

**Yukon Legislative Assembly**  
**Whitehorse, Yukon**  
**Tuesday, November 17, 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.

Are there any tributes?

**TRIBUTES**

**In recognition of National Aboriginal Addictions Awareness Week 2009**

**Hon. Mr. Hart:** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to National Aboriginal Addictions Awareness Week, which runs from November 15 to 21.

Monsieur le Président, je prends la parole aujourd'hui pour souligner la Semaine nationale autochtone de sensibilisation aux toxicomanies, du 15 au 21 novembre.

Every year during the third week of November, the NAAAW encourages people to celebrate in positive, collective healing events. The NAAAW promotes an addiction-free lifestyle for communities, families and individuals by enabling communities to develop activities that increase knowledge and awareness of addictions and how addictions can be addressed.

This yearly awareness campaign helps to focus attention on and support for people who are struggling with addictions, celebrate those who are recovering from substance abuse and acknowledge the work of those who assist them. In 2009, campaigns across the country will promote the building and renewing of positive relationships within families, communities and natural environments to ensure good health and addiction-free lifestyle.

Cette année, des campagnes semblables ont lieu dans tout le pays en vue de promouvoir l'établissement et le maintien de bonnes relations entre les membres des familles et des collectivités et avec le milieu naturel. Leur but est de favoriser des modes de vie sains et sans dépendances.

This year's theme is, "Living the good life". Local community-based groups have spent a lot of time planning and developing activities to bring people together in positive and affirming ways that embrace addiction-free and responsible lifestyles through the building of positive family and community relationships.

In Whitehorse, for instance, Blood Ties Four Directions is screening *Facing the Dragon*, a documentary on drug addicts and detox. The viewing is on Wednesday at lunchtime in the Alcohol and Drug Services boardroom.

The next day, on Thursday, from 11:00 a.m. to 1:30 p.m., Prevention Services is hosting a mocktails and snack booth at Yukon College. On Saturday, Prevention Services is teaming up with the RCMP to support the Yukon Liquor Corporation, which is sponsoring a free family swim at the Canada Games

Centre. Prevention Services will have a booth at the centre and hand out information and hot chocolate.

Mr. Speaker, opportunities that help to build awareness and shared experiences about successful recovery processes, addictions-free lifestyles, harm reduction, and information about support services available to assist in the healing process all play an important role in the development of healthy communities.

Ultimately, that is our goal: to build healthy, positive and safe communities for all of our citizens.

Substance abuse in all its forms is incredibly damaging to individuals and family and friends and to the community.

I can't say enough about the work Health and Social Services is doing in helping people to overcome their addictions. Alcohol and Drug Services offers help in prevention, detoxification, outpatient counselling, in-patient treatment, outreach and youth services. In addition, it has provided a 24/7 direct link to an alcohol addictions and crisis line for people who need to talk to someone right away.

Along with a broad variety of non-government partners, ADS works toward assisting people achieve healthier lifestyles that do not include alcohol or other drugs.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Mitchell:** I rise on behalf of the Official Opposition to pay tribute to National Addictions Awareness Week.

The purpose of National Addictions Awareness Week is to provide information and materials and promote activities that will serve to raise awareness of addictions and substance abuse that affect so many people across our country.

Addiction does not discriminate; it affects all races, gender, ages and cultures. There are many forms of addictions with devastating problems, which are affecting many aspects of Canadian society.

La semaine nationale de conscience de penchants est une avenue pour les communautés effectivement de mobilisation en travaillant ensemble vers un objectif commun, pour commencer à agir pour établir les communautés plus fortes et plus saines et l'importance de créer les communautés stables et penchant-libres pour que nos enfants grandissent dedans.

National Addictions Awareness Week is an avenue for effectively mobilizing communities to work together toward a common goal, to start taking action to build stronger, healthier communities and the importance of creating stable and addictions-free communities for our children to grow up in. The more comfortable we feel communicating with each other and discussing addiction-related issues as a family, community and a society, the better we will become at recognizing and addressing addiction-related problems. Breaking a long-term habit and lifestyle takes tremendous strength and willpower. It is important to note that beating an addiction isn't as simple as just "stopping". Recognizing an addiction problem and really understanding what lies behind it is often the key to recovery. To the people who are suffering from an addiction, please know that there are people who will help you. Be humble enough to accept the fact that you need help. That's the first step to recovery.

National Addictions Awareness Week is a time to celebrate the joy of living an addictions-free lifestyle. We would hope this one week of non-addictions would show some people that it is a more satisfying way of life. We hope that this one week could become the first week of the rest of their lives.

National Addictions Awareness Week is a time to celebrate the joy of freedom from addiction, while focusing on celebrating the success of recovery.

We would like to recognize and thank the many front line workers, volunteers, NGOs and counsellors who support in the recovery and rehabilitation of people with addictions and for giving them hope and helping them understand that each and every one of us in an important and valued member of society with a contribution to make.

Ensemble, nous devons tout travailler vers l'élimination de l'abus de substance au Canada. Ensemble, nous espérons que nous pourrions créer les personnes en bonne santé, les familles en bonne santé, les communautés en bonne santé et une nation saine.

Together, we must all work towards the elimination of substance abuse in Canada. Together, we hope that we can create healthy people, healthy families, healthy communities and one healthy nation.

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

**Mr. Cardiff:** I rise on behalf of the New Democratic caucus to pay tribute to National Addictions Awareness Week, celebrated the third full week in November each year. This year, as in the past, the week will support and promote an addictions-free lifestyle for communities, families and individuals. The slogan for the campaign is "Living the good life".

When we think about addictions, our first thought is detoxification and treatment. Those are very necessary, and they are the first steps to having an addictions-free lifestyle. But the theme of this National Addictions Awareness Week leads us to the focus on enhancing individual, family and community supports and resilience. It points out that we need to enable communities, families and individuals to develop activities, attitudes and programs that will address the social problems that cause addictions in the first place. This is known as after-care.

After an addicted person leaves treatment and returns home, they are under the same stress that caused the addiction in the first place. They are likely facing unemployment, poor housing and violence. Those problems are both the cause of the addiction and the result of it. After-care looks at these problems and provides support to change a total lifestyle for the addicted person.

The Addictions Awareness Week campaign objective of an addictions-free lifestyle was approached in the strong resolution that came from the annual general meeting of the Yukon Medical Association a few days ago. The resolution encouraged us to see health issues for aboriginal people as the result of the social problems they face, including addictions.

The substance abuse action plan that was introduced here several years ago also takes social conditions into consideration in attacking this very serious Yukon problem. It proposes a community harm reduction fund, community planning and de-

velopment, community training in addictions issues and expanded outreach services among other programs. Communities are ready to take up the challenge of changing a lifestyle for their people to one that is addiction free. Let us respond to that with eagerness and commitment.

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

THAT this House urges the Yukon government to follow the substance abuse action plan which is now four years old, and establish:

(1) the community harm reduction fund, and

(2) community planning, development and funding for community plans.

I give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Canada to raise the funding levels it provides to the 125 friendship centres across Canada so that these important organizations can fulfill their mandate of providing programs and services to urban aboriginal residents.

**Speaker:** Are there further notices of motion?

Hearing none, is there a statement by a minister?

This then brings us to Question Period.

## QUESTION PERIOD

### Question re: Peel watershed land use plan

**Mr. Fairclough:** I have a question for the minister responsible for the Public Service Commission. He's responsible for promoting a respectful workplace. Last week, the Minister of Tourism admitted she took no action upon learning the Premier had placed an irate phone call to the Deputy Minister of Environment. Her silence condones the minister's actions.

She said she is a team player and that members of the government support the work of one another. By her responses last week, that includes when the Premier decides to make irate calls to deputies.

The minister responsible for the Public Service Commission has an obligation to stand up for employees. When did he become aware of the Premier's irate call and did he confront the Premier about it?

**Hon. Mr. Fentie:** Obviously, if there was an issue, I'm sure the minister responsible for the Public Service Commission would have heard about it. The government side cannot speak for the members opposite and the Official Opposition's interpretation of chapter 11, but the government side has a very clear understanding of chapter 11 and what the government's obligations are. That's exactly what this government has fol-

lowed and will continue to follow — our obligations under chapter 11 of the land use planning process.

**Mr. Fairclough:** The minister didn't answer the question. It appears the Premier is taking control once again, and that's not surprising. This summer, the minister said the Premier was a strong leader. He endorsed his leadership and backed him 100 percent. They're all in this together, Mr. Speaker. This is the same Premier who made an irate phone call to the government employee in March of this year.

The minister has an obligation to stand up for employees. In his government's own harassment policy, it says the employer is to provide leadership in creating and maintaining a work environment free of harassment. The minister had a choice. He could have confronted the Premier about the irate call or he could have remained silent.

Why did the minister do nothing when he learned about the Premier's unprofessional treatment of this government employee?

**Hon. Mr. Fentie:** It's pretty obvious: there was no such treatment. That's why the minister had nothing to do in the matter. Frankly, Mr. Speaker, the members opposite have failed to accept the facts, the answers provided them, and they can continue on as they see fit.

The government will ensure always that every department, every agency, in all of our functions is adhering to our obligations. In this case, these are constitutionally entrenched treaties. We must follow those treaties as we have, as we continue to do and we will always, as a government, follow that obligation and meet those objectives in partnership with First Nation governments when it comes to land use planning.

**Mr. Fairclough:** The Premier ought to read the e-mail, Mr. Speaker. We know the minister is in a very tough spot, but we are asking him to do the right thing. The minister's department puts out brochures that say that the government promotes a respectful workplace. It also talks about leading through respect. We know the Premier leads through making irate phone calls and we know that the Deputy Premier sees no problem with that approach. She also did nothing.

The brochure has more advice about harassment. It says not to ignore it. Unfortunately, that is exactly what the minister has done. He learned about the Premier's irate call and took no action. Worse yet, he told reporters this summer that he supports the Premier. Is it any wonder the public has lost trust in this government? We know that this type of phone call would not be tolerated within the public service. Why is the minister letting his boss get away with it?

**Hon. Mr. Fentie:** Well, first off, the minister responsible for the Public Service Commission is doing an exemplary job, considering the fact that the public service is working very hard for this government.

Mr. Speaker, let me point something out. You do not establish the number of habitat protection areas this government has under its watch by yelling at people and being disrespectful. You don't implement management plans for Fishing Branch and Tombstone by being disrespectful. You don't change the course of the territory in the positive manner that this government has by being disrespectful. You don't create

partnerships with other governments by being disrespectful. You don't solicit millions of dollars of investment from offshore by being disrespectful.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, you can accomplish absolutely nothing by being disrespectful and this government has accomplished a great deal; the evidence is obvious.

#### **Question re: Peel watershed land use plan**

**Mr. Mitchell:** Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Environment minister cited chapter 11 of the *Umbrella Final Agreement* as justification for the Premier's irate phone call to the Deputy Minister of Environment. Mr. Speaker, I have read chapter 11 and nowhere in it does it say that the Premier gets to decide what information gets fed into land use planning. Nowhere does it say that the Premier should edit technical environmental data prior to the Yukon government making its formal submission to the commission. And certainly nowhere does it say he gets to yell at officials while censoring their information.

I'll send a copy of chapter 11 over to the minister. Perhaps she can highlight the portion that says, "Make irate phone call to officials prior to making government submissions to the land use planning councils."

Exactly what part of chapter 11 is the minister referring to when she says that the Premier wasn't out of line?

**Hon. Ms. Taylor:** I am very pleased that the Leader of the Official Opposition and the Liberal Party caucus have also finally picked up a copy of chapter 11 because they would indeed see that land use planning commissions are given the sole authority to recommend regional land use plans to Yukon as well as effective First Nations.

I will reiterate for the member opposite — indeed, I have quoted on a number of occasions the letter to the editor that was signed by both deputy ministers for Environment and Energy, Mines and Resources. Perhaps they don't believe that document either. I'd be happy to table it again for the member opposite. Again, it spells out how the Premier did not comment on specific details but it is in fact in the Premier's purview to ensure that all departments adhere to the obligations, as spelled out in chapter 11, which pertains to the land use planning process.

Again, we very much support the independent work of the Peel Watershed Planning Commission. We look forward to receiving the recommended plan by the end of the year, and we certainly will continue to support the respective departments, including the Department of Environment, and their contributions to the land use planning process.

**Mr. Mitchell:** The minister didn't answer the question. Yesterday and again today, she has excused the Premier's caustic behaviour by talking about chapter 11. The minister said that the *Umbrella Final Agreement* says the planning council "shall make recommendations to Government and each affected Yukon First Nation."

The *Umbrella Final Agreement* does not say the Premier shall personally determine what information the planning council gets to have. The *Umbrella Final Agreement* doesn't say that the planning council shall make recommendations based on political interference. The minister is the Premier's

topologist. She's saying out of one side of her mouth that the *Umbrella Final Agreement* says the Premier can get involved, and saying out of the other side that we shouldn't worry, because her officials wrote a letter saying that he didn't really get too involved anyway.

Now, the minister and the Premier are hiding behind the *Umbrella Final Agreement*, and they are hiding behind government officials. When will this government finally commit to allowing land use planning to proceed free of the Premier's political interference?

**Hon. Ms. Taylor:** Mr. Speaker, I'll chalk up our record on park preservation and protection to any of the respective parties opposite any day, any time. It was just a few months ago when the Premier was able to sign off, in collaboration with the Chief of Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation, the Old Crow habitat protection area worth over a million hectares, as I believe it was — the very first north Yukon land use plan in collaboration with the residents of Old Crow and the Chief and Council of Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation. I was also privy to being able to sign off the management plan of the Tombstone Territorial Park in collaboration with Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in First Nation. There are a number of park planning processes, including the Peel watershed planning, which is mandated under chapter 11 of the *Umbrella Final Agreement*.

