning.

Over on this side of the floor, I know there are still four members of the 40-and-under caucus. There had to be a recent name change to the name of the caucus, but there are four members in the 40-and-under caucus. We will continue to expand our knowledge and continue to learn. We'll continue to work with some of the other age-specific caucuses.

The member opposite brought up the Aboriginal Head Start program, which is a federal program where the federal government works with many First Nations and band councils throughout Canada, I believe. I don't have any information about their annual report or the report from this organization, but we can endeavour to see if there is a copy or any kind of longitudinal studies.

I can certainly appreciate the member opposite's point that sometimes when you started a program in 1995, you might not see some of the meaningful changes you're expecting from the system for another 10 or 12 years. Indeed, if it started in 1995, that would be 12 years ago, so the first children in that program would be graduating from high school now. It would be interesting to see if they have done any studies to see if that increased the participation rate in school or the success rate in completing high school, or if it has translated into any changes in people participating in post-secondary education.

Right now the Department of Health and Social Services maintains a significant involvement in early childhood education. It has a wide variety of early intervention programs which include, for example, the Child Development Centre which, as I am sure the member is aware, has books for babies and other targeted programs throughout the territory.

The Department of Education works closely with the Department of Health and Social Services. We recognize there will be a transition from some of their programs into the Department of Education. One of the areas this government has worked on is expanding full day daycare, which I am sure the member opposite appreciates, provides additional learning opportunities for children at an early age.

There are other programs such as the targeted programs for kindergarten students, books for babies, training sessions, K-to-4 and K-to-5 combined programs and other involvements that the Department of Education has with early childhood educators, as well as supporting programs at Yukon College. It is important that we recognize the important course components that they have at Yukon College. It is very interesting to note the programming at Yukon College which is very much geared toward training Yukoners for Yukon opportunities, from training early childhood educators to the YNTEP program to the recently announced licensed practical nurse program or the heating and housing maintenance program or some of the new survey technician programs. That relates to the member opposite's previous question about what are we doing to train Yukoners for Yukon opportunities.

We will endeavour to contact the federal government department that's responsible for the Head Start program and see if they have provided any kind of assessment or formal evaluation of their program and if we can get a copy of it, we'll see that a copy is sent over to the member opposite.

Mr. Cardiff: One of the areas of the education reform report deals with education data, and one of the recommendations — in fact the very first recommendation reads: "The Yukon Department of Education should collect reliable, comprehensive, long-term data about students, keyed to student ID numbers, from kindergarten to post-secondary years."

Basically, we are talking about that longitudinal data again that I was asking about with regard to the Aboriginal Head Start program, and it “should include data that is already collected electronically as well as other indicators that may affect performance, including elementary report cards, departmental exam results and post-secondary student grant information.”

This is about how we measure the success of our education system. Briefly, I suppose what it means is not figuring out how many students went into grade 12 in January and how many came out in June. It’s about how many students entered the education system here in the Yukon when they were 3- or 4- or 5-years-old, whether it was through the Head Start program, kindergarten, or prekindergarten, and how those students did and where they exited the education system, and what problems they had. That’s that continuum of data, the longitudinal data.

I’m just wondering if something has been put in place. This is a question I have been asking for three or four years, and it comes about because of a concern on my part, but it also comes about because of a concern from other people who have either worked in the education system or are still working in the education system, and feel that this is something that the department needs to address.

I’d like to know if there’s anything that has been put in place or is about to be put in place.

Hon. Mr. Rouble: I agree with the member opposite’s comment about having good data upon which to base decisions and recommendations. It is very important to have fact-based discussions and to have the information that can either indicate a success or indicate a problem. I certainly appreciate that having good data and more information about performance indicators would be beneficial in our system.

It isn’t without its challenges in collecting some of this information. Just one of the challenges has been the transient nature of some populations in Yukon, of coming in and then leaving. We had students who would be in the school system for a couple of years and then move on. I agree it is important to look at the effects of our Yukon education system to see how well people are doing after things like the Reading Recovery program and the Wilson Reading program, and to look at how they do with other programs, so we can either make changes to that program or institute it throughout the territory.

Some of the indicators that we have are — well, it is a good indicator but not a great indicator and that is — looking at the number of Yukoners who received the student grant. That is one way of measuring those people who have completed high school education here in the territory or a significant portion of it and then have gone on to post-secondary education. That does not completely capture all of the students that we have in the territory who are continuing their education. Even then, it does not provide us with specific information as to whether or not they’ve completed their program.

We do have some methods in place for tracking performance of students, but even indicators such as attendance rates can be skewed to not reveal a true examination of the current picture. Because of our small populations, one or two cases can have a significant effect on some of our numbers. It is a bit of a

challenge when we’re dealing with such small populations to look at some of the data and statistical conclusions.

We have our Yukon assessment tests and interprovincial exams that give some comparisons. However, even comparing those from year to year offers some challenges. They are different tests that can be easier or harder than the previous years, so there are sometimes challenges with looking at it from year to year.

What we need to look at is the overall, longer term trends. There was a recent Canada census about which information is now coming out. It is providing a significant amount of information about Canadians and it can be broken out in some instances, based on provinces or territories or even under certain smaller geographic areas. As the member alluded to earlier, some of the results are showing that we’re having very high performance levels as well as some areas where we would like to see greater participation.

