

**Yukon Legislative Assembly  
Whitehorse, Yukon  
Monday, April 20, 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 National Volunteer Week

**Hon. Mr. Lang:** I rise today to ask my colleagues and fellow Yukoners to pay tribute to our volunteers during Canada's National Volunteer Week from April 19 to 25, 2009. During this week, volunteers across our nation are recognized for the important role they play in our communities.

National Volunteer Week was first proclaimed in 1943 by the War Service Department of the Government of Canada. At that time, women's volunteer services in Montreal, Toronto, Winnipeg and Vancouver organized special events to draw the public's attention to the vital contribution women made to the war effort on the home front.

In the late 1960s, the idea of naming a week to honour volunteers was revived and expanded to all community volunteers. This special week grew in importance during the 1970s and 1980s, until 1990, when the third week in April was proclaimed National Volunteer Week all across the country.

Indeed, this week is now firmly established to highlight and pay tribute to Canada's volunteers, who work with the more than 80,000 registered charities and 100,000 non-profit organizations across Canada. This week is set aside specifically to thank and honour the people who donate time, energy and compassion to their fellow citizens.

This is a time for us all to reflect on the important contributions that volunteers make to our communities and our society as a whole.

Mr. Speaker, here in the Yukon alone, there are over 600 active non-profit organizations with volunteers contributing in many, many sectors, including health, arts, sports, recreation, environment, social services, faith, youth and seniors. We all remember the 2007 Canada Games, and I think every one of us recognizes that, without the volunteer effort, the games could not have happened.

I would venture to say that every Yukoner has been or will be served by our volunteers in some way through their lives here in the territory. Every day we see evidence of this year's theme, "From compassion to action". Every day we see Yukoners helping Yukoners, whether it's the dedicated volunteers at Hospice Yukon by the side of families in distress, the hockey moms and dads dedicating their time to the team sport, or our volunteer emergency medical service people and the volunteer

firefighters in our communities. It is all Yukoners helping Yukoners.

I'd like to take this opportunity to recognize the effort of the Yukon Volunteer Bureau. Since 2001, the Yukon Volunteer Bureau has been connecting Yukon volunteers to organizations and has been helping organizations recognize their volunteers through National Volunteer Week.

The bureau has been creating opportunities for our volunteers to develop and enhance their skills for non-profit organizations to move to a new level of efficiency and effectiveness in our communities. Congratulations to the Yukon Volunteer Bureau and thank you for the excellent contribution you have made and continue to make in our territory.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I would like to encourage all my colleagues here today to highlight April 19 to 25 on their calendars. During this time in particular, whenever you see a volunteer out there, take a moment to pause, shake hands, give a smile and especially say thank you to these individuals. After all, to a very large part, it is the efforts of these people that make our Yukon communities thrive.

**Mr. Mitchell:** Mr. Speaker, I rise today on behalf of the Official Opposition to pay tribute to National Volunteer Week, April 19 to 25 and to extend our thanks and pay tribute to our Yukon volunteers. The 2009 National Volunteer Week theme, "Celebrating People in Action," captures the meaning behind this signature week, honouring the individuals who take action and solve problems in their communities.

As Yukoners, we have a strong tradition of volunteerism in each and every community. Through volunteering we connect with and support our fellow Yukoners on a daily basis.

Many of our vital programs and services in the Yukon rely on the dedication and compassion of our volunteers. These volunteers are the lifeblood of every community. They offer their time, energy, talent and experience for the benefit of others.

Les volontaires aident à construire et renforcer le tissu social de nos communautés par la réponse aux besoins qui rendent chaque communauté unique. Ils offrent parce qu'ils croient en causes, égalités des chances, et communautés plus sûres. Ils donnent le cadeau le plus précieux, un engagement de se, parce qu'ils aspirent simplement pour rendre la vie meilleure pendant d'autres.

Volunteers help build and strengthen the social fabric of our communities by responding to the needs that make each community unique. They volunteer because they believe in causes, equal opportunities and safer communities. They give the most precious gift, a commitment of oneself, for they simply aspire to make life better for others. The selfless work of the volunteer is essential work and is beyond monetary value.

Our Yukon Volunteer Bureau opened its doors in April of 2002. The bureau recognizes the importance of supporting volunteers and, over the years, they have provided easy access to resources, training, consultation and support for individuals and organizations.

Cette semaine est notre occasion d'honorer et identifier les contributions que les volontaires apportent à notre mode de vie,

et fait de cette manière au Yukon un meilleur endroit pour vivre. Merci à nos volontaires. Nous apprécions tous ce que vous faites.

This week is our opportunity to honor and recognize the contributions that volunteers make to our way of life and, in doing so, make the Yukon a better place to live. To the thousands of Yukoners who volunteer, whether in non-governmental organizations or as volunteer firefighters and ambulance attendants, in the CARS stations keeping our pilots safe, in the seniors facilities, the hospital and in the community health centres, as coaches for our young people and in virtually every aspect of Yukon life, we say thank you volunteers, we do appreciate all that you do.

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

**Mr. Hardy:** I rise on behalf of the NDP caucus to pay tribute to our volunteers in this volunteer week. Why do people volunteer, Mr. Speaker? Most people volunteer for the satisfaction it brings. Many others volunteer to develop skills. Younger people who are looking to enhance their careers should think of volunteering in areas that supplement their paid work. Many volunteer positions give on-the-job experience and can be listed on resumé. Supervisors of volunteers can be approached for letters of reference and hours of volunteer work can give a person the edge they need to enter fields of higher education. There are many benefits to being a volunteer.

The Yukon Volunteer Bureau brings together people who want to volunteer and organizations that need volunteers. The service is free. Their Web site and printed resources hold a wealth of community information and helpful advice on working with volunteers. They hold regular free training sessions. The issues that volunteer organizations are always coping with are supported by the Volunteer Bureau as well, such as writing proposals, evaluating programs, legal considerations and training and recognizing the contribution of volunteers. It's so important that we do recognize the contribution of volunteers.

I believe the City of Whitehorse is having their recognition of volunteers, the volunteer of the year awards, this week, and that's a very important one. I believe it does encourage more people to step forward. You also see it in many of the organizations that rely upon volunteers. Today I just picked up the Hospice Yukon pamphlet, and in there, they're recognizing their volunteers and the tremendous amount of support they give for the work they do for the people who are grieving or going through the very difficult changes of life.

Let's think for a moment where we would be without volunteers, though. The Yukon has a higher rate of obesity than the average in Canada. If parents had to pay coaches for sports teams, our physical health would be far worse than it is.

Our population is aging. If we didn't have volunteer organizations that support seniors and to help us leave this world — Hospice, as I just mentioned — with dignity, our old age would be far more depressing and probably the services that would be offered would be far less.

We have problems with drugs and alcohol that are threatening the very basic values of our society. If we didn't have volunteers working with women and children in abusive

homes, the problems with addictions would be impossible to combat. If we didn't have volunteers organizing and producing the visual and performing arts, our lives would be very much less satisfying. If we didn't have volunteers working to fund-raise for research and patient support for many serious diseases, those of us stricken with illness would be badly off indeed if this was the case, because it just wouldn't be there.

Non-governmental organizations in Yukon owe a lot to volunteers. They give freely of their talents and time to manage and support programs that make the Yukon a healthy, safe and productive place to live. We salute and extend a heartfelt thanks to all Yukon volunteers. Without their vital contribution the Yukon would be a much poorer place. We challenge everyone to take a moment today to thank a volunteer over the next week who has made their life better. You won't have to look far to find one.

### In recognition of Education Week

**Hon. Mr. Rouble:** Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today to pay tribute to Yukon Education Week, which runs April 20 to 24. This year's theme is "Engaged communities, engaged learners", because we know the foundation of learning is strengthened by the shared involvement and support of our communities.

Education Week is a time to celebrate the important role of education. It is a time to recognize that learning is a holistic process, which includes all aspects of our lives. It is also a time to raise awareness of the many education opportunities available to Yukoners.

Mr. Speaker, it is people sharing their passions, their experiences and their opinions about education that forms the foundation of learning, which is then strengthened.

Education Week is also a time to thank the teaching professionals for their hard work and commitment in helping Yukon learners succeed to the best of their ability.

We also recognize that learner success is supported by families, First Nations, schools, school councils in communities and they also deserve our thanks.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, we invite all Yukoners to share in this celebration of education. If you have an opportunity, please review the Education Week calendar of events in your paper and become involved in the education events in your community. These are exciting education opportunities happening throughout the Yukon.

**Mr. Fairclough:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of the Official Opposition to pay tribute to Education Week, from April 20 to 24.

In this year's theme, "Engaged communities, engaged learners", we must all realize how important it is that the community and we as parents become involved in the education of our children. Each and every one of us has a role to play, and first and foremost the responsibility of our children's education begins at home. For our children to succeed, we must be involved — getting them off to school on time — nurturing, encouraging, and most of all, engaged with them on a daily basis.

In our education system, we must ensure our children experience the joy of learning while at school and that the educa-

tion system provides the essential tools, skills and programs to develop our children to their full potential. Partnership in education is very important. Partnering with students, parents, professionals, educators, school councils, First Nations and all levels of government is critical to Yukon's future.

Meaningful consultation and partnerships including parental and public participation will result in the highest quality of education to our Yukon students. During Education Week, we must credit the important leadership role that teaching professionals play in our children's lives and learning.

We encourage all Yukoners to get involved and attend one of the many open house opportunities and participate in one of the many available workshops being held throughout the Yukon. We celebrate teaching excellence and student achievements. Our students of today will become our leaders of tomorrow. They are our future.

Thank you.

**Mr. Hardy:** I rise on behalf of the NDP caucus to pay tribute to Yukon's Education Week. Education is one of the most significant systems in our society. It is through education that we envision and express ourselves, our past and our future. It is through education that culture is passed along and preserved. The godfather of adult education, Paulo Freire, wrote that the act of educating is always a political act, changing or reinforcing society.

Education forms and develops our children and ourselves, and it's a lifelong experience. It needs to be approached and presented with thought to its far-reaching effect on individuals, communities and our nation. The chosen theme of "Engaged communities, engaged learners" expresses well the notion that if a community is involved in its education system, it naturally also involves its learners. Learners of all ages must be engaged in the formation and evaluation of their communities. The freedom that communities in the Yukon have to voice their concerns about the education of their children and adults is a precious thing. It must be protected and cherished. Communities should be encouraged to express opinions and to be active in the implementation of any results of discussions and recommendations.

Education in Yukon has not been without controversy. All of us put a very high value on education and have voiced concerns about how education is offered to us.

First Nations, in particular, see education as a means to activate and preserve their great culture. Some creative accommodation has been made within the larger culture to engage First Nation communities in the curriculum and programs of our school system. With land claims and self-government agreements, there is the means now to respond to the keen interest that First Nations have about the education system in the Yukon. We have an opportunity to meet First Nation ideas and proposals positively, with support. Let us do that with compassion, creativity and excitement.

I'd like to repeat a well-known saying: It takes a community to raise a child. At every stage of our lives we learn. To all of those who teach us, thank you.

**Mr. Edzerza:** I rise today to pay tribute to Education Week, and I will present this from a traditional perspective.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank all people who choose to teach and share their knowledge and wisdom with others. It is our traditional belief that one's whole life, from the womb until the day your spirit leaves this earth, is a learning process.

Our main individual responsibility while on Mother Earth is to take care of our spirit. Part of this responsibility is to seek education and develop our natural gifts. In our own way, everyone is equal but different, and we must respect that. Everyone will learn differently and everyone will have different interests. Remember that.

Everything in life is a teaching. One must only seek and understand the lesson. In the First Nation way, our youth were taught by verbal means, and in the conventional European style, people are taught by reading and writing, which presents a cultural clash throughout our history. However, what is important today is that everyone has the same equal opportunity to learn and be taught in a way that best suits their needs and abilities for learning.

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

Introduction of visitors.

Returns or documents for tabling.

Reports of committees.

Are there any petitions?

Are there any bills to be introduced?

Are there any notices of motion?

## NOTICES OF MOTION

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

THAT this House urges the Yukon Party government to include in its next budget the construction of a new RCMP detachment in Burwash Landing, in addition to continuing the RCMP policing program in that community, until a resident police force is in place.

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

THAT this House urges the Yukon government to move without further delay to plan and construct a replacement for McDonald Lodge in Dawson so that Yukon seniors do not continue to live in an aging and deteriorating facility.

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

WHEREAS the free-entry system of granting mineral tenures in the Yukon is:

- 1) out of touch with today's public attitudes and values;
- 2) presumes that mining is the first and best use of Crown land, trumping all other values and uses of it;
- 3) undermines responsible land use planning as witnessed most recently in the Peel watershed planning process;
- 4) allows for nuisance staking where miners have no intention of actually exploring the land for minerals;
- 5) conflicts with First Nation rights as it does not provide for free, prior and informed consent by affected First Nations at the critical point when mineral rights are acquired;

6) prevails over private property interests, as most private homeowners only own the surface rights to their lands and not the subsurface rights, and miners are not even required to notify a landowner before driving a stake through their backyard; and

7) in no other resource-extraction industry does the Crown give up ownership of a public resource or receive so little for it;

THAT this House urges the Yukon government to consult with the Yukon public to develop alternatives to the free-entry system and amend the Yukon *Quartz Mining Act* accordingly, if deemed necessary.

I give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Yukon government to honour its fiduciary and legal obligations in the *Umbrella Final Agreement* and self-government agreements of Yukon First Nations by assisting them to resolve funding concerns to implement their responsibility for First Nation justice programs.

I give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Yukon government to honour its fiduciary and legal obligations in the *Umbrella Final Agreement* and self-government agreements of Yukon First Nations by assisting them to resolve funding concerns to implement their responsibility for education.

I give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Yukon government to honour its fiduciary and legal obligations in the *Umbrella Final Agreement* and self-government agreements of Yukon First Nations by assisting them to resolve funding concerns to implement their responsibility for health and social services programs.

**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: Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board investment fund

**Mr. Mitchell:** Mr. Speaker, last week we asked several questions about changes to the Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board investment policy. These changes were made in 2007, but the public was never informed about them. Injured workers were never informed about them.

The minister repeatedly told this House that an OIC had been posted and the public knew all about these changes. Late last week, the Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board issued a news release admitting that in fact no order was ever issued and the public was never informed. It was shortly after these changes were made that the fund, in fact, lost \$20 million. Why did the government come into the House last week and say these changes had been made public when, in fact, they had not been?

