

Whitehorse, Yukon**Thursday, March 27, 2008 -- 1:00 p.m.**

Speaker: I will now call the House to order. At this time, we will proceed with prayers.

Prayers

DAILY ROUTINE

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

Tributes.

Introduction of visitors.

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Speaker: Under tabling returns and documents, the Chair has for tabling a report from the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly on the absence of members from sittings of the Legislative Assembly and from its committees.

Are there any further returns or documents for tabling?

Mr. Inverarity: Mr. Speaker, I have two letters for tabling.

Speaker: Are there further documents for tabling?

Reports of committees.

Petitions.

Are there any bills to be introduced?

Are there any notices of motion?

NOTICES OF MOTION

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to introduce in the Legislative Assembly a bill to establish an act creating a child advocate appropriate for the Yukon no later than the anniversary date of the proclamation of the *Child and Family Services Act* following consultations with Yukon First Nations and other stakeholders.

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

THAT this House urges the Deputy Premier to explain to Yukoners why she said in the Legislative Assembly that \$36.5 million in investments made by the Government of Yukon were guaranteed by a bank when in fact they were not.

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

THAT this House invites witnesses to appear before Committee of the Whole when debating the proposed *Child and Family Services Act* so that the voices of Yukon First Nations and other affected parties can be heard on this substantial piece of legislation.

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

THAT this House urges the Yukon government to develop legislation and regulations around the use of all-terrain vehicles, or ATVs, in the territory with the primary objective of increasing public safety and reducing injury and death, particularly involving young people.

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

THAT this House direct the Public Accounts Committee to meet no fewer than four times each fiscal year to review the spending policies and practices of the Government of Yukon and to conduct public hearings on any matter that is the subject of a special report by the Auditor General of Canada or on any matter noted in the Auditor General's annual report on the public accounts of the Government of Yukon as warranting additional consideration.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House praise the efforts of Whitehorse City Councillor Jan Stick to seek to ban plastic shopping bags in the City of Whitehorse as a means of reducing the negative impacts of plastic in landfills and in our environment and urges the Yukon government to create a similar territory-wide ban on plastic shopping bags as a significant environmental health measure.

NOTICES OF MOTION FOR THE PRODUCTION OF PAPERS

Mr. McRobb: I give notice of the following motion for the production of papers:

THAT this House do issue an order for the return of the report promised to have been tabled the first day of this sitting from the Department of Highways and Public Works detailing measures the department is taking to address issues raised in the Auditor General's report of 2007.

Speaker: Is there a statement by a minister?

This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Asset-backed commercial paper investments

Mr. Mitchell: Mr. Speaker, I have some questions for the Minister of Finance. I would like his opinion on something.

The Auditor General investigated the minister's \$36.5-million investment in junk bonds. She found the government did not follow the law when it made these investments. The Premier's first response was to publicly criticize the Auditor General and dismiss her findings as "just her opinion". The Premier was not content to stop there. He decided he needed a legal opinion to refute what the Auditor General said.

Can the Premier tell the House when he requested the legal opinion? Was it before he invested the \$36.5 million, or after?

Speaker's statement

Speaker: Order please.

Before the Hon. Premier answers the question I'd just like to remind the Leader of the Official Opposition about the guidelines for all Question Period, and specifically Rule No. 2: "A question ought to seek information and cannot be based on a hypothesis or seek an opinion, legal or otherwise."

So, keep that in mind, please.

Hon. Mr. Fentie: Mr. Speaker, it's coming from the Official Opposition, it's the same old tired question and, frankly, the government side has moved on. We are more interested in dealing with the public interest and building Yukon's quality of life, better and better every day. The suggestions that the member has just made, once again, are, in fact, incorrect. Most of what the member has put on the floor of the House on this matter is incorrect. I guess that's the approach that the Official Opposition wants to take. It's not the approach the government will take.

Mr. Mitchell: Yukoners are telling us that they have 36 million questions that they would like to see answered. Mr. Speaker, one of the sharpest criticisms in the Auditor General's report centred on the fact that the government didn't follow the act. She said that one of the ways that could have been avoided was the government could have sought a legal opinion before the investments were made to ensure they followed the act. This would have been the prudent thing to do.

While the Premier was busy criticizing the Auditor General, his Deputy Premier took a different approach here last fall. She said, "The Auditor General of Canada has agreed to conduct a review and we certainly look forward to the outcome of that review, and we will accept all findings and recommendations made." It's obvious the Premier and his new deputy have a difference of opinion on this issue that needs to be resolved.