I will just reiterate that the land use planning commission is given the sole authority to recommend those regional land use plans to Yukon and the respective affected First Nations. These plans do provide the basis for land use decisions. They also provide the basis for conservation parties, measures, proposed protected areas. Those will be determined by the commission. We look forward to receiving the recommended plan by the end of the year and we certainly look forward to moving forward on another land use plan.

**Mr. Mitchell:** Mr. Speaker, the Liberal caucus has been working hard to hold this government accountable. Our efforts apparently haven't been well received by this minister. Yesterday the minister accused the Member for Mayo-Tatchun of acting disrespectfully toward Yukon First Nations by trying to hold this government accountable. She said, "I don't know who should be more offended — the Government of Yukon or the Yukon First Nations who actually negotiated chapter 11, land use planning."

Mr. Speaker, it's this Yukon Party government that is trying to do an end run around the open and accountable, good faith expectations of chapter 11, but we will hold this government accountable. When will this government allow the Peel land use planning commission to do its work in the way the UFA actually envisioned — free of political interference?

**Hon. Ms. Taylor:** Again, when you want to talk about disrespectful, I'll just refer to the members opposite and their conduct over the last few months. Mr. Speaker, when it comes to land use planning, the government is doing its part in ensuring that departments adhere to their obligations as set out and outlined in chapter 11 of the land use planning provisions of the *Umbrella Final Agreement*.

I will reiterate that we very much support the independent work of the planning council — the commission — that has

been tasked to recommend the regional land use plan for the Peel watershed.

Likewise we will continue to support the work of the respective departments — the Department of Environment, the Department of Tourism and Culture, the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources — which have been contributing to the land use planning process pertaining to the Peel watershed for a number of years.

We support that work; we support the transparent and open process that has enabled the Department of Environment to provide data, provide the land classification when it pertains to the ecology, the mapping, participating in stakeholder processes to develop conservation criteria and assessments.

Again, our departments are doing their good work; we support the good work of the departments. I have the utmost respect for the integrity of the process, and we look forward to the recommended plan.

#### **Question re: Long-term care facilities**

**Mr. Cardiff:** Hospitals are acute care facilities. They do not provide a wide spectrum of care. Acute care is for immediate problems; it is not complete care. Yukoners need a full continuum of care, which is not met in an acute care facility. Full health care includes rehabilitation, therapies, mental health, addiction treatment, home care, respite and a wide range of long-term supports. It's not clear what this government's plan is, or if it even has one, apart from putting all the emphasis on acute care.

So while the Yukon Hospital Corporation proceeds with its acute care mandate, how does this government propose to meet the full continuum of care Yukoners expect and need? Where is the overall plan?

**Hon. Mr. Hart:** I'm somewhat astonished that he can come up with this question. I think all he has to do is ask any Yukoner out there just what kinds of health services are available here in the Yukon. They're second to none in any other jurisdiction in Canada, save Quebec — second to none, with regard to the services and programs being provided to young and old and First Nations included.

**Mr. Cardiff:** For several years now, patients have been housed at Whitehorse General Hospital while waiting to be transferred to a continuing care facility. For awhile, this shortage of continuing care beds was alleviated after Copper Ridge Place was opened. Now we hear that patients are being medevac'd to Watson Lake because of overcrowding at Whitehorse General Hospital. Patients are being shifted away from their families and familiar surroundings while the hospital cares for those it was designed to care for.

Ad hoc actions such as transferring patients between hospitals is stressful for the patients, for their families, for the staff at the facilities, and it is also very expensive. Is it this government's plan to shuffle continuing care patients from Whitehorse General Hospital to regional hospitals for the foreseeable future?

**Hon. Mr. Hart:** We had an emergency situation at the hospital last week. We took the appropriate action. We consulted with the doctors. We consulted with all the individuals in question and the individuals who were transported down to

Watson Lake approved the transfer to Watson Lake. In regard to that, the services and resources are available in Watson Lake to assist those individuals whom we transferred down there.

**Mr. Cardiff:** The minister should understand that the health care needs of Yukoners are increasing; they are not getting less at this point. This government has committed nearly \$50 million for acute care hospitals in Watson Lake and Dawson City. It has forgotten about the Thomson Centre, which was supposed to accommodate continuing care patients. This government has done nothing, or very little, on the collaborative practice initiative that has been in the works for years. Many of the preventive health measures outlined in the substance abuse action plan are not being pursued.

The oversight committee on health care sustainability is not even meeting as scheduled. What is the government doing, other than investing millions on acute care facilities that only address a narrow range of the total health care needs of Yukoners?

**Hon. Mr. Hart:** A narrow range of what might assist Yukoners — I hope the member opposite has an accident and then tries to figure out where he's going to go.

We have the best — the best — hospital care for our Yukoners here at our hospital. We have an excellent facility for looking after Yukoners. We have physicians who look after all Yukoners and do a great job assisting us in that manner.

In fact, the member opposite likes to talk about what was done on Friday. I was there. I spoke with the doctors in question. We had a good conversation with regard to the safety of all the individuals who were being transferred. Again, this is something that came about. We had to make an adjustment, and adjustments were made. The appropriate people and stakeholders were involved. A decision was made, and we went through with it. We succeeded in preventing delays in the emergency room, so that it could continue with emergency processes for Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday of this week, and we were very successful in that process.

There are many patients who have been waiting sometimes as long as 18 months to get that surgery done. We have achieved that process and I feel very successful in that.

### Speaker's statement

**Speaker:** Before the next question, I'm going to ask that the Minister of Health and Social Services review the Blues tomorrow, because I think the minister used terminology in his reply to the member that he would probably like to retract.

Member for Lake Laberge, you have the next question, please.

### Question re: Yukon mining incentive program

**Mr. Cathers:** The world is in the midst of a recession, but that topic has barely come up this sitting. I have a question for the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources about the economy.

The Yukon mining incentive program, commonly known as YMIP, has been very successful in increasing exploration by supporting early-stage projects. Since 2003, projects funded by this program resulted in 20 significant discoveries including the

White Gold property. This year, in an effort to combat the effect of the global recession and encourage exploration, Yukon increased funding for YMIP by \$1.1 million to a new level of \$1.8 million.

My question is for the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources. Would he please provide me an update on how successful this investment has been, including how many projects were funded through the YMIP program this year?

**Hon. Mr. Lang:** In answering the member opposite, I agree the YMIP program has been very, very successful over the last couple of years — certainly over the term that we've been in office.

We put an extra \$1 million in it last year, so it increased to \$1.8 million. It was fully subscribed by July of this year. There were 78 hard-rock projects funded and 28 placer projects funded. So it was extensive. The total quartz claims in the Yukon as of October 1, 2009 is 77,690. The number of quartz claims staked in the White Gold area this year was 8,132. There was a total of 13,506 claims in the White Gold area. Total number of quartz claims staked this year up to October 1 was \$13,166. That brought our total investment, Mr. Speaker, from an estimated \$30 million in exploration to the grand total of over \$90 million invested to date in the Yukon on exploration investments in the territory.

**Mr. Cathers:** I thank the minister for answering that question and indeed part of my next question. The Yukon government took another step last fall to improve the Yukon's competitiveness through the modernization of the *Quartz Mining Act*, and the new regulations under that act came into force April 1.

The changes made to royalty rates were important, but the changes that had the largest effect this year on encouraging investments and exploration were the administrative amendments. Exploration companies have told me that reducing the minimum claim post size alone from four inches by four inches to the new one-and-a-half inch by one-and-a-half inch size, and allowing claim tags to be purchased before going into the field, has dramatically reduced the number of trips they have to make. In some cases, it has cut costs by as much as 50 percent, making the dollars go significantly further. The minister provided me with part of the answer, but would he please reiterate how many new mineral claims were staked in the Yukon this year and how many of those were in the White Gold area?

**Hon. Mr. Lang:** The modernization of the *Quartz Mining Act* did benefit industry and the department itself. Certainly, there was an expanded interest in the White Gold area. Certainly, there are a total of 13,506 claims in the White Gold area but that is part and parcel with the 8,100 claims that were staked this summer. It was more than double the staking that was originally there.

Of the 13,166 claims, over half of those claims were done in that area. That was a hotspot in the Yukon this year but it certainly benefited all Yukoners when you look at the exploration dollars going from \$30 million to \$90 million.

When this government became the government in 2002, we have to remind Yukoners there was less than \$8 million worth of exploration going on in the territory at that time.

In the middle of a recession, this territory had a \$90-million investment. That says a lot for the resources in the territory and the investors who have a trust in this territory to move ahead with those invested dollars.

**Mr. Cathers:** I'd like to thank the minister for that answer. I know the minister recognizes, as I do, the importance of mining exploration for our economy, not only as the first step to the development of mines, but because of the many Yukoners who are employed by those companies and by companies that serve those companies and provide services to them.

In anticipation of the effect of the recession on the availability of money for exploration, both the amendment to the *Quartz Mining Act* and the \$1.1-million increase to the Yukon mining incentive program were central to the Yukon's efforts to mitigate the expected downturn in exploration. Both changes were made during my time as Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources, and I want to again thank the staff who developed and delivered the initiatives.

I'd like to ask the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources — I appreciate him providing the numbers on the success of these initiatives. I would like to encourage the minister to request the continuation of the increase to the YMIP and would ask the minister if he will undertake to work with the department and request the continuation of the \$1.1-million increase to YMIP.

**Hon. Mr. Lang:** Certainly, I can agree with the member opposite. The increase was certainly recommended, and it went through Management Board, and was agreed to by the Yukon Party caucus. We'll certainly look into that for the next budget cycle.

Also in these estimates, approximately \$170 million was spent on developing mine sites, like Yukon Zinc, Minto expansion, and Alexco. So not only did we have the approximately \$90 million in exploration, we had another \$170 million invested on the ground for development. This year has been a very positive year for the mining community and was certainly well received by Yukoners. Certainly, understanding the economics in the world, Yukon Zinc, again, is the only developing mine in North America at the moment, so it is a feather in our hat that we have those kinds of investments here on the ground.

#### **Question re: Minto Park development**

**Mr. Mitchell:** Last week, I presented a petition in this House on behalf of 267 Dawson residents, who were unhappy with this government's decision to build the new Dawson hospital in Minto Park. They want the historical integrity of the park maintained.

This is yet another example of the government's my-way-or-the-highway approach to public consultation. At an August meeting in Dawson, residents were told they could get the hospital at the site selected by the government or they would get no hospital. One resident told us the MLA for Klondike threatened to move the project to Mayo if the current location was unacceptable to residents. The Hospital Corporation has said its hands are tied, because this is the only site the Yukon government will make available.

Why is the government so reluctant to consider another site for the Dawson hospital or to consult with residents of Dawson?

**Hon. Mr. Hart:** Mr. Speaker, we have had many discussions with the City of Dawson with regard to the facility there, and we have also discussed many options as to where the facility may be. That is the location that was determined; that was the location that we currently use; it's the location that was deemed appropriate for the footprint of the new hospital and that is where we intend to build the new hospital.

**Mr. Mitchell:** Mr. Speaker, I know that 267 residents who signed the petition to protect Minto Park will not be happy with this minister's response. They are also not happy with their local MLA and his refusal to stand up for their concerns. He's taking his orders from the corner office and toeing the party line, instead of standing up for his constituents. In August, the MLA for Klondike —

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

#### **Point of order**

**Speaker:** Minister responsible for Education, on a point of order.

**Hon. Mr. Rouble:** Mr. Speaker, I realize we do operate under the fundamental assumption in this Assembly that we are all honourable members. I'm hearing comments coming from the Leader of the Liberal Party that are certainly beneath the dignity of this Assembly.

**Speaker:** On the point of order.

**Mr. Mitchell:** Mr. Speaker, I didn't accuse the member of anything that was dishonourable, but rather that members of the public are saying he hasn't stood up for their concerns. I don't know from what version of the House rules the member opposite is quoting.

#### **Speaker's ruling**

**Speaker:** Does anybody else want in on this while we're at it here? No? From the Chair's perspective, there is no point of order; it's simply a dispute among members.

Leader of the Official Opposition, you have the floor. Go ahead, please.

**Mr. Mitchell:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The MLA for Klondike was criticized for not listening to his residents' concerns. It does not appear to have had any impact. He seems content to ignore the 267 residents who have voiced their displeasure with the decision, so let me ask the minister this question: why was there no public consultation with residents before the government made its decision to go with this chosen site? Why were the residents not allowed to be heard?

**Hon. Mr. Hart:** There was public consultation. There was correspondence between us. We had public issues with regard to the hospital. They went up and met with them. There was consultation with the consultants and the experts in looking at building a facility of this type in a small community. Those were all held in Dawson City. They all came to that place and all with the likelihood of putting the unit exactly where it is planned.

**Question re: Family violence**

**Mr. Elias:** Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the minister responsible for the Women's Directorate. Violence against women is a commonplace tragedy in Canada and the Yukon. It affects our daughters, our sisters, our mothers, our friends and colleagues. Through them and through their children, it affects the very health of our communities. Fortunately, in most of the country, we are seeing progress. Reports tell us that spousal violence has been declining steadily over the past 10 years, dropping a full 15 percent from 1998 to 2007. This is good news but this good news doesn't extend to the Yukon. In the Yukon today, many women continue to suffer violence at rates three times higher than the national average. The rest of the country is getting better. Will the minister tell us why the Yukon Party government hasn't helped to make it better in Yukon?

**Hon. Ms. Horne:** As the minister responsible for the Women's Directorate and as a First Nations woman, this is a problem that resonates with me very deeply.

I can tell you some of the initiatives that we have undertaken and are doing. Some of the initiatives are that we've double the prevention of violence against aboriginal women fund for women and children who find themselves in need of housing. We've increased funding to places like Help and Hope for Families Society in Watson Lake, the Dawson City Women's Shelter and to Kaushee's Place in Whitehorse to provide both emergency and second-stage housing. We have participated in both national aboriginal women's summits. We have hosted two Yukon aboriginal women's summits. Funding of \$450,000 has been provided under the northern strategy trust to implement the recommendations of the Yukon aboriginal women's summits.