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** What I would remind the member, the Leader of the Official Opposition, first of all, was that this

change was publicly communicated. It was placed on the Web site right away. It was announced at the stakeholders' advisory committee meeting and it is in the 2007 annual report. The Auditor General also reviewed the policy change.

However, the revised investment policy, which was presented to Cabinet and approved — that part of the process was done correctly. As Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board administration has noted publicly, an error was made by the administration of Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board, which resulted in no OIC being presented to the Commissioner for signature. That type of mistake is absolutely unacceptable.

We have worked with the administration of Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board to investigate how this occurred and to take immediate action to ensure processes are put into place to ensure that no such error occurs ever in the future.

**Mr. Mitchell:** The minister responsible is just that — the minister responsible. As far as being placed on the Web site, just a few weeks ago it was the 2000 policy that was there.

These changes were approved by Cabinet, and then they were kept secret. Shortly after the changes were made, the fund lost \$20 million. The current minister isn't entirely at fault here. He wasn't the minister at the time. It was, in fact, the Member for Lake Laberge, who is answering these questions. It was under his watch that these changes were made and under his watch that the changes were kept secret.

We know the current minister has been fixing a lot of mistakes in this department and in the Health department left by the previous minister, so I'll ask again. Why did the government come into the House last week and tell Yukoners that the public had been informed about these changes when, in fact, that was incorrect?

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** Mr. Speaker, the public was informed and I would urge the member to review not only *Hansard*, but his past copies of annual reports. Again, I refer him specifically to the 2007 annual report. I remind the Leader of the Official Opposition, who often has a problem in this House with connecting the facts to his comments — I would remind the member that he, in fact, discussed this policy in Committee of the Whole in a past session. However, let me again remind the member opposite that the Auditor General has reviewed this matter. The member is referring to a valuation change which has occurred in virtually every single stock portfolio in the country. For the member to suggest that this is anything other than that, it is not a properly made comment in this Legislative Assembly, and it would lead to comments that would misinform the public from the member opposite.

**Mr. Mitchell:** Mr. Speaker, to use a term that the Member for Lake Laberge uses all the time: the information provided by the government last week was simply less than factual. The policy discussed two years ago — what we thought was the policy — was the old policy, because we didn't have the new facts. The government insisted the public had been informed; the public was not informed. Shortly after these changes were made in 2007, the Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board investment shrunk by \$20 million.

The public expects the government to be open and accountable. In this case, they were anything but.

If ignorance of the law is no excuse, then forgetting to comply is even weaker. Will the minister explain why these changes were not made public in an OIC, as required?

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** First of all, Mr. Speaker, the member, again, is referring to a stock valuation that has occurred with virtually every single portfolio of anyone, nationwide, in the current market condition. Secondly, the Auditor General has reviewed this matter and noted in the annual report that as of December 31, 2008, the fund is fully funded.

Mr. Speaker, I would remind the member, the Leader of the Official Opposition, that he stood up in discussing this very policy — the 2007 change, not the other that he is indicating today that he thinks he was discussing. I remind him that his words were, “I just wanted to commend the board, via the chair, on their successful management of the significant investment portfolio. I do notice that there is a policy that indicates the diversification of credit risk is managed by limiting the exposure,” et cetera.

The Leader of the Official Opposition discussed this policy. He commended the chair for the policy and, in fact, indicated that this should be an example of how to manage things. I would remind the member, again, with regard to the process that occurred, that Workers’ Compensation Health and Safety Board administration has noted that an error was made by administration which resulted in no OIC being presented by them to the Commissioner for signature. This type of mistake is absolutely unacceptable. We have acted. We have asked Workers’ Compensation Health and Safety Board administration to take every step to ensure this type of mistake never happens again.

#### **Question re: Workplace injury reporting**

**Mr. Fairclough:** Mr. Speaker, paragraph 10(1) of the *Workers’ Compensation Act* states, and I quote: “Employers shall give written notice to the board of any, or the possibility of any, work-related injury that comes to their attention within three days of receiving the information.” It is very clear: employers shall report any workplace injury within three days.

On the Workers’ Compensation Health and Safety Board Web site under general guidelines for reporting injuries, something quite different is described. According to the guidelines, an employer is only expected to document minor workplace injuries in the company’s first aid file but they are not required to report such workplace injuries to Workers’ Compensation Health and Safety Board. Can the minister explain what effect this will have on reported injury rates?

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** First of all, I don’t believe the assertion made by the Member for Mayo-Tatchun is correct. As acting minister, I will have to look into the matter that he reports. What he is correct in is that the act does require injuries to be reported within three days. That is injuries that meet the definition of the occupational health and safety regulation. Of course, the regulations cannot be overwritten by policy. The regulations stand. The member is misinformed.

**Mr. Fairclough:** This policy change means that employers don’t have to report all workplace injuries any more.

There are some serious implications to this decision. The *Workers’ Compensation Act* is clear: employers shall report any workplace injury within three days. We all want to reduce workplace injuries, but reducing the number of injuries that get reported is not the way to achieve this. Clearly the number of reported workplace injuries will be dramatically reduced by this change of policy.

Why was this policy change approved?

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** Same question, same response. As acting minister, I will have to look into the assertions made by the Member for Mayo-Tatchun, but I would again remind the member opposite that this is a bit of a strange line of questioning. The member ought to know full well that neither act nor regulation can be overridden by policy. The act and the regulations apply and must apply and it is the obligation of the administration of Yukon Workers’ Compensation Health and Safety Board to ensure the act and regulations are complied with.

**Mr. Fairclough:** It’s obvious the minister doesn’t like the questioning here. This policy change is simply to reduce workplace injuries by not reporting them. This issue was also covered in the Yukon Employees Union newsletter recently. Let me quote: “Although it is no longer necessary to report all injuries to the Yukon Workers’ Compensation Health and Safety Board, it is still very important to document them.”

The government claims that workplace safety is important and, at the same time, says, “Be sure to document workplace injuries, but don’t report them to WCB.” Mr. Speaker, this government promised to reduce workplace injuries and the government’s plan for doing so is simply not to report them.

Is this the best plan the government can come up with? Reduce workplace injuries by not reporting them?

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** This line of questioning is extremely unusual, and I would point out to the Member for Mayo-Tatchun that the assertions he has made — I believe the term “ridiculous” has been ruled out of order — so in searching for another term that would be more parliamentary, I would simply note the Member for Mayo-Tatchun is, at best, misguided in this area. I would point out to him that, again, the act and regulations cannot be overridden by board policy; therefore, for him to suggest that is occurring simply doesn’t hold any water. I would encourage him to check his facts and this information he is quoting from. I’d encourage him, as a standard practice in the House, to table that information so members may review this, and we can look at it and understand why that is mistaken — like the Member for Mayo-Tatchun.

#### **Speaker’s statement**

**Speaker:** Before the next question, please, Hon. Minister, sneaking these adjectives in there, or these descriptions, is not appropriate. I don’t want to interrupt the minister or any member in the middle of their question or answer; however, keep that in mind in the future.

#### **Question re: First Nations drawing down responsibilities**

**Mr. Hardy:** Many First Nations have begun to act on their rights under the self-government agreements and take

responsibility for certain programs that are now being delivered by the Yukon government. Can the Premier update the Legislature on his government's progress on government-to-government negotiations with First Nations that are ready to draw down their responsibilities?

**Hon. Mr. Fentie:** First, we have to recognize that there is a clearly defined process with respect to the issue of program transfer. This is a very important part of the self-government agreements. It also includes the federal government, so any progress being made begins with a formal notification of any area of particular authority that the First Nation, through their agreements, has the option to occupy. Formal notification is given, and then that process commences — it's not bilateral. It's not progress made by the Yukon government; it's progress made within the process that includes First Nation governments, the federal government and the Yukon government.

**Mr. Hardy:** We believe that the rights and obligations outlined in the *Umbrella Final Agreement* and the self-governing agreements in the Yukon are part of an evolutionary process. This process is now at a critical stage. After many years of developing programs and systems, First Nations are ready to take responsibility in some of these areas, Mr. Speaker. In good faith they have proceeded to do the complex work of taking on those responsibilities for their own people. Some of them have spent time, energy and a lot of money to research and write legislation that enables them to draw down and manage systems in education and child welfare, for example.

Will the Premier commit to working beside First Nations to pursue adequate and direct funding from the Department of Indian Affairs for implementation of self-government agreements?

**Hon. Mr. Fentie:** I think it's much more than a commitment being made on the floor of this Legislature; it's an obligation that governments have agreed to abide by — federal, territorial and First Nation governments. We encourage First Nations to occupy this authority. That's what self-determination was all about in the very long process that was embarked upon more than three decades ago to negotiate these agreements — agreements, by the way, and a model of governance that's now being held up before the country as a clearly more acceptable type of collaborative governance that is probably nowhere else in Canada.

Certainly, the functioning of that collaborative type of governance in Yukon is allowing us to make great progress.

Yes, commitment, of course; but obligation — that is a matter of fact.

**Mr. Hardy:** The implementation of agreements is the final step in a long evolutionary process of land claims and self-government, and we're now at that stage. First Nations are developing systems to work in conjunction with this government or directly with the federal government and bypassing this government on many of the programs that they have indicated in the past.

They're not opposed to working together, but they have had frustrations with this territorial government in the past, and

the Premier is on record as saying that he does not approve of First Nations running their own programs, separate from the territorial government.

They're also considering drawing down funding directly from the federal government to ensure that their people's needs are met — direct funding that bypasses the territory. Will the Premier support First Nations when they formally move in this direction?

**Hon. Mr. Fentie:** I'm really not sure that the Leader of the Third Party understands what it is he's saying. First off, there is a direct bilateral funding arrangement with self-governing First Nations. It's called the "financial transfer agreement". This government has led the charge with First Nation governments to ensure, through the nine-year review — the gross expenditure base process — that the federal government was meeting its obligation to Yukon self-governing First Nations through the fiscal transfer agreement. We're very clear on that.

We've even tabled a range of increase that the nine-year review demonstrated was clearly there — the adequacy issue was clearly there — through the gross expenditure base. That range that has been tabled is between \$22 million to \$34 million annually, and we are pursuing that now with the federal minister, not only in INAC, but with federal Finance and other ministers. In fact, the Yukon government and representatives of First Nation self-governments have been in Ottawa a couple of times now to make presentations to the federal government. We've even had an intergovernmental forum on this matter.

If the Leader of the Third Party is referring to jurisdictional matters, that's where this government is clearly on record: we will not devolve public government's jurisdiction.

#### **Question re: Mineral claim staking**

**Mr. Hardy:** Yes, it's going to be a new question too, Mr. Speaker. The system of granting mineral tenures in the Yukon has existed since the gold rush. Any person over 18 can enter and access private and public lands that may contain minerals and stake claims. The cost of registering a claim today with the local mining recorder's office is approximately \$10. Once that is done, the miner can exclusively explore for minerals on the claim indefinitely as long as he does \$100 worth of work annually on it or pays \$100 cash in lieu. Boy, big sums aren't they, Mr. Speaker?

Does the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources think the current system of granting mineral tenures truly reflects the opinions and protects the rights of the majority of Yukoners?

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** I would remind the Leader of the Third Party that the system that is currently in place has been in place for the majority of the Yukon's existence as a territory. I would also remind him that in fact the levels of protection have been enhanced over time, including that now through processes including the requirement of anything that hits a trigger in the *Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Act*, there must be a public review through the process that is posted on-line, reviewed by a Designated Office for most projects — and Executive Committee for a larger project. Having a claim does not necessarily mean someone will be able to develop it. They must meet other permitting requirements, other develop-

ment requirements, including public review, and a number of procedures and steps to ensure that those conflicts to the best extent possible are reduced and eliminated wherever possible.

**Mr. Hardy:** I'm sure that has made a lot of people at ease about the over 10,000 claims that have been put into the Peel watershed in the last couple of years.

The free-entry system is based on the premise that mining is the first and best use of Crown land and trumps all other values and uses of it. It does not provide for free, prior and informed consent by affected First Nation people at the critical point when mineral rights are acquired. Under this system, mining even prevails over private property interests, as most private homeowners only own the surface rights to their land and not the subsurface.

Does the minister really believe in a system where a miner is not even required to notify a landowner before driving a stake into the backyard?

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** Again, I remind the Leader of the Third Party — I think what is occurring here is the member has a misunderstanding of what rights are granted with a claim. I have explained this in the past in the House; perhaps I could explain this further to the member in a less stilted venue than through Question Period here.

I would point out again to the member opposite that there are a number of procedures in place for managing potential conflicts. Having a claim prevents someone else from putting a mineral claim in place; it does not, however, ensure that you'll ever be able to develop that claim. There are public processes that must be gone through for that work to occur and steps that provide a check and balance on the potential impact.

I would remind the member opposite, when he's referring to a significant number of claims in one area — as what he seems to be categorizing as nuisance claims — that what's being talked about here is millions of dollars of exploration work, millions of dollars of work in the area the member referred to, many Yukoners working and employed in that area.

**Mr. Hardy:** Actually, I'd like to challenge the minister on that, because he's completely wrong about that. I don't consider \$10 a claim a big bonus to the Yukon people.

The free-entry system has led to all kinds of conflict with First Nations, municipalities — all we have to do is look up on the Mount McIntyre ski trails and the staking that's happening up there — and even individual landowners. In no other resource industry, including the oil and gas and forestry, does the Crown give up its ownership of a public resource or receive so little for it.

I'm not saying to do away with mineral staking altogether, but I am saying I think it's time in our political, social and economic evolution to explore alternatives that better protect the rights of the public and give a say in where mining exploration and related activities can take place.

Will the minister instruct his officials to develop alternatives to the existing free-entry system with a view to change the *Quartz Mining Act* so it better reflects today's public attitudes and values?

