

**Yukon Legislative Assembly  
Whitehorse, Yukon  
Wednesday, April 22, 2009 — 1:00 p.m.**

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

*Prayers*

**DAILY ROUTINE**

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

Are there any tributes?

**TRIBUTES**

**In recognition of Earth Day**

**Hon. Ms. Taylor:** I rise today to pay tribute to Earth Day, which is observed on April 22 around the world each and every year.

As Yukoners, we have much to celebrate when it comes to our environment, whether one canoes, views, hikes, camps, skis or photographs, there is a lot to be thankful for and a lot to pay tribute to.

Earth Day is an opportunity to celebrate all that we have and provides us with a great opportunity to learn more about actions we can take in our daily lives that will help ensure we continue to enjoy a clean and healthy environment for years to come and generations to come.

Today, Yukoners can enjoy a number of Earth Day activities, including an open house in the Elijah Smith Building, featuring a number of displays and an opportunity to ride an electric bicycle, an open house held by the Department of Education, a public presentation at Swan Haven about our wonderful Celebration of Swans, a special tour at the Yukon Wildlife Preserve focusing on birds, and a number of special events hosted at various elementary and secondary schools around the territory.

The Government of Yukon recognizes that the health of our people is fundamentally linked to the health of our environment, and in this regard we are pleased to have developed, and are working to implement, our climate change action plan, as well as the energy strategy for the Yukon.

We have been able to significantly enhance funding for wildlife inventory work, as well as put in place funding for new programs such as an animal health program and a site assessment remediation unit.

One way each of us can contribute to our environment is to recycle. Recycling and the use of recycled materials reduces our greenhouse gas emissions. Recycling benefits our local landfills by diverting waste from our dumps and benefits the natural environment overall.

The Government of Yukon is pleased to support a number of community recycling initiatives, including funding for recycling depots in 17 Yukon communities. We provide support for the collection of household hazardous waste and special waste throughout the Yukon.

The Department of Environment also oversees the scrap-tire recycling program, and we're also very pleased to partner with Raven Recycling on the administration of the recycling club. Thanks to these and other initiatives, approximately 5,000 tonnes of material are diverted from Yukon dumps every year, which is almost 20 percent of the waste generated in Whitehorse alone.

The Government of Yukon recognizes the importance of recycling and, as such, we were able to enhance our level of funding for recycling initiatives to more than half a million dollars last fall.

Earlier this morning, I was very pleased to be able to join with my colleague, the Minister of Education, to launch a new recycling program for all 28 schools in the territory. Of this increase, \$75,000 is being identified for this program, and we are very pleased to be able to enhance those initiatives already currently underway in many of our schools, such as Selkirk Elementary, Whitehorse Elementary and Golden Horn Elementary, to name but a very few across the territory.

This will help further green schools across the territory to the benefit of local landfills, community recycling depots, and most importantly, the environment. We certainly congratulate all of those various schools for taking the initiative and the leadership.

I have to point out that one school in particular has really caught my attention, and certainly has caught the attention of many Yukoners, and that is Golden Horn Elementary. Thanks to their recycling initiatives and efforts over the years, that school alone has been able to divert more than 90 percent of their waste. They have been able to divert it from the landfills, and for that we congratulate them as a leader among Yukon schools, and certainly for inspiring other schools to do the same.

Mr. Speaker, we are very pleased to recognize Earth Day. Living in a healthy environment is something we all wish to enjoy, as well as pass on to our children and future generations. On Earth Day, and every day, let's do our very best to make the right choices for our environment. Working together, we can and will make the difference that will continue to keep Yukon a beautiful, healthy and green territory to live in.

Thank you.

**Mr. Fairclough:** I rise on behalf of the Official Opposition to pay tribute to Earth Day.

April 22 is International Earth Day. More than six million Canadians join 500 million people in over 180 countries in staging events and projects to address local environmental issues. The "call for action on climate change" theme is a continuation of a three-year campaign that was launched in 2006.

Climate change is definitely with us, and with the changing climate comes many adverse problems. We in the north are the barometer for the rest of the world. Our wildlife species are at risk as is their habitat because of global climate change.

Agriculture and biodiversity are also being impacted. Many plant species are under the threat of extinction and many other food sources are being affected by climate change. This is not only affecting the animal species but we as humans.

The Earth belongs to all of us and we need a global effort to combat climate change. We must educate consumers, corporations and governments worldwide on the urgent need to take immediate, concrete steps on climate change.

There are many simple actions that you can take to save money and lessen your impact on the environment. Three little words — reduce, recycle and reuse — carry an extremely strong message, one that encourages each and every one of us to be environmentally aware and to help protect our fragile Earth. We must all learn to reduce, recycle and reuse.

We live in a fragile society that depends on Mother Earth for its many bounties. We have to focus on what we can do to change the way we live and think about the future. We need to focus on practical solutions. We must reduce our carbon footprint, and we must be the green generation. We must be the catalyst for change.

Earth Day is a day to renew our personal commitment to support a healthier environment. This Earth Day get involved, make a donation, volunteer, attend Earth Day events, be a responsible citizen and respectful to our environment.

We would like to recognize and thank all Yukoners who do engage in recycling and other environmentally friendly activities. We also want to thank our youth and the many schoolchildren and schools that take part in Earth Day events. With our young people reminding us to take care of the Earth, there is hope for the future. We must do our part to protect Mother Earth for generations to come.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Hardy:** I rise on behalf of the New Democratic caucus to pay tribute today to Earth Day. When we celebrate this special day we need to consciously make a shift on how we think about our home and our planet.

One of the shifts in our thinking should be that every day should be Earth Day. Each and every day, we need to stop thinking of the Earth as a place for us to exploit; our very survival will depend on that. Earth Day means more than comforting words once a year. It reminds us that we need to commit ourselves as individuals, as communities and as governments to active involvement.

There are many examples of what active involvement might mean for the Yukon. The consumption, treatment and quality of surface and groundwater are a prime concern in the Yukon, for example. Water is a public resource; it should be looked upon as a human right. Canada was the only country in the United Nations to vote against appointing a special rapporteur on the right to water. As a government that would be actively involved in the principles of Earth Day, we can recognize our water as a right. We can ban the sale of bottled water in public places; we can ensure that our water will not be used for public water exports; we can provide safe water through investing in infrastructure, especially in our First Nation communities.

Yukon is surpassed by several jurisdictions in Canada when we look at the amount of land being protected through biodiversity. We are complacent about our wilderness and wildlife in the Yukon. It seems that we believe that both will go

on forever without protection. Active involvement in the health of our territory and our planet means seriously setting aside protected areas.

We are at a crisis in the Yukon when we consider solid-waste management — an area where we could have immediate and long-lasting results. We are polluting our air, affecting groundwater and only minimally supporting recycling programs with our solid waste.

Nova Scotia, for instance, generated less than half the amount of waste produced in other regions of Canada and recycled nearly 70 percent of its waste. It can be done; it is being done elsewhere. There are positive examples in many other Canadian jurisdictions about the production and transport of food, about the consumption of energy and about the control of toxic substances. They present lessons for us to start living in greater harmony with the planet and all its creatures. If Earth Day is looked upon as every day, we can start by implementing some of these successes here.

**Mr. Edzerza:** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to Earth Day. In our traditional way, every day is Earth Day because Mother Earth is our provider. It is man's responsibility to respect and take care of Mother Earth if we want to sustain life on Mother Earth. What we do today in the name of progress will determine the future of our grandchildren for generations to come. If we do not take care of the air and continue to pollute it, will our future generations have to live in a glass bubble?

We need water to live. If we continue to pollute our rivers, lakes and oceans, how will we replace drinking water? If we continue to cut all the Earth's trees down, what will keep the Earth's dirt in place? Will it dry up and disappear into the universe? If we continue to contaminate Mother Earth with pesticides, how will she grow healthy food? If we continue to use the oceans for dumping our human waste, how will we have healthy fish to eat?

Mr. Speaker, there are many issues that man must consider for our future generations, and we must act now and every day to think, not only for ourselves, but for all those who will follow us. Mr. Speaker, White Cloud said, "The Earth does not belong to man; man belongs to the Earth. This we know. Man did not weave the web of life, he is merely a strand in it. Whatever he does to the web, he does to himself. All things are connected. Whatever befalls the Earth, befalls the children of the Earth."

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Introduction of visitors.

Returns or documents for tabling.

Are there any reports of committees?

Are there any petitions?

Are there any bills to be introduced?

Are there any notices of motion?

## NOTICES OF MOTION

**Mr. Elias:** I rise to give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Yukon government to develop a comprehensive territorial water management strategy and work in conjunction with all levels of government and various other agencies to achieve this.

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

THAT this House urges the Yukon government to comply with legislation and prepare and submit an interim state of the environment report for the years 2006 and 2007 as required under section 50(1) of the *Environment Act*.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Yukon government to comply with the legislation and prepare and submit a state of the environment report for 2008 as required under section 48(1) of the *Environment Act*.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Yukon government to resume talks with francophone school board and to work with them on their issues rather than carrying on with lengthy and costly court proceedings.

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

THAT this House urges the Yukon government to fully fund a permanent memorial and place it in a prominent public location to help raise awareness about the National Day of Mourning, which is marked on April 28 each year, for the many thousands of Canadians who have lost their lives or had them changed forever by injury while on the job.

I also give notice of the following motion:

WHEREAS the government has invested substantial sums in promoting the Yukon as a “larger than life” experience for tourists wanting to enjoy pristine wilderness and abundant wildlife;

THAT this House congratulates the Yukon government for making it onto the extremely popular YouTube Web site, and encourages everyone to check out: [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com) and type in the search words “Stop burning Yukon’s garbage.”

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

THAT this House urges the Yukon government to order the four government members of the Public Accounts Committee, who have informed the committee’s chair in writing that they will no longer attend meetings, to formally resign so that four new government members can be appointed, and the committee can continue the important work of reviewing the spending policies and practices of this government.

I also give notice of the following motion:

WHEREAS we have public holidays that recognize Queen Victoria, the discovery of gold, and other things;

THAT it is the opinion of this House that a new public holiday be created for April 22, Earth Day, which would be a day off from work, a day to contemplate our relationship to the environment and do something positive to reduce our impact on the planet.

I give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Yukon government to set a target of constructing one major community greenhouse for every Yukon community in order to improve local food security, reduce emissions from transportation of food and generally improve the quality of life in Yukon as one concrete action on Earth Day.

I give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Yukon government to improve our efforts to divert waste to recycling by expanding the number of items that are subject to a refund and increasing the refundable amount on these items as one concrete action on Earth Day.

I give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Yukon government to ban the use of cosmetic pesticides throughout the territory as one concrete action on Earth Day.

I give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Yukon government to earmark funds specifically for the green economy and direct a significant portion toward generation of power through geothermal, solar, microhydro and wind as one concrete action on Earth Day.

I give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House applauds the City of Whitehorse for providing composting bins and pickup to city residents and urges the Yukon government to follow their example and provide composting bins in all government buildings as one concrete action on Earth Day.

I give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Yukon government to expand the good energy program, increase the amount of rebates and list the products and appliances eligible for a rebate as one concrete action on Earth Day.

**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: Health care services in rural communities**

**Mr. Mitchell:** We have to take this government to task over its refusal to be accountable for its decisions. The government’s decision to off-load its responsibility for providing health care services to Yukoners is a good example of this.

Health care services in rural communities, including Watson Lake and Dawson, are the government's responsibility. This responsibility should not be assigned to the Hospital Corporation, in spite of the government's efforts to do so.

It has become clear that this government cannot complete a health care project. It just keeps reannouncing some brand new bigger, better design, only to flounder around for a couple more years and accomplish nothing. The government has money in the bank, yet the Hospital Corporation has to go into debt to pay for the construction of new health care facilities in rural Yukon.

Will the government rethink this decision?

**Hon. Mr. Hart:** I just wish to remind the member opposite that we have had a hospital in the Town of Watson Lake since 1979. It continues to be a hospital, and we're looking at trying to enhance the services in that hospital for the citizens of Watson Lake. We have asked the Hospital Corporation to review that process for us so we can achieve that purpose and provide great health services for the citizens of Watson Lake.

To that effect also, we are working with the citizens of Dawson to provide them and the surrounding area with the same services.

**Mr. Mitchell:** We're talking about accountability. The hospital in Watson Lake since 1979, which the minister refers to, has been under the auspices of the Department of Health and Social Services, where we can hold it accountable. This government hands out sole-source contracts for rural health care facilities, but when the projects fail, they say it's not their fault, that someone else is responsible. That's exactly what's happening again. The government can't do the health care job so it just turns it all over to the Hospital Corporation.

This minister was elected by Yukoners to protect the interests of Yukoners. Nobody voted for the chair of the Hospital Corporation. It's this minister who is ultimately responsible for Yukon's health care system. We want to hear him accept responsibility for that. We want to know how the minister will be held accountable for his portfolio after it has been turned over to the Hospital Corporation. Accountability should rest with the minister.

Will he agree not to turn these projects over to the Yukon Hospital Corporation?

**Hon. Mr. Hart:** As the member opposite is well aware, we've already signed an agreement with the Yukon Hospital Corporation to review the Watson Lake hospital; that is already in place and is due to expire on March 31 of next year. That process is well underway. The review is underway and it is being undertaken by the Hospital Corporation. They are processing their work and they have hired a professional firm with the expertise to also provide the Hospital Corporation with what is going to be required for Watson Lake.

In addition, Mr. Speaker, they are using the same expertise to provide them with information for the City of Dawson for their footprint. I would say that this particular use of the consultant by the Hospital Corporation is very good. It is proof of efficiency, and that is what we're hoping to get out of the process: efficiency of service and acute care for all Yukoners.

**Mr. Mitchell:** Mr. Speaker, let's make this clear. It is about accountability — accountability — accountability, not just efficiency. That is what is missing. We'll never know in this Assembly what the results of these reports are if they are not being presented in this Assembly where we can debate them. It is this government that can't do the health care job and yet it is this government that points to everyone but itself when it justifies failures.

The chair of the Yukon Hospital Corporation has admitted he will use private financing to build the new hospital in Dawson. This will add millions of dollars in interest to the construction costs and all of it will be off the government books. So much for accountability.