We've developed two violence prevention dramas produced entirely in Yukon. One of these was *Getting Real*, and this video is being used across Canada. As a matter of fact, at our national conferences, Yukon is being touted as being ahead of the rest of Canada in preventing violence against women.

**Mr. Elias:** The minister actually helps make my point. Whatever has been done in the past, whatever list of initiatives the minister can provide, it's clearly not enough and it's not working in our territory, and the years of sobering statistics support my assertions, Mr. Speaker.

Yukon women are more than twice as likely to suffer violence at the hands of their partners. Yukon women are more than two-and-a-half times likely to be sexually assaulted than the Canadian average. These rates are simply unacceptable and have been going on for far too long. These statistics should be troubling to any government, especially when it comes to the protection of the weakest in our society.

This government has a duty to change the trend of violence in our territory. When is the government going to finally actually do something about violence against women?

**Hon. Ms. Horne:** As I said in this House yesterday, we know that the largest driver of crime in the Yukon is substance abuse. In response, we developed and implemented the substance abuse action plan in Yukon. We had a criticism from across the floor earlier that the substance abuse action plan was

not being implemented. Our substance abuse action plan is based on four strategic directions: harm reduction, prevention and education, treatment, and enforcement.

Our government has made great strides in presenting the substance abuse action plan in Yukon. For instance, we have the *Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act*. We all know about the address on Wheeler Street that was closed. We put it to Habitat for Humanity. What better indication is there of the effectiveness of an initiative like SCAN to our Yukon communities?

We have the creation of the RCMP street reduction team. We have Our Way of Living Safely, or OWLS. As I said yesterday, I had too many things that we have going on. This is the directory we have for communities for the substance abuse action plan, and this is available from the department.

**Mr. Elias:** The facts in this territory speak for themselves. For decades now, we've been dealing with these staggering statistics with regard to violence against women, so it's obvious to me that this Yukon Party government needs to take a more comprehensive approach in addressing violence against women in our territory.

The facts are that Yukon women still suffer violence at rates hugely exceeding what other Canadian women are subject to. On average, for every Canadian woman who experiences violence at the hands of her partner, two Yukon women do. It is time to address the root causes of violence against women in our territory, including economic inequality, education, affordable housing and substance abuse, to name a few.

It is time for this government to take a holistic view of an issue that affects Yukon women more cruelly than it does women anywhere else in our country. Will this government commit to taking the comprehensive approach that our territory needs to combat violence against women once and for all?

**Hon. Ms. Horne:** Mr. Speaker, this government reinstated the Women's Directorate that was closed down under the last government and the prior government. We are working with the women; we are making a difference in the lives of Yukon women. We are constructing the affordable family housing unit in Riverdale right now. This is what the Yukon women told us they wanted and we listened to them. We are improving the lives of women in Yukon. This government is committed.

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

**Notice of private members' business**

**Hon. Ms. Taylor:** Mr. Speaker, I would first like to remind the House that pursuant to Motion No. 877, adopted by this House on Thursday, November 12, 2009, the first item of business under Orders of the Day on Wednesday, November 18, 2009 shall be Motion No. 850, standing in the name of the Member for Mount Lorne.

Also, Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 14.2(7), I would like to identify the item standing in the name of the government private member to be called on Wednesday, November 18, 2009. It is Motion No. 834, standing in the name of the Member for Klondike.

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

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

**Hon. Ms. Taylor:** 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):** Committee of the Whole will now come to order. We will now continue with Bill No. 17, *Second Appropriation Act, 2009-10*, Vote 3, Department of Education.

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. 17 — *Second Appropriation Act, 2009-10* — continued

**Chair:** The matter before the Committee is Bill No. 17, *Second Appropriation Act, 2009-10*, Vote 3, Department of Education.

#### Department of Education — *continued*

**Hon. Mr. Rouble:** Mr. Chair, when we left our debate yesterday, we were discussing the situation that Yukon and other jurisdictions find themselves in with the aging of the baby-boomer generation and the increasing number of teachers and specifically the number of vice-principals, principals and administrators who are nearing retirement age. We do recognize that this is a demographic trend that is not only affecting Yukon, but is affecting jurisdictions across Canada.

I do want to tell members of the Assembly that the Yukon is taking some very proactive steps in order to be ready for this type of situation. We have made some significant steps and significant investments in helping to promote from within. One example of this is the Yukon educational leadership program that was launched about a year ago. This is a two-year program and we had 44 participants enter into the program. The program, which certainly includes teachers and educators of First Nation ancestry — I should point out for members opposite that 10 of the participants who completed level 1 are of First Nation ancestry, that being 23 percent of the total of people who have completed year 1 of the Yukon educational leadership program. We have done another intake of this program — 10 level 1 participants are joining the other 25 participants, and they will continue on in their work.

The intention of this program is to develop formal and informal leaders who have the skill set to facilitate the transformation of the Yukon education system that's articulated in our education reform and New Horizons documents.

These people are being trained in additional skills and abilities, additional communication, management and leadership tools, as well as additional education and training on different education techniques that will enable them to be better teachers and leaders or better school administrators for our education system. They are also being educated and trained on education reform and New Horizons initiatives so that they will be able to implement these in their schools with their communities in order to transform our education system, to take it from a very good education system to an even better one.

Mr. Chair, included in this process was the Yukon leadership academy, delivered in August 2009, that had approximately 80 participants in attendance. One of the days was hosted at Brooks Brook and provided an excellent opportunity to experience Yukon First Nation hospitality and culture. This is one of the steps that we are taking in part to fill the looming retirement gap. We are also taking steps to ensure that we have a more representative education system.

Members in the Assembly will be familiar with my discussions in here with my public service hat on, discussing the representative Public Service Commission. I want to ensure members in the Assembly that we are making great strides in this area as well.

For their information, the department currently has one First Nation superintendent, three identified First Nation principals, one First Nation director and, in addition, two First Nation vice-principals were hired in September 2008. That's just a bit of a snapshot from some of the senior management areas of the Department of Education.

Members should also be aware that, in partnership with the University of Northern British Columbia, Yukon College is offering a master of education in leadership program. This is a voluntary program that many Yukoners are taking the school up on. In fact, I believe there are about 30 people who are in attendance in that program right now. That will certainly be a great learning opportunity for them, an opportunity to advance in their field and advance in their career and also to provide additional services to Yukoners.

Speaking of someone who has returned to formal education partway through their career, I know the benefit of returning to school — of returning to a master program in the midst of one's career, where one is aware of many of the issues going on in the particular field and then having an opportunity to sit down with your peers or with a cohort of people in a similar situation.

It provides a great learning opportunity where one can not only expand their knowledge but also see the immediacy of what they're learning — in other words, see how to implement the new knowledge almost immediately.

In fact, in discussions with some of these folks, I know some will complete one assignment one day and then make another change in their classroom or their school operations the next day. That is one of the great benefits of continuing educa-



tion or lifelong learning that will continue to have an impact on how we go about doing business, not only in education but also as a government.

The member was also asking for information about the Yukon student information system. As members realize, we need good data in order to make good decisions. We need some good information that provides some clear indicators of results we've had from different investments. We need to be able to track the different changes that have happened in our education system and to emphasize those that are having the desired outcomes. If a program isn't having the desired outcomes, then we need to change it and find something else. It has been said many times that if you do the same thing over and over again, you'll probably get the same results.

People have told me, they have told members in this Assembly, they have told our educators and they have told the education reform group that they want to see some different outcomes of our education system. That will require making some changes. I went through a list of many of those changes with the Member for Mayo-Tatchun yesterday. It is by no means an exhaustive one, but it did include many of the different changes that we are making at the school, at the community and on a territorial level in our education system.

One of these is indeed the Yukon student information system, or YSIS, as it is being referred to. This is a computerized electronic-based data program that is being implemented in Yukon schools as we speak. This past week and in previous weeks there have been officials from the Department of Education working with school-based staff to enter data, to train people on its use and to answer many of the questions that people have about this new information system. It replaces an old information system — Win School — with a new, more up-to-date one that will have greater flexibility, ease of use and greater reportability for our educators.

I understand from discussions with the training staff that it is being very warmly received by our school-based staff, and they are actually fast-tracking some of the areas of its implementation. I'm very encouraged by the discussions that I've had with them and thank all the people for coming into the training sessions with an open mind and a willingness to give this new system a shot. As I mentioned to the Member for Mayo-Tatchun the other day, this process has been thoroughly reviewed from a privacy perspective, from a threat assessment and a security perspective. I have been assured that the new system meets all its privacy obligations under the *Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act*. I'm confident that this new system will be a great tool for our teachers, administrators, our students and ultimately the parents and the communities of the territory. It certainly is a neat system that will serve all the partners and stakeholders in education very well for years to come.

Also, yesterday the members were asking some questions regarding retirement of some of our administrators. As I mentioned earlier, this is an issue that is facing Yukon and other jurisdictions in Canada. I brought back some statistics for members opposite. From the information I have, it would appear that about 65 percent of the principals and vice-principals

— the positions that were opened up for a variety of reasons — were filled by Yukoners.

That variety of reasons include retirement, personal reasons for leaving the territory or the desire to change positions or move to a different position within the Department of Education, or even a different career path. About 65 percent of those positions were filled by Yukoners.

There were seven from outside the territory who were hired into principal or vice-principal type of positions. Of those, two are on permanent employment contracts, so that does provide some flexibility for the new hires. It provides some flexibility for the Department of Education and also gives us an opportunity to work with those Yukon teachers who are going through the Master of Education program and also the leadership program so that we are again preparing Yukoners for Yukon opportunities.

There has been some discussion about the age ranges of some of these folks, and I don't want to go into great levels of detail on this, but I will let members know that the age of these people ranges from about 55 to 62. So there is a pretty good mix of people in there. I'm going to ask that members opposite not ask too many specifics about individuals so that we don't breach any privacy or protocol rules here — other than to say that, overall, I've been very pleased by the department's work with the variety of communities that the Department of Education has worked with, including school councils and Yukon First Nations, in involving our partners in education in the selection process for principals.

I appreciate that there are always going to be some challenges on an operational level, and I have faith in the department to respond to those appropriately. We will continue to work with partners in education to identify the needs in our community and to identify administrators with the skills to meet those needs and continue to develop Yukoners with those skills.

**Mr. Cardiff:** I am pleased to be back here this afternoon to engage the minister on important issues that are happening in our communities, in our education system. It was interesting to note that the minister talked about returning to post-secondary education mid-career. I can't remember which courses he was taking or what degree he was pursuing, but it wasn't one that included brevity or lack of repetition, because a lot of what he said just now he said yesterday as well.

I thank him for reinforcing that and also for providing the other information I had asked him for. I have some questions that come out of that. The minister said the specific information I had asked him to come back with today was the number of principals and vice-principals — senior administrators — who had been hired — what new hires there were this year. There is a little bit of a concern so I have a couple of questions.

He said 65 percent of the vice-principals and principals were hired from within the Yukon, and that's a good thing. When I listened to the statistics — and I didn't get them all down; I won't ask the minister to repeat them because I'll read them in the Blues tomorrow or later this afternoon or this evening. He said that 35 percent came from outside the Yukon and

there were seven specific hires to either vice-principal or principal positions and only two of them were permanent.

What I'd like to know is, if the other five don't have permanent employment contracts, are they filling these positions on a temporary basis? What's the plan to fill them on a permanent basis?

The minister is quite right — and I thank him for not making me ask the question about the ages of these individuals. But if I heard him correctly, what he said was that the seven from Outside were in an age range from 55 to 62. It's not that we don't value those people. They have a lot of life experience. They have a lot of experience with education, obviously, if they've been in these careers for a long time. But it would seem to me that the situation that we're faced with — and the minister alluded to it yesterday, in that we're up against the wall with the baby-boomer generation and all the people who are going to be retiring. There is a gap there, where there aren't enough people to fill that gap.

I know from my own personal experience as an MLA in Mount Lorne that some of those principals have come out of retirement and provided good service to Golden Horn School. There is no doubt in my mind about that. It's a well-respected facility and school. It's respected in the community. But when we're out there recruiting, the question is, are we having difficulty recruiting people to these positions?

We're going back to that baby-boomer generation that is going to be retiring. If the people we're recruiting are 55 to 62, they're going to theoretically be retiring in the next three to 10 years and we need a long-term strategy to deal with that. I'll go back a little bit to what I said yesterday. It provides disruption for communities and it provides disruption for the schools, the students and the staff of those schools.

What's the long-term strategy? Are we having difficulty recruiting into these positions? What we really should be looking for is trying to promote from within. Given the numbers that the minister quoted earlier about people who are being promoted from within — 65 percent — we're making progress, but we're not quite there yet.

I think that it is obvious by the other statistics the minister quoted that we are seeing the goals and the dreams realized of why the Yukon native teacher education program was created almost 20 years ago. If the minister could touch on those things briefly, I would appreciate it.

**Hon. Mr. Rouble:** Mr. Chair, in continuing education and advanced degrees, I am reminded that one of them is referred to as the pile-it-higher-and-deeper degree — or PhD, for the members opposite. Sometimes I guess one could accuse people of providing too much information or trying to provide additional reinforcement on some of the issues. I will try to include more brevity and levity in today's discussion.

Mr. Chair, the focus here is on why are we seeing so many vacancies among school administrators and what are the Government of Yukon and the Department of Education doing to address this? Is this an urgent and pressing need, and are we having challenges with the staffing process?

Well, Mr. Chair, I'm very happy to say that the Department of Education — in partnership with the Yukon Teachers

Association, with our school administrators, with Yukon College and with other education institutions — is working very proactively to address this. I mentioned that there were several vacancies for administrative positions this year, and in some cases that is due to teachers or principals taking a leave — whether it's an educational sabbatical or time off to pursue other things. Sometimes those leaves are only for one or two years, hence the need to do a temporary contract for some of the administrator positions. Those positions are advertised as a temporary type of position, which in many cases is attractive to a recently retired administrator who is looking for another opportunity and who has a wealth of experience and knowledge to share. We are seeing people retiring earlier in their career, and then once they've taken off a year or two, they are looking for other opportunities, and many of these opportunities are very attractive to people.