We have some challenges in knowing if those results are from home-grown initiatives — that is, Yukon initiatives that are producing specific Yukon results — or if we’re being impacted by people coming to the territory from other jurisdictions.

The Department of Education is going to continue to work with school administrators and teachers, as well as the Bureau of Statistics, to measure and monitor the performance of students. As we continue, I expect that our level of performance indicators will increase and we will have a better database and better indicators that we can use in our decision-making processes.

Mr. Cardiff: I know that sometimes data collection can be boring, and sometimes looking at the data can be boring, but there is an awful lot that can be gleaned and it is about getting the right information and providing it to the people who can make the changes that are necessary to make the system more responsive.

In the education reform report there is a recommendation on page 5.30. Basically it says there should be a pilot project implemented at F.H. Collins Secondary School with regard to fetal alcohol spectrum disorder students — to evaluate that pilot project and to look at expanding it throughout the territory.

This is a recommendation from the education reform report. I am wondering if the department is gathering any information and looking at whether or not something like this would be happening any time soon. I know that it is needed. It has been proven that, with the proper support — problems arise when you have that type of service in elementary schools, in some instances, or at the Child Development Centre and then it is cut off. Again, it is a continuum of services to these individuals who are affected by fetal alcohol spectrum disorder in the secondary school system.

I’m just wondering whether the department is looking at a pilot project for F.H. Collins or if that is on their radar?

Hon. Mr. Rouble: Mr. Chair, I think I brought the wrong book for this debate today. I brought the budget; the education reform document is up in my office. However, we’ll try to respond to the member’s questions.

The education reform team looked at this area and it is an area of concern. Obviously the issue of fetal alcohol spectrum disorder is important and I'm very happy to see the work that this government has done in working with organizations such as FASSY, such as the Yukon Child Development Centre and with the action plan that was created for that.

We're also finding that we're dealing with issues much broader than fetal alcohol spectrum disorder, that there are a broader number of disabilities, whether they are impacted by or caused by substance use. The education system is seeing the results now of children who have been exposed to other environments that have negatively affected them. The Department of Education sees this as a very significant issue. Indeed, our whole special programs unit, which includes speech-language pathologists, school psychologists, occupational therapists, physiotherapists and other professionals, recognizes the challenges and the need to work with people with disabilities.

This is broader than FASD and it's broader than just F.H. Collins Secondary School. So, yes, we do recognize that the education reform document has highlighted the need for FASD programming at a specific school. The department is taking a much broader approach to this already in looking at additional programming — the specific program that we already have underway — not only in the Department of Education, but in Health and Social Services and Justice, for addressing the broader disabilities that some students are bringing to the education system. We're looking at it in a much broader context than just one specific high school.

So the short answer to the member opposite's question is — the Department of Education is working closely with Health and Justice on issues such as FASD. We also recognize there are other influences, other disorders and afflictions that some of our students have, and that it is broader than one school. We're working system-wide to do the best we can in these areas.

Mr. Cardiff: I don't know if I owe the minister an apology or not, but I suppose I could have made it a little clearer by asking if there are any funds in this budget dedicated toward looking at an FASD pilot project, as recommended in the education reform report?

I feel like I've used up quite a bit of time. I have a couple more questions for the minister, and then I will hand it off. I know there were a couple of other people who wanted to ask some questions.

Again, with regard to the education reform report — this is more about personnel — are there resources in the budget to support some of these recommendations about making administrative changes? One of the recommendations is about increasing the First Nation participation in the Department of Education — increasing the presence. I believe the paper says there should be a significant First Nation presence in the Department of Education and should extend to the senior decision-making level, and that the minister should create a third assistant deputy minister responsible for First Nation programs and services, and provide funding to First Nations for the First Nation education steering committee and the First Nation education secretariat. Are there any funds in the budget for that?

While we are on the same topic about First Nation presence and their role in our current education system, is there anything in the department for First Nation administrators for mentoring, for on-the-job training for either administrators in the school system to advance to the department or for teachers to advance to some of those administrative positions like principals and vice-principals?

If the department is doing any training, are there any funds in the budget for those activities?

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. 11, *First Appropriation Act, 2008-09*, Department of Education.

Hon. Mr. Rouble: Before we took the break there was a question regarding special programming. In my previous response I indicated some of the work being done in the special programming branch and some of the occupations and positions in there that do much of the diagnostic and the programming work. They also work with advising people on best ways to address different situations.

If members will look on page 7-9, under the line "Special Programs", they will see that there is a nine-percent increase in that budget item. It is that department that does many of the initiatives that the member opposite was just speaking about.

On the issue of making administrative changes in the Department of Education and responding to some of the concerns of First Nations and people wanting to see a Yukon education system that was more responsive to some of the needs and cultural expectations of people of First Nation ancestry, and some of the recommendations by the education reform team, I will remind the member opposite that the department did not stay stagnant while the education reform team was doing its work. The Department of Education continued to evolve and to involve.

There was the creation of the First Nations programs and partnerships unit in August 2006. This department is responsible for ensuring that Yukon First Nations' content perspectives and views are reflected in initiatives and programming at the department. This unit is dedicated to building productive relationships with First Nation communities and the main partners involved in First Nation education. It's dedicated to improving the results of First Nation students in the K-to-12 system and working toward increased quality and levels of cultural inclusion in Yukon schools. It provides direct and indirect support to Yukon First Nations, to individual schools and the Department of Education.