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** Mr. Speaker, again, I remind the member opposite, we debated this issue that was brought for-

ward by members, including his colleagues. This was discussed last fall when we brought forward the amendments and updates to the *Quartz Mining Act*. I would remind the member opposite that, through the devolution transfer agreement, at some point in time there will be a more comprehensive review of successor resource legislation, including the *Quartz Mining Act*. However, I would point out to the member a few things: first of all, I would clarify for the member that I was not indicating the fee received for licensing a claim as being the major source of benefit to Yukoners. On the contrary, it is the exploration work that Yukoners are engaged in — the millions of dollars of work in the past two seasons alone: in excess of \$100 million each year — that is employing Yukoners territory-wide in the exploration industry, in looking around and doing that early-stage work on claims in several cases, in fact, bringing forward projects that look like they may become productive mines employing even more Yukon citizens. The mining industry, when done responsibly, is a very important industry to the Yukon. It has been a key engine of the Yukon economy since the Yukon's inception as a territory, and we take the steps that are necessary through processes — including the public processes under the *Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Act* review — to provide the opportunity for public involvement and, to the greatest extent possible, to balance existing and proposed interests and to ensure that, to the best extent possible, potential competing values are brought together in a manner that is harmonious in nature.

With regard to the resource revenue, I would remind the member opposite that it was the Liberals who rolled over on that issue and did not negotiate a higher cap than \$3 million under the devolution transfer agreement. They are the ones who are responsible for providing Yukon with only \$3 million maximum in resource revenue per fiscal year.

#### **Question re: Yukon Development Corporation, chair remuneration**

**Mr. McRobb:** I have a question for the minister responsible for the Yukon Development Corporation. The position of Yukon Development Corporation board chair is clearly classified as a part-time job. The Yukon government has a rule capping the salary for this position at a maximum of \$38,000 per year. It turns out, however, that last year this part-time job paid more than \$57,000. Can the minister responsible explain why the Yukon Development Corporation board chair was allowed to exceed the maximum by more than \$19,000?

**Hon. Mr. Kenyon:** For the member opposite, I can look at this but, again, I am not really comfortable speaking about personnel issues on the floor of the Legislature.

**Mr. McRobb:** Well, Mr. Speaker, this is not a personnel issue. The instruction comes from the Yukon government. Now the rules are very clear with regard to the salary of the chair of the Yukon Development Corporation. It is set by regulation. The maximum is \$38,000. The public expects the government to follow the rules. According to recently released documents, the chair of the board exceeded that maximum by more than 50 percent. We want to know why. The public deserves an explanation.

Why was the Yukon Development Corporation board chair allowed to exceed the ruled maximum by more than \$19,000?

**Hon. Mr. Kenyon:** For the member opposite, I'm happy to look into this, but once again, I'm not really comfortable discussing or going after — on any level — any public servant. I think this is a very inappropriate place to have those discussions.

**Mr. McRobb:** The minister shouldn't be trying to shift any blame to a public servant. It's the minister's responsibility. Now the position of Yukon Development Corporation board chair is classified as a part-time job. The president of the corporation is the one who runs the day-to-day business and is paid quite well to do so.

We thought the Yukon Party had understood this differential, because it was the Yukon Party that set the salary at a maximum of \$38,000 per year. A rule is a rule, Mr. Speaker, even for the Yukon Party. But in 2008, the Yukon Party allowed the chair to bill taxpayers for more than \$57,000. This is well beyond what is allowed by the government's own rules. The public expects the government to follow the rules. It should be setting a good example.

Again, why was the chair allowed to exceed the maximum? The minister approved it. Was he unaware of his government's own rules?

**Hon. Mr. Kenyon:** Again, for the member opposite, I am not trying to shift blame to a public servant. I am not the one who is standing up in this House making what does appear to be a bit of an accusation. I will be happy to look at it, but the member is free to take it outside of this House and make whatever statements he wishes. Perhaps the member opposite is just finding out the information as he continues to Google our public servants.

#### **Question re: School staffing**

**Mr. Fairclough:** Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Education. It is now approaching the end of April and schools and school councils are waiting for the department to announce staffing for the 2009-10 school year.

School administrators and school councils are working on school plans for the next year. That process is severely curtailed when you do not know what staff you will have or how many. This is important in the planning process.

Will the minister inform the House when schools will be notified of their staffing numbers for the next school term?

**Hon. Mr. Rouble:** I appreciate the question coming from the member opposite. Indeed, the Department of Education continues its planning around the year. We see this with the work going on with school councils, with our administrators and with the professionals in the Department of Education.

The Department of Education will continue to look at the enrolment numbers and projections for next year at our different schools, and we'll continue to look at teacher retirements, when the information becomes available to us. The Department of Education will continue to work with our principals to ensure an equitable allocation of teachers throughout our communities in order to meet the best needs of students.

Last year at this time the member opposite came to the floor of this Assembly and started talking about teacher cuts. I

would give the member the opportunity now to retract what he said last year, as we saw no teacher cuts. I'd welcome the member to correct the record, to correct the misunderstanding he had last year and correct the impression he left with the people of the Yukon. It's a great opportunity; I welcome him to come to his feet now.

**Mr. Fairclough:** It's this minister who should be apologizing for his many mistakes over the years. This minister quite frequently on the floor makes reference to his many partners in education. I would remind the minister that effective partnerships are built on mutual respect.

Many members of the YTA are wondering if they have jobs for the next year. New teachers on probation are wondering; permanent teachers are only permanent if they have a position that exists for them. Education assistants and remedial tutors are also being left in limbo.

While they wait, positions in other jurisdictions in Canada are being filled on a daily basis. There's no need to cause people this stress — announce the numbers and let administrators, councils and staff get on with their planning. When will the minister announce the staffing for next year? Does he know?

**Hon. Mr. Rouble:** I agree with the member opposite — there is no need to cause undue stress. There is no need to needlessly generate fear among people. We saw this member last year use this approach. He stood on the floor of the Assembly more than once and banged his desk and said, "They're cutting teachers. They're cutting teachers." The numbers don't bear evidence of that. That wasn't true. The Government of Yukon is committed to working —

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

#### **Point of order**

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

**Mr. McRobb:** The House rules clearly disallow a member from saying words like "that is not true" when applied to another member, and I believe that's what the minister just did.

**Speaker:** Anyone else on this point of order?

**Hon. Mr. Kenyon:** From my perspective, a statement of fact is hardly a matter of order.

#### **Unparliamentary language**

**Speaker:** No. There is a point of order. As I discussed last week with the members, we presume every member in here is an honourable member. So those types of statements are not allowable, so, Hon. Minister of Education, I'd ask you to retract that, please.

#### **Withdrawal of remark**

**Hon. Mr. Rouble:** Mr. Speaker, I apologize for my remarks.

The Liberal Party last year said one thing; the results do not bear their statements out. I hope I'm within the parameters of our Assembly in saying that.

Just this past weekend, the Department of Education met with the Association of School Councils, Boards and Committees. I was there to discuss issues with them and members of the NDP were there to discuss issues with them. There was one



party that was absent from the discussions. I won't point any fingers at them though. Mr. Speaker, the government is —

**Speaker:** Final supplementary.

**Mr. Fairclough:** It has been whispered that this minister is withholding the staffing information until after the House rises so he will not have to answer questions in the House. There is no better way for the minister to put this whisper campaign to rest than to simply announce the FTEs assignment for the various schools. Show the respect the minister's partners deserve.

Will he assure Yukoners here and now by announcing the dates and the staffing allocations?

**Hon. Mr. Rouble:** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the member opposite is now starting a whisper campaign. Last year they generated needless fears in the community; the record bears that out.

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

### Point of order

**Speaker:** Stand up, Leader of the Official Opposition.

**Mr. Mitchell:** Mr. Speaker, I think Standing Order 19(g) "imputes false or unavowed motives to another member" would apply here.

**Speaker:** On a point of order, Hon. Member for Lake Laberge.

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Education was simply pointing out that comments made by the opposition last year resulted in needless fears being generated. There is no point of order. The members are just very sensitive.

### Speaker's ruling

**Speaker:** Firstly, I get a chance to say there is no point of order, so I thank all members for your advice. From the Chair's perspective it is simply a dispute among members.

The Minister of Education has the floor. You have about 15 seconds.

**Hon. Mr. Rouble:** Mr. Speaker, the Department of Education will continue to work with our teachers, with the Yukon Teachers Association, and looking at our budget we can see the growth in the budget. There is a 5.5-percent increase in the budget, mains to mains.

Mr. Speaker, I look forward to discussing the budget on Education with the member opposite or we can talk about division of education and we can discuss the significant investments, including the increase —

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

### ORDERS OF THE DAY

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

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

*Motion agreed to*

*Speaker leaves the Chair*

### COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

**Chair (Mr. Nordick):** Order please. Committee of the Whole will now come to order. The matter before the Committee is Bill No. 15, *First Appropriation Act, 2009-10*, Department of Environment. Do members wish 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 Environment — continued**

**Chair:** The matter before the Committee is Bill No. 15, *First Appropriation Act, 2009-10*, Department of Environment. Ms. Taylor?

**Hon. Ms. Taylor:** Mr. Chair, we left off in the general debate last week at a fairly comprehensive discussion on waste management and diverting waste from our respective landfills throughout the territory and the three Rs. Of course, I referred to our community recycling programs of which there are many.

Before I get into a little more about community recycling, though, I did want to just go over a few key points that we did address in last week's debate on the Department of Environment. Certainly, as I have articulated over the last couple of weeks in the Legislature, the Department of Environment is very much key in maintaining the government's commitment to protecting and honouring our commitment to preserving and promoting the preservation of Yukon's natural environment.

Of course, this month — the month of April every year — we in the Yukon celebrate what has come to be known as Biodiversity Month. I have to say that I was out and about on the weekend, and I had the opportunity to take part in a number of different celebrations, celebrating our natural environment, including the Celebration of Swans. My family and I were able to trek out to M'Clintock Bay, where the interpretive centre is located, and it was wonderful — (a) to see the sun shining; and (b) to see the number of individuals out at the centre, taking part in lots of activities celebrating the gathering of the swans.

It was amazing to see a number of individuals I haven't seen in a long time, being able to again gather and witness the return of a lot of various migratory birds, including our trumpeter swans, tundra swans soon to arrive, and of course, many other variety of birds that travel through the Yukon and call the Yukon their home as well. It was indeed a great celebration. That is but one of many of a variety of events being held during Biodiversity Month and we very much encourage all Yukoners to get out and participate in the many activities that have been planned and celebrated throughout every community.

I just wanted to take the opportunity to again recognize those individuals — particularly those individuals who work in

the wildlife viewing program, as well as those who work in our parks unit. It is part and parcel of our celebration-of-parks initiative that our Premier, in his capacity as former Minister of Environment, had launched a couple of years back.

It really is an opportunity to raise awareness about the level of park planning going on in the Yukon when it comes to new territorial parks, of which there are three in the works, adhering to Yukon's obligation when it comes to meeting our obligations in the final agreements in terms of looking at habitat protection areas to special management areas. As I have alluded to in the past, there are numerous planning processes underway.

It's wonderful to see our parks personnel out and engaging with the public at venues such as the Celebration of Swans, to be able to raise awareness about planning underway in our respective areas throughout the Yukon.

Where we left off in last week's debate, we also touched upon waste management. I don't want to go over all of the various points that we touched upon. The Member for Mount Lorne also made reference to the importance of recycling as part of the waste-diversion management programs undertaken in the Department of Environment.

Since assuming the role and the responsibility of Minister of Environment, one of the things that I did identify was that we did need to work closer with our community recycling depots to identify some of their areas of pressure and work with them to ensure that they are part of the process in terms of moving forward on a solid-waste management plan for the territory. I think I have said on the floor of the Legislature that when it comes to waste reduction, especially through recycling, it is something that each and every one of us can do, and most of us do in fact do that to reduce our impact on the environment, including our contribution to climate change.

Here in Yukon, there are 17 registered community recycling depots. There are also a couple of recycling processors, including Raven Recycling. We know that Raven Recycling alone has over 140 customers in the City of Whitehorse for the paper-save programs at well over 200 locations. Well over 90 of them are Yukon government facilities, 18 are schools, 80 are offices. As well, there are many organizations, governments, families and individuals who are involved with recycling and waste-reduction initiatives in the Yukon.

In fact, I was just reviewing some of our family pictures yesterday, and it just brought back some memories of my son's preschool class, where they were taken out to Raven Recycling, at the age of three years, to be able to learn more about the importance of recycling and the importance that Raven Recycling, in particular, plays in our community.

It was really wonderful to see such young individuals taking part in recycling practices. After their trip to Raven Recycling, they took part in Earth Day celebrations by picking up garbage in the local neighbourhood. Of course, at this time of year, we very much witness a lot of garbage in our respective neighbourhoods. It was great to see them taking part with the plastic gloves taped on to their arms because the gloves, of course, were miles too big. That said, I just wanted to impress

upon members that you can never start too young when it comes to recycling practices.

Thanks to everyone's efforts, approximately 5,000 tonnes of material are diverted from landfills each and every year — almost 20 percent of the amount of waste generated in Whitehorse alone.

At the Department of Environment, we have helped fund the collection of household hazardous waste. We know that in years past we have been able to collect over 16,000 kilograms of waste, while over 50,000 kilograms of commercial hazardous waste has also been shipped out of Yukon for treatment.

We very much recognize and value the work of all Yukon communities to maintain and enhance the quality of our environment. We are very pleased to acknowledge our government's support of these various initiatives throughout the year. As I have touched upon in the past, we know that the world's changing economics have affected the ability of many of our community-based recycling centres to operate and meet operating costs. Last year, in response, we were able to provide \$250,000 in new funding to help our recycling depots across the territory, and we are pleased to continue with that level funding in this year's proposed budget.

As I mentioned, we were able to listen to the concerns of the community recycling centres on the need to come up with new solutions by looking at our funding arrangements with them. In working with them over the last several months, we have received great input and representation from our respective centres. We have met with them to go over their funding concerns and the various effects on their operations.

We were very pleased to be able to more than double our core funding to the respective community depots. It's very impressive to see how far we have come from where we were before.

We are also working with Raven Recycling in their request for assistance. We have been able to provide them with interim funding to help them carry on with their work, while identifying longer term solutions that are both sustainable and financially viable, and to ensure that Yukoners continue to enjoy the same level of service when it comes to taking their non-refundables and refundables to various centres, and to ensure those materials are accepted and recycled in a responsible manner.

We continue to work with Raven to explore options that will help it continue to provide its services to the community.

We also help administer the scrap-tire recycling program, which has been a tremendous success in years past. We are also very pleased to take part in the Yukon government corporate shredding and recycling program — which is really on track — to divert about 45 tonnes of material from area landfills on an annual basis.

The Public Service Commission operates the shredding and recycling program through its workplace diversity employment office, in partnership with Raven Recycling.

