

Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Tuesday, December 8, 2009 — 1:00 p.m.

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

Prayers

Withdrawal of motions

Speaker: The Chair wishes to inform the House of a change that has been made to the Order Paper. Motion No. 362, standing in the name of the Member for Porter Creek South, has been removed from the Order Paper as it is outdated.

DAILY ROUTINE

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

Tributes.

Introduction of visitors.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Fairclough: Mr. Speaker, in the gallery we have today Jim Milley from the Town of Keno City, and Tracy Rentmeister. I ask all members to join me in welcoming them here today.

Applause

Speaker: Is there any further introduction of visitors?

Returns or documents for tabling.

Reports of committees.

Are there any petitions to be presented?

Are there any bills to be introduced?

Are there any notices of motion?

NOTICES OF MOTION

Hon. Ms. Horne: I give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to work in partnership with Yukon College, First Nations governments and others to establish a Northern Institute of Social Justice that would help address the challenge of recruiting, developing and retaining qualified workers in social justice related fields in the north by providing training, education and related research at Yukon College in areas such as corrections, enforcement and investigation, addictions and other counselling, social services delivery, and conservation and environmental protection, as well as providing training and conflict resolution, administrative tribunals and leadership development.

I give notice of the following motion:

THAT the Yukon Legislative Assembly, pursuant to section 17(1) of the *Human Rights Act*, does appoint Gloria Baldwin Schultz and Jean-Sébastien Blais as members of the Yukon Human Rights Commission for terms of three years, effective December 12, 2009.

And I give notice of the following motion:

THAT the Yukon Legislative Assembly, pursuant to section 22(2), of the *Human Rights Act*, appoint Sue Bogle, Renzo Ordonez and Max Rispin as members of the Panel of Adjudicators for terms of three years, effective December 12, 2009.

Mr. McRobb: Mr. Speaker, I give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Yukon government to convene a meeting of the Standing Committee on Rules, Elections and Privileges before the end of the 2009 calendar year.

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

THAT this House urges the Yukon government to respond to First Nation governments and non-governmental organizations that have brought forward issues in the cause of alleviation of poverty, such as the Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition, FASSY, the Second Opinion Society, Yukon Council on Disability, Yukon Association of Community Living, Blood Ties Four Directions, the Yukon Council on Aging, the Salvation Army, the Victoria Faulkner Women's Centre and the Yukon Status of Women Council, by considering topics for the Inclusion Poverty Summit that respond to issues such as housing, violence, guaranteed income, mental and physical health, gender, race, employment, food security and addictions.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House calls on the Yukon government to sit down with staff and board members of the Boys and Girls Club of Whitehorse as soon as possible and cooperatively find solutions that will ensure that the centre remains open and continues to provide programming and a safe environment for youth in Whitehorse.

I give notice of the following motion:

THAT, in response to the so-called "Danish text" leaked to the media, this House calls on the leaders of the rich nations, including the Prime Minister of Canada, to negotiate an ambitious climate change agreement in Copenhagen that:

(1) recognizes that the rich world is responsible for most of the accumulated carbon in the atmosphere, i.e. three-quarters of all carbon dioxide emitted since 1850;

(2) recognizes that the rich world has the responsibility to take the lead and that every developed country must commit to deep cuts, which will reduce their emissions within a decade to substantially less than their 1990 level;

(3) recognizes that the developing world did not cause the bulk of the climate change problem and that the poorest regions of the world will be the hardest hit by climate change;

(4) recognizes that the developing world will increasingly contribute to warming, and must thus pledge meaningful and quantifiable action of their own;

(5) does not weaken the United Nations' role in handling climate change negotiations, financing and other matters; and

(6) does not hand climate financing over to the World Bank.

Speaker: Are there any further notices of motion?

Is there a statement by a minister?
This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Keno residents' concerns

Mr. Fairclough: I have a question for the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources. The minister recently launched a new website called "Mining Yukon." It's a resource for mining companies who want to do business here. There is a section about community and environment. It lists all the Yukon communities, including several that are unincorporated such as Beaver Creek. There is one community that's missing from the minister's new site. The town of Keno is not listed at all. This is a community that has been involved in the mining business for close to 100 years.

Can the minister explain why the town of Keno was left off this new website?

Hon. Mr. Lang: Mr. Speaker, I haven't seen the new website, but certainly that's an oversight and that should be corrected.

Mr. Fairclough: It most certainly should be and the minister ought to know this. It's his website. The minister has developed a brand new tool to promote mining and he leaves one of the longest standing communities off the map. It says something about what this government thinks of the community and its residents.

There are big changes coming to Keno. Residents are upset about the lack of support they've received from this government. In February of this year, Keno residents wrote to the minister asking for his permission to establish a local advisory committee under the *Municipal Act*. A local advisory committee is something like a city council. It would give residents an official voice and funding that comes with it. It would allow residents to be more involved in what is happening in their backyard.

In May, the minister finally responded in a letter with a flat no. He said he was encouraged and pleased by the commitments and initiatives, but the answer was no.

Why is the minister so opposed to local residents having a say in what goes on in their own community?

Hon. Mr. Lang: I will correct the fact that Keno is not on the website. I did not know that. I will do the work I have to do to make sure that is corrected.

As far as the community of Keno is concerned, we are going to put people on the ground there to work with the community to start a community association or some form of governance we can work with as a government so we can assist and work with the people in Keno City.

Mr. Fairclough: The government produces a brand new site to promote mining and leaves Keno off the map completely. The community makes a request for a local advisory committee and the minister says no. Is it any wonder residents feel ignored by this government? Residents have been struggling for months trying to read technical reports, respond to a YESAB application, attend meetings, and when they ask the government for help, the answer is no. Residents have asked the minister to provide some funding to allow them to be for-

mally represented in all the ongoing processes, and the minister said no.

Why has the government made no provisions for a meaningful role, and the funding that comes with it, for the local residents of Keno?

Hon. Mr. Lang: Because of the number of individuals who live in Keno City, a local improvement district — or local improvement group — wouldn't work, so what we're offering is the next best thing and that's a community association where we can get membership and work with the community to address some of their issues.

Question re: Keno residents' concerns

Mr. Fairclough: I have more questions for the minister on this same topic.

Residents of Keno were very disappointed in the government's handling of their concerns. The government response to every issue that has been raised is the same: no, no, no.

Another issue that has been raised is the future of Lot 960. This land is located in the middle of town. In 2007, it was transferred to Alexco Resources, and they remain the owner today. There are four homes on that lot. People live in those houses. One resident has lived on that property since 1977. Those people want to know why the government has allowed this transfer to happen. Can the minister answer that question?

Hon. Mr. Lang: In addressing the member's question on those lots, that was a court-ordered transfer. It had nothing to do with the territorial government. That transfer of the assets of United Keno Hill to Alexco was a court-driven decision. It wasn't the territorial government.

Mr. Fairclough: Those homes were built long before the Onek property — 30 years before — and people there were paying taxes at the time. Now, the ownership of the lot is not resolved in the minds of the residents, particularly those who live on the site. They were concerned what might happen to their homes. I'm sure if this were happening on Fox Farm Road, we would have the minister's attention.

Speaker's statement

Speaker: The honourable member knows full well not to personalize debate like that. If the member does it again, I'll ask him to sit down.

You have the floor, Member for Mayo-Tatchun.

Mr. Fairclough: There is clearly a difference of opinion between the minister and the residents. It's also clear that the minister has made up his mind and will not listen to the residents' concerns over Lot 960, so I'll propose a solution to the minister.

Will he allow a third party to examine this issue and report back? They can go through all the documents, the land transfers, the surveys and photographs and settle this issue. Will the minister allow that, or is it simply his way or the highway?

Hon. Mr. Lang: The court was a third party and the court made a decision. The lot always belonged to United Keno Hill; it was in receivership. A third party got involved in the form of a court and the court made a decision. It wasn't the territorial government. It was a receivership and the court made

a decision in favour of Alexco. There was a process. The process was followed through. There was a third party in the form of a court and the decision was made. It wasn't made in these offices, Mr. Speaker. It was made in the courts and the company has to follow the court order and we in turn have to follow the court order.

Mr. Fairclough: It's his way or the highway obviously. These homes were built way before the Onek property came about and people were paying taxes at the time. Now the residents are frustrated because of answers like the one the minister just provided.

The government doesn't seem to be willing to listen to what the people in Keno have to say. The government may have changed the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources but the answers are still the same: no, no, no. They want to be involved, not ignored.

The four private homes on this land are an issue. It is a property issue that has been brought forward to the minister's attention and I thought perhaps, Keno being an unincorporated community, the minister would have taken this issue forward on behalf of the residents of Keno. He has chosen instead to ignore it, just like the government ignored the residents' request for a local advisory committee, just like the government ignored the community's request for funding.

When is the minister going to start working with residents instead of ignoring them?

Hon. Mr. Lang: The Department of Community Services will be working with the community of Keno and has in the past. We will work with them to form a community association so we can have a conduit of information flowing between the two. But we will be working with the community of Keno City.

Question re: Yukon Health Care Review recommendations

Mr. Cardiff: Last week I asked the government to act on a motion passed a year ago to activate the oversight committee on health. This committee was to oversee the work of the steering committee on health care, which has produced 43 recommendations in the *Yukon Health Care Review*.

The steering committee is taking the pulse report from public consultation that was presented eight months ago. The *Yukon Health Care Review* recommendations are far-reaching and of great concern to all Yukoners. The oversight committee now has all the material it needs to make decisions. When will the minister call the oversight committee to meet?

Hon. Mr. Hart: For the member opposite and for the Legislative Assembly, we plan to call a meeting of this committee early in the new year, and that will probably take place in January sometime.

Mr. Cardiff: Mr. Speaker, over 800 Yukoners responded in writing to the recommendations that are in the *Yukon Health Care Review*. According to the *What We Heard* report from the steering committee, one of the main priorities of Yukoners is to improve efficiency. This government has not responded to the fastest growing component of health care costs, which is pharmaceuticals. They are the most important reason for escalating expenditures according to the report. Our

pharmacare budget is exorbitant, the highest per capita in Canada. But this government has apparently decided not to negotiate a new contract with the pharmacists association.

When will the minister negotiate a reasonable contract on behalf of Yukoners with the pharmacists?

Hon. Mr. Hart: One of the items coming out of the previous western premiers conference held in Dawson City was just that — the western provinces would get together and look at the possibility of a joint buying power for pharmaceuticals, and we are working on that.

Mr. Cardiff: I thank the minister for that answer. I hope it happens soon. Other themes from the *What We Heard* report were prevention, long-term patient care, mental health and addictions. According to the *Health Act*, five percent of the health care budget is to go to prevention programs. That's not done by this government. Long-term care of seniors has a long wait-list and so few beds available that transfers from Whitehorse to Watson Lake were necessary recently.

Effective mental health and addictions treatment is almost non-existent, in spite of government reports and action plans. Early prevention and primary care systems save money in the long run. Now the president of the Yukon Medical Association has been quoted as saying that private health care is inevitable. Have we learned nothing from what's going on down south? Does the minister agree that Yukoners will have to pay more and more for health care? Or, does he have a plan to implement the good recommendations in the *Yukon Health Care Review*?

Hon. Mr. Hart: When we review the report done by Dr. Reddoch — and I must say, Mr. Speaker, we were very pleased with the responses that we got from the review. As the member opposite indicated, well over 800 people put in their issues with regard to health concerns in Yukon and we will look at those concerns.

You know, the member opposite also said that five percent of our treatment budget for preventive health promotions has not been done. Well, that is totally incorrect. I would like to correct the record for the member opposite. In our budget estimate for Health and Social Services, we have got a substantial amount of monies within health promotion programs and services throughout, and they are probably equivalent, Mr. Speaker, to probably 11 percent of our budget.

Question re: Takhini elk herd

Mr. Cathers: Mr. Speaker, I would like to return to an issue I asked about last Wednesday. Wild elk are not indigenous. They were imported by government. In 1990, the then Department of Renewable Resources estimated the size of the Takhini elk herd as 30 to 35 animals and recommended a target population of 100, noting growth beyond that level would negatively impact other wildlife and farmers. Today there are over 300 wild elk.

The new permit hunt is a step in the right direction but will take time to reduce the herd. My constituents are having fences damaged and crops destroyed. Once again, I will ask the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources: will the government be moving forward with the planned enhancements to the wildlife damage prevention program and the wildlife damage compensation program, or is this no longer a priority?

Hon. Mr. Lang: To address the Member for Lake Laberge, I talked to the department about this issue and they're going to meet with the wildlife damage compensation committee in the new year and assess the investments from the last year. They will give us a plan to consider on how we can move forward.

Mr. Cathers: The wild elk were imported by government and because the Department of Renewable Resources' 1990 plan was forgotten, the herd size grew beyond what the biologists said it should be. There's another fundamental problem here. Government is not able to defend my constituents and they are not allowed to defend themselves. If an elk is damaging their property or even threatening their lives, they are not allowed to shoot that elk. If a carnivore attacks, you can defend yourself, but sections 86 and 87 of the *Wildlife Act* prevent you from defending your property or even your life if an elk is threatening it.

My question for the Minister of Environment is this: what does the government recommend Yukon citizens do if a wild elk is causing imminent threat to life and limb?