The unit works closely with the Yukon First Nations Education Advisory Committee and has regular meetings with staff from the Yukon Chiefs Committee on Education and the Council of Yukon First Nations.

The unit is responsible for the following: design, implementation and evaluation of First Nation education programs in

Yukon schools; design, implementation and evaluation of First Nation language programs in Yukon schools; curriculum and resource material adaptation, development, implementation, evaluation; in-service training for teachers, including elders, CELCs and language teachers; professional development for teachers, administrators and department staff with the delivery of First Nation culture and language programming; reporting for First Nation student enrolment and achievement statistics; and working toward ensuring that First Nation content, perspectives and views are reflected through the education system.

This is a fairly new department in the Department of Education, and it does have a director-level position who is involved with many senior management decisions and discussions. It's a very prominent department.

It is one that is working very closely with the New Horizons initiative, which is looking at an implementation plan for many of the issues, thoughts and concerns brought forward in the education reform document.

We have created this separate department but it does have ties to so many of the other departments, whether that is curriculum, or programming, or the experiential education coordinator. While it is a new department in the Department of Education, it is having a significant impact on the curriculum that is being created, some of which I have shared with members, and other curriculum materials that I am sure members will have an opportunity to see in the future.

The Member for Mount Lorne also mentioned the issue of building a more inclusive public service, specifically building a more inclusive Department of Education, and having people of First Nation ancestry involved not only as teachers, but also as administrators in our school systems and in other senior positions in the Department of Education.

Mr. Chair, a joint Department of Education and Yukon administrators committee has been formed. It includes representation from the First Nation Education Advisory Committee, and it is working on the development of an educational leadership development framework and accompanying professional development plan.

As I'm sure members will appreciate, there is an aging — demographic changes. We're going through the whole boom, bust and echo type of phase. Many of our administrators are nearing retirement age. Many of our school administrators will have the opportunity for retirement in the next five to 10 years, and the department is very proactively looking at how we will be responding to the situation. Included in responding to the situation is how we'll be responding to the issue of having greater First Nation representation among our school administrators.

This educational leadership development framework has been established, and two administrators have taken on the role of setting up a mentoring program for 20 administrators. The program involves at least one committee that includes the chair of the association of Yukon administrators, deputy ministers, superintendents and a PhD student. It also includes an elder and two First Nation representatives who are all working on the development of the set of guidelines for Yukon educational leaders.

This work is well underway right now. We have recognized that there is an issue with many of our administrators nearing retirement age. This is not unique to the Yukon; it's an issue that educational systems across Canada are facing. We are taking steps to address it.

As well we recognize that we want to see Yukoners being trained for Yukon opportunities and that certainly means training Yukoners to be teachers in the Yukon system and also fill other necessary roles, such as administrators and staff at the Department of Education.

There are plans on the way to create these types of programs and we will be working with all of our stakeholders, with the First Nation Education Advisory Committee, with First Nations, with people of First Nation ancestry, with Yukon College and the First Nation teacher program there, to address this issue and to build the best education system that we can possibly build here in the territory that prepares Yukoners for the future.

Mr. Cardiff: I thank the minister for that information and we'll take that information and have a look at that to see whether or not the government is measuring up to the expectations of this side of the House and of other Yukoners and those who participated in the education reform project.

I'd like to end — I almost feel that I should have started with this question but I felt that it had been somewhat covered off. I'd just like to hear if the minister has changed his tune a little bit on this. The first part of the first position paper in the education reform report deals with partnership. There is a definition here that comes out of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples about defining partnerships as: "relationships that are worked out on the basis of nation-to-nation negotiations amongst equals who reach agreements by means of consent on both sides and no subordination on either side."

It goes on in this section to talk about First Nation input and the fact that First Nations should have input on any aspect of an agreement that directly affects that First Nation or their membership. It talks about equitable access to information — equitable access to information would be great in here too, sometimes. I think it is important in partnerships and that equality is essential to a partnership. It talks about no one person or group in a partnership having the power to impose its will over others in that partnership. It talks about how it is binding — there is a word missing on that page 1.4. It talks about partnership agreements being non-legal and non-binding entities that can be dissolved at any point. It actually says, "This would either partner to opt out ..." but it should say it would allow either partner to opt out.

It is about the structuring of the agreements but it is all about those partnerships — it talks about adequate resources of all kinds — time, money, infrastructure, expertise — and staff have to be in place for those partnerships to succeed. When we get to the recommendations, it recommends that the Yukon government and the Yukon First Nation government should agree to a definition of educational partnerships.

The first thing I would like to know is whether or not that memorandum of understanding is being worked on, if there are funds in the education budget to work on that negotiation and

to come up with that definition. Maybe those funds are located in the Executive Council Office and we will have to ask the Premier about that.

As well it says — and this recommendation runs through the report — the government should examine existing legislation and identify articles or clauses that are potential barriers to developing effective partnerships.

I'm wondering whether or not that work is being done as well in the Department of Education.

I'd like to thank the minister and the officials for their time today and for the opportunity to ask the questions and receive answers. I look forward to hearing the minister's response.

Hon. Mr. Rouble: I appreciate the member opposite's questions and comments today during debate. They've been interesting and there have been some good, thoughtful points raised about Yukon's education system.

