

**Yukon Legislative Assembly**  
**Whitehorse, Yukon**  
**Tuesday, April 7, 2009 — 1:00 p.m.**

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

*Prayers*

**DAILY ROUTINE**

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

Tributes.

**TRIBUTES**

**In recognition of World Health Day**

**Hon. Mr. Hart:** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to ask my colleagues to join me in recognizing today, April 7, as World Health Day, proclaimed as such by the World Health Organization.

Monsieur le Président, en ce 7 avril, j'invite mes collègues à se joindre à moi afin de souligner la Journée mondiale de la santé, désignée ainsi par l'Organisation mondiale de la Santé.

This year, World Health Day 2009, focuses on the safety of our health facilities and the readiness of our health care workers to go that extra step during an emergency by treating all those affected, while they also may be affected by the emergency.

Here in Yukon, we know the value of our health care providers and recognize their importance as a lifeline to people, not only every day but during disasters — treating injuries, preventing illnesses and caring for the health needs of the individual and their family.

Au Yukon, nous savons apprécier la valeur de ceux et celles qui fournissent les soins de santé.

Only yesterday, we heard and read the news stories out of Italy about the earthquake which, at last count, had claimed 150 lives. We need to know that here in the Yukon, just like in Italy, our health care workers and our health care facilities are ready to meet the challenges presented by a disaster. Over the past several years, the Department of Health and Social Services has been working on an internal plan to ensure continuity of health services. This is extremely important to us because of the role that our rural health centres and health care providers play in responding to emergencies. Our health care centres are more than just buildings. They are the cornerstone of our communities. Because of the central role played by our health centres and our health care staff, we carry the responsibility of making sure they continue to provide essential health care services during an emergency.

I am pleased to say that our plans cover internal emergencies, such as fires, and community emergencies, such as pandemics and mass casualty events, i.e. floods or forest fires.

Planning for emergencies and disasters is never finished. It is something that we always will be working on, testing and refining. Our efforts will continue in this area, and I'm pleased to say that the Yukon is well-prepared to respond to events that

require a comprehensive health response for individual citizens and/or business continuity response that ensure our health facilities and services continue in the face of an emergency.

We applaud the efforts of the World Health Organization, as well as many other health care providers, whose efforts keep our services and facilities operating and safe.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Mitchell:** I rise today on behalf of the Official Opposition to pay tribute to World Health Day. World Health Day, on April 7, marks the founding of the World Health Organization and is an opportunity to draw worldwide attention each year to the importance of global health care.

This year's theme, "Save Lives — Make Hospitals Safe in Emergencies", focuses on the resilience and safety of health facilities and the health workers who treat those affected by emergencies.

Le thème de cette année est "Sauver des vies, assurer la sécurité des hôpitaux dans les situations d'urgences." Cette année la Journée mondiale de la Santé, est consacrée à la sécurité des établissements de santé et à la préparation des soignants amenés à prendre en charge des populations victimes de situations d'urgence.

The tragedy of a major emergency or disaster is compounded when health facilities fail. If a hospital collapses or its functions are disrupted, lives that depend on emergency care can be lost.

In a disaster, there is an incredible impact on human health, and that puts health services and facilities at great risk. Interruptions in routine service can be deadly. As the minister just pointed out, when we see tragedies such as the earthquake that occurred over the last day in Italy, it reminds us of how important it is for these services to be in a position to continue.

Des manifestations sont organisées dans le monde entier pour plaider en faveur de la conception et de la construction d'hôpitaux sûrs et créer un élan propice à une meilleure préparation aux situations d'urgence.

Hospitals are often assumed to be ready to cope with emergencies, so it is important that emergency preparedness is in a hospital's operational plans. Making and keeping hospitals and health centres safe from disasters is an economic requirement and social necessity. When health services are not prepared, emergency and regular health care cannot be delivered.

Lorsque le système de santé n'a pas pris les mesures pour se préparer, les services de santé réguliers et d'urgence ne peuvent être administrés.

Making hospital and health centres safe in emergencies is not just about saving lives of the people harmed during a disaster, but ensuring the continuation of routine health care during and after a crisis. Health centres and their staff provide vital health care in our communities every day.

Les centres de santé et leurs employés pourvoient des soins de santé essentiels dans nos collectivités.

Keeping hospitals and health centres safe in emergencies is important and protecting the health and safety of people is paramount. In an emergency, people count on hospitals and

health facilities to respond swiftly and efficiently as the lifeline for survival and the backbone of support.

We would like to take this opportunity to salute our health care providers, health professionals, emergency and front-line workers for their dedication to our health and survival. Thank you for being there for us, not just in emergencies, but every day.

Merci d'être là pour nous, non seulement en cas d'urgence, mais chaque jours.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Merci, Monsieur le Président.

**Mr. Hardy:** I rise on behalf of the New Democratic caucus to pay tribute to World Health Day, April 7 each year. To mark the founding of the World Health Organization, or WHO, World Health Day was created in 1948. Each year a theme is selected that highlights a priority area of concern for WHO. This year it is focusing on the safety of health facilities and the readiness of health workers to prevent disease and treat those affected by emergencies. These two elements are the cornerstones of primary care.

Investing in health infrastructure not only promotes and supports the health of all citizens, but secures the prevention of many serious illnesses, and both speakers before me have already talked a lot about the health care facilities. I'm going to talk about something slightly different.

One of the most important facilities that affect health around the world is clean, reliable drinking water. We know that many preventable diseases are spread by the use of contaminated water.

Hepatitis, polio, typhoid and cholera are just a few diseases that mostly affect people living in the developing world and travellers. These diseases usually occur in water contaminated with sewage or by infected persons or animals. However, they may also be spread by chemicals and usually occur as a result of metal leeching into water and through accidental spillage or seepage of chemicals into water supplies. It can also occur through toxins produced by blue-green algae.

Access to secure, safe drinking water does not only apply to developing countries, it has been a problem in hundreds of aboriginal communities in Canada, including the Yukon. It takes only a relatively small investment to secure clean water, considering the lives saved and health costs expended in curing serious diseases. Investing in the necessary infrastructure should be a primary concern. In the long run, around the world, the cost for infrastructure is far less than the expenditures are for illness.

The concerns of the WHO are regarding primary health care and also the health care workers. These workers meet everyday needs such as safe prenatal childcare, child birth, postnatal services, immunizations and chronic care.

Investing in health infrastructure, such as safe drinking water, supports the work of these essential workers, even in an emergency, when injuries and prevention of the spread of disease is the first priority.

Without the dedication and hard work of primary health care workers, effective prevention and treatment of injuries and diseases would not be possible. They deserve to be supported

by safe, reliable infrastructure. We would like to take this opportunity to express our thanks to health care workers in the Yukon, and around the world, whose commitment and hard work make life a lot better for all of us.

Merci.

**Mr. Edzerza:** I rise today to pay tribute to World Health Day. The theme for this year's World Health Day is health facilities in emergencies.

In the Yukon, we are somewhat fortunate. Our population is such that emergencies are manageable. We do have a modern hospital with modern and up-to-date equipment, keeping in mind that new equipment is being constantly updated as funds become available.

Mr. Speaker, we have also been fortunate to date that our medical services have not been extremely challenged by the effects of a natural disaster; for example, like the tsunami of 2004. Thirty of the 240 health clinics were destroyed in Aceh province, Indonesia, and 77 others were seriously damaged.

One can only imagine how devastating and helpless one must feel when there are no medical emergency services available. We all have a responsibility to protect and ensure our health and emergency services are protected and appreciated. This can be demonstrated by such simple tasks as respecting signs that identify an emergency route to the hospital, or pulling over to clear the right-of-way for an emergency vehicle, such as an ambulance or fire truck.

Today I also express my heartfelt thanks to all the dedicated, hard-working employees who work under tremendous stress and who sometimes put their own lives at risk but never give up. We have much to be thankful for.

Mahsi' cho.

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

Introduction of visitors.

Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

Are there any reports of committees?

Are there any petitions?

Are there any bills to be introduced?

Are there any notices of motion?

## NOTICES OF MOTION

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to support the findings of the Motion No. 542 consultation report done by the Yukon Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board and the Employment Standards Board, responding to Motion No. 542 of the fall 2008 sitting of the Legislative Assembly, by requesting that:

(1) the Yukon Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board and the Employment Standards Board work together within their existing framework of authority to appropriately address areas of general consensus;

(2) the Yukon Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board and the Employment Standards Board work together to ensure adequate safety, training, orientation and supervision of young workers; and

(3) the Yukon Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board and the Employment Standards Board conduct a review within five years to assess the effectiveness of any regulations resulting from this consultation and consider whether there is a need for a general minimum working age in the Yukon.

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

THAT this House urges the chair of the Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board and the chair of the Yukon Hospital Corporation to choose which portfolio he would like to continue with, as his position as chair of both corporations has become untenable, given the mess around exempting COR-certification for the builder of the staff residence and the medical services facility.

I give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Member for Riverdale South to choose which portfolio he would like to continue with as minister — either Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board or Health and Social Services — as his position as minister of both departments has become untenable given the mess around exempting COR-certification for the builder of the staff residence and the medical services facility.

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

THAT this House urges the Yukon government to require all contractors working on building projects for government departments and/or government corporations to have a certificate of recognition (COR) in order to ensure the highest level of worker safety and health on the job site.

**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: Certificate of recognition

**Mr. Mitchell:** I'd like to return to the topic we raised yesterday, and that is the double standard the government has for the awarding of contracts. There is a new requirement for bidding on government jobs. Companies must now be COR-certified if they want to bid. COR is an occupational health and safety certification program that improves safety on our job sites; however, the government has decided that companies bidding on the new residence at the hospital do not have to be COR-certified; in other words, a lower standard of safety will apply.

Yesterday the minister said he was fine with that. He has had a day to think about it. Is the minister still content to let lower standards apply on this job or will companies have to be COR-certified?

**Hon. Mr. Hart:** As I indicated yesterday, the Yukon Housing Corporation is not a government agency. It is not bound by the rules of government. It is a corporation and it is operated by a board of directors, and they make their own decisions with regard to items that are happening as outlined in their mandate.

**Mr. Mitchell:** Mr. Speaker, this is exactly why we are moving that this corporation should have to appear before this House. It is too easy to absolve responsibility. There is \$32 million in O&M funding alone going to the Yukon Hospital Corporation this year from this minister's department. Now this change was made at the eleventh hour. Companies were suddenly told that this requirement was being dropped. Mr. Speaker, the Yukon Party promised in their election platform to, "Maintain a level playing field in supporting small business and ensure that government funding or government actions do not foster unfair competition within the business community." Here is a perfect example of another broken promise — different standards are being applied to companies bidding on this job. Will the minister level the playing field and ensure that all companies are COR-certified?

**Hon. Mr. Lang:** In reply to the member opposite, we certainly take COR very seriously.

It's a three-year program and we're working with those corporations inside the Yukon to make sure that all of them can be COR-certified and able to bid on internal territorial government contracts. COR is all about workplace safety, and we are very serious about that, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Mitchell:** Well, Mr. Speaker, not serious enough. On the one hand, this government is putting out ads talking about how COR is a new program that's in place and all contracts need to have COR-certification for contractors to bid. On the other hand, they say they're working on it.

The chair of the Hospital Corporation is also the chair of the Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board. At WCB, he's busy promoting safety. At the Hospital Corporation, he's lowering the standards of safety and the minister is content to sit back and let it happen.

We were promised a level playing field by the Yukon Party; that promise is out the window. There's an easy way to fix the double standard. The Health and Social Services minister and the minister responsible for WCB need to ensure that companies that bid on the hospital contract are COR-certified.

Will he do that? I see the Premier wants to respond. Will he step in and make sure that certification is a requirement?

**Hon. Mr. Fentie:** The sinister plot that the Leader of the Official Opposition is articulating here on the floor of the Legislature is simply a non-reality. There is no such thing happening as a double standard. There is no such thing as lower safety standards on the contract that will be coming out from the Hospital Corporation in the near future in building that project. In fact, I think if the member took the time to review all the facts, he would quickly see that the chair of the Hospital Corporation has been very clear that the requirements for this project, when it comes to safety, will be as high as or higher than COR itself.

Mr. Speaker, the other point to be made here is the members opposite are referring to Yukon contractors. How does the member justify all those contractors out there who have not yet been able to become COR-certified, that this government will be helping to become certified so they're not made ineligible to do government work across this territory? I think the government is clear in its position: safety first; COR is a requirement,

but we will help those who are having a difficult time getting COR-certified.

### Speaker's statement

**Speaker:** Before you ask your next question, Leader of the Official Opposition — Hon. Premier, describing something as a “sinister plot” is going to lead to discord and I would ask the honourable member just to be careful with his verbiage, please.

You have the floor, Leader of the Official Opposition.

### Question re: Certificate of recognition

**Mr. Mitchell:** Mr. Speaker, let's try a question for the Minister of Highways and Public Works. His department oversees the awarding of most government contracts. It's his responsibility to ensure a level playing field for companies that bid on government work.

The government is currently in the process of awarding a contract for the Village of Carmacks' waste-water treatment plan. Bids had to be submitted by March 5. Can the Minister of Highways and Public Works tell this House if all the companies that bid are COR-certified?

**Hon. Mr. Lang:** In addressing the member opposite, from his remarks about the COR process, he obviously doesn't understand that it's a phased-in process that started in 2009 and will be complete in 2011.

We are committed here, in this House and in the territory, to work with all of the contracting community to bring them up to COR certification. This government makes that commitment here today. That is what we're going to do. We're following through with the three-year phasing in of COR, and that's exactly what we're doing.

**Mr. Mitchell:** According to the government's own Web site in the department, and according to the ads they ran in the paper last week, it had to be in place as of yesterday. The phase-in was supposed to be there for contracts over \$500,000. To bid on those contracts you had to be COR-certified — except, of course, on the hospital job, where the government has decided on a different approach.

Now in the case of the water treatment plant in Carmacks, at least one of the bidders — in fact, the low bid — is not COR-certified. They're in the process of getting it, but they have not yet achieved it. The contract was clear and the new rules were clear: you had to be certified to get the contract.