Will the minister agree to fund these projects and keep them within his department so that they can be held accountable in this Assembly by the people elected by Yukoners?

**Hon. Mr. Hart:** For the member opposite, I just want to maybe refresh his memory. The mandate of the corporation is to operate one or more hospitals within the Yukon; that's their responsibility. Okay? That is what is in the act and that's what enables them to provide it. They're looking at the possibility with regard to Dawson City. They're seeking professional experience to ensure that prior to moving ahead — to discuss what footprints are going to be required to meet the requirements for the citizens of Dawson.

They're working with the Watson Lake staff as well as the citizens of Watson Lake to ensure that their needs are going to be met. I must say, Mr. Speaker, they have had several meetings with the citizens of Watson Lake to date. They have had meetings with the union; they have had meetings with the staff and they've all gone over very well. Those meetings have taken place with our Health officials as well as the Hospital Corporation, in addition to the staff and the town council of Watson Lake, as well as the general public. We had several meetings with great attendance. Some meetings had as many as 120 in attendance, and they were very successful.

#### **Question re: Hockey Canada Skills Academy**

**Mr. Elias:** I have some questions for the minister responsible for education. A Hockey Canada Skills Academy program is a program offered in over 120 schools across our country, and is available to any student, male or female, regardless of skill. The primary outcome of a hockey academy is to enhance a student's confidence, individual playing skills and self-esteem, and to provide opportunities in both academics and athletics beyond the primary and secondary school system, and at the same time, make efficient use of arena facilities during school-day hours.

Annually, more than 100 teachers, instructors and program administrators attend a summer training seminar designed to support schools in the design and delivery of their unique hockey skills academy programs. Is the Minister of Education familiar with this program?

**Hon. Mr. Rouble:** Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin. He and I had a brief discussion regarding the Molson Open Ice Summit and the Canadian Hockey Association and their programs. He provided me with a

Web site on this and that was provided to the Department of Education.

The Department of Education will take a look at this initiative. As we've discussed in this Assembly numerous times, some of the key objectives for our educational institutions — specifically our primary schools — are to address numeracy and literacy issues in our schools. We also recognize that we have a responsibility to provide additional programming to develop, really, the whole child.

We'll take a look at the idea that the member has put forward and assess its merits and assess its suitability for the community that he has referred to. Also, I would suggest to the member opposite that one of the issues that has been raised in the community of Old Crow is the need and desire for a land-based experiential education program, and that's also one of the many different ideas around education that we're currently examining.

**Mr. Elias:** Many Yukoners know what the power of sport does for their children and how hockey contributes to a healthy community, building solid young citizens, and the direct relationship between academic achievement and the participation in the game of hockey. Over the years, our territory has produced some excellent male and female hockey players. They have played in the NHL, the AHL, major junior leagues across our country, in Europe, U.S. colleges, and we've had many Yukoners who have won the Memorial Cup, the Allan Cup, the Calder Cup and the Yukon native hockey tournament championships. Just recently three young Yukoners were invited to the Czech Republic to showcase their hockey skills, and I congratulate those three youngsters.

Mr. Speaker, for one, I would love to see a Yukoner's name on the Stanley Cup within a decade. Will the minister support the set-up and implementation of a Hockey Canada Skills Academy within our public education system?

**Hon. Mr. Rouble:** I do appreciate the question coming from the member opposite. Indeed, Yukon has a lot to be proud of. One only has to look at our recent success in the international forum in the areas such as cycling, where we had a Yukoner competing at the Olympics in cycling and women's weightlifting, where we had Yukoners competing

Recently, we have just heard of two other Yukon athletes competing at an international level in swimming. Yukon has a number of very successful athletes competing around the world, not only in hockey but also in other sports that many people enjoy.

Mr. Speaker, the Government of Yukon is committed to helping Yukoners establish and develop healthy lifestyles. The Minister of Community Services has numerous different programs and initiatives designed to do that. As well, we have a role in our public education system. In addition to providing literacy, numeracy, and other initiatives, we will also continue to work on physical education and enhancing people's abilities to have healthy lifestyles.

**Mr. Elias:** Mr. Speaker, we do have approximately six and a half to seven months of solid winter in the Yukon, and the idea here is also to make efficient use of our arena facilities during school-day hours throughout the Yukon communities

that have those facilities. It has also been brought to my attention that a very high percentage of the students attending the Teslin school also participate in that community's hockey program — a very high percentage, Mr. Speaker. Here in the territory, we have a sports legacy fund, a kids recreation fund, the Aboriginal Sports Circle and, of course, Sport Yukon, that provide support. So we have a solid base to support a Hockey Canada Skills Academy. I would like to see a pilot project endorsed and supported by the government that includes rural and capital city schools to set up a Hockey Canada Skills Academy. This would embed the game of hockey into as many Yukon schools as possible. Will the Minister of Education, exercise his authority under section 6(1)(b) of the *Education Act* and give the green light for the implementation of a Hockey Canada Skills Academy here in our territory?

**Hon. Mr. Rouble:** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate that, at this time of year, many people's attention, including many members of this Assembly's attention, turns to matters relating to hockey. I know it's often the topic of kibitzing here in the Assembly, and I appreciate the member's desire to see more hockey education across the territory.

The Department of Education has a commitment to help Yukoners to grow up to lead healthy, productive lives in our community. Some of our key objectives in that manner involve literacy, numeracy and the numerous other areas people want to see their children educated around, whether that be issues of health or community or history or culture or language or music or drama or physical recreation.

We'll continue to work with all our partners in education. When we look at the partners in hockey, that would also include —

The member opposite is saying, "Just say yes." I hope he appreciates that there are more than just hockey players out there, that Yukon has some great successes with swimmers, cyclists, weightlifters and skiers. We'll continue to work with all Yukoners so they grow up to lead happy and healthy lifestyles.

#### **Question re: Public Accounts Committee attendance**

**Mr. Hardy:** I have a question for the government. Four government members of the Public Accounts Committee say in an April 9, 2009 letter to the chair of the committee — the Member for Copperbelt — that they have lost confidence in him. They write, and I quote: "The Public Accounts Committee can only effectively operate on a non-partisan basis. You and members of your caucus, however, continue to utilize the Public Accounts Committee for partisan political purposes even after you assured us that you would not; therefore, the government members will not attend meetings of the committee until this matter is resolved."

I have four copies of the letter that was sent around to people.

Mr. Speaker, we went through this just a year ago in regard to the members, the chair and —

**Speaker:** Order please. Ask the question, please?

**Mr. Hardy:** Ask the question? Okay. Will the Premier immediately order the government members of the Public Ac-

counts Committee to attend meetings so that this committee can get on with important business?

**Hon. Mr. Fentie:** Mr. Speaker, I couldn't agree more with the Leader of the Third Party of the importance of this committee. I would remind the member that for years this committee never met because it was politicized. When this government came into office, we worked diligently to get this committee back up and running in the appropriate manner.

In fact, under the Leader of the Third Party's guidance as chair, it was functioning very, very well, and I want to commend the Leader of the Third Party for his efforts and commitment to the Public Accounts Committee. Unfortunately, we've gone through a bit of a period of time where that has changed somewhat under the guidance and chairmanship of the Leader of the Official Opposition. So the government is exercising what are truly its obligations to the democratic process by informing this House, all the members of the committee, the public, and anybody else who would like to listen that we no longer have any confidence in the chair of the Public Accounts Committee, and I think we could all exercise our obligations here, should the members wish, and have that debate in this House, and we could certainly change the chair.

**Mr. Hardy:** You know, it's extremely frustrating — extremely frustrating — to see politics being played at the Public Accounts Committee level, and it's being played by both sides here. I can stand from the outside looking in now and see what's happening. Unfortunately, it's the people of this territory who are losing in this battle. I ask every member in this Legislative Assembly to recognize that the Public Accounts Committee is the single most important committee that we have for oversight on financial matters within departments and corporations. We talk a lot about economics in here and yet people can't come together under the Public Accounts Committee to take a look at the spending policies.

Will the Premier live up to words he mentioned last year and direct his government members of the Public Accounts Committee to attend meetings of this important body so we can move forward, please?

**Hon. Mr. Fentie:** Again, I couldn't agree more with the Leader of the Third Party. It's a very important committee, but it can't function when it becomes politicized and that's the experience we've had now over the last while, of attempts to use this committee in a manner that is definitely politicizing its work. That's not acceptable.

If the Leader of the Third Party would like to table a motion in this House for debate, where we change the chair of the committee, this government will willingly debate that motion. In fact, I would even submit at this time that the government would fully support the reinstatement of the Leader of the Third Party as chair of the Public Accounts Committee.

**Mr. Hardy:** No, no, no. Thank you, but no — I'm sorry. I've done my job there. However, if the Premier is so intent on this, and he feels that the solution is having a motion brought forward, however it's written — because I'd probably write a different motion than the Premier himself — however, while the government motion day is coming up next week, this

definitely can be brought forward if they so wish to have this debate.

The problem, though, is that the people of this territory are not being served by the Members of the Legislative Assembly when they don't do their jobs. Four members on the government side are not doing their jobs, and we went through two members on this side who were not doing their jobs. Put it aside. Lay down your swords. Let's work for the public — please.

Will the Premier advise the members of the Public Accounts Committee, on his side at least, to get back to work and try to make this thing work?

**Hon. Mr. Fentie:** First off, I would like to inform the Leader of the Third Party that back in 1996, I did lay down my sword and pick up the pen and went to work on behalf of the Yukon public as a representative for the riding of Watson Lake and a member of this Assembly. That's why the government side has taken the position it has. We want these committees to function, and I would repeat for the member, and all members of the House, that it's this government that actually got the committee back up and running. Unfortunately, there's this propensity by the Official Opposition to use these types of instruments, which are very important instruments in the democratic process, in a manner that is simply not part of the design, the function or the obligations of the committee itself. That is what we are addressing here.

Again, I say to the member opposite that we feel strongly about the Public Accounts Committee functioning properly, but to suggest that we're not doing our job because we have challenged the chair of today of the Public Accounts Committee, because we've lost confidence in his ability to chair the committee, is simply not the case. We are all doing our job, and I think quite handily, considering what is happening in today's Yukon.

#### **Question re: Residential school demolition ceremony**

**Mr. Edzerza:** Mr. Speaker, there were several Indian residential schools which operated in Yukon. These schools had a significant impact on First Nations in Yukon. It was a law that status Indians sent their children to the mission schools, and this was enforced by the RCMP. Has the Education minister ever taken the interest to research the effects mission schools had on the First Nation people in Yukon? Yes or no?

**Hon. Mr. Rouble:** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the member opposite's question. The member opposite should recall the numerous debates that we've had in the Assembly where we've discussed residential schools. I can unequivocally state for the member opposite that yes, I have discussed this issue with people of First Nation ancestry and non-First Nation ancestry.

From a personal perspective, some members of my wife's family were in a residential school process as well. I've heard their stories about this. It was a different type of situation. However, her family members were in a residential school very similar. I appreciate and recognize the difficulties that were

created from this, that have had a long-standing effect on Yukoners and have affected generations of Yukoners.

**Mr. Edzerza:** It is crucial for the Premier and his Cabinet to seek understanding of First Nations because they represent all First Nations in the Yukon. The closing day to the last ties of Indian residential schools was a significant event for all Yukon people, especially First Nation people. I thank all Yukoners who attended. On April 20 this year, the Education minister pointed out that members of the opposition were not in attendance at meetings he had with the school councils and the board committees.

The local Member of Parliament, the Leader of the Official Opposition and some of his caucus were present at the closing ceremonies. Were any members from the government side in attendance?

**Hon. Mr. Fentie:** This discussion that we're having on the floor of this Legislative Assembly is very important. I think the Prime Minister of Canada has recognized that duly with the federal government's apology on behalf of Canada. Our attendance at that apology on the site of a previous residential school was quite important and we attended that. The fact that this building is being torn down and is quite symbolic, we couldn't support more. Did we attend that particular function or event? No member of the government side did; we were here in this Assembly. If others in this Assembly did attend, we applaud them.

Our efforts as a government are focused on dealing with those impacts that are generational, that are in our education system, in our social system, in our justice system. It is incumbent upon all of us to not reduce the critical importance of dealing with these challenges in today's society for Yukon by simply defining them as who attended what event.

**Mr. Edzerza:** The attendance of government officials, especially the Premier, at significant events is usually a given. The event started at 9:00 a.m. and ended at 7:00 p.m. I was approached by some First Nation people who asked me why the Premier was not at the event. I could not respond because I did not know. I surely would have, if I had.

In a point of interest, will the Premier now make an apology to the First Nation people of the Yukon for the government side not providing the support by being in attendance at this significant event?

**Hon. Mr. Fentie:** Though I'm quite anxious to chastise the independent member of this House for his suggestion that we do not support First Nations in their efforts to move beyond what was a terrible, terrible mistake made by a federal government and others involved so many years ago, I won't. But I will point out to the member opposite that we do fully support First Nations in every level of our obligation.

In this particular area, with the challenges that we face in society today in the aforementioned systems — education, justice, social, health — we are all well aware of what it is we're up against. That's why we were working so hard. We'll all work hard continually on these issues, whether it be the federal, provincial or territorial governments, to address what should never have taken place.

The point to the member opposite is that his approach here is not constructive. It is not contributing to moving people beyond this situation; it's pulling them back. To suggest that we don't support First Nations because we didn't attend a particular event is simply unacceptable and has no place in this House, in the public or anywhere else in this country.

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

**Mr. McRobb:** Earlier this week, I asked the minister responsible for the Yukon Development Corporation about how it was revealed the government authorized payments to the chair of the Yukon Development Corporation Board, well in excess of the maximum allowed by law. The minister promised he would look into it and get an answer for the public. It has now been two full days, Mr. Speaker, and we're still waiting for that response.

The position of Yukon Development Corporation chair is a part-time job. Last year, the chair was paid more than \$57,000. Government rules say the chair can collect a maximum of \$38,000.

Will the minister now tell this House why the Yukon Development Corporation chair was allowed to exceed that maximum allowed by more than \$19,000?

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** Well, Mr. Speaker, in my capacity as Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources — of course, the Yukon Development Corporation is a separate ministry — I would point out, first of all, that the Member for Kluane, in using the language that he did, really owes this House and all Yukon citizens an apology. For the member to suggest that the government authorized a payment, as he said, not allowed by law, is a statement that holds no water. The member should apologize for misleading the House.