Hon. Ms. Taylor: First, I would like to just correct the member opposite for the record. In fact, the management plan that the member refers to has not been lost. In fact, it has been updated to reflect the 2008 elk management plan of which the elk harvest management strategy reflects those goals and objectives contained within the elk management plan — again, which was adopted a year ago. It includes limiting the range expansion, the population of the elk, to 2007 levels and it's also helping to address winter tick management.

A regulation that was implemented a year ago does enable the Department of Environment to authorize a harassment of problem elk in special circumstances. Alternatively, directed in-season hunting by permit holders may also be an option where land owners provide permission. Environment Yukon is working collaboratively with the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources in making sure that we do have programs available to assist where damage has occurred.

Mr. Cathers: I would correct the Minister of Environment. A previous government forgot to follow up on that plan in 1998, as the 1990 plan committed them to. If an elk is damaging my constituents' property or even threatening their lives they're not allowed to shoot that animal. Two have reported incidents with wild elk that imperiled physical safety. Many more have reported damage to property caused by these imported wildlife.

A very high standard must be met before someone can kill a bear or other carnivore without a permit. Threat to life or property must be imminent and they must have exhausted all other practical means of averting the threat. Sections 86 and 87 of the *Wildlife Act* prevent you from defending your property or even your life from a wild elk.

Government should do two things to correct this injustice: first, repeal sections 86(2) and 87(2) of the *Wildlife Act*, and secondly, immediately create a special permit that allows someone to shoot an elk in defence of life and property. Will they agree to do that?

Hon. Ms. Taylor: Before any regulations or statutes are amended before the floor of the Legislature, a consultation will have to occur. What we have committed to do and what we have done is develop a management plan that prescribes an elk harvest management strategy based on the goals and objectives as outlined in the plan that was a key result of significant consultation with a number of key stakeholders, including renewable resource councils, Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board, landowners and many other stakeholders.

We recognize there are challenges associated with elk and other populations and we are working collaboratively on an interdepartmental approach to this issue. We are addressing winter tick management.

We are also addressing issues concerning damage to landowners' properties, farms and other notables through management regimes as prescribed through our regulatory regime. Again I will refer to a 2008 regulation that did come about after consultation with the public. It certainly does enable the department to authorize looking at harassment of problem elk in special circumstances. Where landowners are proscribed, we're also able to grant lands.

Speaker: Thank you.

Question re: Climate change

Mr. Fairclough: Governments from around the world will be meeting in Copenhagen to discuss climate change. It would be good to know where the Minister of Environment stands on the issue before she joins the talks. Yukoners have heard a lot of generalities from the minister about climate change, but they are yet to get specific comments and commitments about what this government will accomplish in Copenhagen. Yesterday we gave the minister an opportunity to press the Prime Minister for specific reasonable commitments on climate change. The minister was provided with a letter already signed by the Leader of the Official Opposition that awaited her signature and that of the Leader of the Third Party.

Now that she has had some time to think about it, will the minister sign this letter and urge the Prime Minister to act on climate change?

Hon. Ms. Taylor: We view this as a key opportunity to raise awareness and to inform all 192 countries of the climate change impacts on Canada's north and the circumpolar north, and the challenges these impacts are having on our infrastructure, our wildlife, our forests, water and our own people. It's an opportunity to demonstrate our commitment to address climate change here at home and the actions we are taking to address climate change when it comes to mitigation and adaptation and when it comes to establishing research and innovation on climate change mitigation and adaptation.

It's also an opportunity to urge all 192 countries, including our own Government of Canada, to do their utmost in achieving an international agreement that is comprehensive, global, inclusive and has binding targets. We are doing our part here at home, and that is also very important to assure the rest of the world that all parts of Canada — not just the Government of Canada — are doing their utmost to address climate change.

Mr. Fairclough: So the minister thought about the letter and refused to sign it. The letter the Official Opposition

provided to the minister called on Canada to take real action on climate change. It was similar to the letter the former New Democrats provided the minister, with the exclusion of a carbon tax.

We are in full support of a greater reduction in greenhouse gases, but don't believe a carbon tax is the way to do it. The letter asked for medium-range targets, reducing emissions to 25 percent below 1990 levels by 2020. The letter asks for reductions in emissions of 80 percent below 1990 levels by 2050. The letter asks for a cap-and-trade system and incentive program to reduce fossil fuel consumptions. Could the minister tell us which of these provisions she objects to?

Hon. Ms. Taylor: You know, it's interesting when the member opposite talks about other countries' commitments. I'll just refer to how easy it is to commit to something and never follow through, especially when it comes to the Kyoto Protocol, when in fact it was the Liberal Party that promised in the 1993 election to reduce Canada's greenhouse gas emissions by 20 percent below 1988 levels by 2005, which in fact were far tougher than what Kyoto standards were. In fact, despite this pledge, when the Liberals lost power in 2006, I believe it was, after having 10 years of majority and 12 years in government, our emissions went up by over 33 percent.

Here at home in the Yukon, we are doing our part to mitigate through enhanced infrastructure commitments to hydro generation. We are doing our part through renewable energies. We are doing our part through home improvements and we're doing our part to adapt to climate change. We do have a plan in place. It outlines a whole host of initiatives to be undertaken, most of which we are undertaking at this time.

Mr. Fairclough: The federal government is a Conservative government. The Yukon government is a Conservative government. This minister has made it clear that she isn't willing to press the Prime Minister for real action on reducing emissions. Maybe it's because the minister's federal colleagues have already made up their mind about what they will present in Copenhagen and the minister is just following along. Canada has already been attacked for its weak position on climate change. Yesterday the Climate Action Network gave Canada a Fossil of the Day award for actively obstructing progress and global climate talks. Yukoners can see the dire effects of climate change right here in the north.

Is the minister taking her lead from Yukoners? Or is she taking her lead from her federal colleagues who have already made up their mind?

Hon. Ms. Taylor: We take our direction from Yukoners and that is what has helped craft the Yukon's *Climate Change Action Plan*. That is in fact why we are very much committed to ensuring the Yukon Research Centre of Excellence housed at Yukon College in collaboration with the Council of Yukon First Nations is indeed a success when it comes to climate change adaptation.

Mr. Speaker, in the area of mitigation, we are working to reduce greenhouse gas emissions through energy efficiency programs for home owners and conservation use of renewable energy — all of which is helping to displace thousands of tonnes of CO₂ into our atmosphere.

We are certainly investing in a new animal health program. We are investing through the northern strategy, enabling Yukon communities such as the City of Dawson and the City of Whitehorse to do their part when it comes to adaptation. We are certainly very much supporting super green technology in the construction of housing projects, including \$60 million worth of affordable housing, including conservation, use of renewable energy through the expansion of hydro — again, all of which is contributing to fewer greenhouse gas reductions in our atmosphere.

Mr. Speaker, we are already Kyoto-compliant. We are doing our part here at home and it is very important that we share that message with the rest of the world.

Question re: Yukon Housing Corporation financial accountability

Mr. Mitchell: Mr. Speaker, by October 31 of each year, the Auditor General of Canada is supposed to sign off on the government's books. It is now December 8 and the auditor has still refused to sign off.

We know this government doesn't think very highly of the Auditor General. When the auditor said the government acted improperly when it invested \$36 million, the Premier said that was "just her opinion". Another government minister called the Auditor General "a tool" last month and, on Thursday, the minister responsible for the Yukon Housing Corporation blamed the Auditor General for the latest delays, saying the auditor couldn't make up her mind about how she wanted the books presented.

These statements taken together demonstrate the government doesn't hold the Auditor General in very high regard. Will the Premier commit to working with the Auditor General instead of criticizing her every time she does something this government doesn't like?

Hon. Mr. Fentie: For the member's information, the Auditor General does provide opinion. If the member cared to do even a precursory assessment of the public accounts, the member would find that that is what the Auditor General does — provide her opinion on the financial position of the Yukon government and its books.

With respect to the issue the member speaks of — and we take no issue with the Auditor General's decision to not sign off on the public accounts, on our books, until such a time as the financial statements for the Yukon Housing Corporation have been completed. The fact of the matter is those financial statements are in the hands of the Auditor General as we speak. We're actually waiting for the Auditor General to conclude her work so that we can proceed in closing out the year-end. Furthermore, the member conveniently ignores the fact that the Auditor General has clearly indicated there are no other issues with the Yukon government's fiscal and financial statements and procedures.

Mr. Mitchell: We know the Premier and this government don't think much of the Auditor General, and that is a matter of public record. We're calling on the Premier to stop criticizing the Auditor General and start working to resolve some of the concerns she is raising. Now one of the concerns she has is with last year's books. Despite what the Premier

says, she is still refusing to sign off. Last week, the minister responsible for the Housing Corporation said it was the board and not the minister who was responsible for getting the books done. He also blamed the Auditor General for the delay, saying she couldn't make up her mind about how she wanted the audit done — talk about passing the buck.

It's the minister and the Premier who were elected and who are responsible to the Yukon public. The Premier promised Yukoners this situation would be resolved by October 31. It is still unresolved now, weeks past the deadline. When is the government going to get its act together and get its books signed off?

Hon. Mr. Fentie: Mr. Speaker, I don't think the Leader of the Official Opposition wants to be so loose and fast with the facts.

The Auditor General has the financial statements. The reason the financial statements are in the hands of the Auditor General is because the Department of Finance did step in to assist the Yukon Housing Corporation on its financial matters.

The issue today is for the Auditor General's office to conclude their work, as they are required to do. Other financial issues with the Yukon government's books are duly scrutinized by the Auditor General, and the Auditor General has indicated there are no other issues regarding the public accounts.

The member has somehow taken financial statements being transferred, as they should be, to the Auditor General for the Auditor General's review and conclusion and opinion being provided for those financial statements — has somehow construed that as blaming the Auditor General. How on earth does the member come up with that? This is called due process. That's exactly what the Auditor General has undertaken, and that's exactly what the government has undertaken, as we always do.

Mr. Mitchell: We haven't construed anything. We've listened to the statements of ministers opposite, and we're eight months plus the end of the fiscal year and five weeks past the deadline, and the Premier still has nothing from this Auditor General. The Premier has been very quick to criticize previous governments who had qualified audits. Now that the shoe is on the other foot, the Premier has very little to say. The most important page in the public accounts, the letter from the Auditor General, simply says, "Not available at press time."

The Premier says, "Take my word for it, the books are fine." This government has no credibility with voters any more. They don't believe the government, they don't trust the government, and with good reason. There are obviously problems with the books of the Yukon Housing Corporation. If everything was fine, the Auditor General would have signed off by now.

Instead of blaming the Auditor General, the Premier and the Housing minister should get this problem fixed and move on. When will the problem be fixed?

Hon. Mr. Fentie: I think the only problem to be fixed is sitting down with the Leader of the Official Opposition and going over the facts. The government does have a lot to say about the financial position of the Yukon. It's double what it was under the past Liberal government — we'll start there —

and we have a lot more to say. It's no longer borrowing money to pay employees' wages and the delivery of programs to Yukoners. In fact, we've tabled seven consecutive annual surpluses. You bet we have a lot to say about the financial position of the Yukon government.

Furthermore, we are even investing further in the Yukon's health care system, education system, stimulus for our economy, building infrastructure and still maintaining a healthy year-end surplus and an overall net financial surplus that is the envy of many governments in the country. Yes, we have a lot to say about the Yukon's financial situation.

Speaker: The time for Question Period has now elapsed.

Notice of opposition private members' business

Mr. Cardiff: Pursuant to Standing Order 14.2(3), I would like to identify the item standing in the name of the Third Party to be called on Wednesday, December 9. It is Motion No. 932, standing in the name of the Member for Whitehorse Centre.

Mr. McRobb: Pursuant to Standing Order 14.2(3), I would like to identify the item standing in the name of the Official Opposition to be called on Wednesday, December 9, 2009. It is Motion No. 848, standing in the name of the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

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

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

Motion agreed to

Speaker leaves the Chair

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Chair (Mr. Nordick): Order please. Committee of the Whole will now come to order. The matter before the Committee is Bill No. 17, *Second Appropriation Act, 2009-10*, Public Service Commission. 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 10, Public Service Commission. We will now continue with general debate.

Public Service Commission — continued

Hon. Mr. Rouble: Yesterday when we left off, I was asked a question about the government's overall strategy for reducing workplace injuries. The Government of Yukon takes the safety and security of government employees as one of the highest priorities, in addition to doing work on the individual level and the departmental level. On the divisional level, the Government of Yukon is also working on an overall strategy of addressing workplace safety issues.

Mr. Chair, the action plan for the development of a government-wide management system has been completed and in that we have identified what actions we need to do and in what order. We are now going forward with that action plan and addressing that with internal resources and with outside consultant support and expertise. The corporate health and safety strategy business plan is being developed. A revised government-wide policy — policy 3.48, corporate health and safety — is in the approval process.

The revised policy stresses a proactive approach to health and safety management with the responsibility at a corporate and departmental level. The policy outlines areas of responsibilities for employees.

Additionally, the planning of the information and technology component is underway. In this area, there may be a link to other programs, such as disability management, where there are crossover links that relate to IT services. This is in addition to the regular training programs departments do, regular safety meetings departments do, and regular supervisory activities of supervisors and managers to address issues in the workplace to ensure that safe procedures, practices and policies are being followed.

The Government of Yukon is committed to ensuring that Yukon work sites continue to be very safe and providing the additional support necessary to provide employees with safe operating environments.