How does the minister intend to handle this situation? Does he plan to make another exception like the one on the contract with the hospital or will he actually be following the rules that he set out?

**Hon. Mr. Lang:** Again, I remind the member opposite that the COR process is a phased-in process, Mr. Speaker. All contractors are aware of it. All contractors have access to the COR process and we'll work with them as they move forward. As long as a contractor is in that process, Mr. Speaker, he is eligible to bid and work on territorial contracts. Mr. Speaker, that is all about being phased in. This program is being phased in over a three-year period. Individuals and corporations are in the process, Mr. Speaker, of getting COR certification. As long as they are in the process and working toward that, I see no

reason why they can't participate in the business community in Yukon.

**Mr. Mitchell:** Mr. Speaker, the minister should read the document I tabled yesterday from his Web site: phased approach, phase 1 — January 1, 2009 — contracts for construction valued at \$500,000 or greater. It doesn't say: try harder.

The government has already demonstrated with the hospital contract that the playing field is not level. It has done the same thing now in Carmacks where it appears another exception is going to be made. Companies want the rules to be applied fairly.

They bid, and they expect the government to hold up its end of the bargain by awarding contracts fairly. Instead, we're getting different standards on different contracts.

It's two issues, Mr. Speaker: first, there's the issue of safety for the workers. That issue should be the same for all workers on all job sites. The second issue is for safety on construction projects and fairness, and that's not being done either. The government is changing the rules at the last minute. Will the government ensure that the winning bidder was COR-certified when they bid for the job on this contract, as required?

**Hon. Mr. Lang:** I can't be clearer on this, Mr. Speaker. The issue of safety in the workplace is priority. We as a government have committed on the floor here this afternoon — and in the process, by having a phased-in approach, that we're committed to go to work with the contracting community to bring every contractor in the territory up to COR certification, and that's exactly what we're doing, Mr. Speaker, and we're doing it over a three-year period.

### Question re: Certificate of recognition

**Mr. Hardy:** I'm going to go back to the Minister of Health and Social Services, where it all started, in the question around this, and what I consider an extremely serious problem in the chain of command in what he expressed earlier on.

He indicated that the Yukon Hospital Corporation was not accountable to the Legislative Assembly. That is an unbelievable statement.

That Hospital Corporation is funded by taxpayers. We are elected by the taxpayers to make sure the spending is monitored and done properly. Every corporation is responsible to this Legislative Assembly and to the taxpayers. I can't believe that minister said that.

Now, I'm going to say something else. I believe that minister is an honourable person, and I believe he wants to do the right thing. Simply put around this argument: will he make sure that COR certification is brought forward on whoever wins that bid on the hospital project, no matter what the chair says?

**Hon. Mr. Hart:** I think it was mentioned in the House here that the Yukon Hospital Corporation will be looking at their bid process when it is out there, and they will be incorporating a safety management system to verify that it is in place.

Regardless of that situation, also, for the members opposite, the Occupational Health and Safety Board will be reviewing all of the projects throughout the Yukon and ensuring that appropriate safety measures are taking place throughout the workplace to ensure the safety of all workers participating in the construction.

**Mr. Hardy:** Mr. Speaker, is the minister saying that the chair of the Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board is going to review himself over at the Hospital Corporation and make a ruling on himself that it is all right for the Hospital Corporation to have lesser standards than anywhere else in this territory when it comes to workers' safety?

So he is switching his fight to protect workers' safety on a job site when he is in charge of a project on another board that he is in charge of. I want to remind this government that this government appoints those positions; therefore, those people are responsible back to this government. Once again, I'm going to put it very simply. Either the Premier can stand up and say he'll do it and make sure it is all cleared up and we can move on — or not — or the minister can make that promise on the floor today. It is very simple. It is that every project over \$500,000 — as stipulated — is COR-certified. That certification only takes about four weeks.

**Hon. Mr. Hart:** As I stated early, the Hospital Corporation is in charge of the project; they are the lead agency. They are a corporation and dealing with a situation, and they are in charge of the construction of that building. Now, they have indicated to us that the safety measure system will be put in place, and it will be equal to or greater than the current system that is currently in place. It is being handled through COR and/or through the occupational health and safety regulations.

**Mr. Hardy:** I really don't like asking this line of question. I like the minister across the way; I think he's an honourable person. I also like the chair of the Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board. I think they're both doing the best they can for this territory — but I do not like the optics around this. I do not like to think there is actually a double standard in the awarding of this contract. I do not like to think that some contractors got to somebody — some contractors who may not be COR-certified — to lobby on their behalf to waive the COR certification on a project.

Back in December, the chair of the Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board said that some companies appreciate COR and what COR provides, and there are some that have opposing views.

Can this government set a standard right now, and say, "We will make sure that whatever company gets that project will become COR-certified within the first couple of months."

### Speaker's statement

**Speaker:** Thank you. Before the honourable member answers the question, I'm going to exercise the same caution to the Leader of the Third Party as I did earlier to the Premier — that kind of description "got to somebody". Those are inappropriate terms and they will lead to discord, so please be careful.

Minister of Health and Social Services, please.

**Hon. Mr. Hart:** I guess it may be that the member opposite knows something I don't with regard to a couple of those statements but, in essence, I think that this government has indicated that it will ensure that all contracts that are being handled by this government will be under the COR certification for the \$500,000 and over, and the Minister of Highways and Public Works has already indicated that process. In addition,

we are working with small businesses to ensure that COR accreditation is going to take place, especially in smaller businesses that have the time to get ready for the next phase-in process, and we are going to assist those companies to ensure that, in the end, all companies are COR-certified.

### Question re: Bus service to Yukon College

**Mr. Edzerza:** Mr. Speaker, with regard to the seniors residence at 600 College Drive, on November 27, 2008, the minister said he understood there might be a couple of technical issues. I believe those hurdles can be overcome.

On March 31, 2009, he said: "I've raised this issue with the mayor. I've discussed different options with her." However, the minister failed to share information regarding the hurdles, or the different options discussed with the mayor.

Citizens want to know that seniors are given the support and respect they deserve. Will the Minister of Education now elaborate and put on the public record what the different options were that he and the mayor agreed to? Will he do that?

**Hon. Mr. Rouble:** When the Government of Yukon and the City of Whitehorse had the great opportunity to host the Canada Winter Games, we realized there was an opportunity there to create an investment in the community that would have a legacy for decades to come. By using the funds allocated for housing in that event, we invested that with additional government dollars to build residences at Yukon College. These residences are used for seniors and also for students.

There are now some great residences up there, which I believe are all filled and are now homes to literally dozens of Yukoners. I agree with the member opposite — I would like to see the City of Whitehorse transit service extend its coverage, not stopping in the traffic circle in front of the college, but continuing their transportation through to provide additional service to the residence buildings — not only the seniors building, but also the student building.

Again, after the member opposite raised the issue with me, I discussed it with the mayor. I would also encourage him to discuss the issue with the Mayor of Whitehorse, who does have the responsibility for the Whitehorse transit service. This government has invested millions of dollars in helping the City of Whitehorse acquire additional buses; we've certainly helped the city make their investment in public transport —

**Speaker:** Thank you.

**Mr. Edzerza:** The Premier is good at bailing his ministers out, and I think he needs to help this minister again. There are 42 units occupied at the seniors residence at 600 College Drive. Some have single occupants, but there are also some with two occupants per unit. This means there could possibly be 60 to 80 seniors plus living in this complex at any given time.

Needless to say, this is a very large number of senior citizens we are talking about here. I believe the record in *Hansard* to date will clearly show that there has been nothing but talk to date with regard to this issue.

My question to the minister is this: will the minister now put some action to his words, because it is quite clear to all that talk is not solving this issue?

**Hon. Mr. Rouble:** I appreciate the question coming from the member opposite; he and I agree on this topic. One of the challenges from government — that I'm sure the member opposite is aware of — is working with the other entities that we have a responsibility to work with. That means working with Crown corporations, boards, municipal governments, and other orders of government. We don't always agree. The Government of Yukon is responsible for those areas it has a responsibility for. There are other governments — in this case the City of Whitehorse — that have a responsibility. We don't always agree with the decisions made.

Mr. Speaker, we have to respect that as being a responsible order of government. We have to respect there will be disagreements. The Government of Yukon and the federal government have provided significant funds to the City of Whitehorse. This government has contributed — I've lost track of the figure, but it has been enough to require additional energy efficient buses for the City of Whitehorse.

And, Mr. Speaker, I will continue to say that I would encourage the City of Whitehorse transit department to continue their transit service to address the needs of the residents who live in both the seniors facility and the student facility at Yukon College place.

**Mr. Edzerza:** Mr. Speaker, the facts are that the Yukon government did make the decision to make this complex a seniors residence.

Mr. Speaker, I have pictures I took yesterday of the deplorable condition of the sidewalks and roads going from the seniors residence to the bus stop. Unbelievable. That is why I took these pictures, and I want to send these across to the minister, because he doesn't appear to have time to drive up to the college to look at it.

I also walked from the bus stop to the seniors residence. It took 20 minutes. Now, that is quite a walk for those who are in good physical condition, let alone packing their bags of groceries. Ten minutes one way, from the seniors residence to the bus stop; 10 minutes back.

Mr. Speaker, I wonder what the outcome would be if one of the seniors who was walking to the bus stop fell and broke a leg or hip at 9:00 a.m., in the dark of winter, at 20 or 30 below, and froze to death before being found. I might add that I pray this will never happen.

**Speaker:** You're done. Thank you, sir.

**Hon. Mr. Kenyon:** For the member opposite, he's got a few of his numbers wrong. There are actually 48 units there, and 41 of the units have vehicles. But we do realize that some people who don't have vehicles do want to take the bus from time to time, and we encourage that. This government encourages the use of public transportation. That's why we have been involved with the purchase of energy efficient buses, which we gave to the City of Whitehorse.

It is a City of Whitehorse issue; this is something that should be done, but I have to admit I scratch my head from time to time. During the Canada Winter Games, the buses went through there to serve the students quite nicely, the same buses. Why could the buses make those turns in 2007, but they can't make those turns today?

It is a city issue and we will continue to work with the city to get them to arrange for transport through there. But I have to admit, why did the buses make those turns two years ago but not today?

#### **Question re: Certificate of recognition**

**Mr. Mitchell:** I have more questions for the Health and Social Services minister. These past couple of days in this Assembly, the Health and Social Services minister has been indicating he doesn't feel responsible for decisions that are being made by the Yukon Hospital Corporation. The implication is that we should be taking those issues up with them. This is a big concern for us because it's an issue of accountability.

We're elected to look after the money on behalf of taxpayers; we're elected to review the budget and debate it; but now we're being told this is stand-alone.

Recently the government announced they were going to move responsibility for the Watson Lake health centre, the Watson Lake hospital, under the auspices of the Yukon Hospital Corporation. Does that mean that soon we'll be asking questions about the Watson Lake hospital and will be told, "That's not our concern, ask the Hospital Corporation"?

Well, how do we do that?

Mr. Speaker, last week we tabled a notice of motion requesting that the chair of the Yukon Hospital Corporation be brought before this Assembly to appear at least once annually to answer questions. Will the Minister of Health and Social Services guarantee that will happen? Will he make that promise?

**Hon. Mr. Hart:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the member opposite, yes.

**Mr. Mitchell:** Well, we're getting somewhere, Mr. Speaker. Will he be bringing the chair of the Hospital Corporation before this Assembly during this current sitting — the spring sitting of this Assembly — so that we can ask questions about the issues we have raised today and the issues we've been raising over the past weeks?

**Hon. Mr. Hart:** I indicated that we'll be looking forward to that process coming to the House. Once the Hospital Corporation has completed its reviews, we have a memorandum of understanding with the Yukon Hospital Corporation for the transfer of the Watson Lake hospital. That investigation is underway. If it proves to be successful and the Yukon Hospital Corporation wants to participate and take over the Hospital Corporation then, yes, we will look at requesting that the Hospital Corporation, through its chair, visit the House on an annual basis to account for its expenditures there.

**Mr. Mitchell:** The minister, in response to the first question, gave what sounded like a clear answer. He just said yes. In the second response, he said that after the Hospital Corporation and the government have completed a review, after that process is done, if they decide to take responsibility for the Watson Lake hospital, then they'll look at the process of bringing the chair before this Assembly. We're asking for the chair to come before this Assembly, during this sitting, while we're debating the main estimates — during the budget debate, not depending on the outcome of a review.

We've already seen more than enough concern over the contracts. We've seen the concern over a temporary assignment for 13 months for a trial for the Watson Lake hospital. Can the minister commit — regardless of the outcome of a review, which can take we don't know how long — to bring the chair before this Assembly, so that we can ask questions of the chair, like we do with the Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board? Or do we have to ask the questions of that chair when he's here on behalf of the Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board?

**Hon. Mr. Hart:** As I indicated, we are in an agreement with the Yukon Hospital Corporation, and review work is underway, and we will proceed with that agreement. We're working with them to ensure, again, for the member opposite, that the end product is good health care for all Yukoners.

### Question re: Burwash Landing school

**Mr. McRobb:** The government has skated around the issue of building a school at Burwash Landing ever since its former Education minister publicly announced the project in a budget a few years ago. But the Premier intervened and changed that project to something else, which eventually led the minister to do the honourable thing and resign.

Throughout it all, building a school at Burwash Landing has remained a top-priority issue for the Kluane First Nation. In fact, Chief Sheldon publicly raised this matter again yesterday. The community wants to change the planned community building project to a school, but the government so far isn't willing to accommodate that request. Why not?

**Hon. Mr. Fentie:** The Member for Kluane has just made some statements that are quite suspect in nature. The government received from the Kluane First Nation a request — not only a request in writing, but also a presentation of a plan, a schematic drawing, a design of a centre they wanted to build in their community. It was not a school; it was what we called at the time a youth-elders centre for community use.

The government responded to that request and has allocated funds for that project.

The funds have been willingly accepted by the First Nation for some time now and some of the monies have been spent on the project that they requested of the government. Are we going to build a school in the community of Burwash Landing? No, not at this time, as we've been very clear with the Kluane First Nation. The next school that this government will be building is a new school to replace the existing F.H. Collins school.