I'll ask again: when did the minister seek out a legal opinion? Was it before or after he gambled with \$36.5 million of taxpayers' money?

Speaker's statement

Speaker: Before the Hon. Premier answers, I want to refer the honourable member again to specific rules. A guideline for oral Question Period is that a question ought to seek information and cannot be based on a hypothesis or seek an opinion, legal or otherwise. Hon. Premier, you have the floor.

Hon. Mr. Fentie: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We are well of the fact that the Official Opposition has a position that Finance officials were gambling with taxpayers' money. We understand that. That's not the view that we have of our Finance officials.

Furthermore, how convenient for the member to just simply ignore and leave out the fact that the Auditor General said these investments were being made in good faith all along. In every year, these investments were duly disclosed and reported. They were looked at by the Auditor General's office. We all know that. It only became an issue when the bank liquidity agreements -- which were in place, contrary to what the member says; and we all know that the member says many things, not necessarily correct -- they were in place and the banks simply did not live up to those liquidity agreements. We are in a process now with many other governments, corporations, public corporations, and many other stakeholders developing a restructuring process for these investments to ensure they are going to be made good.

Mr. Mitchell: Again, what the Auditor General said in her report was that this government -- and this government alone, she referred to -- did not comply with the act.

Since the minister either doesn't know or is too embarrassed to admit it, I can inform the public that the legal advice was sought on February 1, 2008. It was obtained from a Vancouver law firm seven months after the minister gambled with our tax dollars. The minister didn't even bother to ask for expert advice until after the fact. This is just more proof that the Finance minister was not doing his job. He was negligent in his duties.

The result of this incompetence is that the Government of Yukon didn't follow the act and millions of our dollars are locked away for five to eight years. Why didn't the minister seek the advice before he made these misguided investments? Why did he only bother to get it after the fact?

Hon. Mr. Fentie: Mr. Speaker, speaking of experts after the fact, the member opposite certainly has become an expert after the fact, but that is easy to do. The hard work is being done by officials in the Department of Finance today. As I said, there are many other governments, many other corporations, many other Crown corporations, and many other stakeholders working on this issue.

But I have a question for the member opposite. How does the member view Mr. Greenspan's role in the subprime mortgage fiasco in the United States? How does the member view Mr. Greenspan's role? Was Mr. Greenspan gambling with U.S. dollars?

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

Speaker: Order please. On a point of order.

Mr. McRobb: Point of order, Mr. Speaker. The rules of this House clearly do not permit us to answer a question posed by the government side. If they want to ask questions, they should be on this side of the House.

Speaker: On a point of order. Go ahead.

Hon. Mr. Cathers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In my humble opinion, I submit to you there is no point of order. There is simply a dispute between members. Members are free to pose questions in any debate, or in reply to a question.

Speaker's ruling

Speaker: From the Chair's perspective, the comments by the Hon. Premier were hypothetical. The member has been in this Legislative Assembly long enough to understand that the government cannot ask questions of the opposition that one can only conclude as hypothetical; therefore, there is no point of order.

The Hon. Premier has an opportunity to reply now.

Hon. Mr. Fentie: I have more time, Mr. Speaker?

Speaker: You do indeed.

Hon. Mr. Fentie: Thank you very much. Once again, the member opposite is incorrect in his assertions and is wasting the time of the Assembly.

Question re: Asset-backed commercial paper investments

Mr. Mitchell: I know that the minister is a keen student of economics; he has certainly demonstrated that. I would

suggest that he should write to the former or the current chair of the Federal Reserve to seek advice and counselling.

When the Auditor General investigated this minister's bad investments, she raised the question of why the government failed to seek expert advice before making these decisions. It's obvious that the minister was not doing his job or providing any oversight. The minister only decided to seek advice after the fact. Now, the minister's response to the Auditor General's investigation was quite interesting. For years, the Auditor General has been his best friend, but now when she has something critical to say, the minister dismisses it as "just her opinion". I can tell the Premier this: Yukoners will take the Auditor General's opinion over his every day of the week. The minister got legal advice after the fact. How much did it cost and why did he get it only after the fact?