The Government of Yukon is committed to a Yukon public education system that will meet the needs of all Yukoners. We recognize that there are self-government agreements in place and that Yukon First Nations have the authority to draw down the jurisdiction of education, should they wish to do so.

We will continue to work with the different orders of government, with different organizations, with our different stakeholders, with our other partners in education, including language-specific organizations, the Commission scolaire francophone du Yukon, with religious organizations, with administrators, teachers and parents — and students, I should add. Students are an important component in education and their voice needs to be listened to and considered.

We've demonstrated this commitment of working in partnership by jointly working on the education reform project. That has been released and the Government of Yukon and the Council of Yukon First Nations have agreed to continue to work in partnership during the implementation phase, New Horizons.

The project team consists of equal representation from the Council of Yukon First Nations and the Government of Yukon. The Government of Yukon has been very responsive in the development of the First Nations programs and partnership unit and with our willingness to look at a broad range of ways of improving the educational system for all Yukoners.

This includes initiatives such as experiential education, expansion of vocational learning, increased distance education, the Individual Learning Centre, the issue of international baccalaureate-type programs, French first-language experiential education programs, intensive French programs, and now there are other initiatives and other ideas that are being brought forward to address many of the issues facing us in education.

Yukon teachers and school administrators have told us that we are facing a different classroom composition and that, for a variety of reasons, the characteristics of students coming to school now seem to be different than in previous years or generations. We are responding to this changing classroom composition.

There is significant work done with IEPs, with learning assistants, with teaching assistants, and with additional people in the classroom.

Now school administrators are asking us to even look further at other things such as gender-based classrooms. I am sure there will be additional ideas brought forward, some that people will probably agree with enthusiastically and others that might take further review and discussion before people will accept them or even reject them.

But what is important is that the department remains responsive to the needs of students and responsive to the needs of the community.

On Thursday I spoke extensively on this issue. I know that time is of the essence in our Assembly, and won't repeat all of the comments I made previously. Members can certainly see the comments in *Hansard*.

The Department of Education is very aware of our broad responsibility to all Yukon students — students in our public school branch, students in post-secondary, and to lifelong learning students.

We will continue to work with all our partners — the federal government, First Nation governments, municipal governments, organizations, teachers, and all of our other partners in education — in order to develop the best possible education system for all Yukoners.

Mr. Cardiff: I'm not sure that the minister — or, maybe he didn't hear the question, so I'll only give him a D. But it was whether or not they were working on that memorandum of understanding about the partnership.

I'd be failing in my duty if I didn't ask this question. I'm glad I was shuffling my papers around and realized that this is one of the most important questions I can ask for my constituents, and that is whether or not the minister is considering adjusting the catchment area for Golden Horn Elementary School. That should be pretty simple — it's either yes or no or within the next week.

As well, can the minister tell us when the teacher allotments will be completed?

Hon. Mr. Rouble: Yes and yes.

Yes, I'm working with the chair of the Chiefs Committee on Education. We'll be drafting a further directive to ensure the Government of Yukon and Council of Yukon First Nations are working on the New Horizons project.

As well, we'll continue our dialogue on this area. There's a healthy working relationship that has been created and I expect to see it continue and to broaden into other areas, as I said earlier.

With the creation of the *Cooperation in Governance Act*, and the existence of the Yukon Forum, I would expect the Yukon Forum will be a valuable opportunity and a vehicle for Yukon government and Yukon First Nation governments to come together and have government-to-government dialogue and continued discussions on these areas.

On the issue of catchment areas, yes, I have directed the Department of Education to review catchment areas. There are additional areas of impact. For example, the Chief Electoral Officer needs to be involved, due to the possible changing of boundaries for school councils. I have directed the department to establish a process and if the process concluded that making

catchment adjustments are necessary, that would happen prior to this coming school year.

I can't pre-empt the conclusion of this type of review. However, I have given direction that this review take place and that its recommendations come forward early enough to be implemented for the next school year.

So, I think that was yes, yes and yes.

Mr. Edzerza: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I just have one question for the minister that has to do with school cultural activities.

I think we can all agree that cultural activities in the schools are pretty important. So important, as a matter of fact, that I know when there was nothing happening in the elementary school in Porter Creek, a lot of First Nation students who lived right in Porter Creek wanted to transfer to Hidden Valley because they offered a good cultural program at Hidden Valley. So this could have some effect on catchment areas, all depending on what's being provided in the school.

I know Elijah Smith Elementary School just had a whole week of cultural activities very recently, and I volunteered up there for two lectures a day for three days, I think. I gave lectures to the students. The lecture I gave was on the sweat lodge, and I have to say that I was really impressed at the interest that the students had in knowing about the sweat lodge. There were a lot of very good questions that came out of every lecture that I gave. There certainly was a lot of interest there.

I would like to ask the minister to really look at supporting the Elijah Smith school because of the very large number of students there and the very high interest that the students have in cultural activities there.

The one question I wanted to ask was this: I noticed in the budget book, under school cultural activities, there is a minus 16 percent change. I was just wondering what that was referring to.