**Mr. McRobb:** Mr. Speaker, it's time to move beyond the rhetoric. There's a solution close at hand — change the planned project to a school. The pad is poured; the power line is in place; the project plan already has a library and daycare designed within and it's already budgeted. The chief has said changing the facility to a school won't require any changes to the building shell. The First Nation is also willing to do a land-swap with the government to accommodate the project change and has requested it be delayed for another year to allow this to happen.

Again this year, all of the students attending the school in Destruction Bay are from Burwash Landing. Each day they

must bus back and forth on the Alaska Highway. The Premier has a scheduled conference call with the chief tomorrow afternoon.

What will he do to accommodate the community's request for a project change?

**Hon. Mr. Fentie:** Mr. Speaker, let me repeat what I have just stated to the Member for Kluane. Is this government building a school in Burwash Landing? Not at this time. The next school the government will be building is a replacement for the existing F.H. Collins school. That is the plan for new schools in the Yukon.

The Kluane First Nation made a request of this government some time ago to build a community facility, which we deemed or called a youth-elder facility. Upon that request, the government dedicated fiscal resources to that project. The First Nation willingly accepted those fiscal resources. They have expended some of those resources. No, the government is not going to build a school in Burwash Landing.

**Mr. McRobb:** How much longer must we continue to raise this matter?

The community of Burwash Landing has expressed itself repeatedly on this issue for several years now. Each year, people mention it to the Premier during his budget tour. The Legislature has received a petition in support of this new school and, as mentioned, a former Yukon Party education minister even announced this school in a previous budget.

We have an opportunity before us to finally resolve this matter. There's a project that's been budgeted for years that still hasn't been built.

The Kluane First Nation has requested it to be changed to a school. This would require very little additional expense and no changes to the shell of the building. The Premier changed the project design for a building in Watson Lake; he can do it in Burwash Landing too. Will he at least reconsider his position before tomorrow's phone call?

**Hon. Mr. Fentie:** For the Member for Kluane to put on the floor of this House that there was a school budgeted for Burwash Landing, should be retracted. But we will take the professional course here and repeat what the member has been told, what the First Nation has been told, as far back as when that member was actually in a government and the same request was made and the same response given.

Mr. Speaker, the Kluane First Nation requested of this government that the government invest in a project that they put before us. It was not a school. It was what we called at the time a youth-elders centre. We willingly accepted that request and provided fiscal resources which were accepted by the First Nation. They have expended some of those resources on this project. This project is being built on First Nation land, number one. Secondly, we have a public school already in the area — it is in Destruction Bay.

We've provided the equipment to have children travel to that public school. The public school has a Department of Education teacher in it. We're not going to build a school in Burwash at this time. The only school we're building next is a replacement for F.H. Collins.

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

### Opposition private members' business

**Mr. McRobb:** Pursuant to Standing Order 14.2(3), I would like to identify the items standing in the name of the Official Opposition to be called on Wednesday, April 8, 2009. They are Motion No. 719, standing in the name of the Member for Porter Creek South, and Motion No. 220, standing in the name of the Member for Kluane.

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

### ORDERS OF THE DAY

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

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

*Motion agreed to*

*Speaker leaves the Chair*

### COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

**Chair:** Order please. Committee of the Whole will now come to order. The matter before the Committee is Bill No. 15, *First Appropriation Act, 2009-10*, Department of Community Services. Do members wish to take a brief recess?

**All Hon. Members:** Agreed.

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

*Recess*

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

### Bill No. 15 — *First Appropriation Act, 2009-10* — continued

#### Department of Community Services — *continued*

**Chair:** The matter before the Committee is Bill No. 15, *First Appropriation Act, 2009-10*, Department of Community Services, which is Vote 51. We will now continue with general debate. Mr. Cardiff, you have the floor.

**Mr. Cardiff:** Yesterday, we were talking about water as a human right. We were talking about the need for the projects that the government was going forward on, whether it was the Marsh Lake fill system or arsenic treatment in several communities. We believe that these projects are important projects. We asked the government how they prioritize them and I was informed that is done on an application basis.

I think it would be helpful if the government made communities a priority where they know that water quality issues, or water supply issues, are important in those communities, where it is an issue for them, where they are having difficulties with water quality, where they are having difficulties with water supply. Mr. Chair, I think that that is one area where the

government could do a better job of communicating with those communities and ensuring that they know what the process is, so that they can raise their standard of living in their communities, and so that they can avail themselves and apply for funding, or apply to have the government go forward with projects that will improve the health and well-being of their communities.

I'd like to talk today a little bit about this government's commitment to the solid-waste strategy. We had a discussion here two short weeks ago — and it was a short discussion, too — and the minister has gone on record as saying that the burning of solid waste is a bad thing and that it can't continue.

The government, at the very least, two weeks ago, gave the pretense of good intentions, and that they would — when I hear the minister make comments like, "We can't continue to burn solid waste," I think that his intentions are good or, at least, they appear to be good. But we all know, and the Minister of Highways and Public Works can tell you, where good intentions will get you.

When I look at what is being proposed or what is being taken out to communities, the reason why I'm concerned is that when you look at the request for proposals to go out and actually develop a new solid-waste strategy, one of the terms of reference — the instruction in the request for proposals was not to raise expectations in the communities.

I've talked to people just this past weekend in some of those communities and they were disturbed by that as well. But what they're even more disturbed by, Mr. Chair, are the proposals and the presentations that the government is making to communities as we speak. When you look at the presentation that is being given in communities around the solid-waste disposal strategy, the government has a concern — or is indicating they have a concern — about the carbon footprint. What they're indicating is that actually when you look at 16 sites where there's a burning vessel or an open trench, the carbon footprint is actually less than the carbon footprint of the two transfer stations.

What I would like to know, what I would like explained — and I think this needs to be explained to people at the public meetings — is the methodology for arriving at these figures by the consultants — how they did that. Even more important, the government has chosen to focus on the costs of solid-waste management; they've decided to focus on the carbon footprint of how solid-waste management is carried out. There is nothing in this presentation that indicates measurement of air emissions, whether it's toxicity or what's being emitted, how bad it is, how prolonged it is. In talking with people in some of the communities where there are burning vessels or open trench burning, I've learned that the fires smoulder. The fires continue to smoulder in the burning vessel, and they continue to emit emissions — toxic, noxious, bad-for-your-health emissions. People are concerned about that. They are concerned about their health, and they are concerned about their neighbours' health; they are concerned about their children's health; they are concerned about the health of the wildlife and the land and the water and how that affects where they live.



So the government, in the presentation they are giving to communities about the solid-waste disposal strategy, seems to me to be not well balanced with people's concerns and what people have indicated that their concerns are. People's concerns are about their health. I can understand how the government is saying — you know, if they want to talk about the carbon footprint and what it costs to transfer the garbage from transfer stations to one regional landfill site, then there are ways to improve the economy of that and improve the carbon footprint by including more transfer stations, which would require fewer trips back and forth, and hauling more less frequently would be one option.

The other question that a lot of people have a concern about is this: how does the government measure the carbon footprint? How did they actually arrive at these figures? How do you arrive at the figures that will tell you what the carbon footprint of a burn-and-trench facility is or a facility with a burning vessel? Because it's not explained in the presentation, people are finding it hard to believe that these figures are realistic and they actually reflect the actual facts of the situation.

So the minister has some answering to do. I hope there is some clarity that can be provided around that. There is money in the budget for the solid-waste strategy, but there is no money — and the minister's commitment the other day, and his statement, was that burning can't continue, that it's wrong to continue burning.

But there is no money here in the budget that would indicate that the minister is prepared to make some infrastructure investments in communities to turn those solid-waste facilities in those communities into transfer stations, when it would be relatively easy and relatively simple to do that. Or there doesn't appear to be any money for communities to even hire and supervise and oversee what goes into the burning vessels, because there is no control over what gets burned in the burning vessels.

So that is another major concern that I heard this past weekend, that people would like to see burning end — thank you, Mr. Chair. They would like to see the burning of solid waste totally end in their communities but the other concern they have regards what is actually being burnt in these burning vessels, because there is no control. It is about the health of the community. It is about social development in a community and it is about economic development in a community. By providing jobs in some of these smaller communities, the minister would have the opportunity to actually contribute even on a small basis to the economic well-being of those communities — by creating jobs in those communities. I think that is important.

You know, when I started my comments yesterday, I listed off all of the areas that Community Services is involved in and there is a multitude of them.

This is just one small area where the Department of Community Services is actually involved — one of many it's involved in — in the everyday lives and what happens in a community. Community Services, in my mind — and I believe the objectives of the department — is to improve communities and deliver services in communities and contribute to making the lives of people living in those communities healthy and produc-

tive, and making those communities places where people want to live.

I can tell the minister that, when I talked to people this past weekend about this subject, they were concerned that their communities weren't places where people wanted to come and live. There's a need to address this issue and address it quickly.

The solid-waste strategy is due to be completed by June 2009, according to the documents that are being presented at these community meetings, and the minister is going to have those recommendations when this study is completed.

It's interesting because, when you look at the RFP, the actual completion date was much earlier. So this is a project that not only has gone over on its time, it has also gone over on its budget. It started out at \$124,000, and it's up over \$300,000 for this project now — that's my understanding when you look at the Web site.

There are some concerns about how this particular project, this solid-waste management strategy, is being managed, and how far out of hand it has gone.

I would like the minister to respond to this, and to answer a few of the questions that I've raised, and to give me an idea of how fast a response he's prepared to make as a minister, to ensure that the health of communities is looked after when he gets these responses.

Can he commit to a fairly fast turnaround to ensure that burning ceases at all solid-waste facilities in the Yukon as soon as possible?

**Hon. Mr. Lang:** This process we committed to was expanded to the eight municipalities as well as the other solid waste that the government is responsible for, so we took it even further and that's where the resources were added. Without doing an overview of all of our solid waste in the Yukon, the issue the member speaks of was not going to be solved. We had to work with all our communities and all of the unincorporated solid-waste areas that we're responsible for, and they're quite extensive. Community Services and the territorial government manage 20 solid-waste facilities. The Department of Highways and Public Works is responsible for three; and then there are nine community sites that are managed by either a First Nation or a municipality. This is a very large, expanded study that we are doing extensively throughout the territory.

The member opposite was talking about how we went about this. First of all, we looked at the environmental footprint and that was reviewed, and the draft form is coming in this month so that we can put that out for public consultation. In conjunction with that, the air emissions study is being started — exactly what the member opposite is talking about — so we can run a comparison on air emission and also the footprint issue, which is going to be looked at and brought forward. Of course, there is public consultation taking place on how individuals or municipalities or, in the case of unincorporated communities, visualize their solid waste being managed. That in itself is going to be done in June.

Now, for me to stand in the House and second-guess what comes out of all this would be folly. That is why we've spent the resources to hire the individuals to do not only the solid-waste footprint throughout the whole Yukon but also a very

important component which is the air emissions. This is exactly what the member opposite was talking about. That will be done by June 1.

Public consultation will be done, and then we will put a business plan together on how we address these issues. I've stood up in this House many, many times and defended the fact that we have to do something about solid waste in our communities. I've travelled in our communities. I understand that this has got to be managed better.

But, in saying that, these decisions are bigger than I. I have to go out, as a department, and hire the expertise to give me the proper information on how the plan moves forward in how we manage this. Also, Mr. Chair, I have an obligation, and I think we were elected to do this. The consultation end of it is very important. How do the people in these communities visualize managing solid waste? It is a big question.

Now, as far as the resources are concerned, this government will resource what we can to move forward on this issue. But to stand up in the House and ask, "Are we going to put a gatekeeper on every solid-waste situation in the territory?" — that will come out of this consultation. That will come out of this expert corporation we hired to do the overview, and we will make the adjustments we have to make to put this solid-waste issue behind us.

Solid waste in the territory is an issue in every community. It touches every community. People live around our solid-waste areas. Solid wastes, in some communities, were put out in locations that were further away than at the beginning, so it could be managed more easily, and we grew around that. So, those issues have to be dealt with.

As far as the municipalities are concerned, we have to also work with them. How do they visualize managing their solid waste? Then, Mr. Chair, we have to work with Environment on the recycled items. How do we combine solid waste and recyclable items? How do we work with our communities? There are a lot of questions to be answered.

This government has made a commitment to go ahead with this. I am going to follow through with what we committed to do. I've not only made that commitment here in the House, but I've made it out in the communities. I've lived in these communities; I understand exactly what these people are going through. But once we fix this, and once we invest the money on the ground, I want it to be done properly. I want it to be done at a high enough level that we can defend it in the House, through science, through expertise, and through consultation — and that we get a buy-in from our communities.

Our municipalities manage their own solid-waste sites. That cost is borne by the communities. How do we get a buy-in from the municipalities? How do we make the impact of what we do as a territory? That is why when we went out the door with this, we went out and were managing an overview of our sites that we are responsible for and we discovered through consultation that we couldn't ignore the fact that there were eight or nine communities out there that manage their own sites. So we went back to the drawing board and involved those communities to make sure that they themselves — this overview will be part and parcel of this final overview. When the

member opposite talks about the resources, the resources are being invested to do just exactly what the member opposite has been talking about this afternoon.

My job as minister is to work with the department and make sure that we have timelines and make sure that we're serious about managing these solid-waste sites because they are an issue. Whether you go to Old Crow or the municipality of Watson Lake — all of these places have a question about solid waste.

The problem you have is there is not one answer for each community. Every community is a little different. How do we work with Old Crow, Mr. Chair? How do we work with Watson Lake? How do we work with the City of Whitehorse? The City of Whitehorse absorbs a lot of solid waste from not only the city but the surrounding area. That is being managed internally in the City of Whitehorse.

Now if you look at solid waste in a place like Ontario, the city of Toronto — I was reading an article, and they truck a lot of their solid waste to Michigan. Michigan somehow handles the solid waste from parts of Toronto. Again, decisions made, and the cost borne by the City of Toronto that is an issue. But as the member opposite was talking about on the floor here today — what are we prepared to do? We're prepared to invest in this study. The draft is coming out on the footprint issue. The mission study is going out starting fairly soon, hopefully, so we can get that report back by the first of June. We're going out the gate to again talk with the affected communities and get input from them. When I look at the overview of those studies — the three: the footprint, the emissions and the consultation part of it — we can make a solid decision for solid-waste management in the territory.