Hon. Mr. Fentie: Oh, the opinions the member has. I can assure the member that Yukoners will take the Auditor General's view and opinion any day of the week over the member's opposite -- that's a fact. No matter how the member tries to address this issue in his attempts to criticize the Department of Finance or government and anybody else involved here, it's not going to work. So, let's go over this issue. No, I'm not going to resign. As Premier, I'm not going to fire myself as Minister of Finance. No, I'm not going to attack Finance officials. This government will not do that. No, I'm not going to bite on the member's approach here, because it's not factual. If the member wishes to move on to a constructive, factual debate, he'll find the government side very willing to engage, but on this matter, nothing is going to change from this side of the House. The answers have been given and we'll continue to give the same answers. Whether the member likes it or not, that's just the way it is, so he's going to have to get over it.

Mr. Mitchell: I don't know what the Minister of Finance is hiding here. We certainly haven't criticized officials or suggested that anybody should be dismissed.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

Speaker: The Member for Porter Creek North.

Hon. Mr. Kenyon: The word "hiding" has been ruled on many times in this House.

Speaker's ruling

Speaker: From the Chair's perspective, there is no point of order. The Leader of the Official Opposition has the floor.

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Now, the Minister of Finance went to great lengths when the results of the Auditor General's investigation were released to try to discredit her findings. Public officials didn't do that; the minister did it.

He dismissed her work as "just her opinion" and said he had other opinions. He has had a few weeks to think it over now. Has he come to the same conclusions that the Deputy Premier and everyone in the Yukon has -- namely, that the Auditor General was right and he was wrong? Or, does this difference with his Deputy Premier continue today?

So I'll ask again: what did the legal advice cost, and why did he get it after the fact?

Hon. Mr. Fentie: Once again, the member is putting incorrect information on the floor. Nobody has criticized the Auditor General. When Finance officials were asked in a public forum if they had other opinions on the matter, they responded factually -- yes, they do. That's exactly how the Department of Finance responded to the question on the matter.

That is their work; it's part of their operations. They were fully disclosing all that took place here, as we've done each and every year, as governments have done as far back as 1990 -- fully disclosed these investments. They're in each and every year-end -- our public accounts.

The member is twisting in the wind. It's time to move off the cunning approach and take the constructive approach.

Mr. Mitchell: I actually think that is quite interesting, because I am not aware of any government from 1990 on, prior to this government, that has had its investments frozen -- a third of their cash surplus frozen. It happened on this minister's watch.

The day after the report was released, despite what he is saying now, the Premier was critical. He went on the radio and dismissed the Auditor General's report and said it was just one opinion. It is clear that the Deputy Premier and the Premier have a difference of opinion on this. The Deputy Premier is right. The correct course of action would have been to accept the findings and move on. Instead, the Premier decided to try to discredit the Auditor General and spend taxpayers' money on legal advice from a Vancouver firm. Now he is refusing to say what it cost and why he waited until seven months after the investments were made to get it.

Unlike the Premier, I don't take issue with the Auditor General's findings. He is right. I do respect her opinions, so will the minister release the instructions he sent to the law firm? What precise questions did he want them to answer so many months after the fact?

Hon. Mr. Fentie: Well, Mr. Speaker, I am about to demonstrate once again just how far off the facts the Member for Copperbelt really is.

The fact of the matter is that the Auditor General asked the Department of Finance to seek another legal opinion. I hope that answers the member's question, though it doesn't fit with the approach the member is taking -- I understand that. But it is the fact of the matter. The Auditor General asked the department to seek the legal opinion.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Question re: *Child and Family Services Act*

Mr. Edzerza: Yesterday the government tabled its new *Child and Family Services Act*. I would like to acknowledge the significance of this, because the new act has been a long time coming, and it is a very important piece of legislation.

Obviously it is going to take time to go through this bill in detail and give it the consideration it deserves; however, I have a few preliminary questions for the Minister of Health and Social Services.

First of all, why did the minister decide to ignore the wishes of several First Nations who asked for more time to provide informed input into this legislation that will have such a profound impact on First Nation children and families?

Hon. Mr. Cathers: I thank the member for his comments, appreciating, of course, that he has not had time to go through this act and to see that, in fact, it's not only a very thick piece of legislation but it is leading edge in Canada in addressing these matters and providing appropriate protection to children. It is also taking the important step of involving the family and First Nation citizens in efforts to cooperatively plan and take all necessary and appropriate steps to prevent bringing children into care when at all possible, while keeping them in a safe situation.