Hon. Mr. Rouble: Mr. Chair, I had a discussion not too long ago with someone and they commented, "What's all this with culture in the school?" I had to chat with him a little bit and I said, "You know, it is impossible not to teach in a cultural context." Then I started talking a bit about the books that he and I had when we were young — *Meet Dick and Jane*, *See Spot Run* — and I had to remind him that those books were a representation of a very stereotypical white middle-class nuclear family that had a dog. I told him that it is an example of a book that was written in a specific cultural context, but that it might not be the same for everybody.

When we do teach, we do recognize that it is happening in a certain cultural context, whether we intend for that to happen or not. It is an issue that we've become much more aware of. Members in our community have come to us and said that they want to see academic excellence in a culturally appropriate setting. They want to see the culture of their community and their people represented in the classroom.

In addition to making people aware of the culture and other steps such as increasing the number of people from that culture in the representation of the school, the department is taking steps such as more cultural training for teachers, more

cultural awareness training for new hires and, also, offering support for cultural-inclusion programming.

This cultural-inclusion funding is made available to all Yukon schools so that they can develop and implement cultural activities, projects and programs. The cultural-inclusion program funding initiative involves the schools, school councils and the First Nation communities working together to increase and improve the cultural programs, projects and activities in classrooms throughout the entire school.

There is a cultural-inclusion plan, and this is required from each school and is done to encourage schools to align with other school cultural programs, such as the elders in the school and the community-based teacher orientation programming, toward an overall goal with measurable objectives, targets and outcomes.

On that issue I am reminded of a cultural awareness day that I had the honour of attending last September outside of the community of Watson Lake. The Liard First Nation wanted to ensure that the teachers there were aware and conversant with the culture of the Liard First Nation. On the first professional development day of the year, the Liard First Nation invited the whole school staff and me to come to one of their buildings to find out about their history, their structure, their structure of governance, and some of their stories. It was a great opportunity for the teachers there to go and meet with more of the people whose children they were teaching in the school.

These programs have a very positive effect not only in the school but also in the community. A great example is one that the member just brought up, and that was the Elijah Smith bison hunt and feast that was held last Thursday. I also had the honour of attending that and it was great to see that the students there had integrated the whole hunt into their school plan for the year and into their learning for the year, and really into all of their subjects. It was referenced in everything from science to math to English to some of the physical education programs.

It was great to see the community of hunters who went out on their first kill and brought back the meat served at a community feast. It not only served to feed the students at the school, but to bring people together from the broader community — to also bring their parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles into the school for a celebration. It was to celebrate their accomplishments and the learning that was going on.

Really, I think that any excuse to bring friends, family and community members into the school is a good one. Bringing them together to celebrate a feast like that was an excellent school event.

It's initiatives like that that are supported by these funds. It also includes supporting things like making moccasins, beadwork, canoe building, and other projects that happen both in the classroom and outside of the school.

A new application process was initiated in 2006-07. It was designed to increase the collaboration for cultural inclusion at the community and school levels. The three parties are encouraged to complete the funding proposal together and include the school, the First Nation and the school council representatives.

I think the members opposite will agree that this is a great way of ensuring additional input to the decision-making in the

school. It also ensures that the funding going to the school is responsive to the needs of the community. This is another way that we have reformed the system, so to speak.

We are constantly looking at the programs in place and evaluating how they can best be changed or adjusted in order to meet our broader overall objectives.

One objective here was to ensure there was ongoing dialogue between the school council, the First Nation and the school administration. I think we're achieving that with this project.

The amount spent for 2005-06 was over \$214,000. The amount spent in 2006-07 was about \$190,000. I'm not sure why, Mr. Chair, but 10 schools did not completely spend their 2006-07 money and therefore did not apply for the 2007-08 money.

What we have here is some of the results of this type of money not all being needed, some of it being revoted. It's the same type of situation that I mentioned earlier where there is the transfer for previously advanced money and accountable advanced. We're anxious to work with all of our school councils on this excellent initiative.

The member has asked me specifically if I will support the school in his riding. I appreciate the member's work for his constituents. I think the member knows and, certainly given his previous position, recognizes that the Minister of Education can't have a favourite school, that the Minister of Education can't treat one school with more care or favour than he does other schools.

The Minister of Education has to ensure that we have a fair and equitable system. I recognize that each one of our schools is special and unique and has their special characteristics. I also recognize that I have a responsibility as the Minister of Education to ensure a fair and equitable system throughout the territory. From time to time, much as I might desire as a human being or as an MLA to see that some areas are treated more fairly than others, I have a responsibility to all Yukoners and all Yukon students to ensure that we have a fair and equitable system throughout the territory. I think we have that with this cultural inclusion program.

There is a base amount that is provided to each school and then it is topped up with a per-pupil type of accelerator. That is based on their previous June enrolment so it is a pretty easy calculation to do. It ensures that the school will then do a plan as to what they intend to accomplish and how they are going to do it. Also, the planning process must include the participation of the school council and the First Nation. That is to ensure that the school is meeting with all of those affected and that their views and opinions are included in these decisions.

I think we have created a system that responds to the unique cultural differences that we have throughout the territory. We certainly understand that one program cannot meet the needs in every community, that there will be different priorities from community to community and, indeed, from school to school. We will work with the school council and the First Nation to ensure that we have the appropriate cultural programming in their school.

Mr. Edzerza: That was quite a mouthful, Mr. Chair. I must say that, in my previous position, I helped everyone — everyone in the territory. In case the member opposite has a short memory, we actually put \$1 million into the communities. That was the best thing that could have happened for the Education department — because all of the things schools were deprived of for many, many years were fulfilled. So I'm quite proud of that.