It is a huge issue. Not only is it solid waste but, as I said, we have recyclable items. There are issues now where, for the items we recycle, there's no market for them. Through the downturn, we have problems selling our cardboard and things like that. How do we address that?

We can't start a recycling program in our communities, and then wake up one morning and cancel it. We have to carry these things on, because they're good, not only for our environment but they're good training and discipline for all Yukoners to understand we have to manage whatever waste we create.

We all know that; you just have to look into your garbage. Look into your recycling bins and see what we create as a society. For example, buy razors and find out you get six razors in a cardboard container covered with plastic that you have to use a pair of scissors to open up. Those are the kinds of things our society is creating just by being on Earth.

I look at it and think, what's wrong with the cardboard?

I know we have to keep the razors together, but why do we need the plastic covering? But those are questions that we as a government have to put into the equation when we come up with this master plan on how we're going to move forward and manage solid waste in the territory. I agree with the member opposite on burning. I mean, you only have to live downwind from it, Mr. Chair.

Health and all of the other issues that come out of that kind of process — this is going to answer some of those questions,

or all of those questions, hopefully. But there is more than just solid waste here. There is discipline on our communities, on how we manage a dump site, and like the member opposite talked about, how do we get people to stop burning in a dump?

Even if we have a transfer station, we have issues with management on what happens on the ground, on a daily basis. So maybe we as a government and as communities will see fewer dump sites and maybe we'll see more labour-intensive solid-waste management. Those are the kinds of things that will come out of this study. But we can't leave a lot of these sites unmanned because of the management skills of the individuals who use the sites.

At some of these sites, the government doesn't have a burn policy. It doesn't mean that people don't burn. They go there and they light a fire; they have some papers that they don't want people to see, or they have private stuff that they decide should be burned, and they go ahead and do it. Those are the kinds of things that we have to address, and we're willing to do that. This study will give us the tools and the professional background, first of all, to know where we're at, and then the next thing we have to know is where we're going. At that point, then we have to resource it, because it will take resources. That is what we have to do; we have to find out where we're at, where we're going to go, and then what it's going to take to resource it to get it to where we want to see it.

I'd like to thank the department. This is work, and when we add another eight communities on to it, and expect the timelines to be shrunk down, I have to thank the individuals out there on the ground, because we've added another eight communities — by the way, eight of the bigger solid-waste areas in the territory.

So as I said, the territorial government is responsible for many; Highways and Public Works is responsible and so are communities. We will do the good work. We look forward to doing something in the fall and being able to make an announcement here on a go-forward plan. We look forward to putting the resources together to address the plan as it unfolds.

**Mr. Cardiff:** It is interesting that the work is continuing, but meanwhile the government is presenting information that sounds like it is incomplete, because that is what I was asking. The minister says they are doing emission studies; meanwhile they are presenting information out there about carbon footprints and costs without having the air emission studies completed. So they are going around to communities and consulting with them about infrastructure dollars and the solid-waste strategy, but they are not giving people all of the information. That is a concern, and it is one of the concerns that people had when I talked to them this past weekend.

I would like to, as well, talk a little bit about the FireSmart program.

In the audit of contracts that was done a couple of years ago, there were a number of recommendations made about the FireSmart program and the way it was administered. It suggested the department should re-examine the design and objectives of the FireSmart program and develop performance measures so the projects were better managed. Part of it is about

how the department interfaces with the communities that are doing these.

The projects are sponsored by community associations. From my experience, I don't think that local advisory councils or hamlet councils are able to manage these projects.

There were concerns about the reporting of the outcomes of these projects. There has been some frustration by communities with administering these programs and the fact they have to deal with government departments. These projects I believe are subject to YESAA approvals, so they have to go through that. There needs to be kind of a one-window approach as opposed to having to deal with YESAA applications. Then they have to deal with tendering processes and deal with contractors. There needs to be some assurance that when they enter into these agreements with the department and with these contractors, that it's going to be a good experience and the work is going to get done.

It is a lot to ask of volunteer organizations to supervise and oversee some of these projects. In a number of communities, there has been frustration expressed over the amount of work involved. In some instances, there are even safety concerns. I know in Mount Lorne, there is one area in the Wolf Creek area where the blow-down poses a risk to the community because the trees have been down and drying out for a number of years but the liability to go in and do that work is something that the community association wouldn't be able to take on.

I am just wondering if the minister can tell us what improvements have been made to the administration of the FireSmart program.

If he has got some information that he can provide by legislative return about what steps have been taken to improve the management of that program, to make it easier for communities to participate and make it so they don't have to deal with as many departments, when it comes to permitting, and YESAA applications, and to contracting — and what assistance the department is prepared to provide to ensure that inspections are done and that work is completed. It seems to be a little bit more than volunteer organizations are able to do.

**Hon. Mr. Lang:** This is a very popular program and the demand is certainly there. We as a government have committed another \$500,000 for this fiscal year. It will be \$1.5 million. But I will remind the member opposite that it is driven by applications. Those applications are made.

Again, YESAA is a federal law. There is a review in process right now — the five-year review. I would also like to defend not only the program, but the individuals who work on the program.

We are aware of the capabilities of different organizations in the communities. I personally know from the Porter Creek situation in the past — I don't know what they've done in the last five or six years — that the city would work with us on the application and manage it. So I understand the burden put on these community organizations can be quite burdensome.

In saying that, we are talking about public money and a process, and the process we can help with internally in the government. We also have a policing process and do an audit to

make sure that taxpayers are getting value for money spent. So there is an internal process we work on.

In the past, the smaller communities have depended on — not only for the FireSmart program, but it does bode well for communities in a timely fashion, when there isn't as much work available as there is during different times of the year. So it has been an engine for economic development in the communities.

In saying that, the main focus is on FireSmarting our communities. Certainly, on a safety issue — these are some of the questions a member opposite could address to the Department of Education. I know that the college, the Department of Education, puts on power saw safety programs, work internally within the department. We are very concerned that safety procedures are followed on these issues.

This program, which started many years ago with a very small budget, has grown to a \$1.5-million commitment by this government. In saying that, I certainly work with the department and the individuals that manage this to make sure that the FireSmart programs, the applications, are addressed, and also the capacity issues are addressed.

By the way, Mr. Chair, over the years, people have become more and more comfortable with the application process, so they understand as a community how they can work with it. It's not as frightening as it was, let's say, 10 or 15 years ago, when people had to go out and learn the process.

It has definitely become more user-friendly over the life of the program. That doesn't mean there are not issues, because people change and situations change but most communities and organizations that make application have a bit of history in it. Certainly, the department and the individuals who have run FireSmart over the years have addressed some of the issues the member has talked about. Safety is an issue. The issue about communities that haven't got the strength on the application side — how do we help them? Also, how do we monitor at the end of the day the work done? They have to put a business plan together. Of course, we monitor that to make sure the work that's done or the work plan is finished. All of those things are addressed internally.

It's not a perfect system, Mr. Chair, but I think it's something the communities have grown to appreciate. Of course, when you drive through the community, you can certainly see the benefit of a FireSmart program, because it stands out when you drive through these smaller communities. It's a good program and it's well received in the communities. I encourage the department to work as much as they can with the individual groups and the municipalities to minimize the obligations on their part to get the work done, and also that at the end of the day that the work is monitored and there is a process to monitor value for dollar in all individual programs that are out there.

I remind the member opposite, Mr. Chair, that the uptake on this has been fairly — it has grown over the last seven years and that is why you see another \$500,000 in the budget. As we move out with those resources, we will be working with the affected communities and groups to make sure that all of those internal standards are met and that any help they need is forthcoming by the department or by the individuals who go out and

work in the field to make sure that safety is being addressed and applications are coming in in a timely fashion and that the applications are properly done so that they aren't sent back and forth over a period of time. I would like to make sure that we make sure that organizations, when they send the application, have as much of the information that is needed for the department to make a decision — and that comes from education — and certainly that we have a process to monitor the investment for Yukon because, again, it's there for FireSmart, and to mitigate any issues we have with forest fires in our smaller communities.

It's a successful program, and this government is committed to work with the individuals or groups, and also the governments that take advantage of this program to make it as good an experience as possible for them to mitigate the fire threat all our communities in the territory have.

**Mr. Cardiff:** I appreciate what the minister said. There are some concerns from volunteer organizations about administering FireSmart projects. One of the questions I asked — and maybe the minister didn't hear me; maybe if he has time, he can have a discussion over his family Easter dinner about this, because I know there is a possibility it could come up.

If he wanted to bring it up, he could probably have that discussion about whether or not the Department of Community Services, through wildland fire management — whether or not the minister is willing, and the department is able and willing to do this — could administer some of these FireSmart projects on behalf of communities where there is a demonstrated need for the work to take place and it's identified in FireSmart plans, but it's beyond the ability of communities to administer the project. Is that a possibility?

**Hon. Mr. Lang:** This, again, is application driven, and we will work with those applicants and get the job done. It is applicant driven, so we work with the communities, or we work with individual groups, but we are certainly not saying no to helping those individual groups or municipalities with their issues about how to manage the FireSmart program.

We do have professionals in the department review the projects so that they can work with those applicants to make sure that they're ready and able to go to work and oversee this. We don't just abandon the individual out in the field. We do have individuals out there to work with them, so it's not an issue of putting the application in and then at the end of the day when it's done, or supposed to be done, we show up on the job site. There are individuals to work with these groups, and as they work themselves through it, if they need help, we certainly aren't beyond helping them.

**Mr. Cardiff:** I know that the department supports these community organizations, but there are some who feel that these organizations actually are like another level of — not bureaucracy, but another level of administration that's actually unneeded, even. But the concept, I guess, is that in some communities — and I believe it's referenced in the audit of contracts — community associations or non-profit associations applied for the funds and then didn't even actually end up administering the funds or the projects.

There's some concern that these aren't easy projects to manage and administer, that there's a lot of paperwork, and that it would be more efficient if the government would just administer some of the projects themselves, save the admin fee and ensure the work was done. In the past, there have been examples of where wildland fire management has participated in these FireSmart projects and assisted in making sure the work was done on the ground with their own personnel. There have been examples where they've actually managed the project, and they've been tasked with doing jobs other than what their primary jobs are during the fire season.

It would mean keeping some of these people employed for a longer period of time after the fire season ended. It is work that they are used to doing and capable of doing. It would be of great assistance to communities if that were possible.

I don't know — the minister didn't sound like he was open to that but I am just offering it one more time.

**Hon. Mr. Lang:** I think, Mr. Chair, having community support on any issue is very important, whether it is the ski club in Watson Lake, the Porter Creek Community Association. It is all very well to talk about what we can do as a senior government but I think to go and work in the communities on a program like this — it gets buy-in from the community. They certainly are aware of the process. It does build capacity in the community and that is important.

Certainly, again I say, it is an issue that is very popular in the communities and we are not beyond helping the group of individuals. We are not shutting out any community. We encourage the community to get together as a group, whether it is a skidoo organization or a ski group saying we need this work to be done. We'll work with them on the application and we'll provide the support and assistance they need. We have done that in the past and we'll do that in the future.

But I don't think that we on this side of the House recommend that we cut out that part of the FireSmart where it's driven by application of citizens of the communities, whether it's a municipality or whether it's a First Nation. That is very, very important. So when the member opposite says that, I don't agree with that, Mr. Chair. But I agree with FireSmart. I agree with working with the communities.

I have worked on FireSmart projects so I understand how the process works and I understand that, when we put our first application out, it was a bit of a learning experience. But after we did our first as a group — as a ski club — after that we put them in on a yearly or over a two or three-year period — and it all fell together. When we had an issue, Mr. Chair, we phoned the department. There were people on the ground who helped us through issues. But that was driven by the community or the community groups. It works; it's popular; so let's work with our communities on the FireSmart program and not complicate it any more than it is.

Again I remind the member that it is public money. There's a process for how we handle public money and part of it is a \$1.5-million commitment to go to work in the communities, whether it's a municipality or First Nation government, and work with them on the FireSmart issue, but we do have applications — it's application driven — and I would remind

the member opposite that we will assist and will help organizations or municipalities or First Nations that have issues with how the process works.

It has been successful; there's not a community in the territory that hasn't really been touched by a FireSmart program. It does work; there have been more applications than we had resources. This government put another \$500,000 into the program — that's a 33-percent increase in 12 months. That's how much demand is out there by these organizations, municipalities and First Nations to work on the FireSmart program.

We're looking forward to the coming season; we're looking forward to the investment being put on the ground, and we're looking forward to helping the applicants move through it as quickly as possible, as efficiently as possible and, at the end of the day, get the work done that the FireSmart plan has assigned.

In the past it has been very successful, and I have no reason to believe that it will be less successful when we add a 33-percent increase to the budget. This is a good program. This is good news for Yukoners. This is investing in Yukon. This is investing in our municipalities, First Nations and unincorporated communities. This is good. This is a very solid program. We will help, and we will assist on the ground to maximize the dollars invested and, by the way, help our communities learn how the process works if, in fact, they haven't participated in the past. We do have people available to walk them through it and to simplify it for them, so that it's not as complicated as it appears.

**Mr. Cardiff:** The minister obviously isn't listening. I never said they should go in and do FireSmart where they think it needs to be done without the support of the community. What I was asking the minister was whether or not they would manage the projects if they were asked by the community. Instead, he goes on and on and on. So, listen to the questions.

I have some other questions. We'll move from FireSmart to volunteer fire departments and fire services. I notice that the government is purchasing a fire truck for Ross River, and that's a welcome addition in that community, I'm sure, as I know it was in Mount Lorne and as it has been in Golden Horn and in many other communities as well. The trucks that move from community to community when the new trucks are bought are much appreciated.

I'd like to know for sure — I know that it came up as an issue in Golden Horn when the trucks were replaced there, that it became difficult to get the vehicle into the existing facility. It's good to know that they're purchasing fire trucks for communities. I'm just wondering if there is a plan to upgrade or replace fire halls around the Yukon Territory.