I would point out, in response to the member's question, that this is the result of a joint effort between the Yukon government and First Nations, a partnership that saw joint public consultation, joint policy development and jointly informing the legal drafters. Although, as the member noted, there were a few First Nations who encouraged us to delay it, I must remind the member there were others who encouraged us to get on with the work, to table the legislation and to put in place this step, which they regard as a very important step for their families, their citizens and their children.

Mr. Edzerza: The minister avoided the question. I believe in giving credit where credit is due. One major improvement since a consultation draft came out in November is the commitment to develop legislation for an independent child advocate within a year after the new act is proclaimed. This was very high on the list of things that were asked for during the consultation.

As the minister knows, I recently tabled a motion calling for a children's advocate. In fact, as far back as 2000, the NDP MLA for Ross River and the Southern Lakes tabled a private member's bill to establish an independent child's advocate, but it was shot down because of the possible cost.

What kind of consultation can the minister promise in developing our child advocate act and how soon will that process start?

Hon. Mr. Cathers: Of course the consultation will start very soon. As the member will note, part 12 of the new bill says, "The Minister shall develop an act to establish a child advocate, to be independent of the director of family and children's services and of any director appointed under paragraph 173(c)."

That reference to "any other director" -- I would remind the member -- is to allow First Nation service authorities to establish -- If they wish to deliver the services to their citizens, they have the ability to use this legislation. A key part of the policy development process is that this is designed and is an improvement, which will improve the services for all citizens, including First Nation children and will allow First Nations to utilize this legislation if they wish to deliver services themselves. Should they not do that, they can utilize the greater opportunity provided through this act for greater involvement and cooperative planning, greater involvement up front in being

informed and in being involved in decisions related to children and to citizens of that First Nation.

In answer to the member's question specific to the child advocate -- that will come in shortly, and of course, by virtue of the bill tabled, must be completed within a year; it will include First Nations and it will include the public.

Mr. Edzerza: A number of First Nations have expressed serious concerns about the draft *Child and Family Services Act*. These concerns include the amount of unilateral power held by the director and social workers, the lack of alternatives to court systems, the limited roles that are given to grandparents and other extended family members -- this is just a small sample. Certainly, in my own initial review of the act, I am concerned about the number of areas where it says the director "may" do this or that, rather than the director "shall" or "must". These are serious issues. If those concerns are still there, would the minister be willing to allow First Nations and other witnesses to appear before Committee of the Whole when this proposed act comes up for debate?

Hon. Mr. Cathers: I appreciate the member's concern. I would encourage him to in fact read the current *Children's Act* and then to read this new bill, the new *Child and Family Services Act*. In fact he will see that, under the new legislation, the unilateral powers of the director are reduced. It is far clearer in the need to involve First Nations in cooperative planning. It is in fact a much more inclusive process.

As the member will be aware and I have indicated in the House before, through policy, some measures have already been implemented. To see that greater involvement, there are some areas that did require legislative amendment. That is an important part of this piece of legislation. Again, this legislation provides greater opportunity for involvement by the family and greater opportunity for involvement by the First Nations, and other steps requested by First Nations, such as the recognition of custom adoptions and creating that mechanism.

Again, while the member points out and I acknowledge that there are a few First Nations who asked us to delay this process further, in fact there are others who have encouraged us to table this bill and bring forward what is a significant improvement in legislation that will benefit their citizens and all Yukoners.

Question re: Whitehorse Housing Co-operative

Mr. Cardiff: I have another question for the minister responsible for Yukon Housing Corporation. I'm not interested in hearing the minister reconstruct history one more time. I would like him to address the current reality regarding the dispute between the Yukon Housing Corporation and the Whitehorse Housing Co-operative. It would be nice if the minister would refrain from attacking the credibility of the co-op board and acknowledge the hard work that they've done over the past five years to get the co-op back on a stable footing.

One of the two national housing co-op bodies has agreed to lend the co-operative about \$250,000 to discharge some of its current obligations. Can the minister explain why Yukon Housing Corporation as receiver/manager blocked that move so that the money is now sitting in a trust fund instead of being put to good use?

Hon. Mr. Kenyon: Once again, the matter is fairly complex. It's disappointing that the member feels that looking at the historical aspects of where we are today isn't relevant.