Mr. Cardiff: I thank the minister for that answer. I'd like to ask the minister a question. I believe we asked this question before. There was a court case a few years ago and there was supposed to be a new policy on accommodating employees with mental disabilities. It's 2009 now and I'd like to know what public service policies addressing employees with mental disabilities there are?

I did raise this question last spring and the minister's response was that they were going to continue to take efforts, not only through the Public Service Commission, but indeed through all departments to promote the inclusion of all people in our society.

This is an important issue about having an inclusive workforce, whether it's mental disabilities or other disabilities. Last year when I asked about persons with disabilities, there was a pilot project, there were some term employees and some auxil-

iary employees. I'd also like to know whether or not that project is running. I believe it was to do with document shredding and recycling.

I'd like to know whether that project is running still, whether there are any plans to extend opportunities for persons with disabilities in the public service and I would also — as I mentioned earlier — like some information on how the policy around employing persons with mental disabilities is progressing.

Hon. Mr. Rouble: Mr. Chair, the Government of Yukon is committed to being a very inclusive employer, one that is representative of Yukon populations. There have been a number of different initiatives that this government has put in place to address many of these situations.

Internally, we have the workplace diversity employment office, which I believe the member opposite was referring to, which works with people with disabilities in our community and looks at different positions within the Government of Yukon and how we can create a more accommodating workplace. Within the Public Service Commission, in our staff development branch, we do have an individual who is now managing the project that the member opposite is referring to and ensuring that there is a full review of disability management issues and policy reviews to ensure that we don't have any policy areas that are barriers to this type of employment situation and also looking at areas where there might be other, more physical barriers.

As well, the member opposite, the Member for Mount Lorne, made reference to a pilot project. I believe that was the document destruction project that is done in conjunction with Raven Recycling. This is a really neat project that is now a permanent part of the Government of Yukon. It is staffed permanently by people with different disabilities. They provide a very valuable service to the Government of Yukon. As well, it is also one that has had a greening effect on some of our operations.

The corporate shredding and recycling program, to date, has processed 23 tonnes of material and has diverted that from the burning process. We're continuing to work on initiatives like that. As well, there are programs, such as auxiliary on-call for people with disability who sometimes go into office assistant or administrative assistant types of positions. The department works with individuals who have been identified and then also looks at suitable placements for them within the Government of Yukon.

The Government of Yukon recognizes that it has a responsibility to have an inclusive public service, one that is representative of all Yukoners, and we will take great steps to work to ensure that a variety of different Yukon groups, whether they are people in non-traditional roles, or people with disabilities, or people of First Nation ancestry or other different groups in our population, have representation in Government of Yukon employment.

Another initiative — I'm afraid I might be wearing my Minister of Education hat on this one — is the target initiative for older workers. We are looking at different initiatives where we can help people — who, for whatever reason, have been

outside the workforce — re-engage with the workforce. Some of those people are going into Government of Yukon positions.

A little bit on this line, too, is the GradCorps type of situation where we have a program in place to work with recently graduated Yukoners — those individuals who have gone Outside, or even to Yukon College, for their education and who wish to return to Yukon. We have created the GradCorps, which is a program that works with Government of Yukon departments to identify workplaces and positions that are suitable to returning graduates. I can go into more detail on that program if the member would like, but I just want him to rest assured that the government is strongly living up to its responsibility to be an inclusive employer and is an employer that is representative of Yukon citizens.

Mr. Cardiff: I thank the minister for the response. I asked this question on April 30 in Question Period. I asked it again on May 6 in budget debate on the Public Service Commission. I would like to know how we are progressing on the policy. The minister talked about establishing a senior level committee to deal with this policy.

What he was saying was in regard to policy 3.59, which is entitled, “Accommodating Employees with Disabilities”. All the policies that we can find are dated between 1994 and 2004, so there was supposed to be a corporate-wide review of disability management programs in 2007, but this was supposed to lead to changes in the policy or new policies. This came out of a court case where the government was instructed to do this policy development around accommodating employees with mental disabilities. I’d like to know what progress has been made.

Hon. Mr. Rouble: Since we last spoke on this there has been significant progress. In regard to this policy, a steering committee for the project has been established. The committee has drafted their vision and the principles for disability management within the Government of Yukon. I believe it’s made of a cross-section of senior officials from the Government of Yukon, including a couple of deputies. Their next steps will be to continue to work with the steering committee to develop strategic direction for the many aspects of the project, developing a working committee to develop the operational policies, process systems, roles and responsibilities for disability management within Yukon, and examining all resources required to support the program in the long term.

These are some of the overall objectives of the organization. They have had numerous meetings on this. There has been progress made on the variety of different issues. There are some very visible changes that have happened in this building, about creating a more accommodating employment place — for example, the ramp that was constructed in the foyer. This committee will be doing its ongoing work on this and we look forward to finalizing some of these policy changes and putting them in place.

As I said, we are continuing to make changes on a very regular basis, not only in our physical structures, but how we look at different positions, and indeed how we can remove other barriers that are in the way of people accessing employment situations in the Government of Yukon.

Mr. Cardiff: I only have one more question in this area. We’re obviously making progress. There is a steering committee. They have terms of reference. They have developed a vision. They’ve done a lot of work by the sounds of it.

I’m wondering two things. You said it was a steering committee. There were deputy ministers involved. This is beginning to sound like last spring. I’m wondering what the level of participation is by employees, whether it’s the Joint Management Committee or representatives of the union, who, by representing employees, have a stake in this. I’d like to know about the timelines. Have any timelines been assigned to this committee with regard to developing the policy?

I appreciate the work that has been done around removing barriers in this building. As much as some people have said that it’s inconvenient that you can’t come through that door for awhile, I think it’s much more welcoming now to a larger group of the public. So I’m pleased to see that that work has been done — again, the timelines for the steering committee to develop the options for the policy and when we might see those options.

Hon. Mr. Rouble: I appreciate the comments coming from the member opposite. I do recognize that he recognizes we are making progress on this issue. This is a fairly broad committee that has been established and includes human resource managers from a variety of different departments — sorry, those would be directors of HR. I also mentioned there are also several deputy ministers. I do understand the steering committee expects to include participation of some of our bargaining unit representatives as this progresses.

Additionally, we’re working with some of the outside entities that are affected or affect us in this, which include organizations such as the Yukon Workers’ Compensation Health and Safety Board, or Sun Life, our insurance agent. We’re looking at not only creating a more accessible workplace, but also at reducing the return-to-work barriers that may exist. I’m sure the member opposite is familiar with those discussions from our debates on the Yukon’s *Workers’ Compensation Act*.

Increasing the ease with which people return to work will do a lot to re-engage them into the workforce and be of benefit not only to the employee but also to the employer. We are working very closely with Workers’ Compensation Health and Safety Board. Some of these changes are very visible — for example, new concrete structures, new ramps or new door openers — but some of them are a bit more subtle in the workplace, like the positioning of different files or folders or pieces of office equipment. Some of these are more of a barrier by practice rather than a barrier by policy and they can be changed quite easily without any significant impact on other people. We are addressing many of these issues on a day-to-day basis as well as looking at the large policy issues. I expect that the next time that we speak in this type of manner I will be announcing the policy change has been made.

Mr. Cardiff: I thank the minister for the answers. I know that we are not going to be able to get through all the departments before the sitting comes to an end, but I’d like to ask a few more questions. I’d like to know whether or not the government has any plans to — I know in previous govern-

ments there were some initiatives where government jobs were distributed in the communities. I know that there are jobs out there in Highways and Public Works, highway maintenance, Community Services — all of those areas — nursing stations — and we had, I believe, the aviation branch at one time, or still is located out in Haines Junction.

I'm just wondering whether or not the government has any plans to look at providing more employment in communities by distributing government jobs in those communities, where possible. Part of it I guess goes to the fact that — I don't know if the government — I think the government, the minister, recently announced this actually. It was a telework program. I can't remember the exact name.

The minister gave a ministerial statement on this, I believe. It's the opportunity for people to work from home. So I'm wondering whether the government envisions this providing more opportunities in rural Yukon for employment with the government.

Hon. Mr. Rouble: I appreciate the question from the member opposite. The Government of Yukon strives to provide appropriate levels of service wherever we can. This certainly includes providing Yukon communities with levels of service that they should expect — things like highway service, community services, and health. As well, there are a significant number of employees from the Department of Environment and Education, just to name a couple of different departments that provide services in Yukon's communities.

I know there are a number of different departments — Education is included — that have expanded some of their rural employment situations. In Education, there is a child behaviour specialist, for example. This was done because many Yukon communities are very attractive places to live.

We will certainly continue to work with the different structures that we have throughout the territory, the different offices that we have and strive to meet the needs in the community. We certainly recognize that the Yukon is a beautiful place to live — an incredible place to live — and indeed, it's the place that all of us have chosen to make our home. We certainly realize there is more to Yukon than Whitehorse. As a rural representative, I am reminded of that on a very regular basis. We do need to ensure that appropriate services are being provided in communities such as Dawson, Carcross, Tagish and others.

The member also mentioned the telework program, which has been put in place in order to increase workplace satisfaction, to increase — I would expect — the output of some of the work from some people. We try to be a very accommodating employer, an employer of choice. There are many instances, as we discussed during the telework exchange when the ministerial statement was made and the member opposite had an opportunity to provide his comment on it — that in today's workplace with the communication tools that we have in place, many people can communicate via telephone or Internet, just as easily as they could through interoffice links.

I expect as this policy continues to expand and unfold and different people take advantage of it, we will see some of the changes, perhaps like the member opposite is talking about.

Each of the telework cases is looked at on a case-by-case basis. There is an inspection done by the supervisor of the employee, and we have to ensure appropriate communications, safety and security protocols are in place in their home. It wasn't one of the intended objectives of the policy, but I'm not going to say it won't turn out to accomplish some of what the member opposite is talking about.

I would expect that all members of the Assembly, whether by choice or otherwise, have had the opportunity to work from home, and have sat there, working on their own computer at home, emailing back and forth with the office or talking back and forth. I see people are nodding. We recognize this is an important tool we use and it's an important tool for other Government of Yukon employees to have as well.

Mr. Cardiff: I thank the minister for the answer. It does make sense to me. I believe I was otherwise engaged the day that the minister gave the ministerial statement. I think that the telework policy is a step in the right direction for some people, but for others it may not be what they desire to do. I guess the way the minister has explained it is that it applies to existing positions. The direction I was going was whether or not there would be positions that would be available. I realize there would still have to be that assessment and monitoring. It might be a little more difficult, but it is an opportunity to provide more impact for government and taxpayer dollars spent in some of those smaller economies in the smaller communities of our territory.

The minister has mentioned things like GradCorps, but increasingly I hear about young people coming back to the territory; they have got credentials and they would like to work. They apply for jobs in the private sector or with government. Sometimes maybe their credentials are too good for the positions they're applying for. What they'd like to do is just get their foot in the door, so I'm just wondering if the minister can briefly tell us about what opportunities the government is giving to young people with regard to work in the public service.

Hon. Mr. Rouble: One of the strong focuses of the government has certainly been working on providing opportunities for Yukoners. We've seen a tremendous growth in the employment sector in the territory, certainly through the private sector, but also through the public sector as well.

One of our big focuses in the Department of Education has been preparing Yukoners for Yukon opportunities. That involves sitting down and taking a look at some of the emerging areas in the territory that are growing, that need to have people and looking at how do we prepare people or provide educational opportunities for those people to take advantage of the opportunities that are here in the territory.

Additionally, we've seen a growing private sector employment area. I don't have the statistics in front of me about the growth of the number of jobs in the territory, but they certainly have been significant in recent years. We also realize in the Government of Yukon and the Public Service Commission that we are seeing an aging workforce and a significant number of the baby-boomer generation are retiring, and we have to have in place appropriate succession plans. I spoke a bit about the succession planning process yesterday during debate, but to

briefly recap, we are taking a look at those different areas in government that will be affected by many of the soon-to-be-retiring people and working to ensure that we have people that are being prepared to take up some of those positions.

We also recognize that we need to encourage Yukon's younger people, those people just completing either secondary school or post-secondary education, to continue to become employees of the Government of Yukon. There are a number of different initiatives in this area. I'll start with things like co-op programs, where students either from Yukon College or from other jurisdictions work. They do a co-op placement, so it isn't a remunerated position, but they gain experience in a variety of different departments, whether that's Health and Social Services, Justice, Education, the hospital, highways. There are a variety of different places where students do work experience within Government of Yukon.

The next step then would be summer employment. That's the STEP program — the student training employment program — where the Department of Education and Public Service Commission work to identify positions within government that would be suitable to have students working in those positions during the summer months. There are a variety of different positions in that and a different pay scale based upon the number of years that students have been in school. I believe a call has already gone out to the different departments, identifying positions for this upcoming summer season.

I am very encouraged to see that the different departments are recognizing the importance of bringing young people in and preparing them for future employment. It is also living up to the responsibility of the Yukon government as an employer to work with the younger generation. Members will also realize that this government did recently change the STEP program to make graduating students eligible for the program. Once they had graduated from their post-secondary institution they could come back to Yukon, take a STEP position for the summer and get a foot in the door.

The next step then after graduation would be involvement in programs like the GradCorps. The GradCorps is a program where Public Service Commission has worked with a variety of different departments to identify different positions that would be suitable to work with recently graduated students as employees.