**Mr. McRobb:** Mr. Speaker, I refuse to engage in this finger-pointing exercise, and instead will focus on the issue itself.

When I raised this issue earlier in the week, the minister promised to look into it and provide the public with an answer, but that has not happened. The minister responsible also tossed this hot potato to the corporation, and the Cabinet spokesperson tossed it over to the Yukon Energy Corporation, but the corporation tossed it back to this government, because it was this government who needed to deal with the issue. It was the government who appointed this individual, it was the government who issued the salary cap order, it was this government who allowed this individual to exceed that salary cap by 50 percent more than what is required and allowed by this government's own law. Why was the law not upheld in this case?

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** Mr. Speaker, again, I will begin by giving the Member for Kluane an opportunity to retract his statements. The member should know that the statements he is making are not accurate. The chair of the Yukon Development Corporation is paid a set rate of remuneration of \$38,000 per year, and in that capacity he has not been paid one dime more. The Member for Kluane, as a former energy commissioner, should be well aware that since the inception of Yukon Energy Corporation, the chair and members of the board of Yukon Development Corporation and Yukon Energy Corporation are

also paid some remuneration separately for Yukon Energy Corporation Board responsibilities — again, a long-standing practice dating back to Yukon Energy Corporation's creation.

This government is looking at changing this structure through the rationalization initiative currently underway, and that is why the energy strategy, which we released earlier this year, notes it will consider appropriate roles, responsibilities, and corporate structure for Yukon Development Corporation and Yukon Energy Corporation to ensure effective management and operation, and optimize efficiency and reliability of electricity generation and distribution.

Mr. Speaker, the Member for Kluane ought to know the statements he's making are misleading and inaccurate. He should apologize to the House and retract his statements.

**Mr. McRobb:** Well, obviously the Yukon Party chooses to attack the messenger and not the issue itself. I am certainly not aware of any such policy and neither is the Yukon public. Nowhere is it written down that people who serve on the Yukon Development Corporation Board and the Yukon Energy Corporation Board receive separate pay for each board. They receive one paycheck only. The chair's salary is capped at \$38,000 per year; that is the full pay of serving on both boards.

Mr. Speaker, in documents obtained last week, the chair of the board managed to stay under the cap in 2005 and 2006. In 2007 he was only over by \$200. Suddenly in 2008, he billed for more than \$57,000 — well over the limit of the law.

If the minister's claims are true, will he provide the evidence for this House that identifies those payments for each of the past four years?

**Hon. Mr. Fentie:** Mr. Speaker, I would first provide some advice to the Member for Kluane to recognize what it is he is saying here. That's the first point I would like to make. The offer to retract will stay open by the government side. Furthermore, for the member to recite from a document — a document that we all know he has obtained vis-à-vis information that is before the Yukon Utilities Board — and the document is quite explicit. It has to do with honoraria — not remuneration for the Yukon Development Corporation chair, but honoraria from the Energy Corporation itself to board members and the chair. Again, we offer the member to retract his statement.

He has made an accusation that the government has authorized an overpayment to the chair of the Yukon Development Corporation; that is not correct. Either the member is confused about the matter or the member is up to some mischief.

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

#### Point of order

**Speaker:** On a point of order, presumably.

**Mr. McRobb:** On a point of order, clearly it's against the House rules to point out a member is "up to some mischief".

#### Unparliamentary language

**Speaker:** Yes, I agree with you; there is a point of order. Hon. Premier, don't use that term again.

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

### ORDERS OF THE DAY

### OPPOSITION PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

### MOTIONS OTHER THAN GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

#### Motion No. 688

**Clerk:** Motion No. 688, standing in the name of Mr. Cardiff.

**Speaker:** It is moved by the Member for Mount Lorne THAT this House urges the Yukon Government to direct its efforts to improve the education system by expanding and enhancing programs and services, particularly in rural Yukon, that have proven successful, such as:

- (1) experiential learning programs;
- (2) after school tutoring programs;
- (3) the Leaders in Education Innovation Fund;
- (4) the Individual Learning Centre Program;
- (5) the Whole Child Project;
- (6) First Nation cultural and language programs;
- (7) counsellors in all schools;
- (8) summer and after school programming;
- (9) the involvement of Community Education Liaison Coordinators in community development and counselling; and
- (10) skills training at the high school level.

**Mr. Cardiff:** I am very pleased today and especially during Education Week to rise and speak to this motion. The motion talks about expanding and enhancing programs and services — particularly in rural Yukon — that have proven successful. We are citing examples of successes in the Yukon education system that we think there needs to be more emphasis on, and especially in rural Yukon, so that all Yukoners regardless of where they live are treated equally and have the benefit of a good education.

Some of the reasons we're talking about this today is because we understand some of the challenges that the education system faces. This is not an exhaustive list of solutions. There are many more solutions, and I may be bringing some of those forward, as well, because I believe that there are other programs and services that could be expanded and enhanced.

We're not here to point fingers and lay blame on any particular person, organization or department of government. We're here to engage in a conversation and to put on record some of the things that we think require more emphasis by the Department of Education and by the Minister of Education and to look for those solutions to some of the problems that face our education system today.

All of the problems we see facing the education system and students in achieving their potential in the education system aren't necessarily as a result of the education system either. They are, in some instances, societal problems, and that's where we need the Department of Education to work with other departments to ensure that there is cooperation and collaboration to ensure the best possible outcomes, and that students and



teachers, and the system, are supported to the best possible extent so that the outcomes for the learners and communities are the best they can be.

One of the things that was brought up, one of the reasons why we're presenting these solutions today and want to talk about them, is because we view education as an investment and not as an expense. Too often, I think, governments have a tendency to view it all in budgetary terms.

The government has talked about a stimulus budget at a time when the economy is in crisis. That affects our society as a whole as well, and puts strains on our social services network and our education system. Children are arriving at school with more on their minds than just what class they're going to today, what they're going to learn, what activities they're going to be participating in and whether or not their physics assignment was completed or not. They've got other things on their minds that are bothering them. We need to have a positive outlook provided to them, that they have a future and that education is part of the way forward for them to achieve all they can and to be part of their community and contribute to that community.

So education needs to be viewed as an investment — as a strategic investment — and part of the stimulus. When we look at what the government spends on education, we hear the Minister of Education and the Premier talk about the cost per student, and compare that to other jurisdictions. Well, I'd like to compare something else with other jurisdictions.

As a percentage of the total budget, the Yukon government spends 10.8 percent of its budget allocated to elementary and secondary education. Those figures are from 2006-07. I know the minister will tell us that has gone up. We are actually third and fourth on the bottom end of the scale in Canada. British Columbia, Northwest Territories, New Brunswick, P.E.I., Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Alberta, Ontario and Newfoundland and Labrador all spend more as a percentage of their consolidated government spending — territorial and local — on education. Those jurisdictions spend more. In the Yukon, it's 10.8 percent; in British Columbia, it's 11.6 percent; in Newfoundland and Labrador, it's 14.1 percent of the consolidated provincial and local government spending that's allocated to elementary and secondary education in 2006 — that is what they spent.

There is a considerable difference. There are also considerable similarities to some extent between the jurisdictions. There are vast expanses of land and distances and isolated communities that pose challenges to delivering education and to ensuring that those isolated communities and the children in those isolated communities receive an education. Some of those challenges are here. Some of the social challenges that we experience here in Yukon — broken families, substance abuse problems, the need for cultural recognition — are very similar in a lot of ways. It appears that Newfoundland and Labrador have recognized that. I think that the government needs to look at it as a percentage of what it spends as a whole, and that is how you determine what the priority is.

First, that is the one of the things that we think the government needs to focus on and that is why we're bringing forward these and other programs and services that we think

should be expanded and enhanced in some way. We'll get to some of the reasons for that very shortly, I hope.

Some of the other reasons why we think these solutions need to be presented and discussed were presented in the Auditor General's report. One of the issues was front and centre and has been brought up many times in this Legislature — but I think what we need to do is that we need to talk about it in a rational manner. We need to think about what the priorities are. We want to hear what the minister's priorities are for dealing with that.

The Auditor General's report talks about actual graduation rates, based on the data in the department's student information management system. The figures that they give are 58 percent for Yukon students as a whole and 40 percent for First Nations.

Mr. Speaker, quite frankly, that's not good enough. When I think about graduation rates, when I read those figures, they tell me that 42 percent of students as a whole aren't graduating. And thank God we have things — and thank the government and previous ministers of education, and the department officials that had the foresight and the willingness to put in place things like the Individual Learning Centre, because that's where some of those students are going. But there are still students who are falling through the cracks. It's the end of April. We're almost into May here. Graduation ceremonies are going to be held throughout the Yukon. Sixty percent of First Nation students who had the potential to graduate won't be graduating. What message should the Minister of Education, or we as legislators, give to those children? What can we tell them?

We stand here in this Legislature and talk about this. Previously our terms were four years. Now they're five years. It's still basically at the will of the Government Leader, the Premier of the Yukon, as to when an election is called. During the length of our term in this Legislature, there is a cohort that goes through the secondary school system — from grade 7 or 8 through to grade 12. I think about the students who go through that system while we're here trying to do our jobs to make that system better, but I can't help but think of the ones who fall through the cracks and that we as politicians, the system and we as society are failing. We are failing to provide for their needs.

Quite frankly, as a political legacy for my career, it's not something that I would want. It's the reason why we're talking about it today. It's not a legacy I think the Minister of Education wants — to live with those kinds of graduation rates. We need to look for solutions so that these graduation rates — that we turn the corner, that we build an education system that's inclusive of communities, that responds to their needs, is a legacy that we all can be proud of and that those children aren't failed by the system. I think we can do that. I think that progress has already been made.

I was quite pleased just last week to attend the Association of Yukon School Councils conference, and it was good to see people who were interested and engaged and wanting to participate in the system. We need to look for ways of allowing them more input into expanding and enhancing programs and services for all their communities — not just in Whitehorse, but

for rural communities, so their children have the same opportunities as the children who are attending school in Whitehorse.

Part of that is about how we govern our education system. There are a couple of components to that. First of all, through the *Education Act*, there is the allowance for the creation of school committees, for school councils and for school boards. We hear frustration at all levels, and we see parents and educators searching for ways to have more involvement, have more of a say, for communities to have more of a say, in how education is delivered in their community and for their students.

They would like to have more influence and more autonomy to be able to deal with some of the issues. I know in the education reform document there are instances where there are recommendations that talk about more training and more support for school councils, school boards and for educators themselves and their needs. The recommendations in the education reform project — we'll definitely be touching on some of those today.

School councils would like to play a greater role, I think, and I believe that some of those school councils and some communities in looking at — I know I heard it in the Member for Mayo-Tatchun's question the other day — the possibility of forming school boards.

I often wonder whether or not — we talked about this before, in the First Nations context, and the fact that there are a number of First Nations who, through the *Umbrella Final Agreement* and through their self-government and final agreements, are looking at drawing down education, and several are currently engaged in negotiations with the federal and territorial governments at the table for program service transfer agreements in the area of education.

Yet, we also hear from First Nations that they would like to be part of one education system; that they need the authority, and they need to feel that they have some control, just like other communities and other schools we hear about that are considering maybe changing from school councils to school boards. Again, it requires more resources and more training from the Department of Education.

That's one of the areas that wasn't totally explored in the education reform project. There are some recommendations, but it makes me wonder whether or not education has become so centralized in Whitehorse that we don't need to look seriously at how we can devolve some of that power and authority to communities to make them feel empowered, to make them feel like they're part of an education system, and that they're part of their communities' and children's education, both through empowering school councils and school boards, and through empowering First Nations, and supporting their efforts to take more control over the education of their communities and their children.

I think that it's important that we do that, that we recognize it, that there is a need for that, that those roles are clarified, and that they're also strengthened. We shouldn't be afraid to give communities more control over the programs and services and staffing of their educational facility.

I know the minister and I'd like to actually thank him at this time has previously offered a briefing on the New Horizons

project and we received that and we've been promised an update on that. I look forward to receiving that update, along with my staff. I think it's going to be enlightening and informative, for both myself and the staff in my office, and I'd like to thank the minister for that opportunity.

The minister has said in the Legislature that New Horizons is really not a program, it's about the implementation of the education reform project, which is the big document that the minister claims could put you to sleep, and there are areas that can put you to sleep but there are a lot of exciting things. It's not an easy read but there are a lot of exciting things in there. What is not clear to the public and to members on this side of the House is what the plan is. That's what we need to hear from the minister.

New Horizons is supposedly the implementation of the education reform project, but we don't know which pieces. It's supposed to be a positive, solution-based approach, which is what we're here to talk about today, about ensuring there are programs and services in all schools in the Yukon, that we enhance those, learn from the good things that are happening and provide for those most in need.

Right now New Horizons is kind of like a philosophical discussion in my mind. It needs to become more focused; it needs to have the priorities of how we move forward better defined, which specific items in the education reform document we are actually going to move forward on, because there are a number of them. There were a number of position papers and a lot of recommendations and they covered a variety of topics. I am not going to go into a lot of them but there were sections dealing with governance and partnerships. There were sections dealing with First Nation issues around languages and whether there should be a First Nation secondary school, about First Nation administrators and ensuring adequate representation in the education system, and about how students are challenged by the rural to urban transition, coming from small rural communities to larger centres.

Maybe we need to think about a more regionalized approach to some of those problems. There were sections on community issues, literacy, early childhood learning, and youth substance abuse. There's support for teachers and administrators, support for students, and there was a section on programming. We'll talk about some of those as we move through the 10 programs that we've identified in the motion.

So what we're looking for, I guess, from the Minister of Education, in the New Horizons philosophy and approach — in these solution-based approaches — is, what are the priorities, and how do we define them? I know the minister has a plan to deal with that, and maybe there's still more work to be done in that area. I guess the only thing that I would say is that we received the *Education Reform Final Report* in I believe it was December of 2007, so we've had that report for 15 months, give or take.

We feel that it's high time, I guess, that those priorities are defined, that they're communicated to educators, that they're communicated to parents, to leaders of communities, to First Nations, to students, so that they have an understanding of what direction the education system is going. We feel that it has

turned the corner but that it needs to be better communicated. We need those priorities identified on what is the way forward.