I think most Yukoners, knowing that they can't pay their bills, would realize that increasing the size of the bills isn't the way to get out of it. The organization the member opposite refers to has offered a loan, which simply increases the debt load of the organization. That is why, at the request of the co-operative, a third party in Toronto -- a company specializing in these sorts of evaluations -- was engaged at the expense of the Yukon taxpayer. They determined that this likely was not a viable operation.

The Yukon taxpayers and the Canadian taxpayers have a huge sum of money invested in this. The only way that the corporation can get out of being a court-ordered receiver is to return to the courts for the court's direction. And that is what we have agreed to allow the corporation to do. It brings it back into the courts, and it allows the courts to make those decisions -- not the corporation and certainly not the government.

Mr. Cardiff: Well, yesterday the minister did finally admit that the co-operative is not bankrupt. Reading the Blues, however, I was left with the impression that the minister feels that the co-operative is a huge financial burden on Yukon taxpayers, and that simply is not the case.

I can't help wondering if the minister simply has some ideological objection to people acting together to meet their housing needs. If that is the case, it's no wonder we've seen so little action from this government on the big, big problem we have regarding the need for affordable housing here in the Yukon.

Will the minister give his assurance that if the Housing Corporation agrees to work with co-op board and voluntarily withdraw as receiver/manager -- through the courts, of course -- that he will not interfere with that process?

Hon. Mr. Kenyon: For the member opposite, that is why the courts are involved. The housing co-operative was placed into receivership and the member opposite is right -- the word "bankrupt" was used in the letter and that has been corrected. They are, however, in receivership and that leaves the board of directors as the receiver, by Canadian law.

We have no choice but to go back to the courts and seek their direction. The Canadian taxpayer has bled over \$1 million into this co-operative. If the member opposite wants people to look at their own housing needs, or if somebody wants to give me or a few friends \$1 million, I would be happy to accept it.

We will live with the court's decision and again, if any of the other organizations want to take over as receiver and continue to subsidize this, and if the New Democratic Party and their good offices want to take this over and pour the money into it, we are more than happy to live with this. We'll support it.

Mr. Cardiff: The minister is not recognizing the contribution of the board and the people who live in that housing cooperative or the work that they have done over many, many years. It is ironic that next week this minister is going to be flying to Ottawa to meet with federal and provincial housing ministers to discuss social housing. This is a major concern

across the country and especially here in the Yukon, in every community in the Yukon.

A lot of the problem we are experiencing right now can be traced back to the decisions of previous federal governments to walk away from their responsibilities in the social housing field, and I hope the minister is planning to make a strong case on behalf of the Yukon and won't accept any excuses from the federal minister for why the federal government isn't doing more.

Can the minister tell us what targets he is hoping to achieve next week in terms of the number and kind of social housing units that should be built in the Yukon, and will he consider housing cooperatives as a viable way for that to be done?

Hon. Mr. Kenyon: I do thank the member opposite for recognizing the fact that the Leader of the Third Party has offered to pair with me to allow me to attend these very important meetings in Ottawa.

I have to correct the member opposite. There certainly has been a lot of work on all sides within the co-operative, but we still have to look back to October 2003 when the co-op's bank account was closed because it was overdrawn. In November 2003, the debts incurred by the co-op were approximately \$125,000. In October 2003, the co-op missed July, August and September mortgage payments. In November 2003, the president and the vice-president of the co-op resigned. There is a long story involving this. We are now continuing to ask CMHC to issue comfort letters because of the difficulties that they have had with the mortgage. The court may come up with any decision.

The court may very well allow the co-op to continue and if that is the case then we would certainly support it. But the opinion of the Mintz report, which I do hope that the member opposite has had a chance to read, is fairly clear that given the limited human resources within a co-op that small, the chances are that they will continue to go down. In which case, they could sell off assets and settle their debt. But because of that, they would become a much smaller group and then there would be the question of who gets the money.

Question re: *Liquor Act* amendments

Mr. Inverarity: Mr. Speaker, in October of 2002, the Yukon Party declared as part of its election campaign that it did not support the introduction of new types of licences to the liquor market. In a letter to the B.C. & Yukon Hotels Association, the Leader of the Yukon Party rejected the idea of neighbourhood pubs because it would be unfair to existing liquor licensees who had to build hotels and motel rooms as a condition of their licence. At the time, two government ministers owned hotels.

Well, Mr. Speaker, these are exactly the changes that are proposed under the new *Liquor Act* amendments. Why should Yukoners trust this government when they do the opposite of what they say they are going to do?