Maybe I just have better negotiating skills or something, because to say that the money has to be spread only so much to this one and that one is just a way to cop out. There are ways to deal with it. I think that even bringing to the floor of the Legislature that someone doesn't like cultural programming is, more or less, a way of saying, "Neither does the minister." I have some concerns with that.

For many years, First Nation people said, "Why should we learn French?" Did they have an option? No, they learned French. I don't think there is even a place on the floor to be talking like this — just do the job. First Nation people have asked to get good financial support, and I think they deserve it.

I also had a lawyer say to me just two days ago on the street how proud he was that his daughter was learning Southern Tutchone. "You couldn't get that in most places," is what he said to me. Down south, it's hard to have your child have access to a First Nation language. So there are pros and cons on both sides, and education is education.

It took many years for First Nations to even be recognized in the school system. It took many years of bringing these concerns forward, saying that First Nations would like to have some cultural content in the education system.

So the minister is capable of supporting it 100 percent or 20 percent — the choice is his.

The minister didn't answer the question about why there is the minus 16-percent change and that's more or less what I was asking about.

Hon. Mr. Rouble: I appreciate most of the member's comments. I think there may have been a bit of a misunderstanding between something that I said and something the member opposite heard. There was attribution of a couple of comments there in his last question that I certainly didn't make.

Let me be clear on this. There is a commitment from this government to provide more cultural inclusion in our programming, to make our schools more reflective of the communities that they are in. One of the ways we have to do that is to provide cultural inclusion programming dollars.

I'm not sure why all schools didn't draw down all of this money. I'm not even sure why some schools didn't put in their application until a couple of weeks ago, especially when some people knew about the process and how they should go about applying for it.

There was a revote. Not all of the dollars from last year were used. We're continuing to fund this initiative. There was an accounting entry, as I've explained previously, that addressed this. We are there to support our schools. We have tweaked the programming to ensure that school councils and the First Nations are involved.

Mr. Chair, in past years, all of these funds have not been fully subscribed to. That certainly should not be interpreted by the member opposite as any kind of negative feeling toward it that he seems to believe that I have — because that's not how I feel about this.

I want to see our schools access this. I'd love to see 100-percent utilization of this fund. Can I make that more clear for members opposite? I'd love to see all of the funds that we have set up for cultural inclusion or experiential and vocational training and learning fully subscribed to.

We do create our budget, our estimates here, with specific goals and objectives in mind. One of the ways we accomplish those is if the schools, the school councils and the First Nations create a plan to spend the money to do that.

I appreciate the work that the member opposite has done for education. I supported many of the decisions that he made. He does, I am sure, realize that there were other people supporting his decisions and other people who were in agreement with him.

I am not going to get into a personality debate about the hard work that people do. I know the member opposite worked hard as the Minister of Education. I know there were good things that were started. I know that he and I agreed on many things, and there were some things that we disagreed on, as is normal — I am a different person, and I approach this in a bit of a different way as well. I think that we see eye to eye on many things but, on other things, we will disagree.

I don't think this is one of those issues, and I don't think it should be portrayed as such.

Mr. Chair, I've given a pretty detailed description about the goals and objectives of this programming. I have given some examples of some success stories. I've talked about how it is being changed to be more responsive to the needs of the school council and the First Nation. I have explained the accounting process that creates this situation. I'm not sure if there is additional information that the member would like.

Mr. Elias: I guess, first, I would like to thank all of the Department of Education employees who worked diligently on a daily basis to achieve the departmental objectives. Your work is very much appreciated and respected. Second, on behalf of my constituents I would like to congratulate Ms. Patti Tetlich, from Chief Zzeh Gittlit School in Old Crow, on receiving the excellence in education award. Our community would like to thank her for making an outstanding contribution to the Chief Zzeh Gittlit School, and I join with her students in saying mahsi' cho for Patti's dedication and excellence in public education. Congratulations Ms. Tetlich.

I do have a couple of issues that I'd like to get on the public record and hopefully some answers from the minister in terms of a couple of issues in my riding. This year, some of the parents from my riding were provided with the opportunity to visit the Wood Street Centre School. The parents were very impressed with the school's facility and programming — especially the achievement, challenge, environment and services — or ACES — program. The ACES program was viewed by the parents who attended this opportunity as a very viable option for some of the students in Old Crow and the challenges we

face educating our children who do not fit in the current system.

I'm talking about six or seven children in my community who were trying to find a solution to the problem. It was noted that there is a waiting list at the Wood Street school every semester. The point is that if the ACES program is so successful in students achieving their educational needs, then why hasn't the minister put more resources and money into the ACES program and expanded the program to rural Yukon communities like Old Crow? Old Crow does have the facilities to deliver the ACES program or something similar to the ACES program.

I guess the question to be asked is this: will the minister help the students in Old Crow who don't fit into the current system by expanding the ACES program and delivering it in our community? We see this as a viable option, and it's part of my job, on behalf of my constituents, to try to be solution-oriented here.

We have brought this issue to the minister's attention via letters and e-mails, and in my response to the supplementary budget speech, so the minister is aware of this issue.

Another constituent concern is with regard to education assistants in the Chief Zzeh Gittlit School. Some of the parents were wondering if money is allocated or available to the Chief Zzeh Gittlit School to hire an education assistant for the next school year. That's the second question.