One of the other reasons we need to think about making some of these changes is because when we talk about these programs — to go back to one of the things we started with, which was about making education an investment and not viewing it as an expense or a burden on the government — resources need to be attached to those solutions. That's one thing that we haven't seen the government do in New Horizons. I know the minister will stand up and say that we've increased the budget in Education this year. That may be the case, but I'll go back to — as a percentage of the entire budget, we still fall behind when it comes to a percentage of our entire budget.

We could be spending more on education, and some of those school-based resources would allow for greater flexibility in communities. I know that one of the ones we've cited in our motion is the leaders in education/innovation fund. We congratulate the minister on recognizing the need for that but I feel that the resources that have been committed may not be enough.

I know the minister told me that we need to start somewhere and we need to see what the uptake is, but when you look at what happens in various communities around the Yukon — if we look at what is happening in communities like Carcross, with some of the things that have happened in that school. The renaming of the school to make it more culturally relevant — and I don't know if I'm going to say this right: the Ghùch Tlà Community School; the minister is nodding — was celebrated by that school. When it comes to innovation and programs, the community played a big role, supported to some extent by the Department of Education in new curriculum — a First Nation-based language curriculum for that school. We need to see more of that. Those are some of the positive things in schools in the Yukon that we would like to see.

Elijah Smith Elementary School here in Whitehorse is, as we know, an over-subscribed facility where there is a lot of demand on that facility with children wanting to attend it and parents wanting their children to attend. It has done wonders around being a culturally relevant school. Just one of the many things that they have done is get students out on the land, to put them back in touch with the place that they live, through going on the bison hunts. I think that this year was the eighth bison hunt. I know that there are other schools — I believe Hidden Valley School is also doing bison hunts. These are examples from around the territory.

I've heard reports of outdoor experiential pursuits in Old Crow. Someone was mentioning to me the other day a fish wheel project — again, something that supports students exploring not just the outdoor, back-to-the-land experience, but how to provide for themselves, with some historical context and cultural context for where they come from, and I think that that's important. There are numerous examples from around the territory, and numerous requests, as well, for increased culturally relevant programming and services in communities.

I'd like to talk a little bit about some of the programs and services that are in the motion. Experiential learning programs

such as music, arts and drama or ACES or the outdoor pursuits experiential science programs — I think they've become very, very popular. We saw a pilot program run at l'École Émilie Tremblay. I'm not sure what the status of that is — whether that's going to be able to continue and whether or not the funding for the continuation of that project is going to be there. We also hear requests from other communities. Some communities are doing this with resources of their own, because they realize how important some of these experiences are for their children and for their students, but they only form part of their children's education.

I would like to see some expansion of these programs to other communities to offer students more of an opportunity. So I'm not sure where the funding is at necessarily for the pilot project for l'École Émilie Tremblay. I was at the announcement and the minister was at the announcement when they announced there would be this program there, but I think it would be wise to look at how well subscribed that program was, and to look at continuing it, to ensure the continuation of that program, to provide those students with those opportunities, and to look at ways of either expanding the programs here in Whitehorse for those high school students who come from other communities to attend high school in Whitehorse, and to even look at trying to make some of these programs available in rural Yukon, even if it's only on a part-time basis, but to ensure that they are afforded the opportunity to have those types of learning experiences.

This is Education Week and, as the minister has been touting, it's about engaging communities and it's about engaging students. I believe the theme is "engaged communities, engaged learners". This is one way of making education more attractive to students and to put the reading, writing and arithmetic and the science into a context where students can understand what it is that they are learning and see the reasons for learning it. I know that in my education it helped me to understand some of the arithmetic and math that I was learning by also pursuing the trades programs when I was going to high school. It put why I was learning geometry into context for me.

When it comes to support for students there are a number of things — in fact a lot of items listed in the motion could be, I guess, defined as support for students, not the least of which would be after-school tutoring programs, and ensuring that these are available. In the current budget it actually looks like there is less money this year for the after-school tutoring programs. We think it would be good to actually support students and to assist them after school to expand the use of after-school tutoring programs to assist students where they're having difficulty. This not only provides support for the student; it provides support to the teachers as well.

I heard it said the other day that there are increasing demands on our educators, that we are pushing some of them to the breaking point even, and that they're struggling. Part of that is the fact that students are struggling and teachers don't necessarily have all of the support that they need in their classes to deal with not just the educational problems and the struggles that students have, but the social problems that children experience, and when they come to school and they're not ready to

learn; they're just distracted by other events that are happening in their lives. We need to provide support for them for that as well.

If we can provide more support after school, through after-school programming or after-school tutoring programs, and provide training for tutors to provide those services in communities so that, in every community, there are tutors available and that students who are most in need have those opportunities.

One of the things that was raised in the Auditor General's report was the fact that 17 percent of all students in the Yukon had individual education plans, for a total of 866 students. That's one reason why I think we need to ensure that teachers receive the support that they need in the class. I know that that falls into a different category and into a different recommendation that we have in our motion, but I think that it's important to recognize that it's students who are struggling, who have those individual education programs, who are the most vulnerable, who are those most in need, and we need to ensure that we provide support for those students and, through after-school tutoring, I think that that can make a difference.

As I said earlier, one of the initiatives the minister has talked about and has said is part of the New Horizons project is the leaders in education/innovation fund. He has dedicated \$75,000 in this annual budget for this fund, and it's to support innovation in the schools — to take educators who have innovative ideas and help them move them forward. I think we've been doing that. There are so many examples, and I've mentioned some of them — music, arts, drama and experiential science programs — we were on the leading edge, I think, many years ago, when these were fledgling programs here in the Yukon.

I think we owe a debt of gratitude to the educators who first came forward with those ideas. They were supported by the Department of Education at that time. An enormous amount of resources have been put into them because they've proven successful. There are other programs and services that are being offered that deserve the same level of support.

While I applaud the idea of a leaders in education/innovation fund, I think that we could resource it more. One of the things I've heard about over a number of years is school resources and the need to have school-based resources and support for programming that is happening in our schools. It's a problem, especially in rural Yukon, to try to deliver some of these programs without adequate resources and discretionary funds. What you find a lot of the time is that there's a process where you have to apply for the money, and it goes to the Department of Education and the Department of Education looks at it and then it gets lost.

I'll go back to the autonomy and the control by the community and the school council or the school board. Maybe that's one of the reasons why maybe we need to look more closely at devolving some of that authority and providing more autonomy to communities through the creation of school boards. Maybe the minister should look at that, because the education system needs to be more responsive to the immediate needs of communities when it comes to education. If the com-

munity sees a need in a certain area, and it has to make application to the Department of Education, and the Department of Education has to research it and look into what it is that's being proposed and vet it, it takes time. It's not a criticism of the department; it's just the way that the process has been set up.

We either need to look at ways to ensure that there are more discretionary school-based resources, so that some of that innovation in communities can take place, and that the needs of students can be provided for on a timely basis. It's not a criticism of the department; it's the way that the process has been designed and developed over a number of years. I think that subconsciously, it's done that way. That that is just the way that our government system and our bureaucracy works, and we need to look at ways of making it more flexible and responsive to the needs of communities and our students, so that their aspirations are recognized more fully and expediently.

While the leaders in education/innovation fund was a great idea, again, it's about providing more school-based resources on the ground in communities. I think it would be good to provide more money. I think if you do the math, and every school had one project, roughly \$2,500 would be available — somewhere between \$2,500 and \$3,000 would be available for each school. We all know that it doesn't go a long way.

Then, when those programs, services and innovations become a reality, we need to provide ongoing support, so that those innovations just become part of the education system on a regular, ongoing basis and part of those solution-based improvements to our education system.

Earlier we talked a little bit about graduation rates. In response to poor graduation rates several years ago, I think the former Minister of Education came up with the idea or someone came up with the idea and the then Minister of Education supported the establishment of the Individual Learning Centre. It has been a great success. I talked to a number of individuals — young people who have attended the Individual Learning Centre — have found that the support and the flexibility provided there has enabled them to go on to get their credentials so that they can say they've graduated from high school and they've moved on to bigger and better things in their lives.

I think that it wouldn't take a lot. There are recommendations in the education reform project report that talk about rural secondary schools, and I think that that's something, as well, that needs to be explored, because it is traumatic and it is difficult for students to travel from their communities — without the support of their families — on a daily and a regular basis, or even on a weekly basis, to come to Whitehorse to get their secondary education. But when it comes to the Individual Learning Centre programs, I know that some of this could be — and we talk often about collaboration, and working with our educational partners, and one of the educational partners is Yukon College. How can we work with Yukon College to ensure that students who have dropped out of high school, either in Whitehorse or in their own community — and have returned to their community, if they were attending in Whitehorse — have access to some sort of an Individual Learning Centre program, where it is more tailored to the individual and where that support is there for those students? It's about ensuring that

these students aren't left behind and that they're not just handed off to developmental studies at Yukon College, but that they are actually still supported by the Department of Education, or maybe they're supported by their school council or school board, as well, with funding from the Department of Education. Or, maybe the funding comes from the school board, if the school board is granted that kind of autonomy and authority over the delivery of education in their community or their region.

This would allow for, I think, greater success. I know that all children, all students and even all adults don't take in information — for that matter, we probably don't disseminate information all the same either. I think we can see that here. We don't all learn the same way. I think we need to ensure that, when those most in need fall through the cracks, that the education system is there to lend a hand and to pick them up and assist them on their way.

The expansion of the Individual Learning Centre program for high school dropouts and those who have struggled with their education, I think, would be a very positive initiative. We need to look at how we can do that in other communities — as I say, through partnership with Yukon College or with First Nations, their education departments and to assist them as well.

The fifth program or service that we mention in our motion that we would like to see expanded and enhanced is the Whole Child project. I read recently, I think it was in preparation for another motion that we were talking about a number of weeks ago, about measuring the success of education; I think I mentioned the Whole Child project in that debate as well, but it's very important. It supports students who are at risk and come from troubled families. There are students at risk in every community in Yukon.

The Auditor General's report stated, "The Department produces an annual Kindergarten Screening Profile Report for younger students. The purpose of the screening profile is to identify students who may have problems with literacy or numeracy in Grade One."

So these are students who are being screened and the "...Report stated that 34 percent of students ... fell into an at-risk category" when it came to numeracy and literacy. One of the things that the Whole Child project does is promote the involvement of families and volunteers in the school. It supports children and families who have problems. It provides opportunities for those children to get the support they need so that they can get the literacy and numeracy skills early on in their education — and the program has been very successful.

It currently runs, to the best of my knowledge, only at one school in Whitehorse, at Whitehorse Elementary. I know I read extensively about it a few weeks ago; I don't have the information in front of me and I know that the minister is probably well aware of the benefits of the Whole Child project at Whitehorse Elementary. I think that it's one of those things, again, that could be enhanced, it can be supported, and we can look at ways of making it available. Again, it's one of those things that was an innovation, and it was an initiative that was taken on by educators. Parents got involved in it, and they saw the need and the Department of Education supported it.

Now I think what we need to do is share that experience with other communities, and at the very least, offer it to other communities and schools, so that some of the experiences and the things that we've learned and that the education system and educators have learned can be shared with other schools.

I read another motion in the other day that talked about support for Food for Learning programs. The Food for Learning program, while it is not on this list, is another one that we believe should be expanded, enhanced and supported by the government through increased resources to the Department of Education.

I know that there is federal funding that is provided for the Food for Learning program, and that the Department of Health and Social Services also provides money. I believe it's \$50,000 a year for the Food for Learning program. The Minister of Education is indicating that it's more than that, but it costs quite a bit to run that program.

I don't know that the program is available at all schools in the Yukon. The minister is indicating all but one. It operates and it exists through donations and fundraising efforts. I'll remind the minister that, if he wants, he can come by my office some day, and I'll show him the bumper sticker that I look at occasionally to remind myself. I think I've probably had it for almost 20 years. It's the only one I've ever seen, and I'm not sure exactly where it came from. It says on the bumper sticker something to the effect of — and I'll try to paraphrase: it will be a great day in the Yukon when the education system is fully funded and we need to sell chocolate bars to ensure that the Department of Highways and Public Works has enough money to ensure that our roads are maintained — something along those lines.

It seems like, as a society, we are increasingly looking toward fundraising efforts to provide for services that should be publicly funded, whether it's the fundraising done by the Hospital Foundation in order to provide infrastructure, so that our health care needs can be fully looked after, or whether its children selling chocolate bars, boxes of oranges, raffle tickets or discount cards so that they can have a fuller education.

This goes back to education as an investment. The government has talked about investment in infrastructure — in highways, millions of dollars for the Alaska Highway and the Shakwak project. There are millions of dollars for the Robert Campbell Highway, but when we look at the percentage of the total that we as a government expend on education, we are fourth in the country. We are in the bottom four. Consequently, when you think about that — I haven't seen the Minister of Highways and Public Works out selling chocolate bars to make sure that there is enough money to BST or fill potholes on our highways. Yet we would have our students and our educators selling raffle tickets in front of Canadian Tire or discount cards or chocolate bars in order to ensure that they can fully participate in the education system and to assist in that.

I just think that, as a society and as a government, we've become somewhat complacent and accepting of this practice. I don't think that it's a good practice to get into and it's not something we should look to as a fall-back. It's interesting that I would be talking about Food for Learning and chocolate bars,

because chocolate bars aren't really food for learning. We need to think about the food that is available in the schools. That's what the Food for Learning program is about — ensuring that students attending school aren't hungry, that they have the ability to concentrate to the best of their ability and achieve as much as they can without worrying about whether or not they're hungry.

There's another program like that in the school as well that I'll mention and that's the school dental program. When children don't have healthy teeth and oral hygiene, it's difficult for them to digest that food. So we need to ensure that programs like that continue and that they're available throughout the Yukon, and that the government fully supports them and that we don't have to rely on fundraising efforts. It's through initiatives by communities, initiatives by educators and teachers, who first-hand — this is another one of those examples where we need to rely on front-line workers to provide leadership and direction, and that's how Food for Learning programs actually came to be in the territory.