I know that there are some instances where the pressure on these facilities has become a lot greater in recent years, typically before you had a pumper and you had a tanker. The idea was that you would respond to a fire and you would take the pumper and you'd take the tanker. Now more pressure is being placed on some of these facilities because they are first responders. They are first responders to highway accidents and therefore they have first-response vehicles. Some of them have

ambulances. Some of them have first-response vehicles to respond to wildland fire situations.

Some of the facilities around the Yukon need more space and they need more equipment. That is always a request that is out there. I'm just wondering if there is a plan, if it's written down on paper, that the minister could provide to members on this side of the House about what the plan is for volunteer fire services throughout the territory, both when it comes to equipment replacement and facilities upgrade and replacement.

**Hon. Mr. Lang:** It is factual that we are buying a Ross River fire truck to enhance their fire protection. Their fire truck has time-expired — 20 years — so that fire truck will be retired. Of course, we're investing in ambulances. We are replacing two ambulances this year and that's an ongoing management tool we're using for EMS for the ambulance fleet — so that again is being done.

We're investing in firefighting equipment and resourcing that. We're replacing — through wildland fire management — operational equipment, including pumps, hoses, chainsaws, sprinkler kits, radios and protective clothing to assist firefighters in protecting people, communities and infrastructure from wildland fires. So there are many ways how the government manages the fire issue outside of the communities and the municipalities and part of that is the wildland fire management team.

What we're also doing is consolidating our wildland fire management team with our EMS department, so that we have an interaction between the two, because we understand that they work so closely together that, eventually folding in the overview of both of them is very, very important.

What we're saying about upgrading our on-ground fire halls is that we do a regular assessment of our fire halls. The last one — I could stand corrected — is Golden Horn, which will be open — the member opposite was just talking about it. I was there the other day, and it's quite a footprint and it's going to serve that area for a very long time. Also, there are other fire halls that are being constantly upgraded, whether it's in Carcross or in other communities. We do assess them on a yearly basis and prioritize what we're going to do. But, of course, that comes with needs. You know, these fire halls eventually become time-expired, as we look at different requirements, whether our trucks — like the member opposite, we buy new fire trucks to find out we don't have the infrastructure for them to even fit in our building.

As we move through, we'll assess and manage as we move forward, but we have put money in our Marsh Lake situation, in Golden Horn and Mount Lorne, in outlying areas. We do understand the importance of modern equipment, but with modern equipment comes modern buildings.

It's a huge investment on the ground and we're willing to do it. We will assess as we move forward other locations that will have to be upgraded. As equipment is upgraded and as the demand grows, we will be there to invest in whatever we need.

**Mr. Cardiff:** The minister says they assess it on an ongoing basis but there's no plan. He didn't indicate there was a plan he could provide and that's cause for concern. You should look to the future. There must be a plan for replacement.

There's a plan for replacing ambulances, obviously, but I'd be interested in knowing about a plan to address the needs of fire halls and the infrastructure around fire halls.

I've got a couple of other questions about that. The minister can stand and answer the questions; I'll list a few of them. I've referred to whether or not the truck is going to fit in the fire hall as being a concern. Can the minister tell us whether or not the new truck slated to go to Ross River is actually going to fit in the fire hall in Ross River? That would be one question.

One of the other issues that came up previously in a number of locations is that some of these facilities are required to respond in the — obviously, they're responding in the event of an emergency, and sometimes those emergencies can be — well, they're responding to traffic accidents, fires, windstorms, all kinds of things, and often we see power failures. I know these facilities are central in communities and they can be used to marshal forces to respond to all kinds of emergency situations, whether it be wildland fire or flooding.

Often, if it is a wind storm or an ice storm or there has been an accident and the power lines are down, there is no power in these facilities. The emergency generators or gen-sets that they have in these facilities aren't the types of equipment that would lend themselves to be reliable — or they are not the appropriate pieces of equipment for the situation that is required. We are talking about emergency services. Or it could be cold outside and the trucks need to be plugged in. They need to be ready to go. They need to have the air charged in the air-brakes systems. If there has been a power failure, a lot of the essential equipment isn't going to work.

I'm just wondering whether or not the department is looking at ensuring that these facilities have the appropriate emergency gen-sets.

The minister also talked about how closely volunteer fire departments work with emergency medical services in communities. Some of those are volunteers as well, and they do work closely. I know there is some work underway to look at emergency medical services and volunteer firefighter remuneration. I know there is a working group. I'd be interested to know when the minister expects that working group's recommendations. I know before EMS was moved to Community Services there was an agreement to pay rural volunteer emergency medical services staff to be on standby, because they're basically on standby 24/7, and somebody has to be on call at all times.

There needs to be some sort of a recognition that volunteer firefighters in communities are also on standby 24/7, and there needs to be something put in place for them. I know they get paid to go and do the training, but a lot of administrative work is done by volunteer fire chiefs; it's done by deputy fire chiefs, and some of it's done by volunteer firefighters. There's a whole bunch of essential paperwork and administration that needs to be done. I know I mentioned this to the previous Minister of Community Services: the concept of having more of a regional admin person who would take some of the administrative duties off volunteer fire chiefs and deputy fire chiefs, so that they could concentrate more fully on working with the volunteers and ensuring that the equipment is being looked after and en-

sure that the training is being done appropriately — even a regional training officer to coordinate training between various volunteer fire departments.

We've got a tremendous opportunity. It is not unlike the solid-waste situation where we've got a number of communities that are all close and have the same interests and have a willingness to work together, but we need the minister and the department to be willing to step forward as well and provide resources and assistance in ensuring it. I believe there were three or four questions there, beginning with the one about whether or not the new fire truck will fit in the hall. Have they measured that and ensured that it fits in the fire hall in Ross River?

**Hon. Mr. Lang:** Certainly the department has professional individuals on staff who would spec all our departments, and part of that spec would be determining the size of the facility that the vehicle was going to be put into.

I have not gone to Ross River and seen the new fire truck, nor have I measured the fire hall. But, hopefully, that will not be an issue when the fire truck arrives.

In addressing some of the other questions of the member opposite, when this government made the move to put our EMS into Community Services, it was a commitment to resource it to enhance it. It's important to remind the member opposite that, in that expansion, we as a government resourced it quite considerably, to make sure that we could not only keep our staffing at a certain professional level, but also that the resources were there to pay those individuals on a full-time basis to be part and parcel of the Yukon workforce. Those commitments were made.

In that decision we also made a commitment in two of our communities, Dawson City and Watson Lake — Dawson City, being a northern community, and Watson Lake being on the border with British Columbia. We put paramedics in there — full-time paramedics. There are two in Watson Lake and two in Dawson City. Both of them are working with the community and working with the volunteers.

We didn't stop there as a government. In EMS, we have a whole contingent of trained individuals who travel the territory on a regular basis, putting our volunteers and our individuals on the ground through a training program and enhancing their education throughout the year. That's important.

It's important to understand that a lot of these volunteer ambulance individuals located in different communities don't get a lot of calls. It's not like being in San Francisco; it's not like being in Whitehorse. So we have to constantly keep training those individuals because in fact they don't get the practice that's needed with our ambulances to address issues that arise in these communities. We as a government have said this training program has to go on a constant basis, to enhance not only their capabilities, but also to keep them at a standard of capabilities so they can manage these situations.

I remind the member opposite that these community situations where you have two or three volunteers is a pretty lonely job if you don't have the training and don't have the confidence that you can do the job.

As far as training is concerned, and the resources, and also manning our EMS operation here in Whitehorse, those are things that we're doing on a daily basis. Certainly, as Community Services department acquired this responsibility, it grew within the department, and we learned as we went along what is needed.

The member opposite is talking about the shelf life of an ambulance. Well, the shelf life of an ambulance, in industry, is roughly 300,000 kilometres. In other words, once you've got an ambulance that has 300,000 kilometres on it, or is 12 years old, it's time that it is rotated. This is something I guess that is a rule in that industry, so that's what we're doing.

Our fire trucks, in our smaller communities, certainly get time-expired, Mr. Chair. We have locations in the territory where there's more pressure put on the fire department than in others. Certainly, Dawson City and Watson Lake would come to mind because they're bigger communities. Dawson City has a surrounding area that they work with.

They do have a fire hall out on — I think it is called the Klondike fire station, which is another piece of infrastructure Dawson City has access to. Watson Lake firefighters attend fires in quite a radius of the community. They are a volunteer fire department, which by the way is run by the municipality, and has a fire chief and a volunteer group.

If you were to look inside these small communities, a lot of the people who work on the fire — volunteer there — are also volunteer EMS workers. There is interplay between the two because these communities are small and don't have the head count and volunteer people tend to volunteer and work hard for their communities. There is an overlapping workforce in our communities. As far as improving the EMS or the fire contingent in our communities, I have met with the rural volunteer fire chiefs and, of course, the volunteer firefighters on two or three occasions and they have had issues and those issues we have been working with.

It is very important that we work with our volunteer fire departments to make sure that they're comfortable with what's happening and that they're being treated in a fair and equitable way. As far as EMS, I am very proud to stand here in the House and represent those individuals. They do a stellar job, Mr. Chair. I've gone to their training programs. I've watched the excitement of the individuals who have come from all over the Yukon to take advantage of those training programs. There's another EMS project going on as we speak here this afternoon. I compliment all of the individuals who make up the EMS component of this department, and the results are very, very good.

Is there work to be done? Yes, there is work to be done, but is there work to be done with new fire halls? Yes, there is work to be done. I don't think this government can be faulted in what they've done for the fire departments in the territory. I don't think there has been a government in the Yukon that put as many new fire halls on the ground as this government has. I don't think there has been a government that has bought as much fire-related equipment as this government has.

As the Member for Lake Laberge mentioned — honorariums and the money part of it has been addressed by this gov-

ernment. I am very proud to stand up here as Minister of Community Services and answer questions about that part of our department. It has done a great job. I thank all the volunteers in all the communities for the hard work they do on a daily basis. Volunteers are few and far between, and they do a stellar job. If you go to Watson Lake or you go to Dawson City or you go to Beaver Creek, they are all there. People are in place, and they are there to help their fellow citizens — whether it is a fire or an emergency medical situation requiring an ambulance. They are there as volunteers. We're going to be doing more as the next two or three years unfold, and we will be enhancing the programs that we have in place today and enhancing the capacities of the individuals who work in EMS — whether it is volunteer firefighters or working with our EMS crew. The government has made commitments to Yukon that we would enhance that system and we have.

**Mr. Cardiff:** I didn't hear the minister answer the question, other than the fact he hasn't personally measured the truck and the bay that it's going into, but he trusts that it has been done, and I'm hopeful that it has been done.

With regard to what this government has done for emergency medical services, how much they've done and that they're the only government that has built that many fire halls or bought that much equipment — they're also the only government that has had emergency medical services workers walk out on them — and they fixed that, or it appears they fixed that.

My question was about volunteer firefighter remuneration. They addressed the issue when it came to EMS volunteers, but the question I asked was about support for volunteer firefighter remuneration and support for those individuals professionally and the good work they do.

I know he's looking forward — in fact, his letter says, "I'm looking forward to considering the working group's recommendations in the near future."

He's informing me that the Association of Yukon Fire Chiefs and Community Services have formed a working group to review this. What I'm asking the minister is, when does he expect the recommendations, and how soon will he be addressing this issue? That's what I asked him, not for a big speech about all that they've done in the past. I want to know what they're going to do in the future here, and some specifics.

The other question I asked was about the need for emergency generators, gen-sets, in these facilities, in all communities, because they're essential services in those communities in the event of an emergency. If the minister can answer that in under five minutes, I'd appreciate it.

**Hon. Mr. Lang:** The member opposite comments on my comments on the last question, but I certainly would like to make people aware in the House what a good job the volunteers and the department does in supplying the service.

Whether the member opposite likes to hear it or not, there's work being done on the ground in all our communities. The committee has been put together to address what the member opposite has spoken of, and that is representatives from the Community Services and the Association of Yukon Fire Chiefs. We put that group together. What is that group's as-

signment? They're to come back to us with options and changes to remuneration rates and types of remuneration.

I don't have that report; I look forward to them coming back. It's work in progress and I will address the report when I get it.

This government has done more work in this part of our responsibility than any government has done in the past. We put great emphasis on our ambulance, volunteers, and groups that work out there on a daily basis. Yukon should hear about this. It's not the past; it's what is happening on a daily basis.

I would like to thank the members who work on a daily basis in all our communities for the hard work they do as volunteers to supply the services they do on a daily basis in our community.

As far as not mentioning it in the House, I am very proud to stand up and defend the individuals who work out in our communities. We are doing the job assigned to us. The committee has been put together. I am looking forward to the report. I did not put timelines on it or any restrictions on them. They will do their good work and they will bring a report with recommendations to me as minister and we will address those recommendations. It is work in progress, Mr. Chair.

**Mr. Cardiff:** Yes, just like the certificate of recognition, it is work in progress, Mr. Chair.

You know, nobody suggested that we don't appreciate the work of volunteers. I wouldn't be asking the question if I didn't appreciate the work of volunteers. It is about recognizing the work of those volunteers in a meaningful way for what they contribute. It is not about the fact that I don't think they should be recognized — of course I think they should be recognized; I wouldn't be asking the question if I didn't think that. What I am saying is that the minister doesn't have to go on for 20 minutes talking about it

It wasn't just that that he was talking about. He was talking about all the good work that he had done and that his government had done and the fact that he forgets to mention the fact that they had a walkout of emergency medical services volunteers before they finally came to the realization. All I was asking about was when does he expect the report? I never suggested that he had to put timelines on it.

But he also failed to answer the question about the need for emergency gen-sets because these are first-response facilities in the event of emergencies, regardless of what type of emergencies. It's 24/7, 365 days of the year, anywhere between minus 55 degrees and plus 30 degrees, probably. So I'd appreciate an answer to that question as well.

I'm going to throw one more question out there while we're still with the volunteer firefighters and the wildland fire area. Can the minister inform us of what changes have been made to the pay scales for emergency firefighters, if there have been changes made? It's my understanding they are still being paid less than the people they work alongside when they're working in the field. I would like to know if the minister can tell me whether there have been any changes recently or if there are any changes planned.