Another issue that has been long-standing — it has been there since I attended Chief Zzeh Gittlit School — is with regard to the educational assessments with regard to science academics for grade 8 or grade 9. The students who leave Chief Zzeh Gittlit School — who are scheduled to leave Old Crow to attend high school in Whitehorse — are falling short in their science academic standards, and they end up struggling when they arrive in Whitehorse for high school. It's a long-standing problem. Again, I'll ask the minister: how does the minister intend to address the problem in a "fair and equitable way" — as his words were earlier on in the debate.

Those are the three questions I'd like to get on the public record and hopefully receive an answer from the minister because they continue to not be addressed. I'd just appreciate some answers from the minister.

Hon. Mr. Rouble: I'd like to thank the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin for his questions today. I know he has raised the issue of education with me, not only in here, but in the cafeteria and in correspondence. I appreciate his thoughts and ideas on this. I'm glad to hear that members of his community have had a chance to take a look at the ACES model, the OPES model, or the MAD model. I'm wondering maybe if he could nod if they took a look at the Individual Learning Centre.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Hon. Mr. Rouble: Okay. It sounds like there has been a good opportunity to take a look at some of the solutions and some of the programming the Department of Education has been able to put in place.

One of the things I recognized pretty early on is that our different schools in our different communities respond to situations differently and they do have different priorities. It's very interesting to see how the different school councils approach

these. Some are very vocal and some are not nearly vocal enough. I usually have more concern about the school councils I'm not hearing from, rather than the ones that I hear from very regularly.

That isn't to say I want to see any amount of correspondence diminish. It's just to say that I have sometimes a greater concern for those schools that I don't hear from and wonder if we're oiling the squeaky wheel or if we're addressing all the situations in the territory.

We recognize too, Mr. Chair, that the different schools respond to things differently. Solutions we put in place at one school, when we have taken the exact same model and put it in place in another, it has fallen flat and has not worked.

I certainly recognize that Old Crow is a unique community, not only because of its accessibility but also the cultural heritage of Vuntut Gwitchin people.

Mr. Chair, last year I made a commitment in this Assembly to have the Department of Education work with the school council on issues; I believe there was a staffing issue that they were involved in. I was very pleased and gratified to see, if not an organized formal school council, at least that a committee was formed to be involved in the Department of Education's efforts.

I understand that the superintendent for the area will be going to the community in the near future, likely within the next month. I want to give a bit of room here just because I am sure the member realizes that travel times in and out of Old Crow sometimes change.

One of the areas that he will be working with the community on is looking at initiatives like this. We have a benefit in Old Crow of having a fairly good student/teacher ratio. I am not sure of what that is right now, but I believe it's quite a favourable number, and that does give the teachers the opportunity to work very closely with the students they have.

It also gives the opportunity to work on programming that not only is appropriate to their grade level but is also appropriate to their personal level and is preparing them for the future. We also recognize though that having opportunities and the variety of courses available is a great thing. I believe that the more opportunities one has available to them, the greater chance for success.

We have the video conferencing system that has been established in Yukon schools and I'm suggesting that might be a tool for students in Old Crow to use to access difference science courses. The video conferencing allows students to participate in a class across miles and miles. It allows students from different communities to come together to work with one teacher. The teacher could be in Dawson City or Watson Lake or Whitehorse, or the teacher could even be in Old Crow and teaching a course to students throughout the territory. That allows us to give the opportunity for some courses to people in our more remote communities, where there might not be enough students to make a full class but where we recognize that students want to take advantage of different programming. So, we have that option to look at.

Mr. Chair, the member opposite also asked about EAs. I would like to clarify for the member that the education assis-

tants are not assigned to a school. Education assistants are assigned to individuals who have been identified as having specific needs and need individual attention.

There is a process to go through with that. An educational assistant provides assistance to an individual student and not to a whole community or school.

The member asked if there is money. The supplementary budget that is before this Assembly includes funding for 10 additional education assistants. I think the members heard the statistics and the indicators that I read on the floor about the rising number of teachers in the educational system and the rising number of education assistants in our system and the decreasing number of students in our system.

Our teachers have grown by five percent; our EAs have grown by, I believe, almost 30 percent. At the same time, the student population has decreased by about eight percent.

We're also looking at system-wide ways we can better accomplish our objectives in education without always looking at education assistants. Some of the methods could include things like thematic teaching, or greater experiential education opportunities, for which there is funding.

Just to build on the previous question, there will be the same amount of money available for cultural inclusion programs this year. Part of that is coming in a revote from the unused money that was spent in previous years. It's then being topped up to the same amount, so there is certainly not a decrease in funding. To characterize it as such is just incorrect.

I know the member opposite asked four different questions. We had the superintendent, who is going to visit Old Crow in the near future. One of the issues he is going up there to work on is the needs of the community, the school and the students. The department is clearly dedicated to working with the community to ensure education, and that it's the right solution for Old Crow.

The other questions I believe I've answered. If the member has any other questions, I'd appreciate hearing them.

Mr. Elias: It's encouraging to hear the minister suggest a solution about video conferencing with regard to science and academics. I'd like to see that happen; however, there is also the need for proper materials with regard to biology and chemistry, which are lacking in Old Crow, to go along with the video conferencing.