The member also asked if we were seeing a difficulty in recruiting people, and the answer to that is no, the department is not seeing a difficulty in recruiting people. We are in a situation here in the Yukon where we have been looking for additional teachers, additional administrators, and other jurisdictions in Canada, due to their financial situation, are actually reducing the number of teachers. We're seeing reductions happening in other jurisdictions. Members have heard about the changes or challenges that other governments are having in Alberta and British Columbia, and seeing the sum of the staffing reductions in those areas. We are seeing that, when some of the other areas are downsizing, that is increasing the opportunities here.

I'm sure the member opposite will agree that there are many attractive qualities about coming to and working in Yukon. We offer a tremendous lifestyle, a very significant remuneration package, excellent senior management staff to work with, as well as all the other intrinsic qualities that go with working in the Yukon.

Indeed, in talking to many teachers and administrators, they revel in the opportunities that they have here in the Yukon — whether it's support for different initiatives, programs like the innovations in leaders program that will support teachers with different programs, or whether it's the wealth of resources that we have at our disposal or the sense of community that is established in Yukon's education system. There are a significant number of strong points about working here in the Yukon and I'm sure that all members in here will attest to that.

The member also asked: what is the long-term strategy? I'm very happy to respond to the member opposite that, yes, there is a significant long-term strategy in place that looks at the number of individuals who are nearing retirement age.

Let's see, I'll start at the beginning with some of the mentoring programs that we have established for new teachers, to provide mentoring opportunities for them to work with more established teachers, to other professional development opportunities that we have in the education system and also negotiated with the Yukon Teachers Association, as part of the collective bargaining process, as well as ongoing professional development through our PD days and other opportunities from the Department of Education. These opportunities include the

leadership development program that I identified in my opening comments here today. That's a leadership program that is developing formal and informal learners in our system. It's designed to encourage those teachers who have an idea or an inkling of becoming a principal to gain some of the additional skills, characteristics and qualities that they need to perform some of those functions. We have the leadership program, which again is another avenue that teachers throughout the territory can be involved in. That involves bringing in guest speakers. It's a bit more structured than I'm actually outlining right now. I've been very pleased to see people graduate from the first level of that.

Then for more formal education, there are opportunities out there. The member asked me what I did and that was a distance education program from Royal Roads University. That was a Master of Business Administration and Executive Management for Educational Administrators. Yes, it was a title that was pretty long, which leads me to my long dissertation sometimes, I guess.

There are those types of education opportunities out there, some of which can be supported through Yukon's education support programs. Yukon College, in partnership with the University of Northern British Columbia is offering a master of education and leadership program here in the territory. This is a Whitehorse-based program with a cohort of about 30 students. I understand about 50 percent of those students are of First Nation ancestry, which will then help to accredit those individuals so that they can take on further leadership situations in our education system throughout the territory.

We are also seeing that graduates of YNTEP — which is another step and part of the long-term strategy of preparing Yukon educators for Yukon education opportunities — making the shift into administrative positions. One of the principals who was hired this year was a graduate of the YNTEP. We are accomplishing some of the hopes and aspirations of the member opposite of seeing that homegrown students are going through our education system, are continuing on through the YNTEP, are now moving up the ranks in our education system and are now taking the helm of schools and becoming principals.

We have a variety of different strategies here. We have very significant remuneration packages. We have quality of life. We have the quality of leadership in the Department of Education that makes Yukon very attractive. We are accommodating of different schedules for people with the different positions that we have open. We have local teacher training programs. We have local leadership programs and local master programs. We also have school councils that are very eager to work with Yukon teachers as they're very familiar with Yukon situations. We have a community that's very supportive of their own and wants to see more Yukoners succeed. I trust that addresses the Member for Mount Lorne's questions and concerns on this issue.

**Mr. Cardiff:** Mr. Chair, I thank the minister for the answer.

Even though part of it was repetitive, there was new information in there. It is always good to get new information.

The minister talked about the Yukon student information system. We talked yesterday about the privacy concerns and the minister assured me — and I am taking him at his word so I don't need any more clarification on that. The minister said that it is being met. The implementation — the training, so to speak — of this system is underway now. It is beginning. I know there were some concerns expressed by teaching staff about what it would mean to their workload. I am not sure if there is any difference between the previous system and the new system for what is required of front-line teachers to input data about their students — the difference between the old system and the new system. There were some concerns expressed to me. If those concerns are unfounded, or if the minister is saying that people are receiving it well, then that is a good thing, because this is something that we've been asking for a long time. I just want the minister to be aware that there were some concerns. As it rolls out over the years and more data is collected, I just want him to reassure me that our teaching staff won't be overloaded with inputting data into the system.

The other question I have is this: is this system one that the department has chosen? Number one: the previous system is now not being serviced by the people who provided it. Have we got some sort of guarantee that this new system has some longevity and that five or six or 10 years down the road the supplier will still service it? Is this the system that's going to give us the longitudinal data to track students from their entrance into the education system — kindergarten — to their exit at grade 12 and give us the real graduation rates that we're after and track them after that?

**Hon. Mr. Rouble:** I appreciate the member opposite's questions about the new student information system. I did have an opportunity to have another brief chat with the YSIS implementation group earlier today. I have had some very good discussions with them over the last couple of weeks and months, and they tell me they are very pleased with the implementation of this system, that they do have teachers, administrators, school-based staff as part of their implementation team, that they are working together to address many of the concerns and to work out any bugs that might be there before it's put into widespread use. I believe they've accomplished that now, and that many of the fears that were expressed by some — or concerns, shall we say — have not materialized, that when people become familiar with this system, they have very warmly embraced it and are very impressed with the ease of data entry, the flexibility of the tool, the security of the tool, the ease of providing information.

Just as one example, a school counsellor will be able to very quickly call up a student's file and do a comparison between their current course load and their history of course loads and the graduation requirements, and very quickly and expeditiously identify any outstanding graduation requirements. This will be a significant tool to have so that people won't be caught off guard by not having taken the right math course or not having taken enough communications courses or others prior to graduation.

This will be a very good tool, also, to alert people to some of the ramifications of their decisions. We've had discussions

in the past about choosing math essentials over principles of math, and some of the doors that are closed as a result of those choices. This will provide more information to counsellors, to teachers, to parents and to students.

As well, yes, to answer the member's question, it will provide more longitudinal data. In the program, we will be able to track students' histories. I believe there are also opportunities to include extracurricular activities, so we'll be able to use the data to possibly draw correlations between involvement in sports activities and scholastic achievement, or look at the difference in outcomes among students who participated in the Skills Canada Yukon clubs, just as an example. If we do have the data entered, we will be able to track it and do some comparisons. This is a tool that is being used by a multitude of other jurisdictions in Canada and possibly North America with a very long-standing research network that, yes, we do expect will stand the test of time. This isn't the type of program that is a very unique one. It's being used by many other jurisdictions, so we do expect the support to be there for quite some time. This will be a tool that will help students, it will help teachers, it will help administrators, it will help the department to design different programs that continue to become effective and meet the needs of students, and we will be able to track the results of the interventions into the education system that we make.

For example, we did implement full-day kindergarten about three years ago in areas in the Yukon. We're now seeing those kindergarten students in grade 2, and they will be captured next year by the Yukon achievement tests, and we'll then see if the change of having full-day kindergarten has made a difference in the outcomes for those grade 3 students. So the department will use this as a tool to look at the changes that were made in the system and to see if we have achieved the additional outcomes that we expected.

Has that covered the member opposite's question? I see he is nodding. So without further comment or repetition, I will turn the floor over to him.

**Mr. Cardiff:** Now we're moving along. This one follows some of what the minister just talked about with regard to the all-day kindergarten. Hopefully, this is a pretty straightforward question and we'll get a straightforward answer. It will probably be a yes-or-no question, depending on what the answer is, and be really brief.

The minister talked about all-day kindergarten. There has been an increase in the devolution of programs and services around labour market programs — we seem to be doing a lot more of that — and the development of immigration policies, but with respect to young children, is the department working with the Department of Health and Social Services on any transfers around early childhood education? We are just wondering whether or not this will be affecting childcare centres.

**Hon. Mr. Rouble:** Mr. Chair, the departments of Education and Health and Social Services — indeed all aspects of the government — recognize the importance of early childhood education. We recognize the tremendous learning opportunities that young people have very early on in life.

To answer the broader part of the member opposite's question, yes, the Department of Education and the Department of Health and Social Services are looking at ways that the Department of Education can become even more involved with early childhood education.

Currently, initiatives such as the Child Development Centre are housed under Health and Social Services. There are areas of child care that are under Health and Social Services. In order that we provide better service to all, specifically focusing on increasing the opportunities for Yukon students and focusing on early childhood education, there are some very good discussions going on between the departments of Education and Health and Social Services now. As we move forward on this, we've seen a tremendous call for this type of move through the education reform process, through New Horizons, as this is the direction that people would like to see us move in. The previous Chiefs Committee on Education of the Council of Yukon First Nations and others have endorsed a greater role for the Department of Education in early childhood education. We certainly recognize its importance and its value. The Government of Yukon, a couple of years ago, made the very significant move, through working with our schools and school councils, to put in full-day kindergarten in many schools.

We are continuing the discussions and dialogues interdepartmentally on this and are getting very close to broadening these discussions and talking about some of the broader areas of early childhood education.

Just to summarize for the member opposite, yes, there is a very strong concern from Department of Education for early childhood education and early intervention programs. The member will recall that in this year's budget there are significant resources for the early years transition program that is working with students, either through the Child Development Centre, Health and Social Services or kindergarten to look at some of the best ways we can support some learning opportunities. We will continue to work with Health and Social Services on addressing this issue.

Also on this issue — and I know this is a bit outside of what the member opposite has raised, but I do want to stress there is a very strong working relationship between Education, Justice, and Health and Social Services on what's often referred to as the common client project, where the three different departments are working closely from the deputy level through to some of the staffing levels to address many of the common clients who are involved with Justice, Health and Social Services, and Education.

I do want to stress for the member opposite that this government is working to take a very broad view of many situations, working as holistically as possible, working interdepartmentally where it is appropriate, in order to meet the needs of the people we serve.

**Mr. Cardiff:** I thank the minister for that answer. It's not that I think that it's a bad thing. I think we need to ensure that it's done appropriately. The minister talked about discussions taking place between the Department of Education and the Department of Health and Social Services. I think what's important is that we're always looking for ways to improve

child care and the methods with which we teach our children increasingly in our society. Whether it's a good thing or a bad thing, I'm not sure, but it's the way it is that two parents are working or we have single-parent families who are out there trying to provide for their families and, increasingly, we need child care. If we can provide the assistance and the education earlier — it's a matter of what is appropriate, I guess.

But I think what is appropriate is that we ensure two things: affordability and access to childcare for all Yukoners. I guess my fear is that — we've already talked about the workload, and we'll talk a little bit more about the workload facing teachers in our education system. I want to ensure that if we're going to do this that we're going to do it properly. I think that in order to do that, we need to include providers of childcare in the discussion because this is going to affect the for-profit and the not-for-profit childcare providers here in the territory. If we're asking them to provide a greater level of service, which will mean that they're required to do more, it means that we need to ensure that the staff working for them are trained. We have training available at Yukon College and have had for a long time.

So we need to involve childcare providers, whether it is not for profit or for profit or it is for day homes. We need to ensure that this is done with their involvement and the involvement of parents. Rather than do this in a vacuum, I am just wondering what type of process the minister envisions for the involvement of parents, the public and the providers of childcare services in the development and the roll out of any move in this direction.

**Hon. Mr. Rouble:** Mr. Chair, one of the things that the Department of Education is very good at doing is engaging in discussing issues with others. In fact, we have often been criticized that we've done that too much. We did embark on a very extensive education reform project.

One of the recommendations coming out of that is greater work in early childhood education. We've gone to work with our partners on that project and also have received input from other discussions about the growing role for early childhood education.

We've also seen other jurisdictions in Canada making the move or making the shift from having early childhood education held in health or areas of social services or other areas than education. So we have been in discussion with the other provinces and territories that have made those moves to, again, ensure that it is a good decision to make and that, if Yukon does make that, that it is done properly.

Yukoners have seen what happens when government goes in and shuts down different departments or renames or re-labels different branches or combines them without a lot of forethought, a lot of careful attention and without the appropriate amount of planning.

We've received direction from many of our stakeholders that we should go in this direction; we're doing some very careful looking within, between the Department of Education and Health and Social Services. No substantive decisions have been made at this point because we are looking at doing it properly and doing it carefully.

The member opposite did bring up some very valid points and they do need to be addressed. We do have a very strong and supportive group of people in Health and Social Services who do a tremendous job in this area as well. We want to not come across as criticizing the work of Health and Social Services in any way, shape or form. They do a very good job in this area. I want to applaud them and all the work they do.

I also believe our private daycares in the territory do a very good job and, as the member pointed out, they provide a valuable service. We need to continue to support them. Yes, one of the ways of supporting that business, or that service, is from the education support services, and the member mentioned the program at the college. That's another way of preparing people for these opportunities.

I don't want to go down too far on this discussion, other than to say that this is an initiative that the government is considering. It's something that has been supported by our stakeholders in the past. It is something that's consistent with life-long learning. It's consistent with the relationships that we have established already with the work that's going on in full-day kindergarten, in the work on sharing information with the Child Development Centre — it's being supported by the ongoing training for teachers in areas such as formative assessment and different literacy approaches. We have continued to support initiatives that are related to early childhood education in the education system, with the early years transition initiative, and we will continue to do so. The only reason for making a change like this, in my thinking — one of the key criteria for success is that it would have a significant benefit to students.