Hon. Mr. Kenyon: For the record, there were two ministers who owned hotels. I spoke at length with both of them and both had no objections to continuing to review the act and look at the good work of the consultation in 2001 and that

the act be amended. Much of the concern was in totally other quarters who looked at neighbour pubs as being, for want of a better description, the belly-up-to-the-bar-and-spittoon-in-the-corner sort of establishment. That was not what we saw as a reasonable approach to a neighbourhood pub. I think most Yukoners would agree that that is not what they wanted to look at.

However, we did, over time, come up with a proposal that was acceptable to the many others. As I say, I have spoken with our two ministers who owned hotels and many other people who have owned hotels, and to their credit, not one had a concern about changing this legislation. That was not the problem.

Mr. Inverarity: This government has a credibility problem. In September of 2006 during the last election campaign, the Yukon Chamber of Commerce was informed by the Premier that the Yukon Party was, and I quote, "not convinced that reviewing the *Liquor Act* was necessary." The Premier promised the chamber at the time that the Yukon Party would keep the existing legislation. Well, here it is 18 months later and they are doing precisely the opposite. I ask again: how can this government be trusted when it does not do what it says it is going to do?

Hon. Mr. Kenyon: I do have a degree of sympathy with the member opposite who, having not been in government, has obviously no concept of how government works.

At the time, we felt that simply changing parts of the regulations would solve the problem -- the most notable being the word "brew" in brew licence. Our legal opinion over time -- and it was not an easy opinion to get by any means -- is that you brew beer; you do not brew wine; therefore, the act had to be opened in order to deal with farm-gate wineries or distilling, manufacturing or producing spirits.

It was our feeling and certainly my feeling at the time that also simply looking at the definition of the word "meal" would solve a lot of our problems. In fact, we got exactly the same advice that we had to open the act in order to do this. What we assumed we could do in regulation we found required a legislative change, so we proceeded with that. If we had continued on the way the member opposite sort of thinks, nothing would be done and we wouldn't be moving anywhere.

Mr. Inverarity: Let us make sure there are no misunderstandings here. The Official Opposition Liberals support these amendments. It was, after all, the previous Liberal government that did the hard work. The Liberals performed the review and developed the recommendations. That was more than seven years ago. Unfortunately the approach taken by this government was to stall in implementing the recommendations that have left us with proposed amendments to the *Liquor Act* but no regulations to go along with them.

Will the minister ensure that these regulations are presented before the amendments are passed?

Hon. Mr. Kenyon: As I have said many times to the media, the regulations are being worked on by the same incredibly competent and hardworking people who got the act together, literally. The regulations are being worked on now and they will be ready, if not by the end of the sitting when this

hopefully passes, but very shortly thereafter. We hope to have that in place by June 1 in time for summer.

For the member opposite, I will certainly recognize that the Liberal government did a lot of work on that, and we appreciate that. The shortest lived majority government in the history of the Commonwealth of Nations -- at least they did something in their 22 months.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BILLS

Bill No. 10: Second Reading

Clerk: Second reading, Bill No. 10, standing in the name of the Hon. Mr. Fentie.

Hon. Mr. Fentie: Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 10, entitled *Interim Supply Appropriation Act, 2008-09*, be now read a second time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Hon. Premier that Bill No. 10, entitled *Interim Supply Appropriation Act, 2008-09*, be now read a second time.

Hon. Mr. Fentie: I will have very brief remarks in regard to interim supply. It is a standard tool and mechanism always when it comes to the appropriations of government in the budget sitting.

The act requests spending authority of up to \$277,856,000. Its purpose is to defray the charges and expenses of the public services of Yukon for the three-month period commencing April 1, 2008, through to May 31, 2008.

Of this total amount, \$197,976,000 has previously been authorized by special warrant as outlined in Schedule C of the legislation. The amount required -- as I said, \$277,856,000 -- is broken down into operation and maintenance expenditures, as a total of \$201,123,000 and capital expenditures of \$76,733,000.

Of course, the full details of all these estimates will be included in the main estimates for 2008-09 and Committee of the Whole will have ample time to debate in detail all the expenditures of the main budget.

In closing, I move that we quickly put Bill No. 10, *Interim Supply Appropriation Act, 2008-09*, into Committee and move it through the necessary processes that we must so we can get on to the many other items of business that this government has brought forward on behalf of the Yukon public.