Since 2005, there have been five intakes and a total of 31 GradCorps internships have been filled; 21 of the 25 GradCorps graduates were offered continued employment and 15 are still Yukon public servants. This is a very positive step that helps to bring recently graduated students into the Government of Yukon employ. This doesn't preclude or prevent other recent graduates from applying for jobs that are publicly posted.

Other initiatives out there would include the First Nation Training Corps, which is another program that the government has in place to work with people of First Nation ancestry. This provides support in a variety of different positions. Also there is then a bit of a relationship where the First Nation Training Corps participants often work with the Aboriginal Employees Forum, which is a forum that provides support for YTG em-

ployees of First Nation ancestry and additional training or discussion points or mentoring services for those employees.

There are also other methods that past graduates have used to gain experience with the Government of Yukon — whether working in auxiliary-on-call positions or as casual employees, or in some cases, working as substitute teachers in our education system to gain additional experience. The Government of Yukon recognizes that we will need to work with younger people — the next generation — on an ongoing basis to ensure that a variety of different positions within government are staffed appropriately. We recognize that there is an aging of our population in general, and that we are seeing the baby-boomer generation nearing retirement, and we have certainly put in place many programs, opportunities and practices to ensure that appropriate succession planning is taking place and that the Government of Yukon is prepared for the changes in demographics that the territory will see.

Mr. Cardiff: I thank the minister for the answer. The statistics he doesn't have in front of him — he might want to check because the latest statistics from the Bureau of Statistics for the labour force survey, as of November 2009, released December 4, showed that the labour force has actually shrunk by 3.8 percent. The number employed has shrunk by 6.9 percent; the number of unemployed — this is year-to-year statistics, so we're comparing November 2008 to November 2009 — has grown by 44 percent and the unemployment rate is 2.5 percent. So it's not as sweet and bubbly as the minister made it out to be.

I appreciate the minister's answers about trying to get more involvement from youth. It is a succession issue. Some of those questions have been asked already and I'm not going to go back to that. The minister mentioned the First Nation Training Corps, also, so I'm going to try to roll a few questions in here together.

The minister mentioned the First Nation Training Corps. I'm just wondering what the situation is in the Yukon public service currently. I know that there has always been a desire on the part of government to have a more representative workforce, and that includes having young people and First Nations and disabled people in the workforce, but I'd like to know what progress we're making on that issue — and whether or not, in the succession planning, we're using some of the vehicles that the minister talked about to provide mentoring for that succession planning. By using programs like the GradCorps, First Nation Training Corps and even auxiliary, casual or term employees to do some of that succession planning and building that capacity so that those positions can be filled when people retire. That leads me to the question of how many employees there are.

We were provided with some statistics in the briefing and it shows that currently there are 955 auxiliary employees, 216 terms, 93 casuals and 216 other. If you add it all up, more than one-third of employees — or almost one-third of employees I guess — aren't full-time employees. I am wondering why that is? Why don't we create more permanent, full-time employment? I know the purpose of having some of these other categories, but 20 percent of your workforce is made up of auxilia-

ries. It just seems to me that a lot of those positions are auxiliaries or terms that just keep getting rolled over and rolled over. The job stays the same, but you could be a casual or an auxiliary or a term for many, many years, doing the same job. It would make sense that if the need is there, that we should create that full-time employment and provide those people with the benefits. I think I've asked this question before, too, but I need to go back to that and the context of the succession planning, as I mentioned earlier. I will leave those questions with the minister and await his answer.

Hon. Mr. Rouble: Mr. Chair, looking at some of the statistical indicators around Yukon's labour force, we see that in about the year 2002, there were 16,500 people in the labour force in Yukon. This past year, that has grown to about 18,000 people.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Hon. Mr. Rouble: The member is calling out some other numbers, but if he's looking at some of the earlier months — May, June, July, August, September — it was up over 1,800 people in the labour force. As for the number of people employed in the territory — going back to 2000, we were at 14,500 employees, and then this year it's in the high 16,000 to 17,000 mark. So we've certainly seen a significant increase in the number of jobs throughout the territory.

The member is also asking questions regarding representation of First Nations in the workplace. In that, we've seen an increase from about 11 percent of Yukon government employees to about 14 percent. That's in a wide variety of different positions throughout a variety of government departments and a variety of different management levels.

As well, people with disabilities — we have in our population about 10.4 percent of people who are identified with disabilities. That represents about 14 percent of the Yukon population aged 25 to 65. There is certainly progress being made in all of these areas.

Mr. Chair, I am very proud to see the moves that the government of Yukon has made in working with all Yukoners, including people working in non-traditional roles. The member opposite of course has heard me talk about our apprentice statistics and the growing number of women involved in our skilled trades and apprentices and some of the significant growth there. As well, we are also seeing a strong growth in the participation of people of First Nation ancestry in our trades. As well, we are seeing increased representation of these groups in the Government of Yukon employment situations.

I think that covers off the question that was asked. If not, I trust the member will rise again and ask me again.

Mr. Cardiff: The minister covered off part of the questions and it's partially my fault. I've sent the minister over the latest information Bureau of Statistics provided to us by e-mail. All these statistics come to us on a regular basis. It just shows there's a decline, or it has been declining a bit for the last while this fall.

The questions I was asking were about a representative workforce. The minister answered part of that but it was also in the context of whether or not we shouldn't be creating more permanent full-time employment.

I was looking at the handout we received at the budget briefing and the handout is very helpful. It shows we are making progress in some areas of representation in the workforce and that we are making progress when it comes to employment equity and gender equality in the workforce. We can always strive to do more. Currently 25 percent of deputy minister positions are held by women. We'd like to see that come up to the other numbers that we have for mid-management and senior management.

The questions that I was asking were more about what the government can do to create more full-time positions and how the minister and the department see using programs like he was talking about — the GradCorps, the First Nation Training Corps — to promote from within. Indeed, that's why I brought up the issues of auxiliaries, casuals and term positions for succession planning. As the minister alluded to, there is going to be a lot of people retiring. We're seeing it now and I believe that we're going to be seeing more and more of it. It's opportunities for our young people, but it's also opportunities for people who are working within the government. It's also an opportunity to improve those numbers, whether it's encouraging women to move up in senior management, mid-management, into those deputy minister positions or getting people who are in the First Nation Training Corps so that our workforce is more representative of our community and we have good succession planning.

I'm going to leave that with the minister and I hope I've explained that a little bit better for him.

Hon. Mr. Rouble: Indeed, the Government of Yukon is committed to preparing Yukoners for Yukon opportunities. This is evident within the Public Service Commission where we certainly do look to promote from within and base our promotions on an individual's merit. There are a multitude of different training programs, both formal and informal, and internal and external, that are used within the Government of Yukon. Some of these internal programs include the EDAP program, which provides employees with an opportunity to do a rotation through the central agencies in order to gain experience there. The developmental assignments, for which there is a budget allocation in the supplementary budget, I did go into a bit of detail on in my budget speech.

I could go over it again if the member would like but I can trust he will find it in the Blues. These developmental assignments allow people to move into a different position for a term of time in order to gain significant experience and exposure to other departments. As well, there are our supervisory programs, our management development programs and the Yukon government leadership forum.

The supervisory success program provides practical knowledge and hands-on skills for front-line supervisors. There are a variety of intakes that have been done with this program. We have had very positive feedback on this. Leading and learning in Yukon communities is a modified supervisory success program designed specifically to meet the needs of supervisors living and working in Yukon communities. This touches on the issue that the Member for Mount Lorne raised awhile ago of how we are preparing people for more opportunities in our

Yukon communities. Indeed, this is a training program that the Public Service Commission runs with Government of Yukon employees who work in communities outside of Whitehorse.

The next step in this ladder or this process would be participation in the management development program. This focuses on developing personal leadership skills and introducing the theory and concepts behind good management and leadership decisions. Additionally, we have created the Yukon government leadership forum — YGLF — which seeks to improve the self-awareness, knowledge and strategic leadership skills of employees and potential leaders in the Government of Yukon.

Public Service Commission and other departments are working with outside institutions. For example, the Public Service Commission is working with Royal Roads University on a human resource management program. We're working with Outside institutions to provide the accreditation and certification to employees that help to develop their skills. The Department of Education is working with the University of Northern British Columbia and Yukon College to provide a master's in education and leadership at Yukon College. Yukon teachers can prepare themselves for leadership roles within the Department of Education.

Additionally, the Department of Education has a leadership development forum which brings in participants from across the territory to expand their leadership skills in order to engage more with community members, to look at strategic goals, to look at the planning and the research.

There is a very strong representation of First Nation people in the Department of Education's leader forum. I don't have those statistics with me, but we do have a wide variety of programs throughout the territory. Additionally, some of the other informal steps are a speaker series where different experts or practitioners in a variety of different fields provide presentations on topics such as capable managers, ethics in public policy, information overload, information privacy, and the foundation of wellness. These are just a snapshot of some of the programs that are offered through a speaker program.

The Public Service Commission recognizes the importance of succession planning. It recognizes the importance of creating a representative workplace and certainly recognizes the value of education and works with a variety of partners to expand the capacities and capabilities of Government of Yukon employees.

I should add that the information on many of these different programs is shared with other First Nation governments or other orders of government or other Yukon employers, so that those people can also benefit from some of these programs or training opportunities. So we're certainly working with others to increase the overall capacity of all in Yukon.

I see some nodding, so I'm hoping that this is answering the member's question.

Mr. Cardiff: That was helpful, for sure. I'd like to know whether or not these developmental assignments and the supervisory success program — obviously, the public service is like climbing a ladder. Admittedly, there are people who enjoy doing term positions or casual work or being in an auxiliary position, but are some of these programs, like the developmen-

tal assignments or the supervisory success programs, available to people who are in auxiliary or casual or term positions?

Hon. Mr. Rouble: There is certainly a wide range of training opportunities and programs that are available through the Government of Yukon. Some are very short — I mentioned a one-day speaker series. Some of them are much longer. For example, the participation in the Yukon government leadership forum often lasts about a year and a half. We do have the opportunity for many of our casuals, on-call or seasonal type of employees to participate in some training situations. I'm thinking of some of the things like the seasonal workers where we might go and do an off-season type of training opportunity. Also at the beginning of each season, there are workplace safety programs or other training in things like bear awareness, entering and exiting an aircraft, firearms training, vehicle safety, wilderness first aid. So there are those training opportunities.

I would encourage the member, if he knows of individuals who are in these types of situations who are thinking about additional training, to talk to their supervisor and have a one-on-one discussion so we can find the suitable area of training for them. As well, if they are in that type of area, they might also want to go to Yukon College and talk to one of the career counsellors there about other training opportunities that might be available and might lead them to a type of employment situation they might wish to be in, in the future.

Additionally, there are other programs out there, such as a mentoring program we have with our employees that offers more of an informal one-on-one relationship between people in junior positions and those in more senior positions, to get some of that transfer of knowledge and some of that corporate memory transferred from the older generation to the younger generation.

We will continue to provide a wide variety of training programs, both formally and informally. Some of these things are best done on a case-by-case basis. Again, if the member has a specific constituent in mind, I would encourage him or her to talk to their supervisor or the HR specialist in the department to look at other training or career enhancement options that may be available.

Mr. Cardiff: I thank the minister for those answers; they are indeed helpful. I'd like to ask the minister a question. I believe I asked this question in the Department of Education and I'm sure he was expecting it to be asked again. Basically, it's about our constitutional right to belong to a union and to benefit from the organization and the solidarity of having a body that represents your interests, working conditions, fair wages, benefits, protection, and health and safety issues.

I'm not going to go into the details about the challenge and all that, but I would like to know what work is being done on the issue of teachers on call being prevented from joining the union of their choice?

Hon. Mr. Rouble: Mr. Chair, I don't have a whole lot more to add on this topic. When the member opposite and I discussed it during the Department of Education debate, the member realized that membership in Yukon's public servants union requires employment with the Government of Yukon,

with an ongoing employment relationship. We do have the situation where there are people who do provide temporary services to the Government of Yukon but they aren't in a formal and ongoing employee-employer relationship. That certainly isn't to say that we don't have a responsibility as an employer to these people who do the work for us. These are issues such as substitute teachers or some of our emergency wildland fire fighters.

We take our role very seriously and strive to provide appropriate remuneration to all people who are compensated by the Government of Yukon regardless of representation by union or not. That would include things like our management positions or our confidential exclusions or others. I certainly see this commitment reflected in the changes, just for example, to the substitute teacher compensation rates. When I look at the compensation rate in March 2006, a category 1 substitute teacher was paid at \$20.97 an hour, and that amount has increased by, I believe, about three percent a year. Actually, it looks like every six months there has been an increase of 1.8 or 1.2 percent of their salary. They have seen an escalating remuneration or compensation amount. The government, being a fair employer, has certainly seen that those rates have increased at a rate comparable to the increases we've seen with the YTA or the Public Service Alliance of Canada.

We will continue to provide appropriate remuneration to people and we will continue to monitor the situation. The member opposite has mentioned one Supreme Court case and there are a couple of others. We are very observantly monitoring the situation, as is, I would expect, the Yukon teachers' union and also the Public Service Alliance.

Mr. Cardiff: I appreciate what the minister is saying, but some of the teachers who are acting in substitute positions do so on a regular basis. Emergency firefighters come back year after year after year. This is how they make their living. As I said earlier in the questioning, many of the employees who are in those auxiliary or term positions perform the same function day after day, month after month, year after year. It's not just about the wages and it's not just about the benefits. It's about representation. It's about access to dispute resolution processes and representation by a representative who knows and has the ability to work on behalf of that worker to represent their rights in the workplace, as per a collective agreement or whatever applicable legislation there is, so it's not just about wages.