We're also working in collaboration with Education on a new recycling program to be delivered in Yukon schools. In this regard, as part of our new funding that we announced last fall, \$75,000 has been identified for recycling initiatives in our

Yukon schools in support of awareness, composting and other recycling-related activities.

We are also very pleased to provide ongoing grants for capital projects and public awareness programs through the recycling fund and the waste-reduction and recycling initiative. These funds support special projects including capital improvements and public education.

Mr. Chair, we are working on a whole host of various initiatives, including review of the transportation allowances paid to registered recycling depots. We know that that was a key concern that was identified amongst the respective communities on being able to help transport, providing that transportation assistance to the main processors, and again, being able to accept non-refundable and refundable materials, so we are working on a funding formula to account for the variations in fuel prices, distances, load values as they affect the respective community-run centers. So again, we are very pleased to be able to continue with some of those initiatives. We continue to work with our depots in identifying further areas of improvement.

There was reference made last week about having an annual gathering of the respective depots and last year, as part of our new funding announcement for community recycling depots, we were able to have a gathering of most of the community depots — there was representation at least from many of them, and it was really the first of its kind in a long time and that is where we were able to obtain the input and the very valuable feedback of various communities and identify challenges and identify a way to go forward when it comes to bettering our services of recycling. So, as we move forward on a comprehensive approach to solid waste, recycling is very much a part of that and our recycling depots are very much a part of that.

I had the opportunity to actually visit, for example, the Watson Lake local recycling centre during the Easter long weekend. It was great to see how far they have come over the years in being able to really put forward better signage and better storage of various materials. When I arrived there, they were very busy indeed. In fact, there was quite a lineup of hoteliers and individuals wanting to leave their recycling materials with them.

So we had an opportunity to really discuss some of the new funding, and they were very appreciative of that new funding and also looked forward to the rollout of a new transportation allowance, as well, that will perhaps facilitate better efficiencies and more effective transportation of recycling materials.

I think that we are coming a long way in meeting some of these challenges there, but we do know that with the world economy as it is — and world commodity prices in particular — there are some challenges to work on. Officials within the Department of Environment are to be commended for their commitment and their expertise and their hard work over the last few months to work with the recycling depots and the processors to ensure that we as Yukoners continue to enjoy that quality service in being able to take our recyclables.

Mr. Chair, I believe that I am just about out of time. I look forward to continued debate on the Department of Environment. We know that it is a fairly large, complex department. It has been a great privilege to be able to serve as Minister of Environment over the last number of months. We have much to accomplish ahead of us by laying out some of these key initiatives such as the new dollars for recycling, new money for a site assessment remediation unit.

As we mentioned the other day, there are new dollars for an animal health program and of course new dollars for a climate change secretariat. Those are some of the key new initiatives but there are others housed within the Department of Environment. I just commend our officials within the department for their continued commitment toward the health and well-being of our territory.

Thank you.

**Mr. Hardy:** Well, Mr. Chair, I'm actually kind of saddened to listen to this. I don't need a 20-minute lecture every time the minister stands up. I'm going to ask a couple of questions; I hope the minister can address the questions. She's becoming very, very accomplished at recycling words. Maybe it's because of the Department of Environment. Frankly, I don't have time in my life left to listen to this kind of stuff, so I ask with respect that the minister will try to address some of the questions, even if the questions — and I apologize, because I have been out of the House for the last bit — are redundant or repeated. But just for my own clarification, if she can respect the limitations I may have on this side to try to address the questions, we can move forward very quickly, and we don't have to go over and over and over the same recycled words.

I just want some facts, that's all. I'm not after anything else.

Just a very simple question — where the question was asked, I don't believe it was answered, from what I can see in the Blues — and that was species at risk, and the question was when are we going to have legislation developed? That was the question asked by the Liberal Member for Mayo-Tatchun. I went through the response and there really wasn't one.

Can the minister indicate that? Do they have some kind of timeline to have that legislation brought forward?

**Hon. Ms. Taylor:** I believe I tried to address that question last week. The question was raised and I think I made reference that we're engaged in a number of different working meetings with First Nations and the Inuvialuit to address how the legislation deals with a number of components outlined in a proposed species at risk act.

I'm loath to put a timeline to that because I believe we're committed to doing our due diligence and proceeding with thoughtful discussions — the earlier the better. It may happen later this fall. It may happen next spring. It may happen next fall. I can't put a time frame on that at this time.

**Mr. Hardy:** That is all I needed to know. If there were a timeline, it would be nice for us to know when we are working toward.

Let's shift to water testing. How many inspectors actually right now are doing water quality testing?

**Hon. Ms. Taylor:** Housed within the Department of Environment, there are three water inspectors. One has to take a look at the context of the government-wide initiatives — Energy, Mines and Resources also inspects water when it comes to mining-related activities, of course. Likewise, Health and Social Services do conduct some monitoring and some inspecting as well.

I guess when one looks at the Department of Environment, housed within our prescribed responsibilities there are three at this time. Of course, I don't want to go over it because I went through the water resources branch — which is new, I might add. The branch just became formalized in the Department of Environment within the last half a year, I believe it was. So, ever since devolution, we are working on a number of new initiatives but also working to enhance what we do have.

**Mr. Hardy:** I thank the minister for that. Probably the minister doesn't have this answer. There are going to be a couple of questions here so I can condense them very quickly. How many does Energy, Mines and Resources have testing water and what kind of testing are they doing? Health and Social Services again: how many are testing water and what kind of testing are they doing? The federal government must be doing some water testing as well and, again, what kind of relationship exists between the departments and the federal government and how is all that information being brought together so that we have a better understanding of the water quality and water flow that is happening throughout the Yukon and can consolidate that information to better serve the people?

**Hon. Ms. Taylor:** The member opposite raises a very important question, and that has to do with water management. As I alluded to earlier, the Department of Environment is but one of a number of respective departments. I can't speak for the other departments in terms of the number of officials or their capacities, but that could be answered perhaps in the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources and others when we get to that respective debate.

In terms of moving forward — as I mentioned, we formalized our official branch that oversees water resources in the Department of Environment. As such, we have been able to come up with a working group. Because water is being managed in a whole host of different departments, we see the time has come for us to formalize our — there appears to be some biodiversity happening here in the Legislature, Mr. Chair. I think the fruit flies are on a rampage here.

Our government has been able, through the Department of Environment and at the lead of the Environment department and working with other governments, to formalize our framework toward management of water, and it will, in fact, look at providing a very comprehensive, coordinated approach for protecting, conserving and utilizing our water resources when it comes to safe drinking water, for example, and when it comes to ground and surface water resources, how we can protect that better — so, again, identifying how we can look at gaps and looking at how we can make better and efficient use of our current resources and looking at what needs to be strengthened as well.

But the member opposite is absolutely correct that Environment Canada also participates in water monitoring initiatives. In fact, when we look at — we have what we call a Canada-Yukon water quality monitoring index with respective stations.

Sampling has occurred over the last number of years, but there are numerous samples that are collected from various stations, of which there were just four new stations I understand that were added in the recent couple of years — two or three years, if I'm not mistaken. We operate that with Environment Canada with our Department of Environment.

Again, that talks to us about the state of water quality and looks to identifying emerging trends. The index has been used to evaluate suitability of different water resources for different uses in support of aquatic life and so forth. There are a number of various initiatives. That's just one of them when it comes to Environment Canada but, as I mentioned, we work with Highways and Public Works, Health and Social Services, Energy, Mines and Resources and Community Services, to name but a few, as well as the Executive Council Office, which also oversees administration of the Water Board.

There are a whole host of different departments involved in this. We are working on being able to strengthen that water-management framework as we speak.

**Mr. Hardy:** Thank you. It seems that there are too many departments, including the federal government. It seems that you have a more compatible working relationship and are sharing information. There seems to be too many departments out there that are doing water testing, as you seem to have indicated, but it's not necessarily all the information being gathered together in a central body and being able to use that information in a more cohesive manner.

I do hope the Minister of Environment tries to bring all that information together because it would be good for everybody and it would probably prevent some of the redundancy and costs.

If I was going to ask questions — and I just need some clarification of this — regarding testing at quartz mining sites, testing at the placer mining, testing at solid-waste facilities, testing sewage treatment effluence — would these be in different departments? Do these fall under the testing that the Minister of Environment does?

**Hon. Ms. Taylor:** Perhaps the member opposite could engage in a bit of further debate with Energy, Mines and Resources, but when it comes to placer, for example, that is housed solely within Energy, Mines and Resources. When it comes to hard rock or quartz, so to speak, that's actually performed jointly between Energy, Mines and Resources and Environment. When it comes to solid-waste sites, for example, again that is shared, depending on the arrangement between Community Services and Environment.

As the member opposite alluded to before, there are a number of various partners involved in monitoring the state of water quality in our territory, but that's how it is today.

**Mr. Hardy:** This is a hypothetical question because, just listening to this actually bothers me. I would hope that we would be moving toward more of a cohesive form of water

testing and resolution on water quality when we do have problems.

In a hypothetical world, I guess — not even hypothetical — I'll ask the minister this: is the government working on trying to bring together, or trying to create some kind of council among the various departments to coordinate this in a more financially and fiscally responsible manner, and to share information to ensure that water quality at all levels, no matter where the problems are arising from, is being dealt with as quickly as possible and being dealt with by the appropriate authorities and appropriate ministries?

**Hon. Ms. Taylor:** As I mentioned earlier, the Department of Environment is actually leading an interdepartmental working group comprised of six departments — I just listed them off before — looking to formalize a more definitive and more formalized framework for the management of water resources. We are working on that; it's well underway.

We know that once it has been completed, some of the defined mandates or objectives of this review will be on how we can manage our water resources in more of a proactive manner and a more efficient manner, as the member opposite alluded to; how we can minimize gaps; and how we can look at utilizing more efficient use of our resources, so that we can have a highly efficient way of managing the system currently.

How we can also look at impacts of climate change, for example — some initiatives are currently underway, but, again, how can we formalize that system right now? And also — which is really critical as legislators in this Assembly as well — how we can assist the public to better understand how water is being managed in the territory. So that process is very much well underway, and we're working toward its final completion.

**Mr. Hardy:** I appreciate that answer. I'm glad that this has been identified. There is nothing worse than a bunch of silos operating independently, yet trying to do the best they can. It's also very difficult to question any department on water quality when the minister says, "That's not under my ministry; it's under the Energy, Mines and Resources ministry." And "Oh, no, this one is under Community Services, and this one is under Health and Social Services." It's extremely difficult to try to get some kind of cohesive answer. It's also very hard to do what I call "productive debate," because you end up just repeating so much over and over and over.

There are a lot of questions to ask about water that I'm not going to go into. The debate has been going on for quite awhile in Environment; there have been a lot of questions already asked. I'm trying to be very concise here.

This is just off the top of my memory, but there were some tests done on fish and caribou in the northern regions. I'm not sure if this is the right term, but the arsenic levels in the species and the danger of it for human consumption — I remember this from a year or two years ago — if the minister has any information on this, could she —

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

**Mr. Hardy:** Pardon?

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

**Mr. Hardy:** Cadmium as well, the mineral — the high levels of dangerous minerals for human consumption. If she

has any information to share, or an update on that, I would appreciate it.

**Hon. Ms. Taylor:** I believe the member opposite is alluding to what is coined the "northern contaminants program", which is led by INAC, as I understand. It has had probably almost 20 years of testing undertaken in Yukon. I believe that it had to do with caribou — in this respect the Porcupine caribou herd — one of them — and various freshwater fish, including those in Lake Laberge and Kusawa. I don't have any current results, but I do know that Indian Northern Affairs Canada guides the work and they fund the contaminants research and monitoring in respective areas in the Arctic. It has covered a large range of various studies and it continues to commit to monitoring contaminants in these identified species of value to Yukon.

**Mr. Hardy:** Thank you to the minister for the answer. I will know where to look for more information in regard to that. I would hope that the minister is also directing her department to keep monitoring this program and being involved in it.

It is very serious if we start to see some consequences of that in regard to not just the species that have been identified and their decline, but also the dangers of human consumption. So many of our illnesses today in this world can be traced back to the foods we eat and the water we drink and the air we breathe. This is becoming an area of greater and greater concern for many people. As I have always said, the north is like the canary in the mineshaft. We are so vulnerable to any kind of change in the climate and any kind of economic disasters that happen and how they impact on the north and the people in the north, the species in the north, and how long it stays here — it just phenomenal — far more than in the south.

I am going to shift off that. I think we all know what we're talking about there. This is just a question around Keno City and the Keno City residents and Alexco mine and their proposed mill development. Is the Department of Environment involved in any way in regard to trying to mitigate some of the concerns about air and water quality with the citizens of Keno?

**Hon. Ms. Taylor:** Mr. Chair, this matter, as the member opposite knows full well, is before YESAB. Part of YESAB's mandate, as I believe the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources, Mines and Resources has also stated, is that, as Department of Environment, we do provide technical input into that process. The department is providing input into that process, likewise other departments — Tourism and Culture and others. It is before YESAB and I am not exactly certain as to what those timelines are for the Alexco mine application, but those recommendations should be coming out sometime soon.

**Mr. Hardy:** I guess my question is this: has the department itself been in contact with the citizens of Keno in regard to their concerns about air quality, water quality, impact upon their life and wildlife around there?

**Hon. Ms. Taylor:** I suppose not so independent, but through the YESAA process, that is certainly being undertaken, yes.

**Mr. Hardy:** There was a report that came out. Half of Canada's boreal caribou are in decline. I'm sure the minister is

familiar with this. They said that 29 of the 57 recognized herds are not self-sustaining and that brings the boreal caribou another step closer to possibly being bumped up into endangered species status. Are any of our herds affected by the study? Just a clarification — I'm sorry about that: are any of our herds identified as being ones that would be of the 29 that are not self-sustaining?

**Hon. Ms. Taylor:** Yes, there has been a lot of news in the media outlets here. That news does not focus on the majority of Yukon's northern mountain woodland caribou — which is quite a mouthful.

I think there is a transboundary boreal caribou herd that enters into the northeast portion of Yukon, but I believe that the news and the report focus primarily on what we would coin as the "boreal herd." When it comes to the majority of Yukon's caribou herds, that's really what is coined as "northern mountain woodland caribou."

Of course, there is a tremendous amount of work that has been undertaken by the department over many, many years that certainly supersedes what this government has done and previous governments have done. But we have worked on numerous caribou recovery programs over the last 30 years, including Chisana, Carcross, Ibex and Aishihik caribou herds and so forth, to name but a few.