**Hon. Mr. Lang:** I think there is a bit of a mix-up between myself and the member opposite. I think what I say in



the House is not what I do; it's what the department does, and I'm very proud of what the department does. I do very little, in effect, compared with what the department does on these issues. They have done a stellar job in bringing EMS to where it is today. It is the department. I give it direction, but the individuals in the department do the hard work.

Part of what I just said on the floor, about this group that's charged with coming back with these recommendations — part of that is what this member opposite is talking about now. We will address that as soon as I get the final review of how they recommend we move forward.

The member opposite asked, "When?" Just a minute ago, he said he didn't mention putting timelines on it. He should make up his mind, Mr. Chair. We're not putting timelines on this; they're doing their good work, and I expect it as soon as possible. But as I said to the member opposite, I haven't put timelines on it. I expect them to come back to the department, or back to me, as quickly as possible, and I expect to make decisions as quickly as possible. But they're charged to do the good work that they've been assigned to. There's a bit of research that goes into this, Mr. Chair, and that research and that work is being done as we speak. The committee has been put together. It has been agreed to by the volunteer fire department and Community Services. It has been tasked to do a job; let's let it do its job.

So for the member opposite, we will get the information out as quickly as possible, but I do not have a final date on that. I'm looking forward to the report being put in front of me. It will come back to the department and we'll move forward on the recommendations that will come from that committee or that group of individuals. That's why we assigned them the task to address exactly what the member opposite has talked about.

**Mr. Cardiff:** The minister isn't listening. When I said "when", I said, "When do you expect it". He says, as soon as possible. I guess what I'm asking is, is "as soon as possible" next week or is it next year? I'm not asking for a firm date; I was asking for a timeline. He still didn't answer the other two questions so he can stand up and answer them now.

**Hon. Mr. Lang:** There was no timeline put on the group. I'm looking forward to their response and, at that point, I will have the information the member opposite has requested. But I will wait for them to do their good work.

As far as the emergency planning group — if we're going to get on to gen-sets in our fire halls and things like that — we have an emergency planning group that prioritizes and works with communities on investments like that, Mr. Chair.

We do that on a yearly basis. So we work with communities and we work with volunteer fire groups for emergency planning. Part of that is how do we address power outages and things like that and make decisions on what the individual fire hall would need. In some communities we have community clubs; in some communities we don't. So the fire hall becomes a different form of support.

We work with the communities and part of the emergency planning involves looking at contingencies for just that. Internally we do that. We have individuals who do that on a daily,

yearly basis. We do work on the issue. We understand the need out there and we work to maximize — and again, invest on the ground. Whatever we put in these infrastructure dollars we have to understand that it is another responsibility for the individual fire halls to manage. Of course, that, again, is more responsibility, and we certainly want to minimize the responsibility we put on our communities.

But the emergency planning would be all-encompassing of these kinds of decisions. We work with all the communities to try to mitigate their questions about what happens if emergencies are created, what plans we have for situations like a fire-storm or windstorm or whatever, to make sure we have some avenue, some gathering place, where individuals can go to in a community to rally or get instructions — for a safe place. Certainly part of that is how we manage if the power goes off and what kind of backup power we have in place to mitigate things like that.

**Mr. Cardiff:** Amazing. So there is a group — so if a community decides that their fire hall needs a gen-set, there is a process, or there's a group they can go to in government to request that they have an adequate gen-set in their fire hall.

If the minister can make that information available — send it over by legislative return — it would be much appreciated. Then if he could answer the last question, which is about emergency firefighters. I'm talking about the people from communities who go out every year and risk their lives fighting forest fires. What has happened in the past is that they are paid at a much lower rate than the people who work for wildland fire operations, who are full-time and working — they're not full-time but seasonal, I guess. They're hired seasonally to go out and work for wildland fire management on forest fires. But the emergency firefighters are people in communities, who live in their communities and traditionally, in the past, they've been paid at a much lower rate. And they're on standby too, all the time during fire season.

I would like to know — the question was — what changes have been made? This was an issue I brought up with the previous Minister of Community Services on many occasions. I'm revisiting it now to find out what progress has been made on righting something I feel is very wrong.

**Hon. Mr. Lang:** That's a class of firefighter that I would have to get back to you on. I can't address that issue — who gets paid what or why. It hasn't been drawn to my attention, so I would have to tell the member opposite that I could get back to him.

**Mr. Cardiff:** I don't have the information in front of me right at this time, but it's something that's covered in the *General Administration Manual* and it's about rates of pay for emergency firefighters. If they could get back to me by legislative return, it would be much appreciated, as to what those rates of pay are. I think it's important that people are paid similar to the EMS volunteer firefighter situation. You're working alongside these people, you're working with them, and you should be paid comparably.

I'd like to ask the minister a little bit about his plans. I'd like to, number one, thank the minister for ensuring — although he hasn't provided a copy of the document, I notice that

it has finally been made available publicly on the government Web site — the final report on the flood assessment and abatement options for Marsh Lake and Upper Liard.

I guess he's done with it, because that's what he said. He said he'd release the report to the public as soon as he's done with it, so he's obviously done with it. There are some solutions proposed and some recommendations, and I'm wondering — it's recommended for Marsh Lake that the 200-year flood be adopted as the design standard for the Marsh Lake area.

It talks about upgrading roads and driveways to ensure dry access during floods. It talks about a dike system that ties into the raised roads, and it is to protect both private and public infrastructure. It talks about bank protection to the shoreline at Swan Haven. I remember watching some of that shoreline slide into the lake, actually, during the flooding that was taking place a couple of years ago. I would like to know what the minister has obviously done with the report because he has released it. I would like to know what the government's contingency plan is. What is the long-term solution for these flood-prone areas in the Yukon? As well, it doesn't really address the issue in Carcross and Tagish, which were both affected by the flood. As well, there are recommendations about dealing with the flooding situation in Upper Liard.

I have some specific questions around this report and the issues it raises and what the government's response will be to the report and the recommendations.

**Hon. Mr. Lang:** The report is out for Yukoners to address. It was a report that was commissioned by the government to look at assessing the flood situation in our communities which, at that time, was Watson Lake and Upper Liard and, in a minor way, some of the other communities.

It's a long-term planning tool. We'll be going out and working with the communities on how this would unfold. It does involve money so a lot of these issues would have to be decided from an investment point of view through Management Board. We'll be looking at the flood situation we find ourselves in — the snow load — for this winter period.

We're looking forward to dissecting this report and going out to the communities and putting in a go-forward plan and to rationalize what is doable and what isn't, what is needed and what's not — and that will be part and parcel as we move forward with implementing this study.

We're looking at the snow load report that's going to be coming out shortly. Department of Environment has 55 different sites that they monitor. They have a report that I've been led to believe would be out on April 9, which would be in two days, that will certainly make all of us aware of what the situation is as of the April 1.

In turn, I have made a commitment, once that snow load report is in, that we would do a technical briefing. That's in partnership between ourselves — Department of Environment, and Highways and Public Works — to get out into the communities and make sure people are aware of the flood situation, whether it's in Marsh Lake, Upper Liard or other communities, that this snow report is on.

There will be another snow report as of the end of this month, May 1. That will be a very important one, because at

that point we're going to need to make some decisions on the ground to protect ourselves from a flood threat, if in fact those snow loads don't correct themselves as we go through this.

So I can't second-guess what this snow load report is going to say. I did make the commitment that we'll be the lead on it — Community Services. We'll work with Environment and Highways and Public Works. We will be doing a technical briefing to discuss this with Yukoners to make sure that everybody is aware of this flood situation if, in fact, it arises. That's why we're working with Environment on these snow load reports — because it might correct itself, but it might not. So we are very aware of that.

But as far as the flood assessment that we had commissioned, we certainly take it seriously. We'll be critiquing it and working with the community to address some of the issues, exactly what the member is talking about. Roadwork — we've done some roadwork. Do we have to do more roadwork? That's a question.

We're also looking at a dike situation. If we are going to build a dike, what's the best dike situation? Those will all come out of the report, and we'll certainly be working with the communities to make sure that the communities are comfortable with decisions we make. We'll have to work with the government because it will involve resources. So all of this will have to come out of the overview we do internally in the department to see how we move forward on reacting to this report.

**Mr. Cardiff:** The minister said he wasn't going to release it until he was done with it. He is obviously not done with it. A number of recommendations were made in this report. What I wanted was the minister to recognize there is a cost to all of these recommendations and I know that he's not going to. I would like to know if he is pleased with the recommendations and whether or not the government is looking at any other options to mitigate potential flooding other than these options — are control structures in the Marsh Lake system an option? — and whether or not they are working with Yukon Energy on this issue as well.

The minister has these recommendations. Are they looking at any other options for dealing with the flooding situation?

**Hon. Mr. Lang:** This report was what we commissioned. It's independent of us. It was done for exactly that purpose: to give us options, and now we have to look at the options. A lot of this work is seasonal work; it's not something you can start in December, so some of this work, if it were decided on, would have to be done in the construction season.

We have been working with Yukon Energy. They have been holding meetings and have been involved in all of our EMO process.

I certainly look forward to critiquing the report. I haven't read the whole report, Mr. Chair, but I've certainly done an overview of it. The department is going to go through it and come back to us with what we've done and what we haven't done. Some of the roadwork has been done. We will have to go out, and whatever we do in these areas, we'll have to get a buy-in from the community, because it will impact the communities, so they have to be part and parcel of the decision.

It is a blueprint on how we can move forward with managing this issue, but there is more than us in this decision-making chain of events. There is the community, and the access to this report gives them the information that they can go through. I am looking forward to their comments on this. Certainly, I am looking forward to this snow load report that is going to be in front of us on the ninth. That is going to be an interesting overview of what is happening out in the field. The last report was a month previous, so that would have been the end of February. The snow load situation in the Southern Lakes was, I think, 160 percent. The Liard Valley was one hundred and whatever — 185. So those figures are pretty scary. As we monitor this and move forward, we are going to have to be aware that if it doesn't correct itself we are going to have some issues on the ground. The technical briefing will be involved with Highways and Public Works, as I said. Community Services will take the lead on it, and Environment will be involved. It is a very important briefing, and I am optimistic that the report we look at on the ninth is an improvement over what we saw a month previous. Then of course we will have another month's report.

We're getting information in so we can monitor what's happening and also be more prepared if in fact this thing doesn't correct itself and put a plan together. That plan will be part and parcel of what we're going to do on the ground to mitigate this flood situation in partnership with the community. The community is a big part of this and certainly we'll be working with the individuals in the community to make sure that the flood situation is addressed as well as possible. So I'm looking forward to the ninth to see what that report brings. After that, regardless of what that report says, there will be a technical briefing so Yukoners will know exactly the information we will derive from that snow load report.

**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. 15, *First Appropriation Act, 2009-10*. Community Services is the department. We will now continue with general debate.

**Mr. Cardiff:** I would just like to continue where we were before we took that short break.

We were talking about the flood assessment and abatement options report for Marsh Lake and Upper Liard that the minister has released.

I understand that this is only an options paper, basically, that they've commissioned to give them some idea of where they might go. I'd like to ask a couple more questions about this. One is whether or not the government is working toward a long-term solution, because this is something that, unfortunately, we seem to be faced with, very possibly because of climate change, and the fact that glaciers are melting; our climate is changing; we are receiving more precipitation, whether it's in the form of snow or rain or hail. So it is affecting our communities a little differently and on a more regular basis than it has in the past. Flooding has occurred in the past in a lot of

these areas, but what we're faced with now is more frequent events and occurrences, or it would appear that way. So I'm wondering whether or not the government is looking at creating a long-term solution for flood-prone areas — not just Marsh Lake, Carcross and Tagish and Upper Liard, but other communities.

I know that there are concerns in Old Crow, for instance, about flooding due to the way that certain rivers froze. It is not just the Porcupine, but also the Blue Fish River that froze right to the bottom. So there are concerns in other communities, but we need to look at possible long-term solutions.

My specific question about this report, which is why I asked the minister whether or not they were looking at other options — because the reality is that there really is only one option presented here, which is some roadwork and building some dikes. There is basically one recommendation for each area, so there are no other options. I am wondering if the government is or will be looking at other options for a long-term solution.

The minister indicated that there would be technical briefings available regarding the snow load. Recently the Department of Justice said there would be technical briefings available about the correctional facility, and they made those briefings available to the media, but they didn't make them available to members on this side of the House about what the plans were for the correctional facility. I'm asking the minister now whether or not it would be possible for us on this side of the House or members of our staff to attend those technical briefings whenever they occur.

**Hon. Mr. Lang:** This flood assessment report contains options that the government — we funded the report, and certainly it has come back and we have to critique it and weigh the options. A big player in this is the community. The community is going to have to digest this and come back with the partnership that they visualize coming out of this report. All this report does, like the member opposite says — the dike option, raising the roads, doing things like that — some of that we've already done.

Certainly, a dike is one of the options, but of course we have to get input from the community to make decisions like that, because it will have impacts on all of those individuals who live there. If you were to build an eight-foot wall on Army Beach, it would have some impact on the quality of life for those people who live there. I'm not saying that is one of the options; that's a bit of an exaggeration, but those are the kinds of things we have to discuss with the individuals.

I remind the member opposite that Environment monitors 55 different spots in the Yukon for snow load. In Old Crow and these areas there is a mechanism where we can, through Environment, monitor the snow load. The two areas that have been affected in the past have been the Liard River basin and, most recently, the Marsh Lake community. As the member opposite spoke to, there were issues in Carcross, Tagish, and even as far north as Lake Laberge had some flooding issues. We're aware of these locations and certainly will monitor them internally in the government.

As far as the technical briefing is concerned, that is designed for the press. We will be doing it with the press as soon as we get this report and can look at the report and come out with the technical part of it and how we can see ourselves moving forward.

**Mr. Cardiff:** Do I take that to mean that we'll have to read about it in the newspaper and that the technical briefing isn't available to members or there can't be a separate technical briefing made available to members on this side of the House? Is that what the minister is saying?

**Hon. Mr. Lang:** To the member opposite, we're looking at this technical briefing coming out of the report that we're going to get from Environment. Of course, the details haven't been worked out because we don't know what this report is going to tell us. What is going to be in the briefing is a moot point. We visual this government having a briefing with the news media and that, of course, will have access to everyone in the Yukon.