This problem has been going on for far too long. When you leave Old Crow — when you leave your home, you come to Whitehorse. There's no other option. The parents cannot simply drive and help their children, and they're struggling with science and academics in high school. That's a fact, and it has been going on for far too long. I'd like to see some solid solutions to this problem because they've been going on for far too long.

I'd also like to get on the public record that every time I go back home to my constituents in my riding, I see these six or seven children walking around, not attending public school. Each and every day that these children do not receive a public education, it's the minister who's not doing his job, because our community has said we want a partner to help solve this problem.

We've raised experiential learning; we've raised the ACES program delivered through the college; we've taken our own initiative to have camps during the summertime to do little pilot projects that are funded by different levels of organizations that have participated. We've tried to find some solutions.

But the problem is still there; the parents are concerned and the children are concerned. They just don't fit into the current system. So I'm just trying to be solution-oriented here and give some solutions I heard from the parents — because it's lifelong learning. Each day that these six or seven children in my riding don't get a public education is a problem. The community is trying to find a solution; they are trying to find a partner. Everybody is trying to chip in but public government has a role in this too. That is why I try to bring these solutions to the floor of the House.

Thank you to the minister for his response with regard to education assistants. I understand there is a process to follow through with here and the community has taken advantage of the educational assistant when there was one in Chief Zzeh Gittlit School. The program got expanded to actually helping the children with their homework outside of school and things like that. It was a successful program. This year — please correct me if I'm wrong — there hasn't been an education assistant working out of the Chief Zzeh Gittlit School to achieve the learning outcomes for the children there.

I just wanted to be on record and hopefully get some answers from the minister. I hope he can understand the sense of frustration that all the community is feeling, including the children who can't receive a public education because they don't fit into the system. We need to find a way for that education to continue. We have tried as a community to give some solutions to the minister. I'm just standing on my feet today to try to express those concerns again because, like I said, each and every day they don't get a public education, we are all failing these children.

Hon. Mr. Rouble: I appreciate the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin's questioning, in bringing forward these issues that are obviously important to him and his constituents. I appreciate his solution-oriented approach. For the member opposite, I will commit that the superintendent will be coming up to meet with the community to look at ways of addressing many of the issues.

I've been in the Chief Zzeh Gittlit School a couple of times and I'm very impressed with the school and the facilities. At least when I was there, it did have the potential to be a bit more reflective of the community and to have more of the Vuntut Gwitchin influence in the community, whether that is artwork or other ways.

I've encouraged the staff there to wear out some of the equipment that is there. There are still many pieces of equipment that are new or appear to be new. The school has been built now for 10 or 11 years.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Hon. Mr. Rouble: Seven years? It has been a few years anyway.

I understand the school population there is about 25 students with about six teachers.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Hon. Mr. Rouble: Twenty-three.

I appreciate the member sharing some additional information with me, but it's easier for all involved if it's all on the record, I think. It would appear that we have a very favourable student/teacher ratio, one that would be enviable in any place in Canada.

It's interesting to hear the member request that we ensure that we have adequate materials and resources there. I would suggest that, if we are to be more responsive to the needs of a community, perhaps we should look at using more of the naturally occurring resources.

While I am not a teacher or someone teaching science in the classroom, I would think that the opportunity to use a caribou in biology discussions, or to use a fish in biology discussions, and some of the naturally occurring resources that are already part of the community would be a great way to link the needs of the community with the outcomes in the classroom.

Mr. Chair, it doesn't seem to make any sense to me why, in a community like that, we'd spend time teaching soccer — if I can pick on teaching soccer — as something to do in the physical education class when instead we could do something that's more relevant to life in the community.

We do need to ensure that our curriculum reflects what is going on in the community, that what students are learning is relevant, important and will have an impact on their future. If we are educating students today toward living a meaningful productive life in Old Crow, there are certain things that they need to learn in order to live in Old Crow. Some of those should be the responsibility of the public education system and some are shared by family and friends, and the greater community plays a role in that. We should be able to incorporate many of these issues and concerns into our public education system.

I hope that addresses the questions of the member opposite.

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

Mr. Fairclough: Mr. Chair, we've been asking the minister some detailed questions and some are related to the line items in this department. It is not necessary to go through every line. I request unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all lines in Vote 3, Department of Education, cleared or carried, as required.

Unanimous consent re deeming all lines in Vote 3, Department of Education, cleared or carried

Chair: Mr. Fairclough has requested unanimous consent to deem all lines in Vote 3, Department of Education, cleared or carried, as required. Do members agree?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Chair: Unanimous consent has been granted.

On Operation and Maintenance Expenditures

Total Operation and Maintenance Expenditures in the amount of \$113,709,000 agreed to

On Capital Expenditures

Total Capital Expenditures in the amount of \$8,109,000 agreed to

Department of Education agreed to

Hon. Mr. Cathers: Mr. Chair, I move that we report progress.

Chair: It has been moved by Mr. Cathers that Committee of the Whole report progress.

Motion agreed to

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

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

Motion agreed to

Speaker resumes the Chair

Speaker: I will now call the House to order.

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

Chair's report

Mr. Nordick: Mr. Speaker, Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 11, entitled *First Appropriation Act, 2008-09*, and directed me to report progress on it.

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

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Speaker: I declare the report carried.

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

The House adjourned at 5:31 p.m.