Our hats are off to them; I believe they should be, and we congratulate them for the success of the program. What I'm asking is that the government fully fund it, or increase their support so that educators and students can concentrate on the job at hand, which is about getting on with education, and not worrying about where the food's going to come from or how they're going to pay for the Food for Learning program.

We believe that more emphasis — and I believe that First Nations believe, and I think that's some of their frustration with the education system and the reason why several First Nations have engaged in those negotiations for program service transfer agreements. If that's the way that it goes, I think we as a society and as leaders in our communities need to be supportive of their aspirations, but we need to also realize that they are still partners in education and that they have the legislative and constitutional authority to do that. We need to work with them in developing culturally relevant programs and services for their communities.

This ties back in with the first one, as well, about the experiential learning and allowing for those cultural experiences and those on-the-land experiences that are so important to First Nation culture.

One of the other things is the language programs. I have heard the Member for McIntyre-Takhini speak very passionately about how important language is to culture and how language is in some ways the expression of your culture, and that when you lose your language, you lose your culture.

We don't want to see that in Yukon. We are proud of all of the cultures that reside here. First Nations have lived here in Yukon from time immemorial — to the best of my knowledge and I can't put a time frame on it. But I know they were here long before European cultures showed up and, through very traumatic experiences, their culture has been subjected to a number of events in history that have made it hard for that culture to survive and their language to survive; but they are strong people and their aspirations are to see their culture thrive again and become more relevant in the territory and become more prominent — and we should all be proud of that. They

welcomed us here in their land and they still continue to welcome us here in their land today and they want to be partners in the education system.

We need to support them through events like the gold rush, the building of the Alaska Highway, the residential school fiasco. Their culture and language have been dealt a very severe blow. They're on the road back and we need to support that. We need to ensure that, because that's what's going to ensure that we have healthy communities, that we have an education system that meets the needs of those students and those communities and heals the wounds that have been dealt over decades.

What are some of the things that we could focus on? I believe that through a partnership we need to give First Nations more of a hand in developing this and more support in developing this, because they're the ones who know the most, I believe, of what's best and most needed for their children and their citizens and their community. We can go along for the ride, and I think that's the appropriate thing to do in some instances.

So support for more language programs, and more on-the-land programs that are culturally relevant. You can learn through those on-the-land experiences and the First Nation cultural approaches; you can still learn about the science; you can still learn the arithmetic and the math; and you can still learn the social studies and the history and the geography. I think that it's very important — I know that some of this is happening already, but we need to make sure that we're on the leading edge, and that we're making these types of programs available in every community and that the opportunities are there for students to become fully engaged in an education that they feel is relevant to them on a day-to-day basis and that they can go home to their families and hold their heads up and be proud of what it was that they did at school today.

When it comes to language programs — I think we need to explore or expand the idea of First Nation language immersion — similar to the successes that we've seen with French immersion here in the territory — in order to allow First Nations to regain that language so that it doesn't become lost and that more children have an opportunity to learn their first language and that they regain some of their culture — that they regain all of their culture.

We talked earlier about support for students and support for educators. One of the other services available is counsellors in schools. We think that there should be counsellors available in all schools. There are a number of issues here. It's about career counselling and personal counselling. It's about guiding students in making good decisions about the choices they make in their education and ensuring that they have all the information they need.

Earlier, we talked about ensuring that there is assistance for students who come from at-risk families, who have problems at home or it may be just problems in their community, where they don't feel that they are ready to come to school and learn because they're distracted by other things in their lives. Whether it has to do with alcohol or drug abuse or family violence issues, there needs to be counselling and assistance there

for those children on how to deal with those situations to ensure that the community supports are there for them, so that when they come to school, they're ready to learn and they can avail themselves of the education that's being made available to them.

This may require interdepartmental cooperation. I don't know whether the counsellors who are in the school are mandated to deal with that type of counselling or not, or if Health and Social Services, through social workers, would be able to provide that kind of assistance to families and to students, but these are the kinds of things that I talked about earlier that affect students and communities, and affect our education system. It's about the fact that the rich continue to get richer, and the poor are left to struggle harder than ever to feed themselves and to keep a roof over their heads, and that their children, when they show up for school, have other things on their minds besides their education.

The current situation we're in now even, where adults are going home — they don't have a job any more. In some instances, people are losing their jobs. People are concerned about their retirement funds. These are all putting stresses on families and in turn, those stresses are being put on children. They're transferred down on to the children, and we need to ensure there is support. It's not just the Department of Education that bears a responsibility here. It's about ensuring the way our budgets are developed is that we're investing in human resources as well as infrastructure and natural resources.

We heard about how today was Earth Day. We heard about the challenges that we face as a territory, as communities, as a country, as a global society. There are challenges that face us environmentally through climate change and the degradation of the planet that we live on. Those are things that weigh on the minds of children. Through the programs that we provide in our schools to allow children to participate in the solutions and to explore and find out what those problems are and to look at positive solutions and to put those solutions into action makes the learning experience of our children more relevant. It boosts their confidence, and it boosts their outlook on life and gives them a better outlook on life. When they are faced with those challenges, we need to be able to respond and to provide support for them. I think that through the education system we can have more of a positive effect when it comes to negative influences like that.

We're increasingly faced with drug and alcohol problems, and the education system needs to work cooperatively with the Department of Health and Social Services and other government departments to ensure that there is appropriate treatment in communities, so that the families have the support and the ability to get the treatment they need, so that when those children show up for school they're not thinking about what happened at home last night or what they saw on the street on the way to school, so that we can heal our communities and provide that support in our communities. It's all part of making that learning experience better for the students who are in it, in every community. While we were talking about counsellors being available in schools to deal with some of these problems, there's a much broader need, not just here in Whitehorse but in

all communities, to ensure that there are supports for families and for students, so that children come to school ready to learn, that they're well fed, and that they're not concerned about where their next meal is coming from, or what they're going to be going home to.

I'm going to move to the involvement of community education liaison coordinators, because I believe that they also play an extremely important role in our education system, and there needs to be more support for them and more training for them in their roles. I think they provide that link between the community and the education system, and they can provide some of the direction about cultural relevance. They're members of their community; they can be involved in career counselling, career testing and the development of the community in what it is striving to be. I think the opportunity is there to provide a lot more support. That's part of the partnership between communities and the Department of Education and the schools that could be enhanced and more fully supported.

When it comes to engaging communities and engaging our learners, I believe there could be better use of our facilities. I know that in some communities, in some schools, a lot of the facilities are used after hours. A lot of them are used for sports, but I don't believe that's the only thing that they could or should be used for. In some communities, they are indeed centres of community activity. We need to look for ways of making better use of those facilities. The way to do that, I believe, is through providing both summer and after-school programming in those facilities. I don't think it's good that they sit empty. I think that they can become centres for tutoring. Number 10 on the list in the motion says, "skills training at the high school level". I know that Skills Canada Yukon is promoting skills clubs, which are after-school activities to get students involved in skills education and trades training.

It is an excellent use of a piece of public infrastructure that is there to provide for the education of our children and our communities, but it is also a community development tool. There are a number of programs and services that could be provided for in the schools when they are otherwise empty.

Some of these programs could even, I think, be beneficial, especially to those children who are struggling. One of the recommendations in the education reform project talks about the length of the school year. It kind of begs the question — our school system uses the B.C. curriculum. This is just one of the recommendations in the education reform project.

It talks about the fact that we use the B.C. curriculum and that we are basically trying to deliver the same curriculum in 12 fewer learning days than what British Columbia uses to deliver it. So the difference is that, in British Columbia, the minimum school year is 187 days. That doesn't include six days for professional development. In the Yukon, it's based on, basically, 950 hours of schooling, but that includes three non-instructional days for professional development. So it basically results in about a 178-day school year that includes those three days. So we're about 12 days short of what British Columbia has.

So it begs the question of — here we are, we're trying to deliver the British Columbia curriculum, we're saying that we

need to be innovative, we want to have more relevant programming in our communities, but we're trying to cram it all in and do it in a shorter period of time. I'm wondering whether or not that doesn't put strain and stress on our students, our educators and our community.

Maybe we need to look more closely at that. Maybe we do need to look closely and think about whether or not we need to have a longer school year. But at the very least we should be offering support, whether it's through after-school tutoring or summer and after-school programming in our communities for those students, so they have the opportunity to receive the entire curriculum that's being offered.

Actually, one of the recommendations in the *Education Reform Final Report* is that the school year should be lengthened and there should be more professional development days. Is there a cost? I guess if you're on the government side, you could look at it as a cost. I think that it is an investment. It's an investment in our children and it's an investment in the future of our territory and our society.

The tenth item on the list of programs and services is skills training at a high school level. I strongly believe that — and I had representation made to me just the other day by a gentleman, an elder in our community, who is a tradesperson and who operated a business, I'm sure long before I arrived in the territory, and who has some insights into it and who has watched the education system as it developed. I know his children went through the education system here and I'm sure his grandchildren and maybe even his great-grandchildren are going through the education system as we speak.

There is a lot to be learned about how things have been done over time. We need to look at what provides satisfaction for students and what the needs of communities are. I come from a trades background and I have to be honest that there are days when I miss working with my hands. We spend so much time here working with our brains, working with our mouths and our ears — listening and speaking. I think that there are days when I miss that. I see men and women driving around in trucks with their tools and their ladders and I think, "Boy, I used to do that." I know that I'm still capable of it and I'm never going to give up on the fact that there is a need.

There is a demonstrated need across the country for skilled workers. The world is changing. Technology has changed this world so much in our lifetime — more in our lifetime than ever before. I know a number of years ago — I guess in the early 1990s — I believe it was the president of the college at the time who mentioned that the amount of knowledge we had and that was available to us was doubling every seven years, I believe it was. It's now growing exponentially. The amount of knowledge available is expanding through the use of technology and is growing in leaps and bounds. There is so much to know.

Where do we disseminate that? Where do children learn how to learn? Through the education system.

There's a demonstrated need across this country for all kinds of things. We're faced with shortages — just the other day on the radio, we found out that there's a need for teachers and principals. We knew that that was coming; we know that the generation that we live in is getting older and that there are

going to be retirements. So there are more teachers retiring — I think there's something like twice as many teachers retiring this year as retired in previous years. We're losing, I think it was, six principals at the end of this school year. I'm told that we're going to be losing eight principals.

The government is talking about hospitals in Watson Lake and Dawson. We fully admit there has been a hospital in Dawson since 1979. There are increasing demands being placed on our health care system. Part of that is human resources. So we need to ensure that graduation rates improve so that students can become more successful, can move on to fulfill those needs in society and in our communities, and there will be nurses, doctors, teachers and principals available in all those communities.

There is also a demonstrated need when it comes to resource development or building infrastructure for skilled trades, to both build and maintain the infrastructure that's being built to ensure there is affordable housing being built and maintained in every community.

As a construction worker, I had the opportunity to work in every community in the Yukon and to work on buildings and to service pieces of equipment and to make modifications and do renovations and to build new projects and to work on mine sites. But I live in Whitehorse and I had to travel vast distances to go and do that. In a lot of instances, those skills weren't available in those communities.

That is why I applaud Skills Canada Yukon and Women in Trades and Technology for the work that they do in promoting skilled trades as a career. It is not just about construction. It is about bakers and hairdressers, and it is about robotics — and that is a new technology too — and it is about computer techs. Those are all skills and that type of programming that are more readily available in Whitehorse.

We applaud what Skills Canada Yukon is doing in Whitehorse and in communities around the Yukon. I attended the skills competition, and it was amazing what we saw. Actually, I wish I could have seen more. I ended up watching and overseeing the plumbing competition, and that in itself was very rewarding. I got to be part of the awards ceremony and saw some of the projects. I would have liked to have had the opportunity to see more. I got to see the sheet metal competition as well, but I would have liked to have had the opportunity to wander around and be able to see some of the other activities that were going on and meet more of the students from other communities who would come to Whitehorse and hear more about their experiences. It truly was gratifying to see that there are the beginnings out there of a more skills-based education in our community and that those skills clubs are taking hold.

I remember — it's a number of years ago now — where we actually debated in this Legislative Assembly, and the government increased the funding to Skills Canada Yukon and provided support. I thank the government for that and I applaud the government for that. What I'm saying today is that those are programs that make a difference in our community and they respond to real needs in our community. They are the ones who can take those skills and use them in their community to provide the services that you need to ensure that communities are



healthy and strong, and they're transferable. They can go to other communities and assist other communities as well. I think that it's really important that we look at programs like that and that we provide the support for communities, for school councils and school boards, and for educators, to ensure that those kinds of programs are available to meet the needs of those communities, and that we provide those options for students in every community.

I was talking earlier about being approached by an elder in our community, and he remembers a more — I guess what would be known as a European model, where opportunities were provided at a young age to explore different opportunities, different career paths, and then they were supported through school to more fully explore some of those career paths. We've got the beginnings of that here in the Yukon, and we have had that for years.

It is about offering our children, our teenagers, the opportunity to go out and participate in the workforce on a career path of their choice at an earlier age and make it actually part of the education system. Is it right for every student? No, it is not, but it is one option. I think it is a good option. It is a cooperative model where the Department of Education, the educators, the high schools, work with the business community to ensure that there are job placements where those students can more fully explore those career paths. I have seen it first-hand and I have worked with some of those kids. Some of them have gone on to be mature and valued employees who contribute not just to their employer, but who I believe contribute greatly to their community.

So I'd like to just remind the members of a number of things. I think we're asking for the government's support to place greater emphasis and greater efforts on improving the education system through expanding and enhancing some of these programs and services. We want the government to consider the information, to look at education differently, to make sure that they look at it more as an investment than as an expense and to look at the reality of what we spend as a percentage of our total budget.

The minister likes to talk about the cost per student and how the cost per student is higher than many other jurisdictions, or any other jurisdiction. But when you look at, compared to other jurisdictions — and I'm going to highlight this because the Premier appears to be interested in this at this time — the figures that I have for 2006-07 show that, as a share of the consolidated provincial or territorial and local government spending allocated to elementary and secondary school education, the Yukon spent 10.8 percent of its budget on elementary and secondary education. And yet there were nine other jurisdictions that spent more. We spent 10.8 percent; Newfoundland and Labrador spent 14.1 percent; Ontario spent 13.6 percent — of the total budget, they allocated 13.6 percent to elementary and secondary education.