**Mr. Cardiff:** Well, the level of cooperation goes to a new low. We have to read the information in the newspaper.

I would like to ask the minister a little bit about — moving off the flooding issue and the report, even though the minister did not clarify whether or not they are looking at other options; he just said that this is the only option they intend to present to communities, by the sound of it. I think that communities would like to see other options as well.

I have some questions around the Building Canada fund. With the Building Canada fund, the Yukon is slated to receive a sizable amount of money. I believe that it is close to \$180 million over the seven-year period. We have already seen some of that money flow. As the minister said earlier, there are priorities, and I believe the priorities for the Building Canada fund, or the five key areas, were drinking water, waste water, roads, solid-waste management, green energy and infrastructure.

One of the provisions that the federal government put on the Building Canada fund — and I'm going to read from the Budget Address that Mr. Flaherty gave awhile ago now, but one of the criteria that they wanted to see when the Building Canada fund was created was — it said that proponents will also be required to demonstrate that the option of undertaking the project as a public/private partnership has been fully considered. I'm just wondering whether or not that is still a requirement and whether or not these projects currently being funded under the Building Canada fund — so in this budget cycle that would be the Dawson City sewage treatment, Marsh Lake intake and fill system, the Carcross system upgrade.

There is money in the Building Canada fund for Ross River system upgrades and arsenic treatment and the Old Crow roadway. These are all Building Canada funds. There is also money in the minister's other portfolio under the Building Canada fund — I believe there is \$8.5 million for road construction in the Premier's riding on the Robert Campbell Highway.

But if one of the criteria is that proponents — which is the Government of Yukon — are required to demonstrate that the option of undertaking the project as a public/private partnership

has been fully considered, has the government done that work? Or, is it doing that work? Or, is it required to do that work? Or, has that requirement been dropped or relaxed here in the territory?

**Hon. Mr. Lang:** The member opposite is talking about the Building Canada fund — we're already into the second year. It's a seven-year program and two years have passed. The five — eligibility is defined by the federal government, so the five include roads, green power and what the member opposite was speaking about.

We are going out now with the Building Canada infrastructure consultation. Yesterday, when we were discussing it, I talked about the schedules that were falling together.

All that work, as we move forward with this program, will be completed by — the consultation started in Watson Lake and Upper Liard on March 31; Faro on April 1; Ross River on April 2; Marsh Lake on April 7; Mount Lorne on April 8 — all of these are being held in their community complexes — Faro is in the Sportsman Lounge. Okay, so then we go to Whitehorse North on April 9 and that is in the Hootalinqua fire hall; we're in Ibx Valley on Tuesday, April 14, and that is in the Ibx Valley fire hall; Whitehorse on Wednesday, April 15, and that is in the Canada Games Centre in room 2; moving on to Carmacks on April 16 in the Carmacks recreation centre; Tagish on Tuesday, April 21, in the community centre; Carcross will be on April 26, and we'll be in the community school; Teslin on April 23, and we'll be in the recreation complex there; Beaver Creek will be on April 28, and that goes into the community centre too; Burwash Landing — all of these are at 7:00 p.m. — and Destruction Bay will be on Wednesday, April 29, and it will be in the Jacquot Building; Haines Junction will be on April 30, and that will be in the convention centre in the Dezadeash room. Again, all of this will be at 7:00 p.m. Dawson City is on May 5 and in the Oddfellows Hall, and again that is at 7:00 p.m.; Mayo and Stewart Crossing on Wednesday, May 6. It's at 7:30 p.m. at the Mayo Recreational Centre. Keno and Elsa will be Thursday, May 7, and that will be at 9:00 a.m. at the Keno Community Library. Pelly Crossing is Thursday, May 7 at 7:00 p.m. at the Pelly Crossing community hall. So all of that consultation will be done by May 7, and the work entailed in doing that. You can see where they have a very full schedule to get this consultation done. It's all about infrastructure in the communities following those five criteria the member opposite was talking about.

I remind the member opposite that it's a very good time for Yukon, because not only do we have the Building Canada fund, but we have gas tax which has been extended, adding another \$60-million investment in Yukon. That's shared equally by First Nations and the municipalities, and we as government manage the unincorporated investments. That again is investment in the ground. As we move forward over the next period of time and put this infrastructure plan together, we will be able to address a lot of the issues that are out there, as the member opposite was alluding to: water, solid waste, sewers and roads.

We are investing in Old Crow. All of these areas are going to be touched by this investment. This is a very large investment in a small constituency like ours. We are certainly look-

ing forward to it unfolding and benefiting all the communities. In reading that this is the schedule we have and it's being done as we speak — it started March 31 — this is a tight timeline in terms of how it's going to work. I don't see in this how Old Crow will be addressed, but there will be a meeting in Old Crow that will involve them in this plan, as well as other communities.

As the member opposite was saying, this is an \$180-million investment in Yukon over the next period in time. It involves our highways and our infrastructure — whether water, sewer or green energy. All of these things can be addressed in a way that hopefully will maximize our expenditures.

Again, our communities, First Nations and unincorporated communities also have a bit of room here to manage some of their own issues, and that can be done through the gas tax. It's a very timely investment in Canada, but it's also certainly going to help our communities and First Nations on their issues on their selected land in their communities, and will be able to invest in the territory. The gas tax funding allocation is substantial. We're going to see in the community of Carmacks an investment over the next period of time of \$1.424 million. Dawson City — almost \$5 million, Mr. Chair. Faro, equally — \$1.4 million. Haines Junction gets \$2.8 million. Mayo — \$1.424 million. That's a substantial investment in Mayo. Teslin gets \$1.424 million. Watson Lake gets almost \$5 million, and that's over the period of life of this tax.

Whitehorse realizes — of course, as it should; it's the most heavily populated community in the territory — but they're going to receive almost \$48 million in gas tax over the next period of time — \$47,775,099. So that's a substantial investment on the ground in the City of Whitehorse.

First Nations: Carcross-Tagish First Nation, \$1.775 million; there's an investment for them. Champagne and Aishihik — \$2.7 million; Na Cho Nyäk Dun, \$1.4 million — all of these figures are substantial. Kluane First Nation — just over \$1 million; Kwanlin Dun First Nation — \$2.1 million; Liard First Nation — \$2.4 million; Little Salmon-Carmacks First Nation — \$1.5 million; Ross River Dena Council — \$1.4 million; Selkirk First Nation — \$1.6 million; Ta'an Kwäch'än Council — \$1.2 million; Teslin Tlingit Council — \$1.8 million, almost \$2 million; Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in in Dawson — over \$2 million; Vuntut Gwitchin — \$1.9 million; White River First Nation — \$851,000. So there is not a community in the territory that is not being touched by this tax and these investment opportunities.

So again, the Building Canada fund is very timely for us, but the gas tax is a huge investment in our communities because it touches every community. It gives First Nations the flexibility to make decisions they couldn't make without it and of course our municipalities and the resources we have, in a small way, put into the communities that aren't municipalities. So, Mr. Chair, that's good news for the territory — the Building Canada fund — and the opportunity for all Yukoners to go to these meetings and participate.

We encourage all Yukoners because all Yukoners have a stake in the Yukon. So I recommend everyone go out to the meetings, discuss what their ideas are and see where it takes

them, because it takes Yukoners to plan what we're going to do in the future. This is a substantial investment in the territory, and to put this business plan together for every community — so they can move forward with improvements in their community — is a massive improvement for the territory.

When we look at what's happening with the water system upgrades, we're looking at Haines Junction, Teslin, CAFN, CTFN — \$4.5 million invested on the ground. Those are improvements. The member opposite was talking about water. Those are investments that the communities are doing. They are investing in their own infrastructure to bring their water management to a level that will match the 2011 expectation.

There is also a water system upgrade in Carcross and Ross River. This is substantial. It is \$1.5 million for each of those communities. Those communities are addressing the issue. The Marsh Lake intake and commercial fill system is a \$2.5-million investment that could eventually, as time progresses, grow into a new fire hall as decisions are made down the road. This not only benefits Marsh Lake residents, giving them access to potable water, but it also gives the ratepayers in that area a substantial benefit in fire insurance. All of these things are based on access to fire protection. Those kinds of investments are being made.

So, Mr. Chair, we are doing the good work. I recommend that all of these public meetings are held for the public. This infrastructure money is part and parcel of those discussions and I look forward to the recommendations coming back from these communities, so that we can do the work needed to get the jobs on the ground and move forward with this plan.

This is a substantial amount of money. It's in excess of \$20 million a year and I think it comes out to \$26 million roughly a year that will be invested on the ground here in the territory and will benefit all communities. Again, I remind everybody that, in these communities, we need input so I encourage them to participate in the meetings. I look forward to the recommendations coming out of those meetings.

**Mr. Cardiff:** I thank the minister for reading the schedule into the record for yet a second time. He also read it yesterday. I have a copy posted on the bulletin board in my office so I can attend some of those meetings. I'm sure that all those listening or reading *Hansard* will appreciate the minister reading those into the record again.

But the minister didn't answer the question. He spoke for 10 minutes and didn't answer the question. The question: can the minister tell us if it's still a requirement of the Building Canada fund — this is federal money.

The minister just stood and talked for 10 minutes about the gas tax money that will be flowing to the Yukon over the next number of years, about the Building Canada fund. All this is money that's coming from the federal government, and there are some requirements. Some of it is cost-sharing, but one of the requirements that was placed on the Building Canada fund was that proponents — which is Government of Yukon, because they're handling the money — be required to demonstrate that the option of undertaking the project as a public/private partnership has been fully considered. That was the

question. The minister spoke for ten minutes, and he didn't answer the question, so can he answer it now?

The question — I don't know; maybe this is a little simpler for the minister — the question: will community infrastructure have to go through some sort of public/private partnership or P3 test in order to get funded?

**Hon. Mr. Lang:** On the issue about public meetings and Old Crow, Old Crow did have their public meeting, and the First Nation met in Whitehorse with the department to put their plan forward, so that has been done. There has been a public meeting in Old Crow. The chief and council had that public meeting and they brought the information into the department so they can move forward with their infrastructure plans.

Part and parcel of this commitment that this fund has is a 75:25 percent share, so the territorial government has to invest, and the federal government fund will fund 75 percent.

As far as the question, whether it has to pass a public P3 process, I'm not aware of that, and I wasn't aware of that, so I would have to say to the member opposite that I can get back to him on that. I don't think that's an issue, but I could stand to be corrected on that. I will get back to the member on that.

**Mr. Cardiff:** I would appreciate if the minister would get back to me on that because that was one of the criteria that was supposedly supposed to be applied to this money — not that I am necessarily in support of that.

This is an application-driven process.

I'm just wondering if the minister can tell us about something we have become aware of over the last several months — almost a year, I guess — which are concerns in some communities about sewer and water and the needs of various communities for sewer and water upgrades. One of them is Watson Lake. I am just wondering whether or not there are any applications or projects being planned to upgrade sewer and water services in Watson Lake?

**Hon. Mr. Lang:** I have been informed by my assistant here that the Town of Watson Lake hasn't applied through Building Canada. They have a sustainable plan and they are working with the gas tax. At the moment, we don't have an application from the Town of Watson Lake. We are looking forward to that plan coming to us. That doesn't mean that they are not doing the good work of managing the water and sewer issues there. They are putting investments on the ground, but it doesn't involve Building Canada at the moment. I can't see why they won't be putting plans together and putting in applications in the future.

**Mr. Cardiff:** I would like to ask the minister about the \$5 million left in the municipal rural infrastructure fund. I am just wondering about it. It is listed in the budget document as not allocated. It was indicated to us that there were some applications and that there could be a new call for submissions. I am just wondering if this money would be available for solid-waste projects in communities. Obviously, these are unincorporated communities. How would they go about making requests of government to access these funds in order to make improvements to solid-waste facilities in their communities?

**Hon. Mr. Lang:** As far as Watson Lake and Upper Liard are concerned, we just consulted with them on March 31 with the Building Canada plan.

The Building Canada fund has grown out of the other funds. I would recommend any municipality or unincorporated community with needs to look at the Building Canada fund. That would be much easier for them. We would certainly work with any community on solid waste or roads or things like that that qualify. It's better for them to apply to the new program and put the good work together — and out of that process will come decisions. But this is certainly resourced and I recommend any unincorporated or First Nation or municipality to work within the Building Canada fund. That's why we're having these consultations and we look forward to the response after we have the whole parcel put together.

**Mr. Cardiff:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and I thank the minister for that answer. Can the minister tell us whether or not there will be another call for submissions on the final \$5 million of the MRIF funding? When can we expect announcements about how that final \$5 million is going to be allocated?

**Hon. Mr. Lang:** I remind the member opposite that is being twilighted so I would have to address his question down the road, per se, but I recommend that we work within the Building Canada fund to move forward. I can't stand up and argue with the member about how much is left on the MRIF projects.

I have some information here. We are working with previous applications on resourcing for the shortfall that we have in MRIF but I remind the member opposite, CSIF and MRIF are being twilighted. Some of the work is still going on in the department under MRIF and CSIF, but it is not what I would recommend somebody to apply for when we have the Building Canada fund that is available now — a modern form of resources for exactly what the member opposite is talking about.

**Mr. Cardiff:** I am not arguing with the minister about the money — the money is in the budget. It is right there on page 5-9 of the capital. It says "Unallocated/Administration — \$5,087,000". I'm asking whether or not — it was indicated to us in the briefing that there could be a call for new submissions on this money, and I'm just wondering whether or not that is going to be the case. All I'm asking the minister to do is to answer.

I agree with the minister — the MRIF projects are coming to an end. This is the last of the money. I'm asking him how the money is going to be spent. They've received some applications for it, and they're working with previous projects. But I'm asking whether or not those projects are going to go ahead, when we might expect to hear about them, and whether or not there is going to be a new call for submissions.

**Hon. Mr. Lang:** Again, another point I should bring up is the partnership in MRIF. It's one-third/one-third/one-third, so it makes more financial sense to go through Building Canada, which is 75:25, than it is to go through MRIF, which is 33:33:33. So it wouldn't make financial sense for applications to come forward when they have the alternative, which is Building Canada.