Mr. McRobb: The Yukon Liberal caucus has stated for the record on several occasions that we would cooperate in expeditious passage of any interim supply bill. This is certainly no exception. We look forward to discussion, albeit a quick discussion, in Committee and assent later this afternoon.

Mr. Hardy: In regard to the interim supply appropriation bill, we have no problem with it; it's a standard procedure; it's recognized from past practices and we recognize the need as we come to the year-end that money is available to ensure that

the bills are paid and projects don't stop and businesses receive money and employees keep working. However, as we have always stated, we do not believe that there was a need for a special warrant.

We believe that there was time enough to bring the interim supply bill forward and have it passed by the Legislative Assembly.

I just heard the Member for Kluane indicate that they will work with something like this. Of course the NDP will as well. The history of the Legislative Assembly has always been that we do pass interim supply bills.

Reading the first page of Bill No. 10, it states: "From and out of the Yukon consolidated revenue fund, there may be paid and applied a sum not exceeding in the whole \$277,856,000, \$197,976,000 of which has previously been authorized by a special warrant, as shown in Schedule C."

I would like to put on record clearly that I don't consider that special warrant authorized, from my own perspective, because it has not had the proper debate that should have happened in the Legislative Assembly. Special warrants have -- as the name implies -- a special purpose. Generally, in emergencies facing the Yukon or situations that arise that are not planned for, a special warrant would be utilized.

But a special warrant is not to be used in this manner. This is our particular viewpoint. Obviously, the Yukon Party does not share that viewpoint. They have used special warrants consistently, even though the opposition has consistently asked them to stop using special warrants in this manner. So, obviously, we are not in agreement at all around this.

What is disappointing, of course, is the fact that we have indicated -- the NDP, anyway, from the opposition side, and the Liberals just recently now -- that there would not be a problem with an interim supply bill being brought forward. So there is really no need for a special warrant in this case.

However, as I say that, it's obviously just a very different way of operating and different way of being accountable to the public that we would have if we were in government. Obviously, the Yukon Party prefers to use special warrants. It could be based on distrust; it could be based on many reasons. However, I still would like to see the government, at least once in their next mandate, not use a special warrant and bring forward an interim supply bill, so we can go back to the way all other governments have worked in this Legislative Assembly: trusting the opposition that it will go forward and ensure that bills are paid.

Saying that, I look forward to the debate on the spending in the budget debate -- in the departments. And I won't spend any time debating the interim supply bill. Our debate will happen in the course of the next -- how many days? -- 30 days or whatever in regard to the budget that has been brought forward by the government, and the departmental budget as well.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: If the Hon. Premier speaks, he will close debate. Does any other member wish to be heard?

Hon. Mr. Fentie: Well, in my brief closing remarks, I can assure the Leader of the Third Party that, in our next mandate, we'll take his comments under advisement. But for the rest of this mandate, we will continue to ensure that spending authority for government is not interrupted, and there is good reason for that.

Some of us who are in this House today were in this Legislature some years ago when an opposition party filibustered the interim supply bill, and the government was left with no spending authority. This government will never, ever take that chance.

The interim supply bill before us is complete, as it should be, on the government's spending needs for three months into the fiscal year, and we are backing that up with a special warrant to ensure that there will be expeditious passage of interim supply.

You know, I have another interesting point to make. I noticed something that may be subtle, but it is of great interest here. There was another special warrant out a few weeks ago -- not this one, another one. It was a special warrant covering the increase for MLA salaries -- the increase for MLA salaries made retroactive based on the motion moved by the Leader of the Official Opposition. There was not one criticism of that special warrant, Mr. Speaker, yet there is criticism for merely a mechanical and technical instrument to ensure the government does not have an impediment to spending authority. I'll close my remarks on that point.

Speaker: Are you prepared for the question?

Motion for second reading of Bill No. 10 agreed to

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

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

Motion agreed to

Speaker leaves the Chair

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Chair: Committee of the Whole will now come to order. Do members of the Committee wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

Chair: I will now call Committee to order.

Bill No. 10 -- Interim Supply Appropriation Act, 2008-09

Chair: The matter before the Committee of the Whole is the *Interim Supply Appropriation Act, 2008-09*.

Hon. Mr. Fentie: We've already delved into the total amounts requested for interim supply in second reading. I will just give further detail now on where the expenditures are appropriated for or profiled for. The appropriation act is required to allow public service, for example, to continue to make certain expenditures while the main estimates continue to be debated and considered during the spring sitting of our Assembly here in this fiscal year of 2008.