It's influenced by the needs of education and I guess it is what priority we put on education. The figures that I have show that we spend a lot of money — and we know we spend a lot of money — on Health and Social Services. We spend a lot of money on transportation and communication. According to

this, on transportation and communications we spend 15.3 percent as a share of our total budget — more than any other jurisdiction that is listed on this table.

It is interesting that we've come in so low on education and yet we're higher in many areas — when it comes to transportation and communication. We put more emphasis and it goes back to the bumper sticker comment I made about whether we're selling oranges and chocolate bars to support our education system.

It will be a great day when the Minister of Highways and Public Works is selling chocolate bars to make sure that the potholes are filled.

We encourage the government to look at education as an investment, not just an expense or a burden, to think about addressing graduation rates and to ensure — like I said earlier, it's not a legacy that I want to leave, and I know the Minister of Education doesn't want to leave that legacy. I think one of the things that upsets me the most is, what do we say to those children who are falling through the cracks? The 60 percent of First Nation students who aren't going to graduate — the 42 percent of students as a whole, who aren't going to graduate this year. We are going to have graduation ceremonies and we'll be celebrating those students' successes. What do we say to those students who are falling through the cracks?

We need to look at more positive solutions. We need to understand what New Horizons is, and I look forward to getting that briefing about New Horizons and some of the positive, solution-based approaches. We need to know what the priorities are. We need the minister to lay those priorities out for us, for communities, for students, and for educators, so that they understand what the focus is and that we can all move forward together — so that all of the partners in education understand and can move forward.

The bottom line for me is learning outcomes. How do we measure that? There are a number of ways of measuring it. That's not what we're here to discuss. We started to discuss that the other day in a previous motion. We need to know that we're moving forward.

I've heard some very positive things coming from people who are involved in the education system, who are on school councils, who want to be more involved, who want more authority and who want more autonomy. We hear it from First Nations and it's about sharing and becoming equal partners. The way forward is to share that power. They should grant more authority to parents and communities, to help them become more involved in the delivery of education in their communities. I honestly believe that's the way forward.

Expanding programs and services is a tool to improve outcomes for our students and for our communities, but ultimately what we need to do is ensure that it goes to the theme of Education Week — that communities are engaged and that they feel they are involved and they feel that they are contributing — that they have authority and they have some sort of control and it is not all based in Whitehorse and that they are told how education is going to be delivered in the communities — that they are allowed to be innovative and that government supports their aspirations.

Are we moving in that direction? I honestly believe we are but I honestly believe that we've got a long way to go. The good news, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is that I believe that it has taken a long time. I remember, back in the late 1990s, *Conversations in Education*, and the whole process that the Liberal regime went through when it came to the *Education Act* review. Then we had the education reform project and now we have New Horizons.

It's a long process. I've never seen it take so long to turn the ship, but the ship has begun to turn. I honestly believe that, and it's through the efforts of many ministers of education, of many governments, but mostly, I believe, it's through the efforts of parents and communities and community leaders who've said, "We can't wait around any longer. We need to do this." They got engaged in the process and they're moving it. My hat's off to them; I congratulate them and I wish them all the best, and I want to be part of it too. I think all of us here in this Legislative Assembly want to be part of it, because it's the future of our children, of our grandchildren, and it's the future of our community and our territory. I really think that we can make a difference.

So I've taken this opportunity, I know, to speak at great length about the education system and our vision, as New Democrats, and what my own personal beliefs are. I thank the Legislature for the opportunity to do that, and I think it's very appropriate that we're having this discussion during Education Week. I hope that our efforts do engage communities, and that they do engage learners, and that the outcomes for those students are positive and that their lives will be more fulfilled. I hope that all of us in this Legislature have an opportunity to be part of that.

**Hon. Mr. Rouble:** I'm honoured to rise today as Yukon's Minister of Education to address the motion brought forward by the New Democratic Party. This being Education Week, it is especially relevant that we take this time to have a conversation, as the member opposite said, about education, to discuss the vision, the objectives and some of our programs and strategies to accomplish our collective goals.

As it is Education Week, I would like to express my sincere thanks to all involved in our education system, from our teachers, our administrators, our CELCs, our school staffs, Department of Education staff, all of the volunteers, all of the parents and indeed everyone involved in education for all of their continued hard work.

People approach education with a considerable amount of passion. It's not only the people with their own children in our education system, but also many other people in our community who feel they have a responsibility to the future to get involved and to help build Yukon's education system to be the best it can be.

I would also like to thank the Member for Mount Lorne, the NDP House Leader, for the approach today; it has been markedly different from other debates that we've had in this Assembly. This wasn't a finger-pointing, desk-bashing or chest-thumping type of debate. Instead, it was a rational discus-

sion with some very valid concerns and some constructive ideas. I would like to thank him for his approach on that.

When the Member for Mount Lorne started off today, he discussed having a conversation. It's unfortunate but our forum here does not lend itself to that. It does make for some very artificial discussion sometimes. I found myself wanting to jump up and answer the member's points. I did, a couple of times, actually toss out some information across to the member opposite. Our system here in the Assembly in debating motions does not allow for free exchange of information across the table. Sometimes that is better served for the lunch table or even the hallway. It is interesting, Mr. Speaker, sometimes I think all of us in this Assembly appreciate that we get more done with a chat in the hallway then we do in the protracted debate in the Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the member opposite's comments. Just to give a bit of a framework for how I will respond — because the member opposite did put a substantive amount of information, points and perspectives on the floor today. In addition to the 10 points in the motion, there were additional issues that were brought forward. Judging by the 18 Post-it notes I have posted around my desk, I have some additional information to provide.

I will start off with a bit of an overview about education and share, as the member opposite did, with members our vision of education and discuss the current situation and priorities that this government has established with the Department of Education. I will then discuss in detail the 10 program areas that the member has brought forward. Then I will try to address some of the other issues he raised today that weren't contained in the original motion, because I do have a list of about another eight or 10 of those.

I will get one out on the road right away for the member opposite regarding Food for Learning. It was soon after the Yukon Party was re-elected that the Minister of Health and Social Services and I met with the Food for Learning folks, and at that time, their funding was increased from \$42,000 to \$92,000 — so an increase of \$50,000. That was done in cash, through an increased contribution from Health and Social Services. With the arrangement that we have with this organization, the Department of Education provides some in-kind contributions — things like office space — and the Department of Health and Social Services provides a cash contribution. This year, that amount, I understand, has grown from \$92,000 to \$97,000. That was one of the issues that was raised in the education reform document.

While we were in the process of working through the education reform document and waiting for their recommendations, the government certainly did not stop making advancements in education. We continued to make amendments to programs and to departments and, really, to the structure of the Department of Education. That was one of those changes.

The funding that the member opposite raised has already been more than doubled; indeed, it has gone from \$42,000 to \$97,000 in this budget.

We've had a bit of an opportunity in the past to discuss a bit about the purpose of education. I've discussed in the past

about that question that the six-year-old asks: "Why do I have to go to school?" The other question that we as legislators often hear is from people in the community who say, "I don't have children. Why should I pay taxes for someone else's kid to go to school?"

There are a couple of very good answers for that. I know, when I repeatedly asked my mother, "Why do I have to go to school?" she would remind me that I had to go to school so that I could grow up and lead a meaningful life. I would then ask her, "What does that mean — to lead a meaningful life?" She said it was my job to figure out what that was and that I had to learn an awful lot, so that I could figure out what it was to grow up and lead a meaningful life — one that I was happy and satisfied with.

Indeed, we do have that micro-responsibility to give every student and child in Yukon the opportunities they need, so that they can grow up to lead a meaningful life.

For the gruff ratepayer who meets us on the street, who is frustrated with the amount of taxes that he has to pay, well, we then respond as the member pointed out, "Don't you want to live in a society where there are doctors, nurses, carpenters, mechanics, accountants, lawyers and all of the other important areas that we have in our community?" Not only from an economic perspective of people working in employment situations, but also filling their responsibilities to the community, of participating in democracy, of not living in an anarchy, but living in a community with happy productive people who have the abilities to satisfy the needs of other people.

So not only do we have the micro-responsibility to each and every student or each and every child, we also have the greater macro-responsibility to our whole community, to ensure that we are indeed contributing to the education of our next generation.

It's not something that rests solely with the Department of Education. I often hear people saying that we should have been educated about that or we should have learned that in school. There was one television show recently that showed tax avoidance tips. The television personality said that this is the important stuff they should have taught in school. Indeed, just the other day, I received a request to see financial literacy increased in the school curriculum. Really, there isn't a week that doesn't go by without someone saying: what about adding this to the curriculum? For example today it was about adding a hockey school to our school curriculum.

Indeed, we have a wide range of responsibility. The preamble of the Yukon *Education Act* starts off with, "Recognizing that Yukon people agree that the goal of the Yukon education system is to work in cooperation with parents to develop the whole child including the intellectual, physical, social, emotional, cultural and aesthetic potential of all students to the extent of their abilities, so that they may become productive, responsible, and self-reliant members of society while leading personally rewarding lives in a changing world.

That's a significant responsibility. It's one that we're not alone with though. Indeed, I believe that everyone in Yukon society has a responsibility to help educate the next generation. Yes, a certain responsibility lies with the parents, the extended

family, employers, non-profit organizations, sports groups, social organizations, religious or linguistic groups and cultural organizations. All of these groups exist in order to serve people, and they need people who have the skills to work in those employment situations, but we also have to have people with the background in our culture and other uniqueness to contribute to our society.

We often talk, too, about our partners in education, those other people who play a role in educating Yukoners.

That includes — as I said — parents, the community, the Department of Education, employers, ethnic groups, First Nation governments, language groups, religious organizations, school councils, students, teachers, and an acronym called "ENPM". Mr. Deputy Speaker, that stands for "everyone not previously mentioned."

There are significant expectations that Yukoners have on education. They do want to see the development of the whole individual. They want to see skill development. They want to see a continuation and commitment to lifelong learning. They also want to see a system that is responsive to the needs of the community. Indeed, that's one of the commitments that this government has made and that is to be responsive to the needs of the community.

It was no accident that in the last election campaign, pages 1 to 3 of the Yukon Party platform were dedicated to education and education initiatives. We're dedicated to education and education initiatives, because we certainly recognize the importance, value and responsibility of providing the best education system we can for our youth.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, upon taking office, we recognized that there were challenges in our education system. The NDP, as the member commented, had started their *Conversations in Education* dialogues, in preparation of reviewing the *Education Act*. When the Liberal Party was in power, they also created an *Education Act* review process. I think one of the most telling things that came out of that process were the number of comments that were received by the *Education Act* review process team. There were literally thousands — I believe there were over 5,000 comments that were received. One of the key indicators there was that more than 90 percent of those comments received didn't relate specifically to the act, but more related to activities in education.

We recognized then that at least 90 percent of the concerns of Yukoners had to do with the process of education and how we were carrying out the activities, and not necessarily the specific piece of enabling legislation that created the system. That's one of the reasons why we established the education reform project. The education reform project was co-chaired, as members are aware, by the Council of Yukon First Nations, and was done for a very important reason. We recognized that we had to start to build the bridge and create meaningful relationships with First Nations governments, and I think this project has significantly contributed to that.

Through the findings of the education reform project, through ongoing assessments through the Department of Education, and through other work that the Department of Education and others have conducted, we've looked at the outcomes

of education. We've seen the gap in performance between those of First Nation ancestry and those of non-First Nation ancestry. It's certainly not uniform; there are some First Nations students that do very, very well, and there are also some non-First Nations students that don't do well at all, either.

We recognized, though, that we had a moral imperative to close the gap in performance between First Nation students as a collective and non-First Nation students. Also, we had to raise the bar of performance for all students. While we recognize that when we look at some of the statistical indicators regarding education we do very, very well, we also know that the world is becoming an increasingly competitive place. We have a responsibility to provide the best education system possible. We know from some of the statistics recently produced by Statistics Canada that Yukoners have the highest rate of participation in post-secondary education of any jurisdiction in Canada. It should be noted, too, that Canada has the highest rate of participation in post-secondary education of any country in the OECD. That's a startling statistic. Canada leads the world in participation rates in post-secondary education — this includes things like the trades, college, CEGEP or university — and Yukon leads Canada.

Now, is it enough to rest on our laurels and say, "Hey, we're doing great"? Of course not; we have to continue. We have to continue to create opportunities for Yukon students to succeed and to ensure that Yukon students of First Nation ancestry also have those opportunities. The government has made a commitment to do that.

The lead department for delivering accessible, quality education so that learners of all ages can become productive, responsible and self-reliant members of society is of course the Department of Education. Education has a key role to play in the government's commitment to a better quality of life and to the economy, to those micro and macro responsibilities I spoke of earlier.

In support of these government priorities, the government will undertake to create a more responsive education system that enables all learners to succeed, to enhance transitions between different levels of education, training in the world of work, and to further develop and maintain meaningful relationships with all partners in education and training. Those are the priorities that I have communicated to the Department of Education as some of the key areas that they are responsible for addressing.

Mr. Speaker, some of the key initiatives that we will undertake as government to address this include continuing to work in partnership with Yukon First Nations and our partners in education, with the implementation of New Horizons, to ensure the evolution of Yukon's education system meets the needs of all learners today and into the future. That is an interesting word — the evolution of education — and it is one I'll come back to in a moment.

Another key initiative is to begin to implement a new student information system that can collect and analyze data to identify critical trends over time and significant performance gaps, including the monitoring of students being funded to attend post-secondary education programs.

I will use the member opposite's terms because I really do believe that they are appropriate for this — we do invest considerable resources as a government in post-secondary education for Yukoners.

Yukoners have seen the Yukon student grant not only grow, but also be indexed. Yukoners who make use of this fund receive about \$1,700 per semester to attend post-secondary education. We currently have about 1,000 Yukoners, I believe, receiving this grant and attending over 100 different post-secondary institutions across North America.

We don't collect, and the government never has collected, the data on the completion rates, the rate of return, and whether these students come back to Yukon or not. One of the great things about being a Canadian is the mobility to travel anywhere in Canada — that we don't always have Big Brother looking over our shoulder. As a nation, we do not track the outcomes of investments in education.