We also have to consider the impacts that would have on the Department of Education, the Department of Health and Social Services, the daycare providers and also with parents. I know that there are significant challenges that Yukon teachers face. I have been to every school in the territory, and most a couple of times, and I've had the opportunity to talk to teachers about the challenges they have in the classroom.

I've been in the grade 1 classroom, where at one desk you have one child who reads at a grade 2 level and another child at another desk who doesn't know his ABCs and has very low-functioning verbal skills. So I certainly recognize the challenges in those cases.

Any change that the government would make in this area would be with the best intent of helping students and in providing additional early education or early intervention support to give students the assistance that they need, when they need it, to increase their opportunities for success.

I hope I have answered the member opposite's question that we are not that far down the process that people should be up in arms about not being in discussion, because we are at the early stages of this. There is a lot of homework that both departments need to do in order to assess the feasibility of this, to look at the operational, the human resource, the legal and the other ramifications.

Members are aware that our childcare act does address this situation to Health and Social Services. So we do have our legislative framework to work through, as well as areas such as

our collective bargaining agreements and the other human resource issues that would surround an issue such as this.

So I just want to reassure the member opposite that we are looking at this area very closely and carefully and that any changes will be done properly and appropriately.

**Mr. Cardiff:** I thank the minister for the information, and I thank him for the assurance that we're moving slowly. I do have some more questions around this, but I'm going to save them for a little later. I want to go back and read the minister's response, go over it and if I have further questions, I'll ask him at a later date maybe.

The minister alluded to the fact that there are many challenges for teachers, not the least of which is the way that, I believe — in my time since I went to school and was in the public school system — things have changed considerably. I asked this question during the briefing that was supplied about a month ago, or a little over a month ago, around the New Horizons project.

I recognize that when I was involved in the public school system, there were a lot of children who weren't represented in the education system I participated in. We've not segregated these people or ostracized them from the system, I guess, and we brought them into the system. Some of them could be disabled or differently abled; some of them may have learning disabilities, behavioural problems. This leads to complexity in the classrooms.

From talking with educators and parents who recognize this as a big issue — the composition of a class and the number of students who may be in that class — some classes may not have a lot of students who display these problems or attributes; they may have a classroom where they don't have to deal with those issues. The other thing for the minister is regarding the collective agreement. We have rules about class sizes and that affects how the department allocates its budget. It affects schools. We've gone through this and we've had lots of questions about it, but one of the things that we haven't talked about is that we need to somehow have guidelines or take into consideration the complexity of a classroom — not just the number of students in it, but the complexity within each individual class.

If you've got a classroom that consists of 18 students and 16 of them have individual education plans and there's one teacher and there's one education assistant, those two people are going to be maxed right out. If you've got one teacher, three education assistants, or teaching assistants, the students are going to be getting more attention paid to them because they've got more teaching assistants. But, at the same time, the teacher is responsible overall for the classroom of 18 students and 16 students with individual education plans. They are also responsible for supervising and making sure that the teaching assistants and education assistants are following along with those individual education plans.

I'm not saying there is a whole bunch of these situations, but I think that there are — and I have heard — a few. We need to somehow step out of the rigidity of the collective agreement, I guess, and say, "There is a special instance here where maybe we need to split the classroom up, so that our students are get-

ting all the attention they need." I don't know if it's an issue for all teachers, but I know it's an issue for some teachers.

The other thing, I guess, that comes into this is the differing pay scales. I know we can't negotiate a collective agreement here on the floor of the Legislature, but the reality is that teaching assistants and education assistants are paid at a much lower rate than our teachers. While it maybe reflects the level of education, it is my understanding that there are teaching assistants out there who are performing that work who actually, in a lot of instances, have more qualifications than they require to fulfill the role of a teaching assistant. They could be doing much more but because of their career choice, and the fact that they can contribute probably more to the education of our children by being a teaching assistant, and get more satisfaction from their job because of what they can actually accomplish with those children, they are not necessarily being recognized financially for the contribution that they make. I just want the minister to be aware of that and the fact that these are things that affect the delivery of education in our communities. I am not sure whether or not the minister has any thoughts on what I'm proposing here about the need for maybe some sort of a plan or a guideline to deal with the composition of a class — not just the class size, but the composition, the complexity that some classes present and maybe taking a look at some of those situations to — not just make it easier for teachers and teaching assistants — but to make it better for our students.

**Hon. Mr. Rouble:** Mr. Chair, I certainly appreciate the situation in Yukon schools. As we mentioned earlier, I had the opportunity to visit all the schools and to meet many of the teachers, either on a formal basis or an informal basis. Just for the member opposite, my mother is a retired special education teacher so I grew up hearing about learning disabilities, cognitive disabilities, physical challenges or emotional intelligence and I'm quite familiar with those issues.

One of the best things about Yukon's education system is its commitment to be an inclusive education system. Yes, it is different from the education system that was present in the member opposite's day. We do recognize the diversity of students; that people are not institutionalized for their differences or segregated; that we as a society have made a decision that we don't want to see things like that happen — that we want to integrate people as best we can, which does pose a challenge of how do we integrate people with special needs into a non-special needs type of environment? How do we address the challenges of integrating someone with cognitive disabilities, physical disabilities, emotional disabilities — the other issues that the member opposite raised?

We in the Yukon respond to that challenge very well. We realize that we need to provide resources and assistance in this effort, and the Department of Education consistently provides a considerable amount of resources to students, teachers and parents in this regard. We recognize that every student is unique, with their own individual characteristics, their own level of abilities, and their own level of challenges that they may face on a day-to-day basis. We realize that there are many forces outside of the control or influence of the Department of Education that will affect students and that we are in a situation

where we need to find some way of addressing or responding to these when these students come to school.

We could go off on a discussion about the broader social issues, the changing of society and the impact that's having in our schools. I certainly applaud the efforts of our teachers and the incredible influence they have and the incredible work they put forward in dealing with all our students — because we do have a broad range of students who come to school every day.

As I mentioned earlier, there are the challenges of working with one student who is at an advanced academic level and others who haven't learned some basic language skills. There are societal impacts in Yukon that affect students — whether that is their home life or their parents' situation. There are issues outside of the force and control or the impacts of our education system that affect the lives of students. We in the education system respond to each and every individual child as best we can.

How do we respond? Well, I will provide some answers to that for the member opposite. Students in Yukon schools do not need a diagnosed disability to access supports and services; and that is different from other jurisdictions. When classroom teachers believe students may need additional support, they work in collaboration with parents, learning assistants, teachers and other school-based personnel to identify and address students' strengths and needs.

This process is coordinated through a school-based team; it's chaired by the principal. Also, Mr. Chair, all students identified as having exceptional learning needs are entitled to an individualized education plan. This plan is created and monitored by a team of professionals, including the classroom teacher, parents and other consultants as needed.

For the member's information, the department has completed an initial review of support services. It is in the process of working with stakeholder groups through a new special education advisory committee. There has been a considerable amount of work done in this area recently. I'm not sure if the member opposite had the opportunity to attend the Learning Disabilities Association of Yukon conference that was held here in Whitehorse. It did bring together some learning disability professionals and practitioners from across North America. That was a tremendous learning opportunity for many Yukon teachers, department staff and administrators. In fact, we had at least one teacher from every school at that conference. That was another tremendous learning opportunity for our Yukon teachers to increase their capacity to address many of the situations that they face.

Mr. Chair, our schools strive to develop classroom-based programming to address the educational needs of all students. Students with academic and behavioural difficulties are supported by their classroom teacher and the school-based resources, including learning assistance teachers, education assistants and counsellors where applicable. In addition, learning assistance teachers provide differentiated learning opportunities for gifted and talented learners and a school-based team coordinates these services. This usually includes the learning assistance teacher, the counsellor, the classroom teacher of any student under consideration and the department consultants by

invitation and is chaired by the school administrator. The function of the school-based team is to provide assistance and support to teachers in accommodating all students in the regular classroom.

The team, in consultation with parents, also determines where assistance is required from the Department of Education's special program consultants for further consultation and/or assessment.

I do want to make a comment about assessments too, because there are situations where parents are leery of additional testing, additional assessments or additional diagnoses. There are parents who are concerned that this would lead to labelling of their child and may feel that this would be detrimental to the long-term needs of the student. There are situations where there might be a concern; however, the parent, for whatever the reason might be, might not be comfortable in doing additional work into identifying the nature or the situation that the child might find themselves in.

I did mention that we do a considerable amount of work in this area and provide additional resources and support. Some of the support that is provided includes 42 learning assistance teachers and 10 program implementation teachers. They work in self-contained classrooms such as the work experience and life skills and transition programs. There are nine FTEs in shared resource programs. They provide support services to classroom teachers, parents and a multidisciplinary team for the development and implementation of IEPs for students with moderate, severe or profound disabilities.

We have 14.5 school counsellors who provide services to facilitate the educational, personal, social, emotional and career development of students in schools in the community. We have 121 education assistants and that is a significant increase in the number of education assistants in our system. It is also an area that we are continuing to support through the recently announced program at Yukon College where Yukon College will provide an education assistants program.

I made a mistake earlier. I should have mentioned that as part of another step in our long-term strategy to address the human resource needs of the Department of Education. I guess I was too brief in my provision of information there and I apologize.

We also have 25.5 FTEs that are remedial tutors. Under the guidance of a teacher, they provide remedial activities and/or support to students in the classroom setting. We also have our special programs division of the Department of Education. I know people often see the Department of Education building across the river and wonder what goes on in there, but I do want to make the member opposite aware that it is full of professionals who are dedicated to improving the educational outcomes for Yukoners. That includes housing the special programs branch, which includes the special programs manager, speech and language pathologists, psychologists, occupational therapists, physiotherapists and the IEP and school-based team coordinator. These professionals certainly work with our teachers, our parents and our schools and school-based teams to address the needs of our students.

Also, I should mention the teacher for students who are deaf or hard of hearing and the teacher for students who are blind or have visual impairments and also some of the programs that we're doing through things like music therapy.

Additionally, we have shared research programs. The member might be aware of things like the elementary life skills at Jack Hulland Elementary School, the high school life skills programs at Vanier, Porter Creek and F.H. Collins. The programs at Selkirk Elementary School and F.H. Collins Secondary School for the people with dependent multiple disabilities and the riverfront program, which is administered by Vanier, which deals with more behavioural issues. The riverfront program is also very involved with the Youth Achievement Centre — again, another way of creating those interdepartmental relationships that I spoke of earlier where Justice and Education are working to address the needs of our common clients.

Additionally, we have a teacher working with students in custody. There is the teen parent program to provide support to other students and the Individual Learning Centre, which I've discussed many times which provides an alternative for students who have disengaged with education. Also, there are some of the other early intervention programs, such as the Reading Recovery program and the Wilson Reading program.

We do take this issue very seriously. We recognize the diversity of Yukon students we have and the joy in working with all students and our responsibility to address the educational needs of all Yukoners, from early childhood education through school age to lifelong learning. We have a responsibility in our education system to try to meet the needs of all students, regardless of the situation they find themselves in or some disability that may affect their performance.

There are significant steps that the Department of Education is taking to address these issues and significant resources that the Department of Education is providing to parents, teachers and schools to support the learning of all students.

**Mr. Cardiff:** I'd like to thank the minister for the depth with which he went into that answer. He provided a lot of information. I commend all the people who are working in education, who are providing the services to our children — many diverse children — regardless of what their needs are. The question that I don't believe the minister answered — he told us what the department is doing and what services are available, but what he didn't address was whether or not he would be willing to look at maybe updating some of the guidelines or procedures within the department to look closer at specific class-composition issues like size and complexity.

I thank him for the answer and I am pleased to have the opportunity to bring this to his attention. Hopefully, we will see some improvements down the road. We know that the people who are working in the Department of Education that the minister listed are all doing their level best to provide the services that are needed. We thank them and congratulate them for the work that they do. This is about how we can take that next step to make it even a little bit better.

One of the other concerns and questions that I have for the minister is how we deal with — I know the minister is going to talk about how there is a tribute coming up this week about

bullying in the schools, and we will be paying tribute to that as well. There is a lot of work going on in the education system and in society about the unacceptability of violence in our society and in our schools, and the issue about bullying.

This is another question about the conditions in classrooms for our students and for our teachers. When there is violence in schools, it needs to be dealt with quickly and effectively. One of the ways that can be done is to have teams — the minister talked about school-based teams — to deal with some of the education issues.

I believe this was pointed out in the Auditor General's report to some extent, but there needs to be what could even be termed risk management or threat assessment, where violence is occurring within the schools and putting at risk other students or our staff, the teachers. There needs to be some way of assessing that threat within those school-based teams to look at specific incidents of violence to ensure that they're being dealt with. I'm sure the Department of Justice program he talked about looking at — I'm trying to think of the word that he used, where you basically have the same clients — common clients.

So where there are these incidents where we're not having the victim and offender in the same classroom, steps are taken to ensure the comfort and the safety of students especially, but teachers as well. They can't be put into a situation where they feel threatened and still be expected to deliver the education that our children need, if their minds are occupied with whether or not a student may react badly or violently — or it may even be a parent. So what I'm looking for is some sort of assurance that something is in place, and this has to be in every school in the Yukon, not just in the Department of Education. A school-based team has to be identified in a particular school. Incidents of violence should be noted by people in the school and plans need to be developed to ensure that people aren't being put at risk and that the educational needs of the students are being best served and that our teachers are safe in their classrooms.

**Hon. Mr. Rouble:** I appreciate the question coming from the member opposite. Indeed, the safety and the security of our students and our teachers is the utmost priority for the department. Students are entrusted by their parents to the educational system each and every day, and that is a significant trust that they place in the school system. They trust the system to act in the place of the parent to look out for the student, to prevent them from coming to harm, as well as the process and the actions involved in helping the child to learn.

In Education, people often talk about the different domains of learning, whether they be the intellectual, cognitive, the psychomotor or the affective domains. The plainer terms for those are the issues that affect your head, your hands or your heart. In our education system, we do a lot with the head, teaching people literacy and numeracy. We do a lot with hands, teaching skills with gross motor development, with fine motor development, with sports activities or hands-on learning activities, with things like shop or learning to sew — things that you do with your hands. There is always that challenge of how do we make an impact in the heart?