Again, I recommend municipalities and communities to work on the consultation that is happening now to bring forward exactly what the member opposite is talking about. MRIF is being sunsetted. We are working with the applicants that are already in the system. I do not recommend it for just that reason — Building Canada is 75:25 and MRIF is 33:33:33 and it is being sunsetted. We are working with the applications that are in the system now. The \$4 million or \$5 million that is in place will be addressed but it will be addressed internally as we move through and finalize this MRIF program. I recommend that we seriously look at Building Canada and move forward with this modern process.

**Mr. Cardiff:** The minister obviously doesn't understand the question I'm asking. I want to know whether all the funds are going to be expended, is basically where we're going with it.

I'd like to ask the minister — because I asked him some questions the other day about this, and maybe he can explain why this money is in the budget. He can answer some of the questions about funds and how they're going to be expended in his department, but in other instances he doesn't seem to know, or he's referring me to Highways and Public Works to get answers. The money is in Community Services.

What I'd like to know and the question I asked — and I think it's a very good question — is about when we might see a project proceed in Dawson City with the sewage treatment. As I said the other day, there was a request for proposals. Some time has passed since that request for proposals closed.

Proponents put in their proposals. Again, time has passed since those proposals were received by the government and the government has had time to consider those. There are people who would like to begin working on this project so they can start mobilizing their crews. The community I think would like to see something happen on this front. It has been a long, arduous trail to get to the point where we are today, no thanks to this government. It has taken years and years and years to get to this point, where they might finally see something happen on the ground.

So my question was, when might we see a proponent for this project or a contractor for this project chosen? How soon does the minister think the project could start? The community wants to know; working people want to know and the contractors would like to know.

**Hon. Mr. Lang:** That is exactly what we are doing. Highways and Public Works staff are in Dawson as we speak and working with the City of Dawson on the decision. There is a court date, which is Thursday, and that has to be addressed. All of this will be answered as it unfolds in the next five to 10 days. That is exactly what we are doing. The RFP was sent out. There were five companies that came forward. Certainly, Dawson is a partner in this situation. We will be working with Dawson, and we have to address the court issue. The court issue is an appearance in court as of this Thursday with a plan. Those are commitments we made and I certainly expect an announcement very shortly on exactly what the member opposite is talking about.

As far as a time on this issue — this was an issue that wasn't addressed by the last government and was certainly funded by the Yukon government at that time. It has been long and drawn out because of issues on the ground in Dawson City. Hopefully, the decisions that come out of these meetings over the next period of time and the court — the judge — will answer some of these questions.

We are committed — this side of the House is committed — to work with Dawson to resolve this issue finally. Certainly, we look forward to people being on the ground in Dawson, working on this issue as soon as possible. That again will be addressed as we move forward with these decisions that are being made at the moment. Certainly, we are going to have to talk to the court to see what resolution they can bring out of this thing, and at that point there will be announcements made and we can move forward.

**Mr. Cardiff:** That's more helpful than the minister was the other day. Yesterday, I was just referred to Community Services, with no explanation at all.

I'd like to ask the minister one more question. I'll pass on that subject maybe because we'll end up in a long, drawn-out conversation, probably, or the minister will have a long, drawn-out answer to a very simple question.

I'd like to ask the minister — when I began my remarks, I talked about the variety of things that Community Services is responsible for. One of them is community libraries. There was some talk about moving the Whitehorse Public Library into some space in a project that was being proposed by a First Nation government. I'm just wondering whether the minister can confirm or deny whether or not that is going to happen, and what the future plans would be for the space that the library currently occupies.

**Hon. Mr. Lang:** We have been working with the Kwanlin Dun on a project that would involve the public library. Those discussions haven't resolved issues on lease and tenure so that's a work in progress. Certainly until that happens, we have no plans for the existing library because of the fact we haven't entered into an agreement with the First Nation on their cultural centre. But I can say to the member opposite that it's a work in progress. We would certainly — if we can come to an agreement with the First Nation in a partnership with them so they can proceed with their cultural centre — look at it in a positive light.

**Mr. Cardiff:** I think we all would look at that in a positive light. I think the library does a great job. It provides meeting room space. It's a very comfortable space with a lot of resources, but they can always use more resources to stay current. I know any time I go there it seems there are computers in use and quite a number of people of all ages are there.

The other question I asked, though, was whether or not the government has any plans, obviously off in the future, for what may happen with that space, should it move.

**Hon. Mr. Lang:** Looking at any space, that is why we commissioned the space plan from Property Management, and we've just got that in front of us over the last two months. If we are successful with this arrangement with the Kwanlin Dun and move the library, that in itself would take some time.

Certainly the space plan would be part and parcel of what we — the government and Property Management — would look at maximizing the use of the existing space. That would be a decision we would make. There are a couple of decisions to be made. One is if we can reach a tentative arrangement with the Kwanlin Dun on the cultural centre on square footage costs and timelines and then, of course, there is going to be a period of construction, so those will all have to be addressed as we move forward. I would say to the member opposite that, until we have this final decision made with the First Nation, this is the first hurdle to cross. We certainly would look favourably at putting the library on the waterfront. That would enhance the waterfront.

I agree with the member opposite that our library here is a well-used part of our community. By expanding it, enhancing it and modernizing it, I think this would reflect well on the users of the library. I look forward to doing that. Again, the good work has to be done. The departments are working with the First Nation to see if there is room for a decision. We look forward to that decision as quickly as possible.

**Mr. Cardiff:** I would like to ask the minister some questions in a couple of other areas of his department as well. We were pleased to hear that the new animal welfare officer has been hired. I believe March 11 was what we were told. I believe that there was some money for capital costs, but there's no increased funding to humane societies in this budget.

I'd be interested to know about this. I understand the animal welfare officer is going to go out and do some education in communities about animal protection issues and ensuring that animals are treated humanely, but I'm wondering whether or not we couldn't be asking humane societies in communities to do some of this, and maybe increase their resources a little bit as well.

The other question around this area is what the government's plans are with regard to training people in communities — whether or not they have plans to do that in the near future so that they, too, can be designated by the minister as animal welfare officers or animal protection officers, whatever the case may be. I can't remember exactly the language or the title, but so that it will be easier for the new *Animal Protection Act* to be enforced in rural Yukon.

So if the minister could respond to that, it would be appreciated.

**Hon. Mr. Lang:** I certainly was a great supporter of this improved *Animal Protection Act*, which we worked on over the last period of time and which took us two or three years to finalize.

The animal welfare officer who has been hired — the capital money there is to set him up in an appropriate office space, with the equipment he'll need to do his work. Part of the animal welfare officer's job description is to go into the community and work with the animal protection officers in the community to do the education. He is also going to be the individual going out to the communities, training people and working with municipalities to address the *Animal Protection Act* in their communities.

Most communities have called them “dog catchers” in the past and other names in the community. The new name for them will be “animal protection officers”, and they'll work in the communities with training, which will come from the animal welfare officer, so he will be the individual who will work with the communities. He has the responsibility of animal protection. In turn, Mr. Chair, animal protection officers can be appointed so that will be through the government. But in turn, the municipalities will have a responsibility. In unincorporated communities, RCMP members can be appointed as animal protection officers, in keeping with past practice. So what we'll expect from this position is not only animal protection, but animal education on the ground for the people responsible in our community to manage this issue.

This issue was brought to our attention many years ago — when we were first elected in 2003 — that the need was there. We certainly worked within the communities through the consultation with interest groups and also with individual residents on how we could improve the animal protection situation, which was seen to be failing the community in lots of ways.

This was an act we brought forward to modernize. It had to be led by an individual like this animal welfare officer so that we could get a consistent standard of management for animal protection throughout the territory.

All the individuals who are hired in our communities will be working with this animal welfare officer, who will put them through a training program and work with them to address their local issues. We will be working with the RCMP members, also, so that everybody understands what we expect through the act and also how to manage the welfare of animals in our communities, whether it is in a municipal setting or an unincorporated community.

We will work with First Nations, if they wish the support or also the expertise of our animal welfare officer. Of course, when we mention humane societies — the animal welfare officer will be working with them. It is not shutting anybody out. It is giving us a focal point and that focal point will not only be the act but it will be the individual — the animal welfare officer — who will be in charge of the act to go out into the community and educate individuals, whether it's the municipality, a humane society, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police — all of the stuff that has to be addressed.

First of all, education — secondly, what does the act entail? It has been modernized, so it's good news for the territory to have this individual, this position, staffed, and I look forward to him going out into the communities.

This job, Mr. Chair, from a municipality point of view, is a task that nobody in the communities wants to take on. This has been, in the past, the dog-catcher, per se — whether part of his job was being the refuge guy or a specific dog-catcher; it was not the most favourable position in town for communities to hire, and I understand why.

But with this kind of expertise, this kind of animal welfare officer, this kind of support that we're willing to give the communities, I think it's going to be easier to staff, and certainly the people will be better trained and working with your humane societies on the local level. Of course, the RCMP is going to be



involved, but I think this is good news, and this is a modernization. This act was badly needed, and I look forward to it being implemented and the communities benefiting from the expertise of this animal welfare officer.

**Mr. Cardiff:** Well, I too am pleased that it has finally come forward. This is after many years of asking questions in the Legislature about this that we have finally moved this issue forward. I hope that the minister will do the same thing with several other issues that we've been asking questions about, not the least of which is the *Landlord and Tenant Act*. We may have some questions for that, although we may save those for the next appearance in the Legislature by this minister.

I'd like to ask the minister some questions — one of the other areas in Community Services is motor vehicles. I'd like to ask him some questions about motor vehicles and the motor vehicles branch.

One question is for the Member for Porter Creek South — I wouldn't say it is his pet project, but it is something that he is championing and I thank him for doing that. What progress is being made to modernize drivers' licences? This is one question that I have for the minister regarding motor vehicles. I have two other questions as well. One is whether or not the government is currently working with the City of Whitehorse on changes to the *Motor Vehicles Act* so that they can more readily enforce — I believe it is the *Motor Vehicles Act* — handicap parking violations.

The other question is one that goes back. This is another one where I hope I don't have to ask questions too much longer in the House in order to get this minister to make some changes. It's about looking at making changes to the *Motor Vehicles Act* around mandatory helmet use on ATVs. Right now, it is my understanding that it is not mandatory.

When you're on the highway, it is. You see a lot of people riding alongside the highway who aren't wearing helmets. I know it's not the easiest thing to enforce, but it's not the easiest thing to enforce mandatory seat belt use either. That was the argument used back then. I think it was actually members of the Yukon Party or the Conservative party who were making those arguments — that you couldn't enforce it. Just because you can't enforce it, doesn't mean that it shouldn't be done. It's about public safety. In a lot of cases, it's about young people and their safety. We'll get to that a little bit later as well when we talk about the report about young workers' safety that was tabled in the Legislature.

So there are three questions: one about modernized drivers' licences and two about changes to the *Motor Vehicles Act*. One is with regard to handicapped parking spaces and the enforcement of that, and the other is with regard to mandatory helmet use on ATVs.

**Hon. Mr. Lang:** The driver's licence issue is a real issue, and it has become more and more of an issue as we move forward. We as a government were monitoring the Washington-B.C. enhanced driver's licence options because of the effect on us. We travel between here and Alaska, being neighbours like we are. The B.C.-Washington enhanced driver's licence study has just been finished. At first glance, it's a very expensive form of identification, understanding that we

have a very small population in the territory and, of course, economics is always a real concern when we make these kinds of decisions.

As we critique this study that came back between B.C. and Washington, it looks to me — at first glance again — that it's not a realistic thing for us to do as a jurisdiction, mostly because of cost.

Certainly, as we go through this process, we've been monitoring other jurisdictions. Saskatchewan, for one jurisdiction, halted the new enhanced driver's licence program. Again, that was a cost. New Brunswick has decided not to enhance the driver's licence; they're looking at recommending a passport system — in other words, if you're going to travel to America, you'd best have a passport. And again, as Minister of Community Services, I really recommend that people have a passport. It's not a matter of me making that decision or this government making that decision; it's just a worldwide requirement today that people have a passport that's current and that identifies them as Canadians and Yukoners. That option is there.

So what are we doing about the driver's licence? I've talked to the department about the issues around drivers' licences, in that I would like to get an overview of the economics of enhancing our driver's licence to a modern piece of documentation.

That means that it is not going to get you across an American border. It is not going to get you into Turkey, but it will identify you as a Yukoner and be a valid driver's licence. That being said, how do we manage that, Mr. Chair? Well, we manage that by looking at other jurisdictions and buddying-up with a jurisdiction — partnering. The jurisdiction we are in is very small and we want to make this as economically friendly as we can, as we change our driver's licence to a modern piece of documentation.

The department is looking into that and bringing back options to the government on how we could do that. Would we partner with the Province of Alberta and they would run our drivers' licences with theirs? In other words, their equipment would be fitted out to address our issues. In other words, if the member opposite went in to get his driver's licence he would get a temporary one and the other one would come in registered mail. That is an option. Certainly, those are things that I have tasked the department to look into.

How can we make this change as painless as possible for Yukoners? Again, all of these changes cost individuals resources, but that doesn't mean that we don't have the necessity of a passport. I recommend to all Yukoners who are going to travel abroad, to have some form of documentation that is a passport. That's how I could address that.

Certainly, it's easier for the Province of Ontario, resource-wise, to have an enhanced system than it would be for the provinces of Saskatchewan or New Brunswick. Again, we're talking about volume and numbers of individuals.

We're certainly looking forward to the internal audit that we're doing and getting some options in front of me as the minister. Then again, I have to talk to my colleagues on how they perceive this thing moving forward. I agree with the member opposite — it's time we went to work and modernized our

driver's licence. As to the enhanced part of it, I would say to the member opposite that it's not an option at the moment because of the cost and also the mechanism that it would take to have that.

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

**Chair:** It has been moved by Mr. Lang 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:** Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 15, *First Appropriation Act, 2009-10*, and directed me to report progress.

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

**Some Hon. Members:** Agreed.

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

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

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

*Motion agreed to*

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

*The House adjourned at 5:28 p.m.*