We know broad statistics, as I mentioned. Statistics Canada has surveyed Yukoners and looked at what we currently have here in the population, but the government does not know how the investments that we've been making for decades and generations — how that has resulted for our community. Right now, the Department of Education is working with the Bureau of Statistics to identify a methodology for finding out some of this information, because I'm sure the members will all agree that it will be very useful in establishing policies and priorities as we go forward.

Mr. Speaker, the Department of Education will continue to support advisory committee infrastructure to encourage community input to department programming, school growth planning, and the community-engagement pilot sites, in order to enhance First Nation opportunities for input at the local, community and school levels. We've heard very clearly from our partners in education, through the education reform process, and through our secondary school programming review process, that people do want to be engaged. They want to see the commitments made and the *Education Act* honoured.

Those areas where there are opportunities for input and responsibilities for the government to listen to them — they want to see those made better use of. We are committed to doing that. I appreciate the NDP House leader's comments about the department turning the corner. I, too, heard that at the school council conference and at other conferences. People have seen a shift and are appreciating the changes that are actually happening in today's education system.

Mr. Speaker, the Department of Education will conduct an ongoing environmental scan that can be incorporated into the department's annual report that includes any relevant and changing educational and labour market needs that can be addressed and mitigated, as the Department of Education is also responsible for labour market initiatives.

The Department of Education's mandate is to deliver accessible and quality education to all Yukon learners, including children and adults.

To achieve this mandate, the department will work with learners so that they may become productive, responsible and self-reliant members of the community, while leading person-

ally rewarding lives in a changing world; work in cooperation with parents and other partners in education to develop the intellectual, physical, social, emotional, cultural and esthetic potential of learners to the extent of their abilities; and work in meaningful partnerships to promote and support lifelong learning and to ensure that Yukon has an inclusive and adaptive labour market.

In a few moments, I will get to some of the operational areas where we are carrying out this mandate. I do want to spend some time talking about the direction that has been given to the department and their overall mandate.

The primary responsibilities are to provide kindergarten to grade 12 education throughout the Yukon; to provide support and resources for Yukon learners; to promote and support adult training, post-secondary education and labour force development; to provide and administer student financial aid and youth employment training; to collaborate with self-governing First Nations in the delivery of education; to foster and maintain effective partnerships with all partners in education; and to promote and support French first-language and French second-language programs in Yukon schools.

We will conduct this in order to accomplish our vision, that being a vision for all Yukoners to possess a desire for and appreciation of lifelong learning, a commitment to their community, and the knowledge and skills needed to live meaningful, productive and rewarding lives. Throughout this debate, I'm looking forward to finding out if other parties in our Assembly support this vision. It would be important to establish a base, anyway — accept we have some commonalities and then identify where we have some differences, whether they be philosophical or more concerned about an operational level.

The Department of Education has some strategic goals ahead of them. Goal number one is creating a more responsive education system that enables all learners to succeed. Number two is enhancing transitions between different levels of education, training and the world of work. Number three is further developing and maintaining meaningful relationships with all partners in education.

I will go into the 10 points that the member opposite raised in the motion and how they do address the strategic goals that have been laid out for the Department of Education.

I will also acknowledge the hard work that the Department of Education has done not only in helping to prepare this plan but also in doing all of the background research and work with all of our educators in order to identify the issues. We have learned a considerable amount and will continue to honour the work done through the education reform project and the New Horizons implementation stage, through our facilities report, and through the secondary school programming review: *One Vision, Multiple Pathways*.

I would also like to acknowledge the action plan tabled by the Department of Education to address the Auditor General's concerns. Much has been made of that. I do think that when members hear a bit more detail about some of the programs that we do have in place, they will realize that the ideas, concepts and the directions brought forward from the Auditor

General's office were taken very seriously by the department and that we are incorporating them into how we do business.

I appreciate that the member opposite, in one of his comments about the leaders in education/innovation fund, put forward a request that we increase the discretionary amount that was available to schools. I appreciate that that would make life somewhat easier; however, that's incongruent with the direction that we received from the Auditor General, and indeed from members of this Assembly, to ensure that investments were being made wisely and on a rational basis.

I'll go into a few more details about the leaders in education/innovation fund and how that will be addressed and peer-reviewed when I address the motion's topic on that subject.

Now, Mr. Speaker, when the Government of Yukon worked in partnership with the Council of Yukon First Nations on the education reform project, one of the key areas that we realized was that we had to continue a process of partnership, a process of consultation and a process of involvement.

Education reform or evolution was not calling simply for one magic project to be created that would all of a sudden do something or one flip of a switch or one change of a budget item. Indeed, the evolution of education would involve changes in practices, changes in programming, changes in content, changes in teaching practice. Really, it would require a transformation of how we go about providing education to Yukoners.

I appreciate the member's comments that it is taking a long time to make some of these changes. I would like to share with the member opposite many of the changes that have already happened: the changes in operation, in mindset and the direction in which we are going.

I've been asked when education reform will be over. The answer to that is, simply, never. Education will continue to evolve and to change. We look at the history of education and we know it has changed from the teachings of Socrates to the standardized training programs that were introduced in the 1940s to now, with the changes we have based on greater knowledge of the brain and people's learning practices, and changes in technology.

We also have changing needs in our community. We're appreciating now that education is not a one-time-only type of process; education is not only for children and those in their early 20s.

In this ever-changing world we live in, education — continuing to learn, continuing to stay current and continuing to grow — is consistent throughout our lifetime.

Mr. Speaker, I had an opportunity to talk to some young women at a recent Yukon Women in Trades and Technology conference. I realized at that time that I had been back to school twice since I had formally graduated the first time. I have about 60 years to go until I hit 100, so at this current rate, I will probably be going back to school five or six more times in my life. That's a pretty significant change in mindset from my father's and grandfather's time. My grandfather was one of the wisest men I knew. I'm sure that every member in this Assembly would say the same thing, but I know it's true in my case. My grandfather's educational career ended at grade 8. His

grade 8 education prepared him for the opportunities that were ahead of him, which was not only being a miner and a farmer, but also an investor.

His education served him well. My father did the standard process of getting a college degree right after high school. That served him throughout his career. As I've mentioned, I've already been back to school twice now. I expect that it will continue to change. We're also seeing a significant change regarding the knowledge of education, knowing how people learn and knowing about the art of teaching. That needs to continue to be addressed and incorporated into our school system.

We're also seeing the reform of wanting to ensure that more people have opportunities for education. We do not accept in our society any longer that education is the domain of the elite. We need to have opportunities for all to be educated.

We continue to see that in Yukon we're on the forefront, not only in Canada, but also internationally, with the opportunities we have for all students and the support we provide — not only moral, but also financial — to learners in our community.

We're also hearing that people in our community want to see an education system that's more responsive to the needs in our community. That can mean changes in content. For example, it has been pointed out to me that many students in the past knew more about the Treaty of Versailles than about current First Nation treaties. Now that's not to say that European or Canadian history would be abandoned in our system, but it is important to note that to live in the Yukon and participate fully as a responsible citizen in our cultural practices — it is about having knowledge of our community and our practices and how the legislation and history of this community significantly impact them. Those changes in our curriculum need to be made so that future generations of Yukoners can grow up knowing more about their history and their community.

Now, Mr. Speaker, when the chairs of the education reform project and I received the final report, which, as the NDP House leader points out, was about 15 months ago — it's hard to believe that we've accomplished as much as we have in only 15 months — we realized that receiving the document was one thing; we now had to work together to address the different issues that had been raised, and to address the concerns that Yukoners had presented. When we received the document, we were also cautioned by the education reform team that some of the ideas put forward were for discussion. Some would need more thought and more analysis. There were some instances where the recommendations put forward were inconsistent with each other.

There were other areas where we realized that there were different ways of addressing the same concern and addressing the same underlying issues, but by taking a different approach than some of the prescriptive recommendations put forward in the document. We also recognized that one of the key feelings behind people's contribution was that they wanted to be included in the process, and to have their input honoured and considered. We did make a commitment to do that.

Going through this, we then tasked both the Council of Yukon First Nations and the Department of Education to look at the document to see what we could address immediately or

what had already been addressed. We also looked at what we would have to work on in the future and how we would work together to accomplish that. I appreciate that some people feel that the process has not happened to the speed of their satisfaction.

However, I do appreciate receiving comments from the school councils. As we've discussed in this Assembly, we did have a conference for the Association of School Councils, Boards and Committees — and we will have to change that name — last week. The Kluane school committee has now formally taken the next step to become a school council. I'm not sure if that will require a change in the Association of School Councils, Boards and Committees letterhead immediately or if they will keep their title just in case a school council or school committee should ever form again, given that that is permissible under the act.

We did hear from them that they appreciated that things weren't being rushed, that there was time to involve people, time to provide information for people to digest, to take it back to their communities and then to bring it back and to contribute to the process. Again, one of the biggest changes that we have made is how we go about including, involving and honouring the contributions of others.

In addition to the Association of School Councils, Boards and Committees meeting that was held recently, there was an education summit held earlier in March 2009 to provide stakeholder groups with an update on the progress being made and to provide an opportunity for input, questions, and suggestions. At that, we discussed in some very significant detail the school growth planning process, the leadership program, the secondary program stakeholder advisory committee, and the resiliency in transition initiatives that have been undertaken.

Mr. Speaker, we will continue to work with the Council of Yukon First Nations. The Council of Yukon First Nations is going through a bit of transition right now. Members in the Assembly will recall that I discussed working with the Yukon Chiefs Committee on Education. Currently, the chiefs committees, and specifically the Chiefs Committee on Education, are in the process of being reorganized. Once we have a new entity to work with, I will continue to work with them, but the Department of Education continues to work very closely, at a very senior level, with officials from the Council of Yukon First Nations on jointly establishing things like the summit and our priorities and our projects in going forward.

Now, I hope that does clear up some of the misunderstandings regarding education reform. Education reform has not turned into a document that is sitting on a shelf gathering dust. I know the copies I have certainly aren't very dusty, and I know the copies with the Department of Education are constantly referred to and used. If I have an opportunity, I'll come back and address the issues that were raised and talk about some of the initiatives that have been made to address the issues.

I did mention the issue of Yukon Food for Learning and the increases to the funding for that organization. I do appreciate the Member for Mount Lorne bringing forward this issue, so that we can actually discuss some of these things and mem-

bers can gain a greater awareness as to what is actually happening, because to simply stand up and say that nothing has happened really does not honour the work that the many people involved in education have done, the contributions that have been made and the changes that we see in Yukon's education system. I do appreciate, though, that members might not be aware of all of them, so I welcome this opportunity to address them.

Mr. Speaker, another initiative that came out of the education reform document and out of the Hold Fast report was taking a look at the secondary school programming. We as a government recognized that there was a tremendous opportunity before us with the replacement of F.H. Collins school. We recognize that this facility has reached the end of its economic life. It has certainly by no means ended its life — there are lots of buildings in use not only in Yukon but across the country that are much older than that facility.

I know that my high school in particular is coming up on its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary. With F.H. Collins, we are recognizing the significant costs in keeping the building current — the energy costs, the costs of redoing things and making repairs. I recognize that it's time to make a replacement. Now it would not make sense to simply take the same floor plan from F.H. Collins and rebuild it. It was built in a different time with different construction standards, different expectations, different teaching practices and different populations.

What we had was an opportunity to look at what kind of programming we needed to see in our school system in order to meet the needs of our students today and then for the next X-number of years. We realized that we do have fewer students in our system today. Yukon's education system has seen a significant drop in the number of students. We've gone from over 6,000 students to about 5,000 students in a relatively short time, and that has had an impact on our facilities.

We also realized that school courses have changed from 40 years ago and, in the work that we have done with the education reform project and with the secondary school programming study, there are expected changes that people want to see.

During this process — which had a significant involvement of many of our partners in education — the stakeholder work teams developed strategic plans based on five pillars identified in the secondary report, those being experiential programming, trades, technology, First Nation language and culture, and multiple pathways to graduation.

We do realize and recognize the importance of experiential programming, not only in the context of different programs such as the ACES program, but also as experiential education as a different way of teaching and one that can be incorporated into many classrooms.

We recognize the value of trades education and its necessity in our community. We also realize that technology is constantly changing, and we need to make Yukon students prepared and aware of that. Also, with First Nation language and culture, we realize that we have a responsibility. In addition to our responsibilities for French first language education and religious education, we also, as Yukoners, have a responsibility to educate Yukon students about Yukon languages and culture.

We also realize that there are multiple pathways to graduation. Different students have different expectations. Some students will grow up to be — well, a whole *Yellow Pages* of opportunities. We need all of those types of occupations in our community, whether they be carpenters, plumbers or power plant technicians. We have a need for all those skills in our community. Our different students will have different career paths ahead of them and people will take multiple pathways to get there.

We have seen some of these situations arise, Mr. Speaker, where life happens and might get in the way of a student completing high school. We are looking at ways of bringing students who have left our system and who have disengaged or dropped out, back into formal education through initiatives such as the Individual Learning Centre or even through programs such as the Teen Parent Centre. The Teen Parent Centre facilitates those students, who now have young children or babies of their own, to also complete their high school career. We will continue to look at ways of helping students to do that — whether that be through a strong scholastic career or through programs for people who do not have those scholastic aptitudes.

I do know that it comes as a bit of a shock to the Liberal Party but I will say this again, and that is that we simply won't just grant a student a high school diploma, but provide them with the opportunities that they can use to then earn that. That's a very important concept that students recognize and appreciate. We do have different options for some students who are not predisposed to academics. We do have options or courses for them to take, but with those choices come some ramifications. I mean, there are always consequences to the decisions that people make.

As Minister of Education, I see my number one job as providing Yukon students with the opportunities that they need to succeed, and I believe very strongly that the more doors that one can keep open for oneself is the best. Sometimes it's too easy to, well, take the easy way out. We do recognize that that then closes doors on opportunities.

At this same Yukon Women in Trades and Technology event, I did share with the students a situation I had in taking calculus. It was one of those courses that I needed for my grade 13 diploma. It took me at least two tries to get a pass in that calculus course. But by having that grade 13 calculus course, it opened up so many more doors for me than having a different math course. It did take an awful lot of effort to accomplish, but it certainly had a significant payback and return.

Those are some of the comments that are coming out of the secondary school programming study and those are being incorporated into our education system today.