To a great degree, it is the responsibility of the family and the community to address those needs. The church has a role in these issues, but so does the education system.

How do we raise people who will become good, solid, productive members of society and not people who are bullies or are abusive? Instead, what is our role in helping to generate that next generation of people who will be, for lack of a better term, good people in our society?

In many of our schools, in our school growth plans, the objectives are to address literacy and numeracy and also the social responsibility issues, helping to grow up that next generation of good people. The Department of Education does that by modelling a lot of good and appropriate behaviour and also by some of the other work that many of our teachers do, things like the anti-bully week and the “wear the pink” campaign that I expect members will be discussing later this week, and we can certainly all show our support for that.

There are initiatives in our high schools, like the Be the Change program, and I really have to applaud the efforts of our teachers and our administrators who have worked on programs like that. That’s an amazing program that if members haven’t had the opportunity to — it brings together students in grade 9 or 10 or 11 to work on some of those social interaction issues, to recognize the impacts that people’s decisions make on the lives of others, to look at the issues of bullying or abuse or substance abuse or other issues outside of the home that affect life in school. There are some significant steps being taken, again, on those areas for which the Department of Education and our school system have some level of involvement or control.

I want to say — obviously it goes without saying — but I think the member opposite wants a clearer statement than that, so I will simply say that violence should not be tolerated in any form, in any Yukon school, whether that be from student to student, from student to teacher, from teacher to student or from parent to teacher. We need to realize that we need appropriate behaviours from all aspects of our community in our school systems.

Yes, I recognize that children, when they go from kindergarten through to becoming adults in high school, do go through tremendous growth, development and change, not only physically but emotionally, socially and culturally as well. They grow up and they become the individual they are going to be for the rest of their life. We have to ensure that we provide them with a safe environment and also let it be known that we do not tolerate inappropriate behaviour.

This has been articulated in policies such as the safer school policy. I can provide a copy of that policy to the member opposite but it is available on the Department of Education’s website. So there has been the articulation of a formal policy regarding this and that is the safer schools policy and it does address the issue of bullying.

Also on the issue of bullying, the Department of Justice and the Minister of Justice are taking some great steps to address the issue of cyber bullying. This is a growing concern in our society and I know that the Minister of Justice has raised the issue with me a number of times and is working with me and other colleagues on taking some steps to address this. Cy-

ber bullying and the changes in technology are creating a different environment than existed when the member or I went to school. Now students are coming home and are posting comments on Facebook or Twitter or YouTube. It is creating difficult situations that all aspects of society are going to learn how to address.

We’re continuing to work on these. The safer schools policy provides a clear statement that bullying is not tolerated, that we need to ensure that we have safety in our school systems. We also have the role to play for the student council and student administration, and the creation of the school-based discipline policy, and for the school council to provide some policy direction to the principal and the teachers, so that the school has some clear understanding of the community’s expectation in these situations.

Now, in that situation, Mr. Speaker, I’m not suggesting that the school council be involved in individual disciplinary actions, although I believe there is an avenue for appeal in there, but the school council does have a role to play in establishing what they want to see for their particular school. I would encourage the school council to be involved with their administrators on the formalization of their school discipline policy, in addition to the broader departmental-wide policy that I mentioned earlier.

The member opposite also mentioned other issues of threats the school may face. The Department of Education works very closely with the RCMP on appropriate protocols and responses to threatening situations. I think that covers the issues that the member was bringing up, that we do have a role to play in the emotional growth of students and that school, in addition to literacy and numeracy — the traditional three Rs of education — has a role to play in the social upbringing — for lack of a better term — of the students, and that we do have clear policies in place and processes for our communities to be involved in their schools to ensure that their school-based plans meet the needs of their community.

The Department of Education will always continue to work with our teachers, our administrators, our parents and our students to ensure that we have the safest possible school environments for all involved.

**Mr. Cardiff:** I thank the minister for the answer and the information he provided. There was a lot of information for me to go back and look at and look into a few other things as well. I know that there is work being done on school-based discipline policies in some schools. I hope that the department provides the support, the resources and the information necessary for school councils to do the work they need to do so that they can come up with what is best going to serve their communities.

The minister gave a lot of information there. The specific question was about working and learning conditions in the school and about being able to have those threats to either teacher or student safety identified and assessed within the school so they were dealt with.

Some of the programming that the minister talked about can be used or put in place to help deal with those issues that

the minister talked about that come from personal development from within the heart. I thank him for that answer.

I have one other question about working conditions, teaching conditions and learning conditions. Following that, after the break, I will have some questions to do with capital and facility issues to some extent. I am wondering if the minister can tell us where we are at. He is both the Minister of Education and the minister responsible for the Public Service Commission. I can see already that they know what the question is. The question is about teachers on call and the legislation that prevents them from actually becoming employees of the government and the Department of Education. What that does is restrict their ability to become part of a bargaining unit, to have representation from either a teachers organization or union, and that is in direction violation of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*.

I'm just wondering what the department's position is on this. We've asked this question before, and I'd like to know what progress is being made on it.

**Hon. Mr. Rouble:** I'm not sure what hat to put on right now — whether this is related to the Department of Education or the Public Service Commission — so I'll try to provide the answer now. I'm sure that if it doesn't suffice, when I put the other hat on, I'll be asked again. We will hopefully see about addressing the member's question by providing the information that he's looking for. There are situations where the Government of Yukon does work with individuals.

Excuse me, if I can start a bit from the beginning — on a broad level, the territorial government does employ individuals on an as-needed basis. There are situations where the Government of Yukon does hire people without the continued expectation of employment; where they are needed for a very specific function or term or situation. These are situations like emergency firefighting, or there are situations such as substitute teachers. These are situations where there isn't the expectation on the part of the employee or the employer of a long-term employment relationship.

In our substitute teacher system, we do have many very dedicated and competent substitute teachers who do provide a significant assistance to our education system. These are people who are called repeatedly and work in a variety of different schools and are certainly appreciated by the Department of Education. Indeed, having substitute teachers who are available to fill in for teacher absences, whether those absences are due to training or professional development or conferences or doing some of the work with special needs students, whom we were discussing earlier, or sickness.

The substitute teachers do fill in often at a moment's notice. I have been in the situation where I've been on the substitute teacher list and have gotten the call at 7:35 a.m. saying, "Can you be here right now to teach a class?" I certainly appreciate the effort and role that substitute teachers play in our community, because they do come in at a moment's notice and provide a necessary service to the school system.

The member has made some comments that, yes, these positions are not included in the collective bargaining process they use in this position and other positions throughout the ter-

ritorial government. That certainly does not prevent the Department of Education and the Government of Yukon from providing appropriate remuneration to these people or providing other support services to them.

The Government of Yukon strives to be a good employer to all of its employees, regardless of whether they are represented by a bargaining unit or not; and that is true of all the positions throughout the territorial government.

We do have an emerging situation with this and the answer on this one, as I understand it, has not been fully answered by the courts. I understand that there are other proceedings going on with regard to this area throughout Canada. We are anxiously waiting to see how these areas unfold.

I do want to tell the member opposite that the Government of Yukon is committed to these individuals and these positions. They are very necessary to the functioning of government, whether they be the substitute teachers or emergency wildland firefighters who are brought in to address some of these situations I've discussed earlier.

We're continuing to look at the legal situation regarding this and, as well, the discussions with the other collective bargaining groups. And I will be very cautious here, as we are in a collective bargaining process and I must trust and honour that system and allow that to progress as it should.

So I appreciate that it might not be the answer that the member opposite wanted to hear, but that is certainly the update from the government — that we are continuing to carefully address this situation as it unfolds and that we will continue to act as a responsible employer to those people who are in our employ, even for a very short time only.

**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. 17, *Second Appropriation Act, 2009-10*, Vote 3, Department of Education.

**Mr. Cardiff:** I thank the minister for the answer regarding teachers on call and the "update" as he put it. I guess the issue is that I agree that we need to treat all the employees of the government fairly and respectfully. I think that my point is that those teachers who fulfill this function be treated the same as other teachers. They should receive in some way, shape or form the same benefits that other teachers do as well. The same would go for wildland firefighters. When we get to the Public Service Commission, maybe we can have that discussion.

I told the minister earlier that I had some questions around facilities and capital. Before I go there, I actually have some other questions that I think need addressing.

So quickly, can the minister tell me — in the substance abuse action plan discussion draft action items there was a harm-reduction program about learning how to help kids with FASD in schools and there was a proposed expansion developing a teacher training model and a support manual. I'm won-

dering whether or not that been done, enhancing the mentors and the training of school-based support persons, developing a culturally relevant grades 1 through 12 curriculum on FASD for Yukon students and implementing an FASD diagnostic support team for school-aged children in this project. I'm just wondering where we're at with that — whether or not that diagnostic and support team is in place, how it's functioning and where we're at on this important issue in response to the substance abuse action plan.

**Hon. Mr. Rouble:** I certainly appreciate the member opposite's question regarding the substance abuse action plan. Indeed, there were the four different pillars of that: education and harm prevention — excuse me, it has been a long day already — harm reduction, treatment, prevention and enforcement. Education, of course, a key role to play in this — educating people to make the right choices in their lives, as opposed to some of the choices that lead to substance misuse or substance abuse.

The Department of Education is working very closely with Health and Social Services and Justice. I mentioned the common-client initiative earlier. I mentioned bullying earlier.

This is another area where we do have some different roles to play but it's also important to coordinate the efforts among people.

First, I'll talk a bit about some of the early identification techniques of addressing the needs of people with FASD. The Minister of Health and Social Services can also discuss this a bit more and provide an update on things like meconium testing or some of the early identification work that's done. A considerable amount of work is done with the Child Development Centre on this issue, and also with, I believe, the diagnosis or identification through family physicians or through a concern from parents or some support worker.

In our education system, as I mentioned earlier, we have the early transition team which looks to identify some of the situations that will have an impact on childhood development and the different situations there — whether it be intellectual, physical, emotional or cognitive disabilities, to name a few. Also in that area, the issue of fetal alcohol spectrum disorder would be identified.

So we do the diagnosis or identification work. I don't really want to stress the word "diagnosis", because that's really up to health practitioners to do, and that would create a situation where we've identified people with FASD. I know that the department has been working very closely with the medical community on providing teacher interventions and reactions, and teacher education tools to use for people with FASD. I'm looking for an update of the release of the report, and I don't have a copy of it in my hand right now to share with the member opposite, so I will endeavor to look into that issue further for the member opposite.

On the education front, there are a number of school-based education and prevention programs aimed at alcohol and other drug use. These include substance misuse prevention, which is part of the curriculum from kindergarten to grade 10. Second Step is a comprehensive program used to reduce bullying, drug

and alcohol abuse. The Real Game is a game that reflects real-life decisions, including the use of alcohol and drugs.

Other programs include: Baby Think It Over is a program that involves students caring for a computerized doll that may exhibit characteristics of FASD; the PARTY program, where high school students are taken to the hospital to observe and participate in the stark reality of the effects of alcohol; Steps to Respect helps students make healthy life decisions; the DARE program, or the drug and alcohol resistance program — this drug and alcohol program is sponsored by the RCMP and is delivered to grade 5 students by trained RCMP members. The Minister of Justice and I have been to several different classrooms for their graduation, whether that's Selkirk Elementary or some of the other school programs that work closely with the RCMP to deliver this drug abuse awareness program.

Additionally, drug and alcohol resources are provided in our schools with assorted kits, including activities, videos and pamphlets. Street Drugs is a program to aid teachers and administrators on what to look for in a youth drug culture. Health promotions, I believe, is sponsored through Health and Social Services, and is a program to provide materials and presentations on anti-smoking and healthy living. Members are of course aware of the canines for the safer schools initiative.

This is an initiative that involves an awareness coordinator and his dog at Porter Creek Secondary School that provides drug-awareness information. There is also the Challenge program, which is a program that all three Whitehorse schools participate in — a type of anti-bullying pro-social program for students in our system.

Those are some of the steps the Department of Education is taking on the issue of prevention and education. As well, there are certainly other initiatives or practices that the Department of Education responds to in our high schools. Unfortunately, in our primary schools and some of our other facilities such as the Riverfront School or the Independent Learning Centre, substance abuse and drug and alcohol addictions are significant social problems. We take a great number of steps and interventions in our public school system to prepare students.

We also have the reality of addressing the situation where we do have students coming to school who have been affected by fetal alcohol spectrum disorder or have been affected by other substance abuses. Members will recall seeing media stories about the impacts of crack or other drug use on babies. Well, we're now at the stage where those crack babies are coming to school and, in our inclusive educational system, the schools have to be responsive to this situation and provide ways of addressing the needs of those students who come with their particular disabilities.

Yes, there is the drug and alcohol intervention program that was established — the action plan — which has all departments in the Government of Yukon taking some very substantive steps in our day-to-day activities to combat this issue in our community.

**Mr. Cardiff:** I thank the minister — he actually provided some information that I was going to ask further questions on, but I'm still left wanting on the FASD issue in our

schools. I asked specifically about the teacher training model and the support manual. The object of this item under the substance abuse action plan — specifically how the program or the service would help reduce the harm of substance abuse in the Yukon — was that it was going to ensure that there were more educators who were trained in how to appropriately assist and support students and also to provide students with greater access to professional services through the diagnostic and support team.

So I don't know if the minister can address that issue specifically about whether or not there are actually more educators who are trained and whether or not those diagnostic supports — he talked a little bit about that and about early identification — but are there any students who are slipping through the cracks who aren't having the opportunity to be diagnosed or assessed?

**Hon. Mr. Rouble:** Mr. Chair, I appreciate that the member has availed himself of some of the opportunities for departmental briefings. I appreciate that he has gone to the briefing between the Department of Education and the Council of Yukon First Nations on the New Horizons initiative. I appreciate his staff who attended the briefing on the budget and that the member has taken me up on other offers for briefings in the past, so we'll try and provide the information for him.