I don't want to get into the argument about whether or not emergency firefighters are being paid enough. Even for all the improvements that have been made, I still believe that they should probably be paid more given the job that they do. The minister needs to understand that it's not just about the wages.

I'd like to ask the minister one more question: which policies, regulations, legislation or program reviews are currently ongoing within the Public Service Commission?

Hon. Mr. Rouble: Mr. Chair, I just want to clear up a couple of things for the member opposite. The wildland firefighters — those folks who do return on a regular basis — are already covered.

Auxiliaries and term positions are part of the bargaining unit, and they certainly do have the rights and representation of their union affiliation with that. The group that I mentioned is the emergency fire people. In case of a large emergency fire where additional people are needed in the community, we go out looking for volunteers to help out. Those are the ones that I was referring to. Our wildland firefighters are —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Hon. Mr. Rouble: Okay, the member opposite recognizes that. He has also asked about the areas that we are looking at in addition to the different government initiatives that are going through. I would expect that during some of the select committee work, the Public Service Commission might be asked to provide assistance. The people in our policy branch are looking at issues such as disability case management work, health and safety as we have obviously discussed earlier, leave-without-pay issues and the employment equity policy.

As well, there are other ongoing issues that do arise from day to day, where our policy people do take a look at that. They have fairly regular meetings with our departmental HR directors in order to look at emerging issues throughout the territory and, as a very responsible government, we do welcome the recognition of emerging issues and then we do take appropriate steps to get involved to respond to them — whether that means establishing a committee, either through the deputies or a committee such as the one I mentioned regarding the health and safety issue.

We form appropriate groups to take a look at it, start doing the appropriate policy work and then, of course, the policies do have to go through the proper Government of Yukon channels through to the approval processes.

Those are a number of the issues we're working on that we can come up with off the top of our head here.

Hon. Mr. Rouble: A couple of the other policies we just recently concluded were the reservist policy and the telework policy, which I shared. I shared those policy changes with members of the Assembly earlier this year.

Mr. Cardiff: I'd like to thank the minister for his answer. I would also like to thank the officials for being here today and yesterday and for the work they do. I have no further questions, and we're prepared to move on.

Hon. Mr. Rouble: Just to provide a response to the Member for Mayo-Tatchun, yesterday he asked how many employees there were in 2002. In 2002, the number was 3,749. In 2009, there are about 4,890. I trust that satisfies the member's question. I don't see any disagreement, so I trust that it does.

Chair: Is there any further general debate?

Seeing none, we'll proceed line by line in Vote 10.

Mr. Cardiff: I'd like to request the unanimous consent of the Committee to deem all lines in Vote 10, Public Service Commission, cleared or carried, as required.

Unanimous consent re deeming all lines in Vote 10, Public Service Commission, cleared or carried

Chair: Mr. Cardiff has requested the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all lines in Vote 10, Public Service Commission, cleared or carried, as required. Are you agreed?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Chair: Unanimous consent has been granted.

On Operation and Maintenance Expenditures

Total Operation and Maintenance Expenditures in the amount of \$524,000 agreed to

On Capital Expenditures

Capital Expenditures in the amount of \$9,000 agreed to
Public Service Commission agreed to

Chair: Committee of the Whole will now proceed to Department of Environment.

Do members wish a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Chair: Committee of the Whole will recess for five 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 52, Department of Environment.

Department of Environment

Hon. Ms. Taylor: Mr. Chair, first of all I would just like to start out by extending my thanks to the Department of Environment, to department officials for doing the great amount of work this department is obligated to conduct each day throughout the year. This marks the 2009-10 supplementary budget for the Department of Environment.

We have spoken at great length about one of the greatest challenges — I would also say opportunities — facing the world today, and that is climate change. In this regard, the Government of Yukon as a whole has been quite active in coming up with solutions that can be applied here in our own efforts to meet the coming adaptation challenges of climate change.

No single government agency or department will have all the climate change answers or solutions. It's an effort that crosses many boundaries and entails not just the Government of Yukon but all levels and orders of government. It certainly entails all countries on the face of the planet and it also comes down to our own individual actions in effecting change. When it comes to the Government of Yukon, however — whether it's the Department of Highways and Public Works undertaking an overview permafrost assessment to guide future highway construction techniques or changing our motor vehicle fleet to become more energy efficient or it's the construction of the new visitor interpretive centre at Tombstone Territorial Park, which relies on passive solar power to reduce our reliance on fossil fuel, or making it possible to generate more electrical energy by reducing our own greenhouse gas emissions, or nurturing and delivering our own Research Centre of Excellence at Yukon College — we are also providing new programs to the Yukon Housing Corporation and Energy Solutions Centre so each and every one of us as individuals can be part of the climate change adaptation solution.

We're also working to encourage and further support community-based recycling centres, promoting recycling and reusing concepts, so individuals can further reduce their contributions to greenhouse gases.

The supplementary before us today includes dollars for the climate change secretariat that operates out of the Department of Environment. As members will recall, we announced the establishment of the secretariat this past spring to coordinate the many climate change actions and initiatives being delivered across the government.

Climate change initiatives also form the largest amount of funding in this proposed supplementary budget. The climate change secretariat recently successfully coordinated federal funding applications for a number of projects in regard to climate change adaptation to be carried out over the next two to three years. In fact, I believe this funding was in the amount of just under \$800,000.

These projects are being carried out in partnerships with the Council of Yukon First Nations, Yukon College, University of Northern British Columbia and the Yukon departments of Environment, Energy, Mines and Resources, and Highways and Public Works. It is one small corporate example of how solutions to climate change adaptation are being found and delivered across the government and not just by one single department or agency.

The supplementary also covers financial support provided to the youth climate change forum that was held in Inuvik this past August. This was also in addition to the annual three-day youth engagement climate change forum coordinated by the secretariat. We have also taken an internal bookkeeping transfer on the \$295,000 in contribution funding that Environment Yukon provides the Northern Climate Exchange. Those funds will now flow through the climate change secretariat instead of the environmental programs branch.

Of the \$1,028,000 increase in the operation and maintenance budget, some \$406,000 is for the revote of funds approved last year. On the capital budget side, we're asking for \$326,000 in revotes for projects that were not completed last year and \$65,000 for new projects needed this year. These include a Southern Lakes habitat mapping project to help the Southern Lakes Wildlife Coordinating Committee in its deliberations, completion of a grizzly bear inventory project and a wolverine inventory project, an Arctic vegetation classification project as part of the International Polar Year initiative, work on contaminated site assessments that were initiated last fiscal year, and completion of the exhibits for the new Tombstone Territorial Park Interpretive Centre that was opened earlier this fall.

We're asking for a \$15,000 revote to complete outhouse replacements in various campgrounds. We are asking for \$34,000 to complete a database collection project for the NatureServe program. The new funds that we are requesting are for renovations to the parks building to provide office space for the parks officer program and funds to repair the fish and wildlife office in Haines Junction.

Mr. Chair, that concludes my remarks and I look forward to comments from the opposite side.

Mr. Fairclough: I do have a few questions for the minister in this supplementary budget in the Department of Environment. I would like to thank the officials for providing a briefing, although I wasn't there at the time because I had other things that I was attending to. I would like to thank them for providing that information to the Official Opposition.

There are a lot of questions in this department that we have and would like clarification on — from wildlife during this general debate before we get into line items, where government is going with certain things, projects that have evolved, and in particular, recommendations that have been made by the Peel land use planning commission.

I would like to start with that. The Peel land use planning commission has made it public. They are presenting their thoughts and all the work they've done to governments — the territorial government and First Nation governments — and internal work must take place now with the Department of Environment and the government in general with all the other departments.

What are the minister's thoughts on the Peel planning commission's submission thus far?

Hon. Ms. Taylor: First, I would just like to congratulate the work of the Peel Watershed Planning Commission, which has been tasked to recommend the regional land use plan for this area as identified under the final agreements. As the member opposite alluded to, I believe, the draft — or I should say the recommended plan — was presented just days ago. It is quite a lengthy document. In the next coming time, there will be an internal review taking place among the respective departments.

Likewise, there will be also much discussion, to be sure, among the respective parties and First Nation governments associated with this planning process. So, until that internal analysis actually takes place, there's really not a lot more to comment on.

Mr. Fairclough: A lot has gone on with the Peel watershed planning process, which involved the Department of Environment. I'm surprised that the minister's just leaving it at that. She has no thoughts on the recommendations that have been brought forward by the Peel Watershed Planning Commission. She doesn't say, "Great". She isn't dismissive. So far, all I've heard from her is, "Not until that internal work is done." These are recommendations, I would think, that might be of great interest to the minister. Like we said, time and time in this House, perhaps the minister is not quite in control here. I know this is broader. It goes on to other departments, but why does the minister not have more thoughts on this, rather than just leave it for the internal work to be done?

Much work already has been done by the Peel Watershed Planning Commission, and I would think that perhaps the minister would have some thoughts on the amount of protection that has been suggested by the Peel planning commission or their thoughts on development and so on.

Is there anything that the minister could express to the House in regard to the information that has been passed forward by the Peel planning commission — more than what she has provided so far?

Hon. Ms. Taylor: I don't have too much more to add other than we are very pleased to receive the recommended plan. It is hundreds of pages in length and very detailed. I really don't have too much to add beyond that. We'll certainly be working with Energy, Mines and Resources, who is the lead department for coordinating land use planning exercises such as this. Tourism and Culture will also contribute to that. It will be a corporate-wide perspective on the plan, and there's a great amount of information to be delivered or to be reviewed.

We look forward to doing that internal review and analysis of the plan and doing our homework on the specific details as outlined in the plan. To be sure, the Department of Environment will take an important role in that review. It is they who house the technical expertise required to provide assessments on overall recommendations. Likewise, other departments will also have a hand in that.

In terms of our commitment to parks and protected areas, I've said on the floor of the Legislature that our government has been able to deliver a number of plans over the last number of years in meeting our obligations as set out in final agreements — chapter 10 in regard to special management areas. I think I've repeated myself on the floor of the Legislature, but we were very pleased to sign off a number of plans earlier this year, starting with the *North Yukon Regional Land Use Plan*, which was Yukon's very first land use plan. That was a historic moment for the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation, and I congratulate the work of their respective elected officials, and their officials who actually forwarded that. It was a significant milestone, in terms of intergovernmental cooperation, regional planning, and certainly land claims implementation, to be sure.

We have been focusing on meeting our obligations for special management areas, as identified in chapter 10 of the First Nation final agreements. We're working to complete management plans for new parks and implementing existing management plans for established parks and protected areas. I believe, as I mentioned, we have been making progress in this regard, in collaboration with First Nation governments, including, as I said, putting in place the *North Yukon Regional Land Use Plan*, Yukon's first-ever plan to be put in place, and also including the Old Crow Flats habitat protection area that was signed off earlier this year, in collaboration with the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation, but also the Tombstone Territorial Park management plan that was signed off, in collaboration with Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in First Nation.

We do have a number of planning processes that are underway for a number of special management areas that will define new territorial parks in the territory, including Agay Mene, Kusawa, Asi Keyi parks. Those are all being in the works to be developed, currently underway. We also have a tremendous amount of work underway to develop management plans for wetlands in Lewes Marsh, at Tagish River, Stewart River, Devil's Elbow, Big Island — to name but a few of the park planning initiatives that are currently underway.

I just wanted to say that the Peel watershed planning process is something that the Department of Environment has also contributed to, as I mentioned, through providing data, land classification, completing regional ecological mapping and

working with other stakeholders to develop criteria assessments.

As I mentioned, we are looking forward to providing the internal analysis. I am relying on our department to do that work and very much engaging with the respective communities and the Yukon First Nations, which we are obligated to adhere to in terms of meeting our obligations under this specific plan, the chapter 11 planning process.

There is a tremendous amount of work underway and it doesn't stop there. Regional land use planning is but one tool. As I believe I've referenced, there is forest management planning, resource planning, fish and wildlife planning as per chapter 16 of individual final agreements. There is a whole host of different entities currently underway that engages a number of different departments. I would be happy to go into some of the specifics on each of these land use planning exercises, whether it be through special management areas, habitat protection areas, or other fish and wildlife planning exercises. The point, to be sure, is that we are proceeding and we are working to meet our obligations.

Mr. Fairclough: Mr. Chair, I have to thank the Peel Watershed Planning Commission for doing the job they have done. I know the department and other departments in government have looked at providing information to the Peel planning commission.

In the public's mind, they feel the Premier went too far in not having some information that was done up by the Department of Environment go into the hands of the Peel planning commission. Even though it states clearly under the UFA that the planning is to promote the well-being of Yukon Indian people — and those words are used throughout the final agreements — and other residents in the planning region, community and the Yukon as a whole, to take care of the interests of other Canadians.

The fact that not all the information provided by the Department of Environment was given to the Peel planning commission is a sore spot for the public.

The Peel planning commission went ahead and provided their recommendations without this information. Is the minister going to make available those recommendations, their submission to the Peel planning commission, the many pages that were not given to the commission?

The many pages that were not given to the commission — is the minister going to make that available? Will she use that information for internal review? What's going to happen with this information that was held back from the Peel planning commission?