The NDP motion calls on the House to urge the Yukon government to direct its efforts to improve the education system by expanding and enhancing programs and services, particularly in rural Yukon that have proven successful, such as — and it goes on to list 10 different initiatives.

These are some very worthwhile initiatives — by no means are these all the domain of the Yukon Party. Many of them are initiatives that were brought forward fairly recently by

this government, but the Government of Yukon can by no means take credit for all of them. There are many good ideas in education and the Government of Yukon will continue to find those good ideas wherever they might be and incorporate them into our school programming.

The issue of the leaders in education/innovation fund was something that I discussed with the Minister of Education from New Brunswick, who had incorporated that program into their school system and had some very good results with it. I was very pleased to borrow that idea and to incorporate it into our system.

The first issue that the NDP motion calls for is to look at experiential learning. I'm happy to take the opportunity today to update members on what's currently going on in the aspect of experiential education in today's Yukon education system.

In addition to some of the specific programs, such as the Wood Street program, the Achievement, Challenge, Environment, Service program, the experiential science program, the music, art, drama and dance program, the outdoor pursuits and experiential science program or the Plein Air et Sciences Expérientielles program, we do have some other programs. This includes the Académie Parhémie at l'École Émilie Tremblay.

One of the very exciting initiatives that this government recently engaged in was the provision of additional resources for vocational and experiential education. In 2009-10, we'll continue to see an investment of \$385,000 in this fund. These funds will provide more flexibility to access experiential and outdoor education opportunities.

Experiential education, Mr. Speaker, is not just a particular program, but a way of teaching and a way of learning. We see this where students are involved in some projects. Whether it's things like the Heritage Fair, whether it's through co-op programs in high school, whether it's involvement in the skills competition, it's learning by doing. It's learning about, for example, a business by running a business, by running a lemonade stand and doing all of the math and work involved in doing that. It's learning by experiencing it, rather than by some of the traditional methods, such as reading about it in a book, being lectured about it, or watching a filmstrip, video or DVD.

It's often captured in many of our classrooms where kids get up and are active in engaging in their learning. I am very excited to see that many Yukon teachers are embracing this and incorporating these concepts in their classroom.

One of the areas that we have been focusing on is also making teachers and school administrators aware of additional techniques to use in education. This includes the professional development work that is going on. It also includes the leadership program or as was recently announced the opportunity to participate in a masters of education program here in the territory.

Mr. Speaker, the leadership program is a very exciting initiative. As the Member for Mount Lorne commented, we are seeing the baby boomers getting to an age of retirement and that means that some of our teachers are retiring, and that is creating opportunities for other people.

The Department of Education has been preparing for this eventuality for some time. We have been working very closely

— we currently have a group of, I believe, over 50 teachers who are engaged in our leadership program and are building their skills, credentials and learning in order to take on the task of becoming school administrators.

Yukon College, in conjunction with the University of Northern British Columbia, has also announced a partnership that will see a University of Northern British Columbia program offered here in the territory, which is a master's in education. This will be a program that people can take. I believe there will be evening and weekend courses so people will not have to leave the territory in order to continue their education. I'm very excited about that.

In the area of experiential education, we continue to make significant investments in that area, not only in the specific programs, but also in all Yukon schools to provide teachers with the tools that they need in order to provide experiential education to their students.

When I talk a bit later about First Nations programming and partnership initiatives, I will talk a bit more about the experiential education opportunities in that area as well.

The NDP motion also identified the tutor program. I would like to provide a few details to the House about this successful home tutor program. The home tutor program started as a small program in Old Crow in 2003 and has blossomed into a program that helps many students from around the Yukon improve their academic abilities and outcomes. This program is another great example of how this government is creating and implementing programs and initiatives that are helping Yukon students improve their academic performance. Parents from across Yukon have said that their children have benefited immensely from this program. Every day, these kids are excited to go to school because they are better prepared and feel confident about themselves and their school work.

Funding for the home tutor program is available to support all students in all 14 rural communities, as well as students in Whitehorse schools. The First Nations of Kwanlin Dun and Ta'an Kwäch'an have also received funding to support students in Whitehorse schools. These funds for hiring tutors can be administered by the local First Nation, school council, another community agency, or the school. Additional funding dedicated to home tutoring programs for the fiscal years 2004-05 through 2007-08 was \$375,000 per year. When we get into the budget discussion, Mr. Speaker, I can clear up the information about the accounting adjustment for the Member for Mount Lorne. Funding is available to all rural Yukon schools, as well as all Whitehorse high schools and Gadzoosdaa residence. The home tutoring programs are designed to fit the needs of the individual community, as determined by a tutoring committee consisting of the local principal, a school council representative, and a member of the local First Nation.

We are continuing to improve this program and, in so doing, are commencing with an internal review of this program for the beginning of the next school year to ensure that funds are being used effectively and to consider whether the process can be improved upon to support children more effectively. So I hope that clears up some of the questions the member had regarding home tutor programs.



The Member for Mount Lorne also had questions regarding the leaders in education/innovation fund. This is a new fund that has just been established. I look forward to all the members of our Assembly demonstrating their support for this initiative by voting for the budget.

Now, this will include \$75,000 in the fund, and it's an initiative coming out of our "New Horizons: Honouring Our Commitment to the Future" program. It's an excellent example of how supporting the innovation of teachers and the school community can bring forward good ideas and translate them into best practices for Yukon students.

Very early on — it was about two years ago, just after I had received the portfolio of Education — I had an opportunity to meet with a school council that had an idea. They wanted the Department of Education to take a look at the international baccalaureate program. This is, as the name would indicate, an international program; I believe it's based in the States; and it has a different model for education.

At the time, I sat down with my staff and said, how can we look at supporting taking a look at the initiative? As all members who have been part of a government at one time or another will remember, sometimes you might have a great idea but there is no current budget allocation. One often hears the comment that, yes, it might be a good idea but we don't have a budget for it.

At that time, we were able to find some money in order to provide some funds to send a couple of teachers down to take a look at this program and do an evaluation. While that idea did not come to great fruition, the teachers returned to the Yukon and said that they really liked the thematic teaching approach they were currently using as opposed to the IB model. I put this forward as an illustration of how we can have a good idea from a school council and how it would be great to have funds available to look at it.

The purpose of this fund is to provide financial support to innovative educators by investing in original projects led by teachers and community-based teams, which can then be shared with other schools. This will encourage pilot projects to move from conceptual ideas, to best practice, to common practice, as quickly as we can.

Mr. Speaker, we have seen some great ideas and some other interesting changes — not only ideas brought forward by the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin — I am not sure if that falls into the "great idea" category just yet or if it still stays in the "idea" category; but we will take a look at it to see if we can bump it up to top tier. That is an example — perhaps we can look at using the leaders in education/innovation fund to do an assessment of the member's idea for the national hockey council's school hockey program.

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

**Hon. Mr. Rouble:** Hockey Canada Skills Academy — excuse me, I stand corrected — the Hockey Canada Skills Academy that was brought forward from the Molson Open Ice Summit on hockey — which I appreciate it's an idea we'll take a look at, whether it falls into the "great idea" category or not.

Now the Member for Mount Lorne talked about how this would be allocated. When we established it, I wanted to ensure

that we had a method of taking a look at the idea and finding out if it should be endorsed or not. One common practice for this is to do a peer review, so to speak. I will encourage the department to create as easy a process as they can to provide sufficient information to the committee, which will be made up of representatives from the Yukon Teachers Association, the Association of School Administrators, the Yukon Association of School Councils, Boards and Committees, the Catholic Educators' Association, the Commission scolaire francophone du Yukon, Yukon First Nation Education Advisory Committee and the Department of Education. So these folks will take a look at the applications and then make a recommendation regarding their funding.

It's also interesting to note, Mr. Speaker, that some of the ideas that come forward really aren't all that expensive. The Member for Mount Lorne commented about the value of changing the name from the Carcross Community School to Ghuch Tlâ Community School. That wasn't an expensive change, but it was a substantive one in the community.

Also, initiatives such as the gender-based classroom that is being examined at Takhini Elementary School was not an expensive change, but I expect this program will continue to support initiatives such as this and others — for example, the Be the Change program that has spread from F.H. Collins to Porter Creek.

I hope that clears up some of the questions the member opposite had regarding the leaders in education program.

The next item on the member's list was the Individual Learning Centre. Right now, there are over 100 students participating. Those are students who had formally left, or disengaged or dropped out of high school for a variety of reasons, but they have now been re-engaged in our formal education system. We've seen over 60 young people graduate and continue on with their education from there.

That is a tremendous opportunity. Would I like to see a day when we don't have to have an Individual Learning Centre? You bet. I am glad it is there. There is a wide variety of reasons why students have left our system, and I have had a chance to be there and talk to the students. Some of them, as the member pointed out, had social issues, some of them had health issues and others had reasons of their own as to why they left school. It is great to see that those students have an opportunity to return to continue their education and get their high school diploma. It is very interesting to see that the canines for safer schools coordinator at Porter Creek Secondary School had a statistical analysis on the wall in the main foyer of the school.

He had done the math to calculate the earning potential of a person with a high school diploma, compared to someone who did not have a high school diploma. He calculated that over an individual's expected working life, and then looked at the number of hours that were involved in completing grades 10, 11 and 12. After he had done the math, it worked out that it could be argued that students would earn \$97 an hour for the time that they spent in high school. That was the payback for having a high school diploma, as opposed to not having a high school diploma. Again, it's about keeping opportunities open

and about keeping as many chances and options available for individuals in the future.

Now, the Department of Education is in the process of expanding the alternate learning program. We did have a pilot project running in Dawson but due to some unforeseen challenges there we are reviewing that program right now. The Department of Education and the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in First Nation are looking for ways that will better address the ongoing needs of students in Dawson. The Department of Education has contracted a consultant to work with the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in to identify their students needs, develop a communication strategy to improve the relationship and to support student learning and program planning.

This is an area that we are committed to working on. I think having these kinds of options open is a very good idea, especially when we look at the technology tools that we have at our disposal. Those include things like computer-based training and the computer-based curriculum models that we have access to through the Individual Learning Centre. Also the aspect of high-speed video conferencing — we do have video conferencing available in all Yukon schools and that does provide us with an opportunity for students in rural communities to telecommute, so to speak, in order to continue their education.

I see the time is running short, so I will jump ahead to First Nation program and partnering issues that the member opposite discussed. The First Nation program and partnership unit is now a department of the Department of Education. Some of the initiatives they currently have underway are: a curriculum course for language instructors, Yukon First Nation engagement protocol, Yukon First Nation contact book, the Champagne and Aishihik First Nations Southern Tutchone bicultural project. The member opposite talked about expanding immersion types of programs other than in the French language. This is such a program. This is in cooperation with the Champagne and Aishihik First Nations in Haines Junction.

They are working on a residential school unit. They're also continuing to expand the NorthWind Books project. I think members in the Assembly have seen many of the books that are produced in this. This is a case of creating a Yukon-based curriculum and course materials. They are early childhood education readers, primary readers, that include Yukon context, pictures of Yukon people, and Yukon situations — and if members haven't had a chance to see them, just let me know and I will provide copies so that they can take a look at them.

The First Nations programs and partnerships unit also coordinates the annual bison hunts, which are in a variety of different Yukon schools. I've been to the bison feasts in Carcross and also the bison feast at Elijah Smith Elementary School. The unit is also working on the Yukon First Nations Language Proficiency certificate program in conjunction with Simon Fraser University. That addresses some of the Member for McIntyre-Takhini's questions the other day regarding language instructors. This is another program to train the language trainer, so to speak. It's also being done in partnership with Simon Fraser University.

It's very interesting to note that, as we continue to evolve and reform education in the territory, one of the initiatives that

we're dealing with on the floor of this Assembly now is the changes to the *Yukon College Act*, and the change to provide that institution with the ability to grant degrees.

I think that's a very important step forward, but I'm also very impressed with Yukon College's commitment to working with other institutions — whether Simon Fraser University, Royal Roads University, University of Northern British Columbia, the University of Regina, the University of Alaska, Fairbanks or the University of Alberta — to continue to expand its menu of options for Yukon students so that they can take significant university programs here in the territory.

I'll continue on with the list here. The First Nations programs and partnership unit is also translating seven Eaglecrest books into Yukon First Nation languages; they are creating a Yukon First Nation resources box; they are creating the Yukon First Nation human resource project and the Yukon First Nations 12 course; there's a departmental exam and teacher and student resources. Yes, there will be an exam for this course. I know that might be a concern to at least one member of the Liberal Party, but there will be an exam for this course.

The northern strategy is revitalizing culture through story and a technology DVD project, the development of language resources and monitoring grade 5 modules on traditional governance, clan systems, language and citizenship. Mr. Speaker, I would like to pass on my special thanks to Tina Jules and her staff. They have done a tremendous job in a very short time of putting together not only a great working group — they work very closely with the First Nation Education Advisory Committee — but they also work very closely with curriculum developers and other educators to provide these types of materials, and now we are seeing them getting out further and further into our communities.

Mr. Speaker, I only have the one copy of the First Nation program and partnership unit newsletter. I will send this over to the Member for Mount Lorne. It has got some good reading in it. There are 14 more pages that detail everything that is going on in that department.

Mr. Speaker, I have touched on the second language programs, the First Nation programming and resource and consultation work. I have discussed the First Nation Education Advisory Committee, which includes representatives from across the territory. They have seen some significant products being created with a handbook that outlines teacher resources.

This helps teachers include a First Nation perspective throughout the curriculum. They have created resource materials for grade 5. They have worked on the grade 10 course and, as well, they are working on a grade 4 Yukon First Nation governance unit, a grade 12 Yukon First Nation studies course and textbook, additional early primary readers, and additional programs and readers that will be translated into Yukon First Nation languages.

There are a tremendous number of other opportunities going on — opportunities in programming and changes happening in the First Nation program and partnership unit. The member brought forward an exhaustive list of programs. I really wish I had more time to talk about them — to talk about the 22 counselling positions we have in our schools, the —

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

*Debate on Motion No. 688 accordingly adjourned*

*The House adjourned at 5:30 p.m.*

**The following document was filed April 22, 2009:**

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Public Account Committee membership: letter (dated April 9, 2009) to Arthur Mitchell, Chair, Public Accounts Committee from Government Members of the Public Accounts Committee (Hardy)