I realize the budget debate does get far-ranging, but I think it's a bit outside of the purview of our supplementary budget right now. I have come prepared with a multitude of information pieces on the changes that are in place through the supplementary budget and some of the other initiatives, including many of the capital programs that are set forward.

I don't have the particulars on the program that he was asking about at my fingertips right now, but I will endeavour to find a bit more information about the reference material the member opposite was commenting about. I will have to get back to him on that at a later date. I apologize that I don't have that information at my fingertips.

**Mr. Cardiff:** I appreciate that the minister can't have all the information and I thank him in advance for the efforts to get the information at a future date. That's great. I look forward to receiving the report he talked about earlier as well.

I will move on to some capital expenditure items, specifically around facility planning. I know the Member for Mayo-Tatchun talked about the replacement of F.H. Collins. The minister gave lots of information about the planning that's going on and about the funds that are in the budget.

Could the minister quickly answer a couple of questions? When do we anticipate breaking ground? When do we anticipate completion of the project? Can the minister tell us if there is any work being done — if there are any funds in this capital budget to address concerns about health and safety issues, specifically mould?

**Hon. Mr. Rouble:** Mr. Chair, as we have discussed in the Assembly several times, the Government of Yukon is committed to replacing the aging F.H. Collins Secondary School. It has been identified that this will be our next major capital education project. I am sure members can appreciate that there are significant capital projects underway right now.

One only has to look at the number of cranes or huge construction tents in the area.

A building advisory committee with representation from the many stakeholder groups has been assembled. I understand that the group is currently meeting and is quickly working its way toward the proposal call for an architect. I understand that their committee work is taking a little bit longer than was originally anticipated. I think it is important to do a lot of the good work at the front end to ensure that we have a product that will meet the needs of the territory for decades to come. Constructing a high school and the budget figures that we'll be using when we get closer to have budget figures to discuss will be very substantive. This will be a major investment in Yukon's education infrastructure and it will be expected to be a key component of our education system for decades. It will involve making the right decisions at the beginning of this.

The general construction contract is planned to be tendered in late winter of 2011, following the whole creation of the architectural designs and some of the other processes that we have to go through, including the YESAA processes and other government or regulatory processes or involvements with the Yukon First Nations on this — as well, the whole budgeting process. Then once we have that, construction will proceed over the ensuing — I would predict — about a year and a half time. Again, the member opposite is quite familiar with construction projects of this nature and that some of the estimates that are created before the architectural drawings are even created are on the estimate side of things.

I'm awed sometimes in the Assembly by the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin and the awesome riding he represents there. I think — let the record reflect, Mr. Chair, that, for once, I've made the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin happy and satisfied in this Assembly. I'm cautioned by the Member for Kluane to not get carried away and to refocus my energy on the debate at hand. I remind the member opposite that the next step for the building advisory council will be to conduct the process of selecting an architect, which will then lead to the schematic design phase, then the process of a YESAA assessment, and all of our budgeting processes.

We do have some steps to go through. There is \$400,000 in this budget that is committed to getting the process going. This is building upon the work of the high school facilities study and is very involving of our stakeholders in this process. In fact, their involvement will be key to the creation of a building that will meet the needs of all students.

Now the member opposite has brought forward an issue of mould as it relates to F.H. Collins, I believe. It's not one that I or my staff is aware of so we will take a look at that. There are obviously issues that we in Education and the Department of Highways and Public Works, through the property management division, do to address the needs in our school system, whether it's emergency cleanups or emergency responses to situations or some of the other areas, such as increasing indoor air quality through putting in newer heating, ventilation and air handling types of systems.

**Mr. Cardiff:** I thank the minister for the answer. I don't have too many more questions. I'm going to try and roll a

couple of questions up into one here. Number one, I'd like a clarification. I don't know whether it's just the way government does things, but when the government came out earlier this year and they talked about a summer/fall consultation on Yukon *Oil and Gas Act* amendments, the consultation actually ended before the fall started.

It ended in mid-September and, on the calendar, fall doesn't start until, I believe, September 21. The consultation ended when it was still technically summer. So when the minister talks about late winter of 2011, does he actually mean 2012? Winter, technically, according to the calendar, doesn't start until December 21. I recognize that most people think that winter is actually six months long in the Yukon, but I'm just wondering what he specifically means by "late winter of 2011".

On a more serious note, yesterday the minister and the government talked about — and indeed with good reason — the positive effects of the family-focused housing facility in Riverdale. It's also my understanding that there is a possibility that the Kwanlin Dun First Nation, which has a substantial piece of property adjacent to that, is talking about further residential development.

It is my understanding and to the best of my knowledge there are three elementary schools in Riverdale. There is the Grey Mountain Primary School, which I believe is either near or at full capacity; Christ the King Elementary School, which is at full capacity. There may be some capacity at Selkirk Street Elementary School. With these residential developments — specifically the family-focused facility that is currently under construction and the possibility of future residential development — what facility studies and planning are underway in order to address possible capacity problems in that area?

I guess the other one that I'm going to roll up in this as well has to do with what we talked of earlier — about the Department of Education's involvement in possibly becoming involved in the early childcare field.

Are there any implications down the road as far as the delivery of service — whether or not there would be an implication for education facilities in the Yukon around the delivery of service with regard to childcare and early childhood education in our school facilities?

**Hon. Mr. Rouble:** Mr. Chair, I'll try to open the window a little bit broader than the 11-day window created by late winter of 2011. Without too much hyperbole, can I say late fall/early winter 2011?

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

**Hon. Mr. Rouble:** In addition, the member opposite has also brought forward the issue and the impact of looking at changes in the City of Whitehorse, changes with the construction of new housing units. That is certainly something that the Department of Education monitors very closely with the different population trends, different demographic trends, our variety of different neighbourhoods.

Indeed, it would be a much simpler place for all city planners and all service providers if we had the consistent demographics all the time in all places. We know that's not the case, and that we do have to respond to the situations that are before us and grow where we need to grow. We do realize that the

population of the territory has grown a considerable amount in recent years. We have seen the population go from a little bit less than 29,000 people to almost 35,000 people in the territory. That hasn't been across every demographic area, and it hasn't been consistent throughout the whole territory.

Indeed, at the same time, we've seen the decrease or stabilizing of the number of school-aged children that we have, and we will continue to look at things like the birth rate trends for the group in the population referred to as "Generation Y", that is now at the child-raising age. We've seen one dip in the population — Generation X go through the system — we've had Generation Y come up and they're having more kids.

Provided that we can maintain consistency in the economy and continued economic growth, as has been demonstrated by this government over the last several years, we're seeing a significant stabilizing in the population.

People will remember that in the late 1990s and the very early 2000s, there was a tremendous exodus of people from the territory and we did lose a whole cohort of people. That generation between about 25 and 35 was leaving, as the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin often phrases, "with their tear-stained faces pressed against the rearview mirror." With that, we lost a generation of people who at this time would have been filling up our schools.

We do need to look at the demographic changes, the birth-rate changes, throughout the City of Whitehorse, and indeed, all schools. The member has correctly pointed out that we have under-capacity issues at several area schools and at-capacity or close-to-capacity at other schools. We do recognize that in Canada, there is the reality of having things like split-grade classrooms or school busing issues.

I believe even students who are in downtown Whitehorse — where one would expect they would always be able to walk to school — are in some cases bused to different schools.

We will continue to look at the growth rates, working with the City of Whitehorse on some of their city planning issues and also their zoning issues for density issues and that. I haven't heard the rumour that the member opposite is referring to with regard to the Kwanlin Dun. I am sure that we will continue to work with them and find out if there is going to be significant growth on that one issue.

The member also asked about the issue of the childcare impacts. As I mentioned earlier, the Department of Education is working very closely with Health and Social Services. There are certain ramifications of some of the decisions that are yet to be made but there are issues around that. The member correctly points them out — facilities or what types of places would be used or what kind of accreditation models. I agree that those are issues and that, as the issues are brought forward, more of those will be addressed.

But the issues that he has brought up right now are not ones that will have an immediate impact and are not addressed in the supplementary budget that's before us today.

**Mr. Cardiff:** I thank the minister for his answers. Although I could probably ask questions for quite some time, I'd like to pass the microphone over to one of the members of the Official Opposition.

**Hon. Mr. Rouble:** I appreciate that, in our zeal to get into discussion and debate the other day, I didn't have an opportunity to present all the information in the introductory comments. But there is a whole section regarding the supplementary capital budget that I would like to get on the record, which I'm sure will be of interest to all members.

Under the 2009-10 supplementary capital budget, the Department of Education is requesting two revotes regarding advanced education funding to support community training fund agreements signed late in the fiscal year. A \$383,000 revote is requested.

Community training funds provide targeted training opportunities for Yukoners across the territory so that they can take advantage of local employment opportunities. A revote of \$19,000 is also being requested to accommodate an accounting adjustment for funds allocated to Yukon College under the youth-at-risk initiatives. An additional \$20,000 is also requested to begin the systems development for labour market development. This system is required to support the delivery of the employee benefits and measures program in operation and maintenance.

Mr. Chair, under Yukon College we are requesting a total of \$1,378,000 to support infrastructure initiatives. This includes a request for \$550,000 for the research centre of excellence facility construction, which was completed in August 2009. The research centre of excellence, which recently opened, is a tremendous asset for Yukon College, for Yukon, for Canada and indeed the world. This very new research centre is already doing some tremendous work and under the direction and leadership of Yukon College, is also working with national and international researchers to address issues of climate change, of mitigation and adaptation. Some of the work being done there is very exciting. I'm sure there will be more information coming out in the next few weeks.

This further demonstrates this government's commitment to education, research and the environment.

Mr. Chair, also for Yukon College, \$500,000 is being requested for two new campuses in Dawson City and Pelly Crossing. These campuses were approved under the knowledge infrastructure program and are cost-shared with Canada on a 50-50 basis. I recognize that a portion of this is being picked up in this supplementary budget, and I expect that future budgets will also include the Government of Yukon's contribution under this, in total, \$4-million project.

The Yukon College identified that their priorities for capital projects were the replacement of a campus in Pelly and a new Dawson campus. They prepared a submission for Canada, under the knowledge infrastructure fund, and the request was granted.

Yukon and Canada will be splitting the amount that was requested and providing that to Yukon College. Yukon College will be working with the property management division on the execution of these contracts. We have already seen work on these begin, in particular with the moving of fill, infill and sub-fill in Dawson City.

Mr. Chair, \$203,000 is being requested for post-secondary education infrastructure. This includes \$158,000 for what is

essentially an accounting adjustment due to the delays in the heating trades lab equipment projects. Not all of the funding was extended by year-end. This is another example, Mr. Chair, of preparing Yukoners for Yukon opportunities and seeing some of the significant increases in skilled tradespeople that we did discuss the other day.

Mr. Chair, \$45,000 is being requested for the sheet metal worker equipment project to deliver the sheet metal worker component of the piping trades pre-employment program at Yukon College. I am glad that I was able to announce that for the Member for beautiful Mount Lorne, as I know he has a significant affinity and background in the sheet metal profession.

Mr. Chair, \$125,000 in additional funding is also being requested to support Yukon College in ensuring that a more responsive security system is in place. This funding is for one-time capital costs and complements the operation and maintenance components of the \$135,000 that I spoke of earlier.

Mr. Chair, the 2009-10 supplementary budget for the Department of Education supports the implementation of New Horizons and recommendations in the January 2009 Auditor General's report. As I mentioned earlier, the Department of Education's focus on being a responsive education system, enhancing transitions, developing and maintaining partnerships and labour market development is well-supported by this year's supplementary budget. As we're all aware, education and training are vital to creating and maintaining the kind of economy in communities we value as Yukoners. The government's investment in education in this supplementary budget is proof of our commitment to improving quality of life for all Yukoners.

Thank you, Mr. Chair. If there are other questions regarding the general debate on the supplementary budget before we enter into line-by-line, I would like to take them now.

**Mr. Mitchell:** I thank the minister for the information he has provided to date. It has indeed been interesting listening to the debate in this department since Thursday last, all afternoon yesterday, and this afternoon. I don't know if there is another area that touches more people in Yukon than education does. It really impacts everyone and every family, whether it be through children or adults. It's a great responsibility that this minister has taken on and this department is there to fulfill.

I would like to follow up on questions that were asked by my colleague, the MLA for Mayo-Tatchun, yesterday afternoon regarding the crowding — overcrowding, really — that has developed over time at Elijah Smith Elementary School. I paid a great deal of attention to the minister when he was answering those questions, and he talked about working with representatives from the Copper Ridge community, the City of Whitehorse, and the Copper Ridge advisory council. In fact, I was in close contact during those meetings and attended some meetings that were public, because it's obviously of great concern and interest to my constituents.

Indeed, I know that the decision was made to continue to monitor, as the minister has relayed, the population growth and the enrolment growth over time. However, I met with the long-serving principal of Elijah Smith Elementary School more recently and he has made it clear that in his opinion the size of the enrolment in this school has not only moved beyond what

the school was intended to include, but it has moved beyond what he considers to be an ideal learning situation. The number he gave me when we last talked was in the vicinity of 340 pupils and it may be above or below that at this point in time. That was the number he had at that point earlier this fall.

The principal does not believe, as I have said, that this is an ideal learning environment for the student body. He has also noted that that enrolment is after he has had to turn away many, many students whose families would like them to be able to attend Elijah Smith Elementary School because they live in the nearby communities of Granger, Copper Ridge, McIntyre and Hillcrest. Again, that's not an ideal situation.

My constituents raise this issue very, very frequently with me. They don't want to live in Copper Ridge or Granger only to have their children bused daily to more distant neighbourhoods.