We are fortunate thus far, and we are continuing to do our monitoring work through wildlife inventories and ongoing collaborative management plans with First Nations and communities, as we speak, as well.

**Mr. Hardy:** I am only going to ask a couple of questions around the Porcupine caribou herd because I know my colleague sitting beside me from Old Crow will probably have some questions to ask and has asked many questions. I want to ensure that he is given the opportunity to do that, as he does such a good job on that, as he always has.

I only have a couple of very simple questions. The first: the Porcupine caribou herd — probably the most famous caribou herd in the world — is it in decline? The second question: historically, we used to have a very good system with Alaska on studying and monitoring the fluctuations in the herd, since the herd does cross three boundaries. Do we have that? I know that relationship and those studies stopped at some point — have they been reactivated and, if they haven't been reactivated, what are we doing to ensure that we can work with the Alaskan people in monitoring the birthing and the population of the herd and the dangers that the herds may be facing today and in the future?

**Hon. Ms. Taylor:** The member opposite made reference to the count of the Porcupine caribou herd. As members opposite, we have debated a fair amount about the Porcupine caribou herd, but each and every year we have attempted to work — we do work, in fact, with the Alaska Department of Fish and Game — they would call it over there — on undertaking an actual photo census of the Porcupine caribou herd. Unfortunately, the last photo census was taken in 2001 because of various factors, but one being that the caribou just do not wish to congregate when we would like them to congregate. Efforts are again underway to hold another photo census attempt this

year, and we certainly keep our fingers crossed to ensure that it does come through.

Based on all the other indicators, the work that is undertaken by our respective departments involved in the governments of Northwest Territories, Alaska and Yukon, we do know the herd is in decline and has been for some time. In terms of monitoring between those three respective governments, there is a lot of various monitoring underway — body conditioning surveys, monitoring, collaring and it also forms part of our wildlife inventory funding that has been allotted over the years.

I would be much remiss if I didn't make reference to the Porcupine Caribou Management Board. We are one of eight different governments and parties around the table working on a long-term harvest management plan for the conservation of the herd, first and foremost.

**Mr. Hardy:** In every one of these questions, it's amazing how many other avenues open up that you want to discuss and explore. But the time just doesn't allow. I think, unfortunately, the guillotine clause in the Legislative Assembly, limits our ability to share knowledge and explore avenues we feel are necessary in order to get a better understanding and hopefully guide the government as well as the government giving us advice on what's happening out there.

I have some very simple questions. Environment rents buildings, vehicles, boats and all that stuff. What is Environment's record on energy efficiency in their own actions, whether it's on buildings they rent? Are there any standards that the Department of Environment sets for where they're located? Are they looking at more energy efficient ways of transportation? I know what a jet boat can suck up compared to a 60-horsepower motor prop.

So it's a very general question. What are the initiatives happening within the department itself on trying to reduce their impact on the environment, as well as recycling programs within the department?

**Hon. Ms. Taylor:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thanks to the member opposite for the excellent question. Within the Department of Environment, there is a green committee. Likewise, I know in the Department of Tourism and Culture, there is also a green action committee. Those two particular departments happen to be mine but I am very proud of their efforts thus far.

In terms of recycling programs, I believe that those two particular departments are undertaking a number of recycling programs housed within their respective shops. I can't tell you exactly how many bins there are or so forth but I am apprised that there are recycling initiatives underway and they are looking to broaden those as well.

In terms of an energy efficient fleet — as the member opposite made reference to — I think that the department is doing their best to go toward more energy efficient vehicles.

In some situations, it may be a little difficult to achieve, compared to other departments, so to speak, because of the purpose and where they have to go and the different terrain they have to go through. Perhaps the technology is on its way, but right now we are doing our best.

I am apprised, however, that half of our vehicles have been downsized in terms of going toward more energy efficient vehicles. There are efforts underway, and we recognize there's always room for improvement, but the main thing is that it has been identified and efforts are fully underway.

**Mr. Hardy:** That's very nice. It is about leading by example, and I think the Department of Environment is in a very fine position to lead by example and hopefully encourage the other departments to follow suit.

I have to thank my staff in my own office who have made major changes within our little office. We have light switches in all the rooms and light bulbs have been changed. We have a compost bin in our office. We did have a slight crisis two weeks ago when there was a smell and no one could find where it was coming from. Our office has made those steps. The NDP caucus office has. I would issue a challenge to both the Liberal caucus and the Yukon Party upstairs to follow suit and try to lead by example in their offices. Little steps like that, when added together, are a huge step and will have an impact. I would like to thank my staff, who have made these changes within our own office. It has been absolutely no hardship whatsoever and yet they have had an impact.

I am not going to ask any more questions. I do believe there are a couple more questions that other people may want to ask. I thank the minister for keeping her answers short and direct to the questions I was asking. Thank you very much. I thank the department as well for the hard work that they do.

**Hon. Ms. Taylor:** Thank you to the member opposite as well. I will just go back to some of the initiatives. I fully concur that the Department of Environment ought to be in the lead and reflecting best practices and taking the initiative to showcase those best sustainable practices to other departments. I think they have been doing a lot in terms of recycling, even compost practices.

Again, I can go on at length with the Department of Tourism and Culture, for example, which is even promoting taking your own dishes, for example, to the cafeteria instead of using take-out containers to transport foods and so forth. Even this Wednesday, which is Earth Day, the Department of Tourism and Culture and government officials are hosting a lunch to help take part in celebrating our Mother Earth.

So I do want to also thank the department for their initiatives and for certainly taking the leadership to spearhead some of these more friendly practices in government.

**Mr. Elias:** Again it's always a pleasure for me to rise in the House and engage in debate on the Department of Environment. As always, I thank the officials and staff within the department for their dedication and hard work in reaching the goals and objectives of the department.

I'd like to begin today by talking about the Porcupine caribou herd. This is a Yukon treasure, and I get on my feet again to talk about the conservation of the herd and the situation we're in on the international stage, in terms of the education and advocacy that's happening in Washington, D.C. and the Lower 48 states — the precautionary principle; the absence of complete information where there are threats of serious or ir-

reparable damage; the lack of complete certainty shall not be a reason for postponing reasonable conservation measures.

I can't stress enough how important this Porcupine caribou herd is to the vast majority of my constituents.

I was there in 1988, in the community of Arctic Village, Alaska, where the Gwich'in people gathered for the first time in over 100 years. It was one of the most powerful things that I have ever witnessed in my lifetime, when the elders came together and they stopped the general assembly and met on their own with representatives from all the various communities and tribes of the Gwich'in Nation. They met for about 10 hours, then the oldest elder at that time reconvened the general assembly and everyone came to the hall and all the elders sat in front of the room. I remember she walked around with her cane and she went to various people in the room and she said to come to the front of the room; she was talking in Gwich'in, and she talked the whole time in Gwich'in, explaining the mandate that these seven individuals were to carry out. They were to go around the world and they were to tell the Gwich'in story, educate anyone who would listen, and convince the most powerful government on this planet not to allow industrial intrusion of any sort into the calving grounds of the Porcupine caribou herd on the coastal plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge in Alaska.

This was the first Gwich'in Steering Committee that was created at that time. There were predictions from the elders across the Gwich'in Nation that one day this battle is going to be won, but it's going to take hard work. Now, over the years, with the help of the Canadian government, Yukon government, many Gwich'in governments — especially the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation government — many Yukoners have dedicated their lives or a portion of their lives to help ensure this mandate of 1988 is achieved and that there is no industrial development in the calving grounds in Alaska and that big oil does not succeed in occupying that sacred space. I've never been there. I was told by my grandmother that I'm not to go there ever, but I talk about it to the senators and congressmen who will listen to me.

I have been tagged a couple of years now — I think it is five years now — to continue this education and advocacy for spreading the message in a good way. You do it so you don't ever hurt anybody or upset anybody, even if they are our opponents. I did go down several times for editorial board tours, for speaking in churches and universities, speaking in places around the world and being on panels and such, hopefully to fulfill this 1988 mandate. At present, in the United States Congress and Senate, as far as I am concerned, this is the best chance that we have to permanently protect the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge calving grounds. We have a bill on the floor in the Congress and on the Senate. Some are sponsored by Republicans and some are sponsored by Democrats. The Democrats have a majority in the Congress and a majority in the Senate and the House of Representatives.

When we went down there this past winter, we were very well received again. There were many rookie, newly elected senators and congressmen. The people they succeeded didn't give us very much time, to tell you the truth. They wanted to

hear what we had to say and that was it. But this trip it was very different. They wanted to listen. They gave us 45 minutes in some offices. There was a change in Washington, and we took full advantage of this and communicated what we need to communicate down there.

I just wanted to take this opportunity to commend a lot of Yukoners who were down there and doing this work. I did notice that the federal Minister of Environment was there, working on climate change issues and other issues. It was communicated to me that he was talking about the protection of the Porcupine caribou herd while in Washington. This work continues.

When the Gwich'in people talk about caribou and our relationship with the caribou and how important it is for our cultural and spiritual survival as a nation and a people, it's hard to explain sometimes. When I go to Washington I see the American people have monuments for a point in time, for a place in our history, and they build towers to reach for the sky as acknowledgement of what they consider to be important as a people.

While I was speaking at the Canadian Embassy, I thought as Yukoners and as Gwich'in, what are our monuments? What are our things that show our recognition of our history and our future? I was thinking about how we look after our lands, water and wildlife, being able to go out to the Old Crow Flats, being able to go to Tombstone Park, Vuntut National Park — these protected areas, our wildlife populations that are healthy — these are our monuments: the way we look after our fish and wildlife, and especially the Porcupine caribou herd. We want to be able to say 50 years from now that we were good ancestors, and that in our time, we did what was necessary to protect things like the Porcupine caribou herd.

Those are monuments that will hopefully stand for thousands and thousands of years and ensure the herd's longevity.

When I am out on the land and I watch the Porcupine River — what I attribute to climate change is thawing a month earlier than it should over the last decade — 15 years or so — I watched the Porcupine River swallow 200 calves, pregnant cows, because they didn't cross the river and get up to the calving grounds. Deep snow years and harvesting issues, the insects, climate change, fires — which relates to food availability for them — wounded loss and all of these things that the caribou have to face, industrial development, habitat fragmentation — I think about what we can do to help and the answer is to control what we can control, which is the actions of our citizens and those people who come here.

I encourage the minister to move in that direction. We are embarking on a harvest management strategy and I am just wondering if the minister can present to the Legislature today an update on where that strategy is going, or if there is any way that I can help that front to come to a successful conclusion. I've said this time and time again about the Porcupine caribou management agreement. To me, it's outdated and needs to be renegotiated with the parties, because there are some clauses that I have issue with and I've said it time and time again — I don't need to go over that right now — but what is the minister's feeling on taking the lead to come up with a new umbrella document that future generations can use that reflects the self-

governing era in the Yukon, the roles and responsibilities of each public and First Nation government, because that could provide future generations with a lot of strength in moving forward to conserve the herd and to ensure its longevity and ensure food security for a great many Yukoners.

If this Porcupine caribou herd crashes, as we've seen in neighbouring herds and around the circumpolar north, our north Yukon ecosystem will crash because there are so many species and the land and the water that depend on hundreds of thousands of Porcupine caribou roaming our Yukon lands.

If the herd crashes, one of the oldest documented aboriginal cultures in the Americas — the Gwich'in — will suffer endlessly, and the price that Yukoners will have to pay will be great.

If the minister can begin by giving an update on where the harvest management strategy is, when it's expected to be signed and what her feeling is on taking the lead on renegotiating and updating to make the Porcupine caribou management agreement current.

**Hon. Ms. Taylor:** What I'm about to say is perhaps not too much new, but I just wanted to reiterate that the Government of Yukon considers the Porcupine caribou herd as not only a treasure for the north but also a treasure for the world. I think the member opposite has made reference to this already. It greatly enhances the health, spiritual and cultural well-being of the people in Yukon, Northwest Territories and Alaska and many others.

I've stated on the floor of the Legislature that the Government of Yukon has been, and continues to be, a very strong advocate of this highly valued herd and advocates for a healthy population, whether it's through our ongoing work, scientific research or monitoring over the last 35 years plus, or as a contributing member and financial supporter of the Porcupine Caribou Management Board.

The member opposite made reference to the agreement and the board itself. We very much acknowledge the valued work of this board and the agreement under which the board is mandated to carry out its responsibility. It certainly reflects the commitment of all the respective parties to work cooperatively in the management, conservation and protection of the Porcupine caribou herd and its habitat.

The government also, again, fully supports the protection of the herd and its critical habitat, when it comes to the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. In this regard, I know earlier, thanks to the work of the Chief of the Vuntut Gwitchin, he and our Premier put forth a letter that was addressed to the President-elect of the United States of America.

I should also say that a similar letter was forwarded to our Prime Minister of Canada. Again, it expressed the importance of this herd to the respective peoples who rely on this herd as their source of health, cultural and spiritual well-being. We were very pleased to have received a response from the Prime Minister of Canada to the joint letter that was signed by our Premier and the Chief of Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation as well. It was a good letter. It was very supportive, and it agreed to continue to protect the herd and reiterated its commitment to protect the herd and its critical habitat as agreed to under the



1987 agreement between Canada and the United States on the conservation of the herd. This obliges both countries to refrain from activities that would damage the herd or its habitat.

It was very encouraging to receive that correspondence and that correspondence was distributed to the Chief of Vuntut Gwitchin as well as to our Premier of the Yukon. It's good to hear that we do have the commitment of the Government of Canada to continue to work with their counterparts. Of course with a new President in the United States, there is reason to celebrate in this regard, and it's certainly an open door. I very much commend the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin as well as the Chief and Council of Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation and the many individuals who have been involved in the lobbying efforts over the many years, not only to advocate for change, but really to raise awareness about the very importance of this habitat and the reason why we do need to seek full protection of the herd itself.

Of course we also recognize that the work to successfully manage the herd requires the cooperation and the commitment of all the affected partners. In that regard, the governments of Yukon has been working with several other partners around the table on the development of a long-term harvest management plan that will support conservation of the herd first and foremost, and includes the governments of Vuntut Gwitchin, Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in, Na Cho Nyäk Dun, the Government of Northwest Territories and Government of Canada, as well as the Inuvialuit Game Council and the Gwich'in Tribal Council, to name all of those involved in this important endeavour.