Hon. Ms. Taylor: I just wanted to go back to all of the work that is currently underway and it is quite comprehensive. I just wanted to again go through some of these items that the Department of Environment has been working on at great length over the last number of years in terms of protecting and preserving areas of value and significance to Yukon citizens.

As I mentioned earlier, this is but a snapshot of what government is undertaking in the Department of Environment. I have to say, when we go back to recent investments in fish and

wildlife inventories, those additional resources toward that has enabled much more work to be completed over the years.

It has also proven to be very integral and very instrumental in providing the detailed information to land use planning bodies through our various departments, but also for our own department planning exercise. Just in the fish and wildlife branch, we have a number of habitat protection areas that are either currently underway or have been approved, in terms of management plans and preservation of those areas. The Fishing Branch, of course, as we all know, was approved not long ago — Lhutsaw wetland approved, Horseshoe Slough approved — Of course, all of these plans also make reference to reviews that are, I believe, legislated or obligated for the respective parties. So, there are reviews built in to each of them. We have underway Devils Elbow — again, working with Na Cho Nyäk Dun First Nation — Macmillan River, we have Tagish River, Ddhaw Ghro, Lewes Marsh, Pickhandle Lake, and Whitefish wetlands. All these are work the department is conducting, and it's a significant amount of work.

I'm sure we'll get into this a little later on, but species population management planning — elk, there has been a great amount of discussion on the floor of the Legislature the last number of years about elk management. As the member opposite is aware, or should be aware, the plan that was completed and adopted dates back to 2008. We have planning underway for muskox, wood bison, Chisana caribou, Fortymile caribou, northern mountain caribou; we have western toad planning underway, North Richardson sheep management plan, Aishihik Lake fish planning underway — and this is but a small snapshot of the work the department is conducting in collaboration with First Nations, the Government of Canada and many other stakeholders.

When it comes to fish and wildlife planning and community-based planning, we have work underway with Na Cho Nyäk Dun, north Yukon, Champagne and Aishihik, Teslin, Little Salmon-Carmacks and so forth.

As I referenced before, a great deal of work has been undertaken by the parks division within the department. There is a tremendous amount of effort currently underway in defining new special management areas and, as I just referenced earlier, habitat protection areas, and the list goes on. Of course the work also entails the Peel watershed plan.

When it comes to the Peel Watershed Planning Commission, it is the commission that has been tasked to do its work on a land use plan. We are very pleased to receive the recommended plan by the commission. I believe it was on time and we thank them for their comprehensive work that was undertaken. I will reiterate just for the member opposite that many of the respective departments, including the Department of Environment, has contributed to the land use planning process and this one in particular over the last number of years.

There has been a substantive amount of data in terms of classifications, regional ecological information, mapping and work with respective stakeholders. Again, our government very much supports the work of the departments that have contributed to this land use planning exercise. It has been a lot and certainly is not all indicative of one document or one memo or

one paper or one technical piece of data. I will again reiterate that it is certainly not my job to dictate to the departments what information to include or not include. That is not about what it's all about. It's about the departments contributing to the land use planning exercise and for the actual commission to do its independent work and for them to report to both Yukon First Nations and the Yukon government as to what the recommended plan is. And that is in fact what they have done. Again, I thank them for that work. It is a significant, substantive document, yet we congratulate that work.

Like north Yukon, it did take a tremendous amount of work to and fro among the respective parties, but at the end of the day, the will was there and the plan was signed off by the respective governments.

I will perhaps just leave it at that and again just reiterate and reassure the members opposite that we do remain committed to meeting our obligations as outlined in the final agreement.

Mr. Fairclough: Well, Mr. Chair, the minister may feel committed and perhaps the direction is for the minister to have the department identify issues and pass them forward to the land use planning commission, but that is in fact what has not happened and the Premier has taken control of it. That's where the public has an issue with this.

I asked the minister a question about the information — what is going to happen with what the minister has. It is 22 pages and four of them have been passed to the Peel planning commission. What is the minister going to do with that information? Is she going to use it for an internal review of the Peel planning commission's submission or are we going to get a bunch of words and the minister is going to reiterate all that she has said before? We don't need to hear that; we've already heard it. We want some answers to the questions so we can move on.

Chair: Is there any further general debate?

Mr. Fairclough: I did ask the minister what she will do with the information and the material that was gathered by the department that was supposed to go to the Peel planning commission. Is she going to make it public? Is she able to pass all that information to us on this side of the House? What will happen with that information now? Is she going to use it for the internal review the government does on the Peel land use planning commission?

It is information I think is important and perhaps all of the public, including us on this side of the House, should be able to see.

Hon. Ms. Taylor: It's my understanding that information in its entirety is posted on the website for the Peel Watershed Planning Commission. It is a public document. It has been in their hands and it is in their hands and it's for all to review.

Mr. Fairclough: Okay, we won't get anywhere on that from the minister at all.

The minister likes to talk about many special management areas and protected areas, parks and so on that were created under the Yukon Party government. We know that a lot of this work has gone back for years and years, including the direction that has been given to governments over the past many years

by First Nations, like the creation of parks, Fishing Branch — you name it. All of those that have been listed by the minister have been a direction that was given by First Nations. I would think that the Department of Environment was thankful that there was that type of direction coming out. There are things that they have wanted to do for a long time. We finally see after many years of work some of these things being followed through. Are there any new parks that the government is doing on their own or is presenting to the public that they would like to see created on their own without direction given to them by final agreements?

Hon. Ms. Taylor: Mr. Chair, I will thank First Nation governments very much for certainly containing provisions within their respective final agreements — whether it be for special management areas or others. We have said all along that we are very much committed to our obligations, as set out in chapter 10 of the final agreements. That is why we do have a multitude of park planning processes underway. In fact, we are at full capacity, as one can imagine.

As I mentioned before, we do have a number of management plans underway. We do have a number of park planning processes underway, and those are taking up pretty much the respective officials' time beyond capacity. We will continue to meet our obligations, as outlined in chapter 10. We feel that that is the priority of the day — again, working to complete those management plans for parks or implementing existing management plans for established parks and protected areas. I think we are making significant progress in collaboration with First Nations.

Mr. Fairclough: That's nice to know from the minister, that the department is following through. I think that's quite obvious by the list of protected areas and special management areas that have been identified.

I asked the minister what parks the Yukon Party caucus and Cabinet have been creating out there on their own, rather than what is being presented by First Nations and their final agreements. Is there anything new, anything the government is working on?

Hon. Ms. Taylor: I'll read off the list again for the member opposite. In terms of habitat protection areas and special management areas, when it comes to management planning for species, value, populations, wildlife, we have fish and wildlife work plans. We have a multitude of processes underway right now. We'll continue to work with First Nations to meet their obligations. That is our priority and that will continue to be the government's priority.

Mr. Fairclough: I haven't heard a number — one, two, three, four, five — anything from the minister, but she did say the department is rather tied up in all the initiatives that have been presented by final agreements. I have to say the number is zero. It's not something that is of interest to the Yukon Party at all. They do have an obligation to address these issues under the final agreements. Perhaps the minister has more she would like to provide us with regard to parks the Yukon Party would like to see created.

Can the minister assure the House that in the future we've learned from this process here — the Peel planning process?

There are others to come. There is more work that's being done right now with the Department of Environment — obligations that the minister and the government have under the final agreements. Will the minister ensure that there will be no political interference and that she will take a lead role where the lead role is identified in the Department of Environment and not have other ministers run her department for her?

Hon. Ms. Taylor: Well, Mr. Chair, adhering to our obligations as set out in the final agreements is not what I would refer to as being “tied up,” but I'll leave it at that.

Again, when we talk about planning and designating special management areas, habitat protection areas, parks, protected areas of significance, I will refer to work underway — Lewes Marsh Habitat Protection Area, over 20 square kilometres; Kusawa natural environment park, 32,000 square kilometres; Lhutsaw Habitat Protection Area, 32 square kilometres; Ddhaw Gro Habitat Protection Area, 1,595 kilometres; Nordenskiöld Habitat Protection Area, 76.9 square kilometres; and the Asi Keyi natural environment park planning process underway and that is over 3,000 square kilometres. Mr. Chair, the list goes on.

I could certainly go on but I have reiterated for the member opposite there are a number of various park planning processes underway and I would be happy to reiterate that again. In terms of a planning process, we are very much committed to contributing to the land use planning process — whether it is land use planning or meeting obligations under chapter 10 for special management areas, habitat protection areas or forest management planning through Energy, Mines and Resources, fish and wildlife management planning, community planning.

Again, there are a number of different resources that are being utilized by the government, government wide. They are processes in which we as ministers at the political level do not engage in terms of providing technical analysis. I'm certainly not a biologist. It's not my profession but we have a number of talented individuals and professionals housed within the Department of Environment, as we do in other departments. We very much support the work they contribute to the planning process. The government is indeed very supportive of that work being conducted, and is very supportive of the work being conducted by independent planning commissions such as the Peel watershed and North Yukon. Soon, to be sure, I think the next in line is the Dawson land use planning exercise, as well.

There are a number of plans that will be underway shortly, and there are number of plans that are currently underway and have been underway. We support all of the departments and their contributions to that multitude of processes.

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

Recess

Chair: Order please. Committee of the Whole will come to order. The matter before the Committee is Bill No. 17, *Second Appropriation Act, 2009-10, Vote 52, Department of Environment.*

Mr. Fairclough: The minister left off talking about some parks as being worked on, some special management areas, and one in particular she mentioned was Kusawa Park. I would like the minister to give us a status report on that, whether or not all players are still at the table and what the issue is holding up this creation of a park.

Hon. Ms. Taylor: There is a steering committee for Kusawa Park comprised of First Nation representation and the Government of Yukon. There are discussions transpiring between the Government of Yukon and the three respective First Nations on a party-to-party basis. Those discussions are surrounding details of the park management structures, enabling the committee to continue its planning work as such.

Mr. Fairclough: Are all the players at the table presently or is this falling apart? What's happening with that and why is there a holdup on this?

Hon. Ms. Taylor: As I understand, work is still on schedule and at this current time there are discussions going on between the Yukon government and three respective First Nations on park management structures, which will further enable the committee to do its work.

Mr. Fairclough: Is Champagne and Aishihik presently part of the discussions or have they pulled out?

Hon. Ms. Taylor: Yes, Champagne and Aishihik First Nations are a part of those discussions that are going on.

Mr. Fairclough: I thank the minister for answers to those questions. I realize they are part of the discussions. I think the minister could elaborate on that. I know that there's a lot going on and the work could be done quite a bit faster than how it is presently going.

I'd like to ask the minister a few questions about the government's commitment to reduction of greenhouse gases and climate change. The minister and the government have produced a *Climate Change Action Plan*, and in the action plan it says that the internal operations of government — the plan is to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 20 percent by 2015, to become carbon-neutral by 2020, and to cap greenhouse gas emissions in 2010. I would like the minister to explain what the department means by that — by capping the greenhouse gas emissions in 2010 — and exactly how it's going to unfold and how it's going to be reported to the public.

Hon. Ms. Taylor: In fact, that is goal 3, in terms of reducing our own greenhouse gas emissions. As the member opposite referred to, we do have a commitment, as outlined in our plan, to cap the emissions in 2010.

I believe there was a debate that recently took place at F.H. Collins, in which there was a discussion on targets overall. In terms of meeting this particular target with the end goal of becoming carbon-neutral by 2020, one of the first things that we have engaged in is — of course, with this launch of the plan we do have our climate change secretariat that will provide government-wide leadership and cooperation or collaboration from all respective departments on the government's overall response on meeting these commitments in the plan itself.

One of the things that the climate change secretariat will be engaged in and I believe is undertaking this work as we speak — or will be in early 2010 — is actually looking at a

comprehensive way of reporting our own emissions government-wide — internal operations, that is, when it comes to the Government of Yukon — and coming up with that baseline inventory of what those emissions actually are. Once that comes into determination it will be capped in 2010. Then, of course, that will help us meet our obligations by becoming carbon-neutral.

Without that information first and foremost, it will be difficult to be able to monitor and to be able to report in a verifiable and accurate, methodical manner. That is certainly one of the other tasks of the climate change secretariat in helping Government of Yukon meet its goals — to look at a carbon-offset policy, as well, for internal operations. Again, there will be a significant amount of policy work undertaken on that. That may, in fact, be used to also help the government meet its own commitments in becoming carbon-neutral.

There's a significant amount of work to be done, but there is a significant amount of work that is also currently underway. In terms of goal 1, which is enhancing our knowledge and understanding of climate change — in this regard, the Government of Yukon has been working through Department of Education, Department of Environment, Executive Council Office and others including Yukon College, on the Yukon Research Centre of Excellence, which was just recently formalized and established — launched earlier this fall. It builds upon some of the work that is undertaken at the college.

A tremendous amount of scientific research is already being undertaken through Northern Research Institute and Northern Climate Exchange and certainly the Cold Climate Innovation Centre, to name but a few — all of which are very much engaged in providing information as it is tabled when it comes to adaptation, coming up with made-in-the-north, Yukon solutions to some of the challenges we find here at home in addressing climate change.

Establishing climate change research study areas is something that — through the climate change secretariat and the good work of the Department of Environment — we were able to leverage or access a fair amount of dollars for, much of which is actually outlined here in this year's supplementary budget that we're currently engaged in. One of those items is actually establishing climate change research study areas and looking at climate change scenarios.