I did listen, and I understand when the minister says that there are other schools that are below their capacity, and we do understand the need to be flexible; however, over time, this has just continued to be a situation that has been exacerbated by increased population in this area. If it weren't for the number of students who choose to be in the Catholic school system or who enroll in either the French first language or the French immersion programs, it would be even more of a pressing problem.

This was a campaign issue when I ran in the by-election in the fall of 2005, when the candidate for the Yukon Party at the time promised in campaign literature that if elected there would be a new school built. Then this issue came up again in the general election. I know that the MLA for Whitehorse West, the Deputy Premier, has no doubt been made very aware of this issue by her constituents.

I have a couple of questions for the minister. Seeing the time, I am going to try to give the minister an opportunity to respond and maybe I can ask a follow-up.

When was the last time that the Education minister met with the Copper Ridge school advisory group to discuss the situation? Is it still the belief of the group that a new school in the area is not needed, either now or some time in the foreseeable future? Because I know from talking to some of the people who were on that committee that one of the reasons why they came to the decision not to press for a new school was they were led to believe — I don't know if it was the minister of the day, or this minister, or by the consultants — but they were concerned about the cross-cultural environment in the school, which was greatly valued, and they were of the belief that a second school might cause that not to be the case. I would think that if there were two schools in the area, both of those schools could enjoy an environment that valued First Nation culture, as well as European-centred culture, or whatever we would call it, that led to the Canadian culture.

I do know that people value that mixed cultural experience and it's a very important part of the school.

I would ask if the minister has any interest, or would he commit to revisiting this issue on behalf of the parents and students in Granger, Copper Ridge, McIntyre and Hillcrest, because the present situation of just continuing to add portable or

temporary classrooms is less than ideal. I was on the school council in 1996-98, I believe it was, when the previous portables were replaced by a permanent addition to the school. I know that it was the desire of the school to never go back to that situation again.

So again, is there any work being done within the department to look at the possibility of planning another school somewhere in that area west of the highway, down the road, to deal with the overcrowding that exists at the current school?

**Hon. Mr. Rouble:** Mr. Chair, this follows up closely on the discussion I was just having with the Member for Mount Lorne about the challenges of having a school system that responds to all the needs in a community with changing populations, changing demographics, changing housing styles and the growth in neighbourhoods, such as in the Copper Ridge/Granger area, and some of the other new developments that are in the idea stage or the drawing stage for the area.

We do have a situation where some of our schools are much more full than others. We do have a situation where a couple of our schools have had declining enrolments and have had some substantive drops in populations of students. This has happened at Golden Horn Elementary School and it has happened at Hidden Valley, and the Department of Education has responded in these areas and has responded to the growth in the Copper Ridge area and the Whitehorse West area as well.

We did respond by changing the attendance areas. Those were realigned. Yes, it does take a bit of time for some of those challenges to have significant impact, because we did grandfather the students who were attending Elijah Smith into that school, so they would then continue to go to that school to the end of their academic career at that school.

Also, I really do have to pay a lot of credit and provide congratulations to the principal of Elijah Smith Elementary School — to him and the teachers there. They have done an excellent job of creating a very warm, embracing school and one that recognizes and celebrates — as the member opposite put it — the mixed cultural student body.

Members will recall, a few years ago that wasn't always the case. I think there has been a tremendous amount of work done in the community and we are indeed celebrating those issues. When I met with the Copper Ridge school advisory group, I sat down with them when they had completed their report because it was a different direction than I was expecting at that time. I certainly wanted to have an opportunity to meet with them, to question them, to ask them about their rationale and to talk to them about how we would go about monitoring this in the future. They did express some concerns to me about whether this was a statistical blip that would smooth out — for example, the long-term demographics of the area would have a lower school-based student age.

They were concerned that if a new school were created that some students would migrate to that and they would see some changes to Elijah Smith Elementary School that they didn't want to see. There was a concern that we would then see a system that was split on racial lines. In our integrated education system, that is not something that I particularly want to see. All of our communities are stronger when we work to-

gether, when we are educated together, when we celebrate and worship together. We do need to recognize the diversity of our cultures and build Yukon to be a very healthy place to live.

The member opposite also mentioned the choice that people have about sending their children to a French-first-language school, to an immersion school or to a Catholic school.

Or in some cases people do choose to send their children to a school outside of their catchment area. That choice also has a significant effect on some of the long-term planning that the Department of Education has to do, and that's okay. That's a situation that we have to recognize and find ways to address. It does provide additional challenges, especially the long-term sustainability of issues and schools.

This is an issue that the Member for Whitehorse West has raised with me on numerous occasions. She has asked for updates on this and I have responded. As for another opportunity to have the Department of Education and the Copper Ridge school advisory committee — whether it's the old members or new members on that — to revisit the issue, the Government of Yukon would welcome that opportunity.

I will provide direction to the Department of Education, once again, to contact the past members on the committee. We will endeavour to establish another meeting.

It's unfortunate that past attempts to revitalize this committee have not been as successful as we would have liked, so we will put out another call to take a look at this. It will of course have to do its good work and revisit the situation. That was the commitment that we made when we received the report — that we would continue to take an ongoing look at the situation.

There have been some steps taken with the current school to provide a portable — some semi-permanent or temporary type of space in a portable — to address the issue of the volume of students in the school. We have also made some significant programming inroads in some of our other schools as well.

Takhini Elementary, for example, comes to mind. I did have some parents who came to me awhile ago who didn't live in the Elijah Smith catchment area. They said, "Well, we want our child to go to Elijah Smith, because that's the First Nation school." Part of that was just a lack of awareness about some of the other initiatives that go on in all Yukon schools, really. In particular, this family was living in the Takhini Elementary area, which does some amazing programming events. I haven't practised it, so I'm not going to try to pronounce the name of the First Nation dance troupe that Takhini Elementary has started and some of the innovative programming that they have there. So that work is being done to try to take some of the pressure off Elijah Smith school.

Yes, it is an attractive place, and that does encourage a lot of people to want to go there. From my perspective, I want to increase the attractiveness at each and every Yukon school and be able to provide excellent education opportunities at all schools.

This is a challenge of providing fair and equitable education and the allocation of resources to a variety of different schools throughout the territory, where we see increasing popu-

lations at one school or declining enrolments at another, and trying to balance these out while meeting the operational requirements of each and every school, and at the same time, creating a level of equity, which is one of the challenges that the Department of Education faces on a regular basis.

As I have committed to, the Department of Education will once again put a call out to the Copper Ridge school advisory members to reconvene, to come forward and take a look at the current information and the demographics of the area. Really, I would expect we'll have to take a look at the whole situation again.

For the Member for Whitehorse West, as well, I would also make that commitment to her.

**Mr. Mitchell:** I thank the minister for that commitment and I will look forward to the progress with great interest. I hope that the minister will keep me in the loop as well, not only his colleague, the Member for Whitehorse West, because so many of the families obviously in my riding — which includes both Granger and a big chunk of Copper Ridge and Hillcrest — are impacted.

I do appreciate the minister having said earlier that the next major capital commitment to new infrastructure is for F.H. Collins. I understand that it is the next school that is in the planning stages, and it is obvious looking at the budget commitments. However, we have to plan beyond that. I would note for the minister that with the new Ingram subdivision, for example, adjacent to Arkell, there are very likely — based on this being a subdivision that is meant to house mobile homes and smaller homes — to be even more young families moving in who will have children who will need schooling. Again, this is adjacent to the existing school. I think that the pressures are likely to only increase and there is only so much we can do by changing the catchment areas.

The minister mentioned some things in his response. Certainly, we appreciate and value the excellence of all the schools. The minister mentioned Takhini Elementary, which is one of the main overflow schools for this area. We know that there are very many excellent programs in place at Takhini. There certainly is no inference, and none should be taken, that we don't think that's also an excellent school. Rather, many constituents who live in the Granger and Copper Ridge area would like to see their kids go to a nearby school — one that they could walk to or ride their bikes to, for example.

The minister mentioned the difficulty of getting the advisory committee together, and I would hope that the minister would also consider new appointments or new volunteers to the committee, because some of the parents who served on that committee — their kids may have moved beyond the elementary school age, and therefore their interest would not be as great in carrying forward into the future in that capacity. Also, of course, I know that the minister would have to — and would want to — obviously include the Elijah Smith Elementary School Parent Advisory Committee and the administrator. When the minister pays tribute to the long-serving administrator and the excellent staff at the school, we would certainly add our voices to that.



I've known the principal of that school for the better part of 30 years and he taught both of my kids when they were in elementary school in another community, so I knew that there were good things in store for Elijah Smith Elementary when he was hired and, in fact, there have been. Without giving his entire name, I think we call him "one more year John" because he keeps extending his commitment one year at a time and we've been fortunate with that.

Again, if the minister would just keep me in the loop, because this is an issue for all our constituents — for both myself and the Member from Whitehorse West, and indeed, the Member for McIntyre-Takhini. All of us have families who make use of that school and are aware of these problems.

I would just say for the minister that I've knocked on doors and had people tell me that they actually moved to Granger, for example, because they wanted their kids to go to that school; that's how much they heard about the good things going on there. So, I thank the department for the excellent job they've done there, but I also have knocked on doors where people told me that they have not been able to get their kids enrolled and they were disappointed about that.

So I look forward to the minister providing the commitment that he has made and proceeding in a timely manner to carry forward.

**Hon. Mr. Rouble:** I certainly appreciate the member opposite's comments. It is always an interesting situation, where you do a public consultation. You think you know the way people are going to respond, and they don't. My hat does have to go off to the Copper Ridge school advisory group. They certainly did their work and they came forward with a recommendation that I think they made based on the best possible data that they had, and it wasn't necessarily a really happy type of conclusion to reach. But it was a responsible conclusion to reach. And for that, they certainly have to be applauded for their work and making an unpopular decision, but one that is a responsible decision. That's something I think we can all be proud of making.

That certainly is a challenge of being in these types of positions and being a community leader where — on the evidence that is provided to us — we make the best decisions that are responsible in nature.

I appreciate the member opposite's support for the principal and I certainly appreciate the drive of the administration, the teachers, the students and the school council to make their school the best school in Whitehorse or the best school in Yukon. It warms my heart to hear that sentiment expressed by all schools — where all schools want to celebrate and become the best school in the Yukon.

It's always a challenge sometimes where a new initiative is brought forward and someone will say, well, with this new initiative we can become the best school in the Yukon, or we want to have the lowest student/teacher ratio so that we can have the best school in the Yukon.

While we have responsibilities to our constituencies, we also have responsibilities to the territory too.

It is a challenge to create equity in the situation while at the same time establishing Yukon as having the best education

system possible. I want to see every school be the best that they can be. We continue to provide great teachers, great resources and great tools into our education system.

As the member opposite commented, yes, it is one that touches the heart and family of practically every Yukoner. The outcomes of our education system will certainly have an impact on all Yukoners. We all have a role to play in this. It has been discussed many times that it takes a whole village to raise a child. We have discussed many of the issues that the Department of Education has control over. We also realize that there are other forces that influence the outcome. We all have a role to play in creating the best education system for all Yukoners and it is one that this government will continue to strive to create.

**Mr. Elias:** It's a pleasure to rise and participate in the general debate today on Bill No.17, Vote 3, the Department of Education, as always. I'd like to thank the officials for once again being so committed to fulfilling the Department of Education objectives. I thank you.

I'd like to take this opportunity to engage the Education minister on some important issues and concerns of my riding in north Yukon, and in the Yukon in general. Firstly, it's important to recognize that the Chief Zzeh Gittlit School recently had a celebration, and that was the 10<sup>th</sup> year of its opening at the new location in Old Crow. That was on Tuesday, September 15 that we celebrated the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the grand opening of the new school. Everyone was invited to participate in some games and craft opportunities for the students, the community and the children. They actually made up a birthday cake and shared it with the community, so it was a pretty exciting event in my community of Old Crow. Thank you so much to the dedicated staff and the students and the major partner in Old Crow, and the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation who work so hard on positive initiatives in the Chief Zzeh Gittlit School to achieve the educational outcomes for the children in the school.

There are so many positive and wonderful things going on. I see we're running out of time here, but I would just like to mention a couple of them. Right now in the Chief Zzeh Gittlit School, there are approximately 39 or 40 students. We also have a number of new staff included in the team. I must say that integration of the new staff into the community and into the school has been such a good-news story. They have been welcomed by the community and have participated in all the events in the community, which is very good to see. The hot-lunch program is important to mention. It's a Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation hot-lunch program that has been recently initiated. It started on Monday, October 19. There is lot of community participation and parent volunteers who participate in the success of that program.

So that's another positive thing that's going on at the Chief Zzeh Gittlit School.

The Terry Fox Run that the students at the Chief Zzeh Gittlit School participate in didn't happen for a number of years. I'm proud to say that they raised \$452 in the Terry Fox Run this year on Friday, September 25. It's important to note that they participated in the Terry Fox Run — in a blizzard. So, you know, that just goes to show the commitment and the leader-

ship from all the parents and the staff and the students in the school to actually organize a run and to follow through with the run, no matter what the weather was that day. So they did complete the Terry Fox Run in a blizzard, and congratulations to all who participated in that.

Another important and fun thing that's going on in the school is that we've got an attendance award system going on with regard to those students who have perfect attendance during the month. They are able to receive a pizza. A lot of people take it for granted here in our capital city. This is organized in partnership with the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation, where a student who has perfect attendance is able to get a pizza and share it with their family. It is a bit of an incentive for students to show up to school, and it has actually become a competition between a lot of the school kids. It's a pretty big competition, and the perfect attendance record, even for the smaller grades, is pretty impressive.

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

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

*Motion agreed to*

**Hon. Ms. Taylor:** I move that the Speaker do now resume the Chair.

**Chair:** It has been moved by Ms. Taylor 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. 17, entitled *Second Appropriation Act, 2009-10*, and directed me to report progress on it.

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

**Some Hon. Members:** Agreed.

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

The time being 5:31 p.m., this House now stands adjourned until 1:00 p.m. tomorrow.

*The House adjourned at 5:31 p.m.*