The member opposite should be aware that work is fully underway. It's being led by the Porcupine Caribou Management Board. We look forward to receiving the recommended management plan and working with all respective parties to advance the work to ensure the herd does remain healthy and vibrant for many years to come.

I also view that the completion of the harvest management plan is an important step in further demonstrating to the United States, to both federal and state governments, that our respective governments are also committed to working to ensure the long-term sustainability of the herd. This work is very important indeed. As I mentioned, that work is underway. We have not received as of yet a draft recommended plan. However, given the time frame, we know that it will be difficult for the parties to not only conclude the plan or to receive the plan but also to have the recommended actions implemented in time for this year's hunting season.

In the interim, the Government of Yukon is working with First Nation governments in the Yukon on a number of interim measures that will reflect work done to date in the draft plan and are certainly keeping with the draft plan. We have commenced some formal consultations to that end with the intent of concluding these discussions by the end of May.

That work is underway and we look forward to receiving the outcome of those discussions and again, working cooperatively and collaboratively, providing harvest opportunities that respect the conservation interests but also again, being able to bring in some conservation measures sooner rather than later in anticipation of receiving the plan later on this year.

**Mr. Elias:** Over the years I have watched our Member of Parliament, various MLAs throughout the Yukon, our elders who are present now and passed on, and chiefs, non-governmental organizations, representatives, members of the Government of Canada, Yukon Environment staff, the Yukon public and representatives of every state of the United States of America get on their feet somewhere and talk about how important this herd is.

In our history in Canada, if three million plains bison can be wiped out in this country of ours, then some people worry that this can happen to the caribou too. That is why thousands of people around the world get up and talk about the importance of the Porcupine caribou herd — and again, if there is any way that I can help further, that invitation is out to the minister.

You know, many solutions have been advocated for over the years by me and by members of the public. Again, the list goes on and on. I hope those solutions we've advocated for over the years come to some fruition, in terms of conservation of this herd.

Maybe I can even go so far as to thank the Minister of Environment, as well as the Premier, for their work and listening to Yukoners in this regard. I'll leave it at that.

I'd like to ask some general questions with regard to the Yukon government's climate change action plan. If the minister could maybe give a brief update on its implementation; on what she has heard from the public so far, in terms of actions to enhance our awareness of climate change and how we are planning to respond to the rapid changes happening in our north; how we are going to document climate change, expanding our research capability and knowledge, and identifying the impacts that are happening now and possibly in the future; promotion of community adaptation efforts as well as mitigation — I understand there are four basic goals in the action plan and approximately 33 actions that are proposed. I'd like for the minister to please take her time in addressing this question so that we can get some of the facts of the climate change action plan on the record today.

**Hon. Ms. Taylor:** Addressing climate change is very much a priority for the Government of Yukon. It's a priority for me as Minister of Environment. As such, on February 12 of this year, our government was very pleased to be able to release the government's climate change action plan. As the member opposite articulated, it comprises 33 priority actions based on the four goals as outlined in the climate change strategy itself, those being to enhance our knowledge and understanding of climate change, to improve our ability to adapt to climate change, to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions and to establish Yukon as a northern leader for climate change research and innovation.

It has to be pointed out that there are a number of various initiatives already underway or about to be underway in terms of addressing the government's commitment to address climate change. What this plan does is build upon that work and it identifies 33 specific priority actions.

I have to say that our overall commitment to climate change is really occurring in numerous departments and agen-

cies, as we speak. I will get into this in a little bit greater length, but in the area of adaptation, for example, work is being undertaken to test different road surfaces in order to determine strategies for the reduction of permafrost degradation on highways. I am fairly sure that if we ever get to the Department of Highways and Public Works that the minister can elaborate on that particular initiative. The Government of Yukon is also providing support to study climate change impacts on major watersheds such as the Yukon River through the use of traditional knowledge, as well as scientific monitoring.

It's a very interesting initiative that is transpiring. We're perhaps into year 2 or 3 of that particular initiative that's being funded through the northern strategy. It involves a number of First Nations along the river corridor. It has been able to provide additional capacity in terms of training opportunities and it has provided integral information on the quality of this water source — as important as the Yukon River.

Through Energy, Mines and Resources, there's a Yukon forest health risk assessment that's also underway. It's being conducted. The Department of Environment — I've spoken at great length about continuing our commitment to investing in fish and wildlife inventories, which is critically important to the way in which we can and will adapt to climate change challenges.

There are also a number of communities, such as the City of Dawson — they've also commenced work on community sustainability or adaptation plans. Others are to be made known in the future.

There is also a great degree of work being done on the research innovation sector. In fact, there was some really exciting news not long ago, made available through the Government of Canada, in terms of making available funding for various centres of research throughout the Yukon. I believe there was some \$13 million-plus in funding that was just recently announced through the Government of Canada that will indeed help to support northern research, including climate change, cold climate innovation, biodiversity, geology, archeology, paleontology and others. Again, these investments, through the federal government, build on the government's commitment as well, as outlined in our climate change action plan, to expand our research capability and knowledge on northern climate change.

I will just make reference to some of the institutions that did receive dollars, including the Arctic Institute of North America. Through the University of Calgary, they received just over \$3 million to support improvements to the Kluane Lake research station, which is used to conduct earth and life sciences research.

Vuntut Gwitchin government received over \$2 million, as I understand, for improvements to their research facility, which is used by its natural resources department. Visiting researchers — and we know that through International Polar Year, there were numerous researchers who were out and about in the flats and in the northern region of Yukon. These dollars will help house a significant collection of artifacts, data, materials and equipment. This was very well received by the Vuntut Gwitchin government.

Yukon College — they received over \$2 million for expansion and renovation of the Northern Research Institute facilities and infrastructure, in building upon their capacity to conduct work in research — whether it is applied, pure or social sciences.

The Government of Yukon received almost \$1.6 million for upgrading and renovating the forest management branch's greenhouse and research forest. So again, those are some exciting initiatives that will very much advance some of those initiatives.

In addition, of course, dollars were announced not long ago by the Minister of Education for collaboration and building on those spaces housed within the Yukon College for a new Climate Change Research Centre of Excellence, which will be located in the lower level of the student residence building and also will be the home of the first northern link in a computer network called the Canadian climate change scenarios network. This is a computer node; it's a storehouse of technical data used by researchers to study the impact of climate change and how northerners are adapting to it. So it's part of a network of sites throughout the world that will provide various climate change scenario modelling that will provide very useful data to students at Yukon College, satellite campuses, and it can be made available to scientists throughout the world.

We actually had a demonstration of this new server network, and it's very intricate indeed. We're honoured to have received this very first node north of 60 and again, I think it does speak to the Yukon taking a lead in terms of building capacity on the research and development side of the sector as well. In terms of also reducing greenhouse gas emissions, we are working in various departments through energy efficiency, conservation, use of renewable energy and many others. The action plan — and I won't go through all of the various items; I could, but I'll refrain from that because I'm pretty sure the member opposite can pick up a copy at the information desk — advances the Centre of Excellence as a means of facilitating, coordinating, distributing research in the Yukon. It also talks about implementing an environmental stewardship initiative in Yukon schools, which Environment is working on with Education, for example, through a new recycling school program that initiates action and other modes.

It also talks about determining the potential of a Yukon carbon market, setting a Yukon-wide emissions target within two years, establishing climate change research study areas and developing incentives for fuel-efficient transportation.

So there are numerous actions housed within the plan. I think what is really exciting, however, is that housed within this budget that we are currently debating, there is approximately \$600,000 all told, including capital improvements, as well as operation and maintenance, that will go toward the creation of what we've coined as the climate change secretariat, which will oversee government-wide leadership and coordination on the government's response to this action plan.

I think it's really important to note that not a lot of other jurisdictions have undertaken this. I think there are maybe four other jurisdictions in the country that have looked at a secretariat, but I think by having a central body acting as a clearing-

house, so to speak, it will help move the departments along, in terms of meeting their obligations as outlined in the action plan and being able to articulate to Yukoners what is being done and how we can better work together.

Like every action plan, this will evolve over the years. It is a start. It is not the final document. I think that as we go along, landscapes will evolve, conditions will evolve, individuals will evolve, and governments will evolve. I think it is a fluid document, and I think it is a great start and provides some central focus to that.

As I mentioned, there are a number of various initiatives underway in the different departments. The Executive Council Office, for example, has been a very major player in its work with International Polar Year and through the northern strategy to work with other governments and to bring researchers and communities together to work on projects that will help us adapt to climate change in years to come.

The Government of Yukon — we are also a very active participant in a number of intergovernmental forums on climate change, including the Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment — which we were able to host earlier this year — the Council of the Federation, Northern Premiers, Arctic Council; we are also — and the member opposite knows full well because of our recent visit to Poznań, Poland. We are one of many subnational governments comprising what has come to be known as the climate leaders alliance, who are working as a collective to also work on reduction of our emissions and look at efficient ways of delivering energy.

I see the member opposite is taking great glee in his memories of Poland. I, too, and many of our department officials, I believe, all very much appreciated the experience in Poland. I'll just leave it at that, Mr. Chair.

Within Energy, Mines and Resources, for example, there is over \$1 million for the Energy Solutions Centre housed within their budget. Of course, their mandate is to address climate change through delivery of programs on energy efficiency and renewable energy.

As I referenced earlier, forests are a key renewable resource within Yukon. They also are subject to facing risk, as well as opportunities, as a result of climate change as a contributing factor. So through Energy, Mines and Resources, we're working to determine the vulnerabilities and adaptive capacities of tree species to climate change, again while developing information on future forest scenarios for the Yukon. As I referenced, Energy, Mines and Resources is undertaking a forest health risk assessment monitoring program.

Yukon Housing Corporation — millions of dollars are being spent on the use of super green technology in the construction of housing projects, which in turn are also contributing to reduced greenhouse gas emissions. There are a number of new housing initiatives that are going — and I'm very pleased to see they are going to a super green technology.

As I mentioned earlier, in Environment, we're expending almost \$2 million toward investing in fish and wildlife inventory work. We have also been able to enhance our level of resources for recycling programs throughout the territory. We've increased funding for a collection of special waste. We are also

— through the water management branch, of course — working to identify potential risks and vulnerabilities of water resources to changes due to climate change.

Through Yukon Energy Corporation, there was approximately \$15 million expended toward the extension of the transmission line and construction going toward the third turbine at Aishihik hydro power plant. These are all ways in which we are working to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and reliance on diesel.

We know the Mayo-Dawson line is estimated to have reduced approximately 10,000 tonnes per year, which is approximately 60,000 tonnes since 2003. The Carmacks-Stewart Crossing transmission line — we're looking at emissions being reduced by more than an estimated 23,000 tonnes per year. With the Aishihik third turbine, we're looking at further emissions being reduced per year, thousands more tonnes per year.

As I mentioned earlier in debate here in response to moving toward more fuel efficient vehicles, through the Department of Highways and Public Works we're working on several fronts to improve fleet vehicles for energy efficiency and adaptation.

In fact, over the last few fiscal years we have been able to acquire a tremendous amount — about 100-plus smaller fuel efficient vehicles in the government fleet.

As I mentioned earlier, we are also undertaking a permafrost testing site on the Alaska Highway near Beaver Creek. Likewise, the Yukon Geological Survey is also undertaking permafrost-related projects which look at the effects of climate change on landslides, using information to better predict disturbances and so forth.

The Department of Community Services has worked with the City of Whitehorse, for example, on the purchase of low-emission transit buses over the last few years, again, which contributes to lower emissions. The Department of Economic Development, through their contributions with industry, has also been working on their climate change or the Cold Climate Innovation Centre that looks at industry-based technologies and new solutions to our efforts to adapt in cold climate environments.

Through Tourism and Culture, we are also working to mitigate climate change effects. We are looking at our importance heritage resources such as Herschel Island, through monitoring, documentation, salvage work and so forth.

Mr. Chair, there are also many other initiatives. I mentioned earlier that there is a new initiative that looks at community adaptation projects. About \$1.2 million is housed through the northern strategy funding. I also referenced earlier that there are dollars being made available for conducting water-quality monitoring along the Yukon River to gather climate change related baseline data. That's just a brief snapshot. I know I've run out of time, Mr. Chair, but it does indicate that work is well underway and again we look forward to the secretariat getting up to full operation.

**Mr. Elias:** I thank the minister for response to the question. I'd like to move on here talking about some concepts. As the minister is well aware, many Yukoners, over genera-

tions and generations, have provided sustenance for their families from our fish and wildlife and plants in the Yukon.

Around the world, as the minister is well aware, there are issues with regard to wildlife populations and their sustainability, especially woodland caribou. I'll use them as one example.

I'd like to talk about a concept that's fairly new with regard to food security. A long-term food security strategy that's developed in the Yukon would be another opportunity for this minister to lead in our country.

If you look at the state that our Chinook salmon fishery is in and if you look at the status of some of the wildlife populations — the Southern Lakes moose population; some of the sheep populations; the things we don't know about the Porcupine caribou herd; our melting glaciers; the water that feeds valuable salmon-spawning grounds; and the list goes on and on and on. I think this might be an opportunity and a concept that the minister could delve into because I think food security over the next decade is going to be a very serious issue that's going to be in the minds of many Yukoners.

I guess the question to the minister is, is there a willingness or a demonstrated need, from what she knows as the Environment minister, that this is something she can take the lead on and take to Yukoners, in terms of a long-term food security strategy for the citizens of our territory?

**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*, Department of Environment. We will now continue with general debate.

**Hon. Ms. Taylor:** I believe where we left off we were talking about food security, and I suppose that one of the initiatives that the government has undertaken — which is housed in this year's proposed budget for Environment — is establishing an animal health program, for example. To ensure that sources of species — whether it be caribou, moose or so forth — are there tomorrow as they are today. I have spoken to this at greater length in previous debate, but housed within this year's budget we have approximately \$320,000 in new funding for a new animal health program that will work with other departments and other orders of government in being able to ensure that we have a healthy, viable wildlife species going from here on out.

As I mentioned, this will go toward the creation of a chief veterinary officer position for the territory, along with technical support staff whose mandate will be to provide the program oversight advice and veterinary services to our various initiatives, when it comes to animal health and animal protection.

It will also go toward improving our surveillance of animal health, building links between animal and human health issues. In that respect, these positions will be working very closely with the Department of Health and Social Services, for example, the chief medical officer in the Department of Health and Social Services — because of the close links between those two

issues — working with Energy, Mines and Resources, which oversees agriculture in their shop. In terms of providing also animal protection, working very closely with the Department of Community Services — again in terms of developing policies and regulations and legislation.