In this regard, we have \$200,000 identified. Again, it's through Northern Research Institute as the lead, through the Yukon College, Council of Yukon First Nations and the climate change secretariat through Environment.

The work under this project will really be a concrete foundation for developing climate change scenarios for Yukon, intended to provide Yukon stakeholders with information on projected changes due to climate change, whether through air or ground temperatures, enabling them to help each of us make informed decisions when it comes to adaptation responses.

This also builds upon work in establishing the Canadian Climate Change Scenarios Network, northern node in Yukon — that's quite a mouthful. This project was actually launched earlier this year at the college. We were there for the announcement and it's through Environment Canada. This is also

to help provide the technical wherewithal in providing and collating historical and current data on our climate and determining indicators of climate change for Yukon in support of the development of regional climate change scenarios.

That is but one. The other numbers of them are addressed also in this year's supplementary budget.

It's also identified under adapt to climate change, meeting our obligations is developing inventory of permafrost information for use and decision-making, for example. Again, the lead partners on that are Highways and Public Works, and Energy, Mines and Resources through the Yukon Geological Survey. They are working together to complete the infrastructure risk and vulnerability assessment focused on all the government-owned, -managed, -operated and -leased buildings, inclusive. It considers infrastructure, conditions pertaining to our climate, together providing critical information on infrastructure, adaptation requirements relating to climate change and specifically this project — which is almost \$200,000 by the way — and will include gathering the information on permafrost and parameters, completing the inventory. As I mentioned, of our government-owned buildings — producing infrastructure assessment based on these results and helping provide decision-makers with the necessary information to conduct its business.

The other tool, of course, is conducting a Yukon forest health risk assessment. In this supplementary budget that we're speaking to, it provides over \$100,000, and that's actually housed in Energy, Mines and Resources, through the forest management branch. I believe the minister responsible did speak to it at some length during his budget. But, again, there has been a lot of debate over the last number of years as a result of beetle infestation and what that has meant for our forests.

When I listen to reports from British Columbia, when I listen to reports from California and then see what is happening in our own backyard, over a million acres, to be sure, is already infected with the beetle infestation. This will help us provide a better understanding of the key gaps in knowledge, help our ability to project future forest scenarios and recommend management practices. It will help to better inform our strategic forest management planning processes, in collaboration with Yukon First Nations. It will assist and provide a follow-up further to the direction provided by ministers of forests pertaining to vulnerability and adaptive capacity of Canada's overall main commercial tree species.

Also contained in the supplementary budget is dollars for completing the Yukon water resources risk vulnerability assessment. This is being led through our own water resources branch and it is going to be utilizing this as a means of collating current water data from all available sources and developing tools for water users to access data for use in project planning, decision-making, community understanding, and again, seeking to address current gaps in our knowledge and how we understand but also contributing to the ability of our own water managers to initiate adaptive measures to respond to a changing regime when it comes to hydrology in the territory.

All of these are very much contained in the supplementary. It is just an indication of much of the work that is going on

already throughout the respective departments in the Government of Yukon.

When it comes to targets — whether it's our own internal operations or when it's meeting a Yukon-wide emissions — there is work to be done, and that will be undertaken. Much of that work is actually already underway in terms of providing research. Especially when we come to a Yukon-wide emissions target, it will entail discussions and consultations with all orders and levels of government, as well as private sector industry, and many, many other stakeholders in determining the future of the Yukon.

Until that time, we are very much committed to doing our part in enhancing our hydro capacity, in focusing in on energy efficiency. For example, when it comes to government-funded commercial institutional construction, meeting LEED standards — which is leadership in energy and environmental design — one only has to look to Tombstone Interpretive Centre where we were able to open the doors earlier this fall. It's a significant building and it's an amazing building. It all is made of natural materials versus plastics.

It relies fully on 100-percent solar power. It has natural air-flow circulation. It has many great attributes and it's actually the very first public infrastructure using those LEED standards. Likewise, we know that the Whitehorse Correctional Centre is also using LEED standards for energy efficiency. Up-front costs may in fact be a bit more, but in the end it will indeed improve our energy efficiency, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, reduce our carbon footprint, and it will also help reduce our ongoing operation and maintenance cost as well.

There are a number of other things in the works when we talk about super green technology. I think I've made reference to this before. We have a number of projects underway right now using super green technology, including the new children's receiving home, the new staff units in Watson Lake, the new family-focused housing initiative being built in Riverdale as we speak, Habitat for Humanity housing initiatives such as the new triplex that is being constructed on Wheeler Street.

Those are but a few examples of the initiatives that are contributing to reduced emissions. The list goes on.

As I mentioned before, we are also working to green our own government fleet with the purchase of well over 100 new smaller, more efficient vehicles. We have new investments in community recycling initiatives, which are also helping to divert tonnes of material from entering our landfills. We are working through the Department of Highways and Public Works, for example, on a green procurement policy.

We are also conducting a great amount of work. I mentioned before — whether it's providing research, looking at setting emissions targets Yukon-wide, registering our emissions in a reportable, verifiable and measurable manner — we're working with an entity called the Climate Registry, which should be very much present in Copenhagen. I intend to learn a lot more about the work they have done.

I believe every territory and province — I think every one except maybe one jurisdiction has signed on to the Climate

Registry as a voluntary way of being able to report emissions, but learning how to do that in a transparent, open and verifiable manner. Again, alongside that, looking at the carbon market for Yukon and developing a carbon-offset policy for internal operations. So a whole host of initiatives are currently underway or will be underway, many of which are being spearheaded or being led by the climate change secretariat.

So, again, we're very pleased to be able to support — some of the dollars we're talking about for the climate change secretariat are a revote here in the supplementary budget. But, again, as I mentioned before, it also means that in order to proceed with this work, we do need to have a baseline inventory of our emissions, whether it be internally or outside as well. Again, we're working with other jurisdictions and this international group called the Climate Registry.

But it's also conducting an energy analysis of all of our government buildings, completing energy-saving retrofits. That's a big job in itself, but when we look at some of the newer construction — all of which are either utilizing LEED design practices and/or super green technologies — that will help in the long run. When we look at also developing pilot projects or demonstrating energy efficiency heating technology, that's something we're actually working on with the climate change secretariat right now in looking for a home for the climate change secretariat and wanting to ensure that we're able to demonstrate to the public just what are the varied benefits of having energy efficiency — having the most efficient heating technology and putting it into practice for Yukoners to view and to be able to access that information.

We've been able to work with Energy Solutions Centre. They provided a number of rebates for Yukoners when it comes to appliances and are expanding that list of appliances. That too is helping individuals make individual choices that will also contribute to reduced greenhouse gas emissions.

We also have our targets of increasing renewable energy supply by 20 percent by 2020. That is also identified in the Yukon energy strategy. The two are inextricably linked, to be sure, and we're also looking at energy policies through consultations on the independent power production policy and also looking at net metering as a means of increasing our supply of renewable energies from here on out as well.

So all of these plus a number of many other initiatives that are already underway in the departments are very much outlined in our action plan. I believe I am very pleased with the progress being made by the departments and I congratulate the Department of Environment in particular for showing leadership on this front and for the work they are doing in coordinating many efforts on all fronts.

Mr. Fairclough: I think the minister would agree with me that that was a long answer to my question — 20 minutes' worth of answer. I don't know why the minister chooses to do this — perhaps it is to chew up time in this House.

She could take lessons from the minister responsible for the Public Service Commission, who is able to answer questions in short form. I asked about the cap and emissions, and the minister was all over the place. I hope that this is the way that it is in the House, and it's not like that in the public, be-

cause it would be terrible when someone asks a simple question and the minister takes 20 minutes to answer it.

I wanted to know from the minister how this is going to work. This climate change action plan was made public in February through a lot of work internally within the department. We're now days away from 2010 — just days away from 2010. The minister says they're going to put in its internal operation — that they're going to cap emissions in 2010. I know more work needs to be done but the minister did say that there's a tremendous amount of work that was done. I would think that we would have a clear answer as to how government intends to do this — to cap greenhouse gas emissions in 2010. Does she expect it to do this in the spring?

Is it in the summer we're going to see a cap? Is it on January 1, 2010, that we'll see a cap on internal gas emissions within government? Also committed in this action plan is the Climate Registry, through which the government will publicly release the compiled emissions report annually. I know this may be a tough job to do. We talked about the state of the environment report. I don't know how the information flows from the federal government, but it's pretty slow. If it's coming by dog team from Ottawa, then maybe I can understand it takes two years. We have modern technology that can have information flow tremendously fast. Studies and ongoing internal work are done all the time.

I would like to know exactly how government is going to do this. This report has been out for some time. How will they have this cap on their own departments, internally within government? How will it be followed through with?

What can the minister tell us on this side of the House and the public about exactly how this will be carried out? This is one of their goals and it is to happen in 2010. It will be followed by annual reports that monitor the progress and keep track of this cap on greenhouse gases.

I think this is a big issue and everybody needs to be clear as to exactly how this takes place.

Some Hon. Member: Point of order.

Quorum count

Chair: Mr. Rouble, on a point of order.

Hon. Mr. Rouble: Mr. Chair, it doesn't appear that we have a quorum present.

Chair: Pursuant to Standing Order 3(4), if the Chair's attention is drawn to the fact that there does not appear to be a quorum, we do a count. We see there isn't a quorum, I will ring the bells for four minutes.

Bells

Chair: Order please. There now appears to be a quorum. Committee of the Whole will continue with the debate on Vote 52, Department of Environment.

Hon. Ms. Taylor: Mr. Chair, you know, I take great pride in all the work, all the consultation, discussions and dialogue that went on with Yukoners in developing the climate change strategy and the *Climate Change Action Plan*. I thank every single person who contributed to that process. There were meetings, there were open houses and there were one-to-

one discussions. This is the product at the end of all those discussions and consultations, this action plan.

The action plan is quite articulate in identifying what needs to take place. When it comes to meeting specific targets, I can't say in a straightforward manner when we'll be capping our emissions. It does say in 2010, so it could be January 1, but probably not because there has to be some work done.

I already explained that, when it comes to looking at our own emissions, it is coming up with an inventory. You have to establish first the baseline inventory of our current emissions factors and then once that is done, we will be able to cap the emissions. Again, I'm not too sure — it could be June 1; it could be my birthday, it could be December 3, 2010, I don't know. That would be a great birthday present, wouldn't it, Mr. Chair? That's right and everyone missed it last week, so now you know.

Anyhow, I don't have specific dates, but what I will say is that the climate change secretariat has been tasked with working with others and there has been an interdepartmental committee struck to oversee many of these items. The *Climate Change Action Plan* is not just pertinent to the Department of Environment; it runs through all the government. When we talk about internal operations it runs through every single department including the Legislature. I would hate to even think about what kinds of emissions are being blown or emitted from this institution.

I will say that work is being done. We do have to do our homework and research. Since this plan was launched, there are a number of action items currently underway. I already listed a number of them for the member opposite. Throughout all the departments, we all have our specific obligations to fulfill. I think that over the past year, since launching the plan, and even before launching the plan, we have been doing a lot of work. We have undertaken a lot of initiatives to address climate change.

As I mentioned earlier, we'll continue to do our part, whether or not that is in the area of adaptation.

I already referenced the dollars we were able to leverage through the Government of Canada — almost a million dollars, to be clear — on adaptation initiatives, of which there are five identified. There's already work being undertaken to reduce permafrost degradation on our highways. I know that on the north Alaska Highway, thanks to Highways and Public Works in conjunction with University of Alaska and University of Laval, as well, I believe it is — they are collaborating on different technologies for road surfaces, in order to improve our ability to reduce degradation on highways. The highway on — Front Street, I should say, in Dawson City — used a new technology that used less heat to compile the aggregate, but also is a much-reduced colour, which will also help reduce the amount of reflection from the sun in adding to further permafrost degradation. That's just but one example.

We are working with a number of First Nations on studying climate change impacts on watersheds, such as the Yukon River, through use of traditional knowledge as well as scientific monitoring.

We have a new site assessment remediation unit, which we created about a year and some ago, so we are able to identify and assess our liabilities — our contaminated sites throughout the Yukon — and identify dollars and resources to actually do the work to remediate those sites.

We have gone ahead with a new animal health program to address issues pertinent to valued wildlife species that we are seeing — the arrival of new parasites or new diseases that may or will be impacting wildlife species. So in order to take a more proactive approach and a more comprehensive and articulate response to some of these issues here and already coming our way, again, it's employing new individuals — a chief veterinary officer and technical staff — to put together a team of expertise to look at how we assess and address some of these challenges, but looking at our policies, looking at our legislation and making recommendations as to how we can be more comprehensive in our response.

I mentioned before that we're working on a number of park planning processes for protecting areas through the final agreements, meeting our obligations in collaboration with First Nations. That is helping to reduce our carbon footprint. We are assisting, through the Northern Climate Exchange, communities such as Dawson City and the City of Whitehorse on sustainability and community adaptation plans, which are currently underway. I commend them for those efforts.

As I mentioned earlier, we were pleased to open the doors to the Research Centre of Excellence, which effectively is helping to facilitate, coordinate and distribute climate change research in the Yukon, and distributing that information to the respective stakeholders who will be able to utilize that for made-in-Yukon solutions to some of the challenges we face.

The list goes on — we are working on a number of fronts. I do congratulate those in the Department of Environment, and in the climate change secretariat in particular, for placing great emphasis on meeting our obligations, as outlined in the plan itself and furthering our capacity in the department to be able to effect change when it comes to climate change.