I think we know that — we were just talking about climate change and, of course, with changes in our climate continuing with no end in sight, there is growing evidence of new species, of parasites certainly making their home here in the Yukon and in northern jurisdictions. The winter tick, which we were talking about at great length earlier last week, is one case in point as to how new diseases have arrived and how we can better work toward eliminating — and working toward adapting to some of these changes of tomorrow.

Working on those issues that have already arrived and looking to years on out will give us a comprehensive, integrated approach toward more comprehensive planning in being able to build capacity in our own government offices and how we can better anticipate some of these changes.

In positioning this new program, we are working with our southern counterparts and other northern counterparts, determining how best to recruit individuals and looking at some of these areas for growing.

Of course, housed within Energy, Mines and Resources are mechanisms to support the agriculture sector and the production of Yukon-grown food. These offices will be working very closely with them on that.

In terms of Energy, Mines and Resources, I know that the minister also recently announced a new initiative that will in fact be, in part, funded through the Government of Canada — the Growing Forward initiative.

It also talks about food security and how we can better enable northern regions such as Yukon to be able to better grow and enhance our ability to sustain our food sources in the north. We are working with Energy, Mines and Resources on that front as well.

In terms of ensuring that we have a better handle or better responses to wildlife, that is in fact an impetus for proceeding with additional funding for wildlife inventories. I have also spoken at greater length on the additional funding sources for this. We have been able to increase the dollar amount to just over \$1.8 million for fish and wildlife inventories. That really gives us a better understanding as to where our wildlife populations are today and what some of the challenges are in terms of health, their welfare and some of the issues that we need to work on as identified through community wildlife management plans in collaboration with First Nation governments and others — Government of Canada for example.

There are a number of initiatives. I would concur that food security is of great importance. I think it is multi-faceted. It is not just one department or one government; it really has to be looked at in a holistic manner in that regard.

**Mr. Elias:** I thank the Minister of Environment for her comments in regard to food security. This is something that I will be bringing up in the Legislature in the future, trying to expand on this concept. One of the things that could be included in long-term food security is, in 1998 there was a feasi-

bility study on the design of a harvest support program. It came out of chapter 16 of the land claim. I'm not sure if the Minister of Environment has read the document or has looked at it or been briefed on it, but, in my opinion, many of the recommendations in that 1998 feasibility study on the design of a harvest support program in the Yukon are still valid a decade later.

I would encourage the minister to either read the document or get a synopsis or briefing on that document because I think it's a very well-written document.

From getting food on your table to having a trapper support program or supporting subsistence living, harvesting country foods or clothing and shelter for people in the Yukon, I think, is another aspect of this food security and getting people out on the land and the value having more eyes and ears out on the land does for the health of the environment. So I'd encourage the minister to have a look at that document, if she hasn't already.

Another comment — this was something that was brought up to me again, and I have brought this up in previous sittings of the Legislature. It's with regard to a trap exchange that happened in the early 1990s. I remember when this happened in Old Crow. The Government of Yukon was maybe in partnership with the Government of Canada; I'm not sure; maybe the minister can clarify this for me, but there was a trap exchange. One 120 Conibear trap was exchanged for two of the old leg-hold traps. Now the way that the Yukon legislation is written in response to the global fur trapping issue, and the quickness necessary for a trap to kill a furbearer has changed. Now those traps that a lot of Yukoners have — the 120 Conibear — are apparently deemed illegal.

That is what I have been told by trappers. I haven't trapped in a number of years so I am not clear on this but I have been told that they have to use the 120 Magnum Conibear for marten and sable now. This is problematic. We are talking about the diversification of our Yukon economy. We are talking about getting more people out on the land and trapping — including our youth. Maybe I'll get up later and talk about the Genuine Mackenzie Valley Furs program.

The question is: can the minister clarify this trap exchange? Is this actually true? If it is — and the trappers who have been talking to me are submitting their testimony that this is true — it is problematic because it costs hundreds of dollars or even thousands for some trappers to be in compliance with the regulations. I guess this is leading up to the question: if this is true, would the minister be prepared to conduct another trap exchange so that those traps that are now deemed illegal for marten and sable can be exchanged again and maybe recycled into the system?

**Hon. Ms. Taylor:** I think I've already responded to this question a few times in the Legislature in the last few days. But in terms of going forward, I think I made reference to working with a multitude of different partners, including the Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board and the Yukon Trappers Association. Renewable resources councils also have a very important role to play in terms of assignment, reassignment and utilization of traplines. It can be fairly complex at times but of course our renewable resources councils make

recommendations to both the Yukon government and to the respective First Nation governments when required, depending on the category of trapline.

We have provided some support over the years, including a trap exchange program. I think where we're at at this point in time is that we want to hear the priorities of the trapping industry.

I mentioned the priorities of the trapping industry and I mentioned a whole myriad of stakeholders at this time. Whether in fact the trap exchange is the best use of resources or whether it's certainly marketing support or whether it's certainly including subsidies and so forth, there are a whole number of issues that need to be identified and addressed and worked on in collaboration with the community.

I think I referenced before that I recently had the opportunity to meet with the Fish and Wildlife Management Board. Again, trapping remains a very important component of the Yukon economy, in terms of traditional economy. I have offered to work with the management board. I know that we are also working with the Trappers Association in identifying priorities for going forward. They are conducting consultations in a number of Yukon communities as it is and we also know that there are other trappers who may not belong to the Trappers Association and who may not be engaged with the Fish and Wildlife Management Board. I think that there are a number of different areas that need to be looked at, and we are committed to working with the respective stakeholders to do just that.

I referenced earlier the development of a Yukon fur strategy, which was really initiated by the Government of Yukon and the management board in looking at the trapping industry and setting the stage for a fur strategy. The initial components of that work did look at an overall profile of the industry. They looked at the state of the industry, an overview of comparison with other geographic regions and considerations for creating a fur strategy, including how we move forward with the components of what support is required for moving the trapping industry.

At first glance, I would think there are a myriad of different issues, but we need to identify these. Again I have made reference to the Fish and Wildlife Management Board; we will be working with them in collaboration with the other stakeholders to advance the trapping industry. Whether or not that includes a trap exchange remains to be seen, but it has been identified as one of the other priorities.

**Mr. Elias:** I'm sorry if this is repetitive as well. Can the minister provide some information about how well the Chisana caribou herd recovery plan is going and how the population is? Were the goals and objectives of that recovery plan met, or are they still — basically, is there data?

**Hon. Ms. Taylor:** I think I made reference to this earlier as well, in terms of talking about the health and vitality or the viability of caribou herds. Chisana, of course, is one of those herds that we've been working on, in collaboration with other partners. I think I referenced the Carcross, Ibex and Aishihik herds and that we have been able to provide monitoring programs which we conduct on an annual basis. I don't have an

up-to-date status report but I understand that will be coming out fairly shortly, later on this year, on the Chisana herd.

**Mr. Elias:** I am not sure if the Department of Environment is aware of some of the concerns with regard to hunting moose on the South Canol Road. Last year, I know when I was taking my boys for a drive up there and talking to some of the hunters who have hunted there for a long time, the vast majority of them said that there is a problem on the South Canol Road with regard to moose. Obviously, it is because of the access to the road, if there is a problem.

Does the minister have any data with regard to any programs that are being initiated in the Department of Environment to look at or study or collar moose in the area to make sure that the moose population on the South Canol Road is monitored and hunting is monitored? Even I noticed that there was very little sign of moose on the South Canol Road, right up to past Lapie Lakes and right down to the Alaska Highway by Johnsons Crossing.

If the minister is not aware of this, then maybe some direction and resources should be put toward that because the people who are out on the land trying to harvest them have noticed, over the last couple of years, that the frequency and signs of moose on the South Canol Road are very few and far between. If she has any information on that, maybe she could let me know.

**Hon. Ms. Taylor:** Over recent years, the member opposite knows very well that we have been able to enhance our funding for wildlife inventories, which has really enhanced our capacity to be able to develop and implement management plans in collaboration with communities and First Nation governments. It has really enabled us to look at more areas, more species — including distribution and behaviours as the member opposite alluded to — which not only better informs our management decisions, but we're also better able to monitor impacts of climate change, for example, on our natural environment.

Inventory work over the last number of years has included, for example, the collection of data on population size, demographics, seasonal ranges of the South Nahanni and Coal River caribou herds. In terms of the moose population, of course, I understand that this year there will be a moose census taken along the North Canol. Of course, that will help determine some of the management decisions to be undertaken in years out.

Again, thanks to the funding that is made available, we're looking at 40 various inventory and numerous other wildlife management plans to be undertaken this year. There is a lot of work to be done, but thanks to dollars being made available in this respect, we're able to look at monitoring and developing more of a formalized framework for the Yukon in addressing some of these issues of concern.

**Mr. Elias:** This is something that the minister should definitely keep an eye on with regard to hunting or the moose population on the South Canol Road. I just have a couple more questions here. I believe we have — what is it, 12 or 13 conservation officers out looking after our lands and water and wildlife and educating and enforcing various pieces of legisla-

tion in the territory. Over the years, in my opinion, again, the pressures on our lands, water and wildlife and hunting and access to the thousands of kilometers of rivers and roads that we have in our territory — it just seems to me that it is a heavy load for 13 conservation officers to bear. That's a huge responsibility, and I commend them for their hard work over the years.

The question to the minister: are there any plans to increase the number of conservation officers who are out on our roads, rivers and lands, to help educate Yukoners and our visitors and to enforce various legislation — and the legislation that they do have responsibility to enforce and to educate any person is quite vast — so that is another question for the minister that I have today.

**Hon. Ms. Taylor:** I believe I've answered this question already. In fact, it was the Member for McIntyre-Takhini who raised this question already last week but I will be happy to go over what I had mentioned last week. I would concur that conservation officers in the Yukon, coupled with parks officers and all other inspectors — we had quite a discussion earlier of inspectors in various departments but, in terms of our own *Environment Act* and *Waters Act* inspectors, all of these respective officials are responsible for monitoring activities that are regulated and ensuring compliance with our statutes necessary to safeguard our resources and our values throughout the Yukon on the environmental front.

I think it's done on a number of different bases, of course. It's achieved through a degree of public, First Nation and stakeholder involvement in the development of the process and also through ongoing investment of our officials and resources, educational initiatives such as training courses with hunters and trappers, specialty workshops, school visits, information publications and media campaigns. So we have been able to enhance our resources on that front.

In terms of conservation officers, however, that is part of the ongoing effort: to be able to keep up with the challenges. With increases in our population, there is also demand for increased use of our resources. We're really proud to call the Yukon our home for that reason.

It's part of the ongoing priority to invest in our operational funding and our capital infrastructure funding. I think there is obviously always room for improvement in that regard. But in terms of conservation officers, it has to be emphasized that there are other park officers and inspectors, as I mentioned, working throughout the government to realize efficiencies in doing air and foot patrols and in terms of being able to respond to some of the challenges.

Again, I would just like to commend the conservation officers we do have, and it will be part of our ongoing program of modernizing and certainly being able to keep up to some of the challenges at hand.

**Mr. Elias:** I've just got a couple more questions here. This one is with regard to the single-use plastic bags that are obviously used throughout the territory. Does the minister have any plans to facilitate a discussion with Yukoners on the usage or the non-usage of the single-use plastic bags — with business, with Yukoners?

I am sure she is well aware that in my community of Old Crow the use of these plastic bags has been made extinct — as well as Inuvik, as well as I believe the community of Iqaluit and many of these northern communities. They see these single-use plastic bags as very damaging to the environment. In my old past career as working in the environment field, I find these plastic bags in the intestinal tract of grizzly bears and in waters. They are single use and they end up going into the waste-management facilities, for the most part, and blown all over the place. This is something that I think the Environment minister can also take a lead on in facilitating this discussion with Yukoners, talking to businesses.

I noticed that many of the local grocery stores here in our capital city are going to soon be charging a fee for the use of these bags or raising their fees in some instances and advocating and educating, like the good corporate citizens that they are, to encourage the public to not use these single-use bags.

Sometimes I end up carrying out a multitude of items from the store, because I just don't really like to use these single-use plastic bags, when I forget my cloth ones.

That's a question for the minister.

**Hon. Ms. Taylor:** I look back at growing up in Watson Lake, for example, back then a lot of issues weren't on the radar screen. Using a multitude of plastic bags was kind of the norm. That has completely changed in recent years, and even I, especially in my capacity as Minister of Environment, will deliberately carry out both arms full of goods overflowing, but I will not take a plastic bag, and I encourage my husband and other family members to do the same. I have equipped his truck with a multitude of reusable bags and have asked him to not bring in any goods unless they're in reusable bags; however, old habits are tough to change, but once you get into the groove, it's not so difficult. I've made myself; it's just part of it. I have those plastic bins or the reusable shopping bags.

What's really heartening is to see that the majority of people who are shopping — at least the ones I come across, whether it's in grocery stores or at the drug store or other places — lots of folks have their reusable bags in hand. What's also heartening is that most of the businesses are advocating and marketing the sale of their own bags, which is great to see. Sometimes when the goods are too much for both my arms — when I have forgotten my bag — I'll just acquire another one. I have probably enough to share with the entire Legislature, but that's all right.

I was out at Swan Haven on the weekend. They have some beautiful cloth bags, and I was able to purchase a few more through the Girl Guides of Canada. They're great bags. They look great and they're just wonderful to have. I congratulate all those businesses who do educate and promote the use of reusable bags.

Currently, we are actually working with the business community on looking at ways to raise awareness and further promote, and we're looking at some creative ways of being able to better encourage Yukon households to use these reusable bags. Again, I acknowledge the fact that there are businesses in the community that already do implement fees —

surcharges, so to speak — and some of them are higher than others, but it's a good deterrent as well.

At this time, we are working with the business community, as we speak. It's one of the initiatives that I asked the department to broach with the business community. We hope to be able to launch this new initiative pretty soon.

**Mr. Elias:** I thank the minister for her response to that question. I think these are some of the initiatives where it just takes individuals and societal change to make our environment a little better place.

Some of my closing comments — part of the preamble in the *Environment Act* says, "Recognizing that the Government of Yukon is the trustee of the public trust and is therefore responsible for the protection of the collective interest of the people of the Yukon in the quality of the natural environment." Another one states that all persons should be responsible for the environmental consequences of their actions.