Another initiative that the climate change secretariat has also been working with is involving and engaging youth in Yukon's climate change efforts. As I mentioned earlier here today, in the fall supplementary budget there are dollars allotted for a number of youth climate-change-related initiatives and we're pleased to support Yukon youth participation. Whether it's through our annual youth engagement forum on climate change — I believe that this is going a long way in helping to empower and engage young leaders in our country, in Canada's north. We just actually had our third annual forum held earlier this summer and I think we had well over 20 individuals — somewhere between 20 and 25 individuals — involved from all over the Yukon. Their efforts are to be commended in providing direction and recommendations from individual action to government action on climate change.

We were also pleased to sponsor a number of Yukon youth to attend the Power Shift Canada conference that was held at the same time as the Hug the Legislature event that took place here. That helps build capacity in our youth and enables them to collaborate, develop those partnerships and broaden their

expertise and their experiences when it comes to addressing climate change.

We are also very pleased to help Yukon youth to join the delegation at COP15 this December and take part in the discussions that will be transpiring and that are transpiring there today. I believe it was a representative of BYTE, the youth organization here in the Yukon, who helped organize the Hug the Legislature event. Youth very much do get it and they are helping broaden the scope of discussions that are taking place here in the Yukon. I congratulate organizations such as BYTE.

I think the more community forums and events, even the debate that transpired at F.H. Collins in which there were representatives from each of the parties and the Member of Parliament — there were scientists on the panel as well. Again, it's a means of raising awareness about what in fact is transpiring here in the north and what it is that we're doing and what more we can do to effect change.

When it comes to engaging in discussions on our overall emissions, again, in 2010, we'll be working to establish a baseline inventory of our current emissions throughout the Government of Yukon in all communities, and we'll be capping them, when we do have that information. Then we will be working toward finding immediate ways, as well as longer term solutions, of further reducing our emissions to reach the 20-percent reduction, and then, of course, in 2015, reaching carbon-neutral status.

It will take short-term, mid-term and long-term actions to reach these many fronts. I can't give the member opposite a specific date, but it does say in the plan "in 2010", so it will be somewhere between January 1 and December 31, 2010.

Mr. Fairclough: That's probably close to a 20-minute answer from the minister again. I know she likes the department, and every opportunity she gets, she'll thank them for all their hard work, and that's good. There's nothing wrong with that, but we hear it every time the minister gets up to answer one of our questions.

This report was done in February; it's now December and we're only days away from 2010, and the minister still doesn't really have any answers to the question about capping emissions internally within government.

I'd like to try to move on. There are more commitments the government has made to become carbon-neutral.

This could be done, as the minister said how the carbon dioxide emissions can be offset or made neutral by undertaking a carbon-reducing activity such as planting trees or buying carbon offsets from wind energy companies. The carbon offsets that the minister talked about or made mention to earlier are usually bought and sold through a number of international brokers, on-line retailers and trading platforms. I'm sure the public would be quite interested in exactly how this government intends to do it.

The other thing that the minister and the department will be engaged in is capturing carbon emissions and storing them. This will be done — and I'm sure the minister has all kinds of answers to this and perhaps even a long one — by capturing the CO₂ emissions from power plants and injecting them into the ground. Does the minister know how this will work? There has

to be some rationale behind it. Where exactly will this take place?

Again, these are things that I think the public are interested in. Perhaps they haven't heard of them before. So, I'd just like to ask the minister how the CO₂ emissions from power plants will be injected deep into the ground?

Hon. Ms. Taylor: I thank the member opposite for his question, and he has raised interest in carbon capture storage. There has been a lot of debate and discussion in a number of forums in Canada and elsewhere. I think that is one of the solutions in being able to address climate change.

You know, interestingly, when you look at the United States — I was reading somewhere recently that half of the States, if I'm not mistaken, are powered by coal-producing plants, for example. In order to be able to meet a concrete target — such is what the United States has been calling for — I think it's 17 percent below 2005 levels.

One of the concerns raised by some of the states in the United States has been this: how are we able to reduce our emissions through some of these plants without having the technology, such as using CCS? For some, I know that there has been a tremendous amount of dollars being invested, I think through the Government of Canada. I know even the Government of the United States has invested a lot of dollars — I don't have a dollar figure — in all of these different technologies. Some of the provinces — Alberta, Saskatchewan and perhaps others — are also helping invest in technologies such as that.

I think technologies are evolving quickly, but some of the concerns are that perhaps some of these technologies won't be coming on-line soon enough. You're looking at maybe up to 10 years for technologies in order to effect the changes required to meet the emissions targets. I supposed that is really what Copenhagen is all about — bringing together 192 countries to come together to be able to effect an international agreement that is comprehensive, global and binding. To be sure, that is one of the solutions — to look at alternative technologies such as CCS.

In the Yukon, I don't believe there has been a lot of emphasis placed on carbon capture and storage technology. That would be more of a question maybe to ask of Energy, Mines and Resources, but I don't believe a lot of emphasis has been placed on that to date. It is not identified in the *Climate Change Action Plan*; however, through the Yukon energy strategy — and I just happen to have a copy on me here — it does make reference to a number of priority actions. Again, I think I made reference to some of the review of new energy policies such as independent power production and net metering as ways of increasing our supply of renewable energies and being able to meet our own targets and certainly for Yukoners those are ways of adding on.

Here in the Yukon, we have also been increasing resources, thanks to Government of Canada contributions through the green energy fund. It has given us the ability to expand our hydro capacity in the Yukon. That's not it; we are looking at other alternative means of energy. The lead for the *Energy Strategy for Yukon* is Energy, Mines and Resources.

I'm sure the minister responsible will be pleased to articulate on meeting their respective commitments and working with other departments on this.

For example, increasing energy efficiency in the Yukon by 20 percent by 2020 — how do we do this? By focusing on priority-focused actions, such as reducing energy consumption in our Yukon buildings. As I mentioned before, we are looking at using leadership in energy environmental design standards in major pieces of infrastructure such as the Whitehorse Correctional Centre and the Tombstone Interpretive Centre, which we opened earlier this fall.

It's improving access to energy efficiency evaluations, providing training for energy evaluators and providing incentives to building owners to carry out retrofits. I know that through the Yukon Housing Corporation they've been doing a tremendous job in being able to keep up with the demand for adhering to homeowners wanting to upgrade using green and super green technology to reduce their own energy use within their own homes. It's also looking at conducting pilot projects on heating technologies and energy efficiency. I think I made reference to that earlier as well.

We are investing in agriculture in support of producing Yukon-grown food. I think the members opposite had asked some questions of the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources, earlier this sitting as well, on what in fact we are doing. The Growing Forward initiative, for example — I can't recall the exact dollar amount, but it is substantive in terms of providing that capacity and providing infrastructure for agriculture to provide more homegrown food accessible to local citizens — again, reducing our carbon footprint and reducing our own emissions.

Through Highways and Public Works, we are looking at developing programs to encourage efficient transportation, looking at strategic opportunities for efficiency and conservation in this regard. We are looking at standards for the government's vehicle fleet. We have set targets for vehicle use and fuel consumption that will help — those standards will be set, again, once we have a baseline inventory of our own emissions — whether it be through the fleet vehicles or from our own current emissions through government buildings, needed retrofits and so forth.

There is work being done through Highways and Public Works on a green procurement policy that will be launched early next year. The Department of Environment is also working on an environmental stewardship initiative that will advance stewardship within all our schools. Again, earlier this year — I think it was on Earth Day — we were very pleased to launch a new recycling program in all 28 Yukon schools. That's but one example of how we are helping assist all schools.

To be clear, just about every school has already engaged in recycling of some sort — composting — very much adding to their education and awareness of the element of recycling, the importance of practising recycling, reducing and reusing all our waste. They are to be commended for their specific initiatives as well.

There are whole hosts of different technologies, means and initiatives we are engaged in. I'd be pleased to perhaps elaborate on some of them that I've mentioned. I hope that addresses the member opposite's question.

Mr. Fairclough: Well, I think there's more information that was called for in that question. I'd like to move on, because the minister wants to turn it over and have the Energy, Mines and Resources minister answer some questions. We all went through that already. We heard many times over and over about how many chickens he had and the fact that he didn't have storage space left in his freezer. We heard it over and over again, and we're starting to hear the Minister of Environment repeat herself over and over too.

I think we should be able to move on in discussions. There are lots of questions to be asked here and lots of opportunity for the minister to put information on the floor. Another area in the action plan — I have to remind the minister again that this has been worked on for years. It was released in February and a lot of information probably has been passed on to the minister. The action plans says, "To forecast potential future GHG emissions for the Yukon", stating that it is important information to have when establishing a reduction target. The minister also mentioned yesterday and again today that the government will set Yukon-wide emission targets within two years and information about the forecasted potential of future greenhouse gas emissions for the Yukon will be gathered.

I would like to know how much of that work has already been done — working with the mining industry, for example. In setting the targets, the minister says that she sees a reduction in greenhouse gases by 20 percent by 2015, which is not very far away. We have some pretty big developments that could take place here in the territory. One is through Carmacks Copper and the Casino properties, which will be requiring a tremendous amount of electricity for it to operate and be in full production. I'm just wondering how much work has already been done in regard to compiling this information about future greenhouse gas emissions for the Yukon, so that we can set targets. I mean, we're setting targets internally within government and we're also looking at Yukon wide, so I'll just let the minister answer that question.

Hon. Ms. Taylor: Actually, it was the member opposite's leader who spoke to this at the climate change debate that took place at F.H. Collins. It had to do with setting a baseline inventory of current emissions. Likewise, that does need to transpire, of course. First of all, we're endeavouring to find out exactly what our own emissions are internally. When it comes to determining Yukon-wide emissions, we said by 2011 we'll have a Yukon-wide emissions target in place. That will entail much discussion with industry, the private sector, community organizations, communities themselves, First Nation governments, municipalities — so there is a lot of work.

In terms of discussions having taken place, what we are focusing on right now, as I just mentioned, is looking at capping our own government operations as the baseline for conducting that work, as it will help determine, in part, Yukon's current baseline of greenhouse gas emissions. That will factor into the equation.

It will also entail working with industry and the private sector and many other entities, as well as working with all of the respective departments — working with Economic Development, Energy, Mines and Resources and looking at new projects coming on-line. What does that mean and what does that not mean, in terms of future emissions? Of course, that also entails working with the Climate Registry, as I referred to before, in being able to find a mechanism so we're able to report in a verifiable, accurate, measurable manner. That's absolutely critical in being able to define that. It's also looking at policies such as a carbon-offset policy. It's also looking at where we find ourselves with cap and trade, and what that means for the Yukon. There is a Western Climate Initiative that has been in the works for some time. It consists of Quebec, Ontario, British Columbia, for example. The Government of Yukon has just commenced as an observer to those discussions with the Western Climate Initiative.

We also know that both Canada and the United States have indicated their desire for a continental approach on cap and trade. Of course, a lot of this will be defined through the outcomes of COP15 and what transpires on the international scene, never mind the continental scene, but also the domestic, Canada wide and, of course, here at home.

There are a number of factors to come into play. We are committed to meeting our obligations set out in the plan itself and meeting those time frames. Very much so, there is a lot of work to be done on all fronts. Again, by launching this plan and by actually taking action on many of the different fronts, as I listed through a number of different arrays, we are working to address climate change as a priority for the Government of Yukon. Certainly, it is a priority for me as Minister of Environment. The plan itself sets out a number of priority-based actions on the four goals set out in the climate change strategy — those being: working to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions, whether it be through the expansion of hydro, looking at green building infrastructure programs or assisting homeowners to reduce their own carbon footprint.

The strategy also builds on being able to establish the Yukon as a northern leader when it comes to climate change research and innovation. I know that, through the Department of Education, the minister has much information in this regard, but I believe that we are being seen as a leader in the north when it comes to innovation and research, thanks to being able to build the capacity in terms of personnel housed at the college. The college has taken a leadership role on this front over the years and we congratulate them.

The research centre really builds on these successes, but also builds upon the one-stop-shop in terms of providing the capacity and the resource personnel and for them to be able to deliver on partnerships. I made reference to University of Laval, for example, University of Alaska, University of Alberta, University of Calgary — there are a lot of different institutions and there's a lot of innovation being conducted in all parts of the country and in all parts of the globe.

It's through learning and listening from others, and acting upon that and seeing what is relevant and how to make that scientific information relevant to Yukon's response, that's

helping shape our response to climate change even more. So, even though we do have a set number of actions identified in the action plan, we are committed to moving forward. This plan will continue to evolve as the years progress and as we continue to identify our responses to climate change.

As I mentioned — the climate change secretariat, again, has been tasked with providing research in working with the Department of Economic Development, for example, on researching the carbon economy — looking at a Yukon carbon market, including potential carbon offset. When we look at a carbon offset, we're looking at something locally based here. We know that there are a multitude of institutions when it comes to providing carbon offsets internationally. We want to look at being able to establish a program that is locally based so we can benefit locally from carbon offsets. The member referenced reforestation — we want to ensure that is done here in the Yukon.

Chair: Order please. Seeing the time, the Chair will rise and report progress.

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, *Second Appropriation Act, 2009-10*, and directed me to report progress.

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

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Speaker: I declare the report carried.

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

The House adjourned at 5:31 p.m.