In our responsibility as Official Opposition members and Yukoners who hold the government to account on various environmental issues, again, I would just like to acknowledge my constituents for giving me a lot of the direction and guidance, as well as many Yukoners. I acknowledge the many Yukoners who are exercising their own restraint in protecting our pristine environment here in Yukon. I acknowledge each and every one of the Department of Environment officials and staff who have dedicated the majority of their lives to making Yukon what it is. We do have a strong, healthy environment and it is going to take a lot of hard work from future generations as well as from us as legislators to keep it that way.

Again, thank you very much to the minister for her responses to the questions in general debate on the environment. I look forward to engaging the minister on environmental issues that come to my attention that are important to Yukoners and bringing them to the floor of this House for further debate.

**Hon. Ms. Taylor:** I'd just like to thank the member opposite for his questions and all other members for their questions. I certainly would concur that the mandate of the department is quite wide-reaching, it's complex, but it is indeed interesting. I think that the department, by and large, with the support of Yukoners and through their participation, are responsible and they do carry out management of the environment for the protection and maintenance of a biologically diverse natural environment and for the sustainable use and conservation of our resources.

The responsibilities of Environment are wide-ranging and we've touched upon some of them — whether it is maintaining and enhancing the quality of Yukon's natural environment through eco-based management, conservation of resources, protection and maintenance of biodiversity, providing fish and wildlife harvesting viewing opportunities for all Yukoners to enjoy, facilitating participation in land-based activities, establishing and managing a system of preserves, natural environment parks, ecological reserves, campgrounds and recreation sites, and providing information with interpretive services for Yukon residents and visitors.

It never ceases to amaze me just how many publications we do have and how much education we do promote, whether

it's in our schools, campgrounds, through the parks program — whether it's through different events such as Swan Haven or other events being held throughout Biodiversity Month. There is a multitude of new publications coming on-line at all times, including Yukon Fishes.

I never actually knew there was a word “fishes” before, but there is. Stay tuned. It's a great publication. My son's favourite fish would be the slimy sculpin, and it's also outlined in the new publication. It's not a species at risk, I might add.

Of course, there are a multitude of other mandates housed within the Department of Environment. I just want to also acknowledge the ongoing work of Department of Environment officials and many who have been with us for many, many years — some of whom have just left us through retirement and some who are just coming on-board. The corporate memory is very much appreciated that's housed within the department and the commitment that is afforded to their respective mandates.

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

**Mr. Edzerza:** Mr. Chair, I request the unanimous consent of the Committee to deem all lines of Vote 52, Department of Environment, cleared or carried, as required.

**Unanimous consent re deeming all lines in Vote 52, Department of Environment, cleared or carried**

**Chair:** It has been requested by Mr. Edzerza that Committee of the Whole deem all lines of Vote 52, Department of Environment, cleared or carried, as required. Are you agreed?

**All Hon. Members:** Agreed.

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

***On Operation and Maintenance Expenditures***

***Total Operation and Maintenance Expenditures in the amount of \$26,296,000 agreed to***

***On Capital Expenditures***

***Total Capital Expenditures in the amount of \$1,837,000 agreed to***

***Department of Environment agreed to***

**Chair:** Do members wish to recess briefly for officials?

**All Hon. Members:** Agreed.

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

***Recess***

**Chair:** Committee of the Whole will now come to order. The matter before the Committee is Bill No. 15, *First Appropriation Act, 2009-10*, the Women's Directorate.

**Women's Directorate**

**Hon. Ms. Horne:** It is indeed my pleasure to present the Women's Directorate budget for the 2009-10 fiscal year. Before getting into the budget details, I want to take a few minutes to highlight the important work of the Women's Directorate over the past year.

In late July, the Women's Directorate provided support for 11 Yukon women to attend the 2008 National Aboriginal

Women's Summit in Yellowknife. This summit provided an excellent opportunity for Yukon delegates to discuss how to address local and national aboriginal women's issues.

In October, the Yukon Advisory Council on Women's Issues hosted an extremely successful women's forum, called “Making Our Way: Yukon Women in Leadership.” This forum brought 75 territory-wide participants together to explore leadership skills and to hear the personal stories of Yukon women in a wide variety of leadership roles. I don't want to steal my colleague's thunder, but \$6.2 million is identified in this year's Yukon Housing Corporation budget toward design, site preparation and construction on the Whitehorse affordable family housing project, which will be built on Nisutlin Drive in Riverdale.

This project will provide affordable housing for 30 lone-parent families. A public information meeting was held in September and an advisory committee with representatives from the Riverdale Community Association, women's organizations, social housing clients and others, was established. The advisory committee has met several times and continues to provide ongoing advice and perspectives on the Whitehorse affordable family housing project's design and construction phases. This will help to ensure that the features of the building meet the needs of those it is designed to serve. We expect that construction of this much-needed housing project will begin later this year. During 2008, the Women's Directorate partnered with representatives from the Department of Health and Social Services and the Department of Justice to form a government working group to research and understand the complex factors affecting Yukon women who are experiencing issues related to substance abuse.

This work resulted in a recently released report entitled *Improving Treatment and Support for Yukon Girls and Women With Substance Abuse Problems and Addictions*. As well as the February 2009 training for substance abuse workers and service providers in women-centred care, over 80 front-line service providers and program managers in Yukon government, non-government organizations and First Nations participated in the February workshop. This important training provided an overview of key gender differences in the experience of substance abuse and addiction. It also outlined advances in evidence-based, women-centred practice and policy in the substance use field.

The training was delivered by Nancy Poole, an internationally renowned researcher and educator who works as a research associate with the British Columbia Centre of Excellence for Women's Health. Poole was assisted by Christine Urquhart, the provincial training consultant for ActNow B.C. — Healthy Choices in Pregnancy, a key initiative of the B.C. Centre of Excellence for Women's Health.

I am very pleased that the Women's Directorate, in partnership with Health and Social Services and Yukon Justice, will sponsor additional clinical training in this area in the 2009-10 fiscal year.

This training will focus on the links between women's experiences of trauma, mental health issues and substance abuse. The cost of these two training sessions demonstrates a com-



mitment of over \$50,000 to help address the special needs of Yukon women who struggle with substance abuse.

With regard to the detailed 2009-10 Women's Directorate budget, members will notice three changes in this year's main estimates. The first is an increase in program delivery of \$20,000 in personnel costs to cover collective agreement salary increases, as well as a new position in the department. The additional part-time administrative assistant will address serious administrative capacity issues and improve overall operations in the Directorate.

The second change is a decrease in other allotments under policy, research and development of \$84,000, which reflects the completion of the emergency shelter feasibility study and the long-term public education campaign, which concluded last year. The respective decreases are \$59,000 and \$25,000.

The third change is an increase in transfer payments. This increase reflects a doubling of the prevention of violence against aboriginal women fund from \$100,000 to \$200,000. The fund is for proposal-driven projects that specifically address the cessation of violence perpetrated toward aboriginal women, who face much higher rates of violence than other women. I will return to this fund later in my remarks.

The primary objective of the Women's Directorate remains unchanged. This is to support this government's commitment to the economic, legal and social equality of women. Violence toward women remains the single largest impediment to the achievement of these objectives. Members may then ask why violence prevention is no longer identified as an activity under this budget. I want to be very clear that the removal of the violence prevention activity is for administrative reasons only and that violence prevention remains a priority of the Women's Directorate and this government. In fact, this government provides almost \$3 million annually to address family violence in our communities.

However, because the Women's Directorate violence prevention programs and initiatives fall under all of its activities, it was becoming increasingly difficult to manage the department's budget at the operational level.

The Directorate also now provides a growing policy and research role within the entire Yukon government. It was therefore decided to move the violence prevention activity and replace it with a policy research and development activity. This new activity better reflects the varied policy and program initiatives of the department, which include those in the area of violence prevention.

We all know that violence against women is linked to gender inequality and, sadly, men and women do not have equal access to safety and security in our society. Women's experiences of fear and violence remain a barrier to women achieving social, political and economic equality in society.

I am now going to take the opportunity to outline some of the current and previous violence prevention initiatives led or sponsored by the Women's Directorate to help address this inequality.

Sexual Assault Prevention Month takes place in May. This year, the Women's Directorate is partnering with Justice, the Yukon Liquor Corporation, and Yukon College to deliver the

"Protect your drink, protect yourself" campaign, and will be contributing \$2,000. Last year, the Women's Directorate sponsored Kwanlin Dun First Nation school and general audience shows of Ben Atherton-Zeman's theatrical presentation called *Voices of Men*. His performances addressed sexual assault and consent, dating and domestic violence, sexual harassment and objectification and were attended by over 240 people. I attended this showing myself and it was very, very well done and very influential. The cost of this was just over \$6,300.

2009 Women Abuse Prevention Month activities are currently being explored. For the past five years, this government has provided funding for project-driven proposals and community-based projects that help to prevent violence against aboriginal women. Since 2004, the Directorate has supported 27 projects with over \$500,000.

The 2009-10 Women's Directorate budget doubles the annual support provided to these projects from \$100,000 to \$200,000. We are doing this because aboriginal women experience spousal violence at a rate that is three times higher than for non-aboriginal women. Statistics Canada reports that rates of violence toward women in the north far exceeds the national average. Calls for proposals for this year will be generated later this spring.

For the long-term violence prevention campaign, the Women's Directorate and the Department of Justice co-facilitated a 17-member interagency working group, Circles of Respect and Equality, or CORE, who worked on a long-term public education campaign on the prevention of violence against women and children.

The amount spent under this program was over \$200,000. The three-year campaign released two nationally recognized, Yukon-relevant, violence prevention videos and a training manual to help educate and raise awareness on violence against women and children in the Yukon to empower the viewer to take action to prevent and stop violence.

In June and November 2008, Train the Trainers sessions took place, which trained front-line workers in how these resources can be effectively used in communities and, as we are all aware, the Bare Essentials Campaign takes place in December and this is a high risk time for increased violence against women and children. As part of its mandate to increase public awareness about violence against women, the Women's Directorate organized the seventh annual government-sponsored Bare Essentials Campaign in December 2008.

The Bare Essentials Campaign is in response to the identified needs of women's shelters and safe houses for basic hygiene products, as well as underwear and socks, for both women and children. The Bare Essentials Campaign continues to experience enormous success.

Finally, in the area of violence prevention, the Women's Directorate provides other funding beside the already-mentioned prevention of violence against aboriginal women fund, and I will name those. We have the women's equality fund, which is \$521,400 from 2007 to 2010 for seven organizations; the women's community projects funding — \$5,000 annually, split between April 30 and October 30 deadlines; the Victoria Faulkner Women's Centre annual contribution is

\$80,000; and the Yukon Status of Women Council's annual contribution of \$12,000.

With that, Mr. Chair, I will conclude my remarks so that members may respond.

Günilschish. Thank you.

**Mr. Elias:** I thank the minister for her opening remarks. They did provide a lot of information with regard to some of the questions. I was putting checkmarks beside some of the questions she did provide answers to in her opening comments.

I would also begin, as I usually do, by thanking each and every staff member within the Women's Directorate for the hard work that they do each and every day in supporting the Government of Yukon's commitment to the economic, legal and social equality of women.

I do have a couple of questions that were not addressed by the minister. I would like to begin with talking about an effort that the Whitehorse Aboriginal Women's Circle has been embarking on over the last several years in trying to find some capital and some partners, basically, to fulfill a goal of theirs that came out of the recommendations with regard to a strategic planning process that they were involved in.

The Whitehorse Aboriginal Women's Circle was founded in 2003 as a local chapter of the Yukon Aboriginal Women's Council. It is a non-profit society directed by a volunteer board. As a local chapter, the organization's primary area of interest in the Whitehorse area — which is obviously located within the Kwanlin Dun and Ta'an Kwäch'an traditional territories. You know, this is the urban centre and the capital city of the Yukon. Whitehorse is also home to women from all Yukon communities who relocate to find work, attend school, to reside with family, to take advantage of other amenities that the smaller communities do not have, and programs and services. The fact of the matter is that many women come here to seek refuge from intolerable situations at home or in their community conditions.

In 2007, the Whitehorse Aboriginal Women's Circle completed a comprehensive strategic planning process with involvement from a wide range of women around the territory and communities. The strategic plan was entitled "revitalization of the spirit of aboriginal women" and it outlined the continuing need for accessibility to programs and services of all kinds for aboriginal women, as well as a centre to house these services in the Whitehorse area — and that's my main point here.

An aboriginal women's centre would provide a culturally safe place for women to gather, work toward their personal and community goals and to have advocacy when they access an often bewildering bureaucracy as they attempt to further their education, set up a society or business, or to obtain services for their children and elders. In 2007, the Whitehorse Aboriginal Women's Circle identified the need for an aboriginal women's centre located in the Whitehorse area. Aboriginal women who live in Whitehorse are often refused services and told they must obtain these services through their community or First Nation government. An aboriginal women's centre in Whitehorse could assist women from all communities to access needed services and could act as an advocate on their behalf.

In 2007, their comprehensive proposal for an aboriginal centre was forwarded to the joint body of the northern strategy trust. In the first round of funding allocations, the proposal was rejected with no encouragement to apply at a future time. On November 15, 2008, the proposal was rejected again, indicating that there was not enough information and that it did not demonstrate long-term viability.

My question for the minister is, when I see the Whitehorse Aboriginal Women's Circle continue to struggle with this government in trying to achieve an aboriginal women's centre that they feel would address a need — and many of the needs were identified by the minister in her earlier speech — I realize that this is a funding proposal that was submitted to the northern strategy trust — I believe it was — however, the Government of Yukon does have representatives on that board that makes these joint decisions. You know, they are trying to provide a stable place and respond to a wide area of interests — the needs and issues of our territory's aboriginal women. When that is being ignored it matters to me.

The question for the minister is this: can she support this concept? Does she consider it valuable, when the Whitehorse Aboriginal Women's Circle have continued their efforts to fulfill a need that they see, and they've been rejected twice by the processes established by this government. If the minister can provide some information to me with regard to this effort of the Whitehorse Aboriginal Women's Circle, then it would be greatly appreciated in the few minutes that we have left.

**Hon. Ms. Horne:** Mr. Speaker, seeing the time, I move we report progress, rather than get into this and have to end.

**Chair:** It has been moved by Ms. Horne 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 on it.

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

**Some Hon. Members:** Agreed.

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

**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 5:29 p.m.*