The interim funding, of course, will extend through to May 31, 2008. The amounts, in case the members are interested how the amounts are derived at, is by canvassing departments for this period, to have departments bring forward what their spending requirements will be during the two-month period.

The amounts are significant, however, and largely due to the fact that a number of government-funded organizations, such as the hospital, the college and other non-governmental organizations receive the bulk of their appropriation in the first quarter of each fiscal year. In addition, a large percentage of capital commitments and expenditures are made during this period of the year so that capital projects can commence and/or continue should they have already been started.

So with that, Mr. Chair, I will then entertain comments and questions from the member opposite and move the bill through Committee to third reading for passage.

Mr. McRobb: Again, for the record, the Yukon Liberal Party wants to demonstrate its complete cooperation with the government -- and that would apply to any government -- by demonstrating that we can participate in expeditious passage of an interim supply bill; therefore, we do not have any questions at this time.

Mr. Cardiff: The New Democrats as well have no questions for the minister in Committee of the Whole. We will be asking all our questions when we get to debate the main estimates. We recognize the purpose of the interim supply bill and agree to its speedy passage.

Thank you.

Hon. Mr. Fentie: I want to extend, on behalf of the government side, our appreciation to the opposition benches for their contribution and the expeditious movement of this bill through Committee. I will stand down on any further remarks.

Chair: Is there any further general debate?

We'll proceed clause by clause in Bill No. 10.

On Clause 1

Clause 1 agreed to

On Clause 2

Clause 2 agreed to

On Schedules A, B and C

Schedules A, B and C agreed to

On Title

Title agreed to

Hon. Mr. Cathers: I move that Bill No. 10, entitled *Interim Supply Appropriation Act, 2008-09*, be reported without amendment.

Chair: It has been moved by Mr. Cathers that Bill No. 10, entitled *Interim Supply Appropriation Act, 2008-09*, be reported without amendment.

Motion agreed to

Hon. Mr. Cathers: I move that the Speaker do now resume the Chair.

Chair: It has been moved by Mr. Cathers that the Speaker do now resume the Chair.

Motion agreed to

Speaker resumes the Chair

Speaker: I will now call the House to order. May the House have a report from the Chair of Committee of the Whole?

Chair's report

Mr. Nordick: Mr. Speaker, Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 10, entitled *Interim Supply Appropriation Act, 2008-09*, and has directed me to report it without amendment.

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

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Speaker: I declare the report carried.

Unanimous consent re: third reading of Bill No. 10

Hon. Mr. Cathers: Pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, I would ask the unanimous consent of the House to proceed with third reading of Bill No. 10, *Interim Supply Appropriation Act, 2008-09*, at this time.

Speaker: The Government House Leader has, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, requested unanimous consent of the House to proceed with third reading of Bill No. 10, *Interim Supply Appropriation Act, 2008-09*, at this time. Is there unanimous consent?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Speaker: Unanimous consent has been granted. Government bills.

GOVERNMENT BILLS

Bill No. 10: Third Reading

Clerk: Third reading, Bill No. 10, standing in the name of the Hon. Mr. Fentie.

Hon. Mr. Fentie: I move that Bill No. 10 entitled *Interim Supply Appropriation Act, 2008-09*, be now read a third time and do pass.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Hon. Premier that Bill No. 10, entitled *Interim Supply Appropriation Act, 2008-09*, be now read a third time and do pass.

Motion for third reading of Bill No. 10 agreed to

Speaker: I declare that Bill No. 10 has passed this House. We are now prepared to receive the Commissioner of the Yukon, in her capacity as Lieutenant Governor, to grant assent to the bill, which has passed this House.

ASSENT TO BILLS

Commissioner: Please be seated.

Speaker: Madam Commissioner, the Assembly has, at its present session, passed a certain bill to which, in the name

and on behalf of the Assembly, I respectfully request your assent.

Clerk: *Interim Supply Appropriation Act, 2008-09.*

Commissioner: I hereby assent to the bill as enumerated by the Clerk.

Commissioner leaves the Chamber

Speaker: I will now call the House to order.

Bill No. 11: Second Reading -- adjourned debate

Clerk: Second reading, Bill No. 11, standing in the name of the Hon. Mr. Fentie; adjourned debate, Mr. Elias.

Speaker: Member for Vuntut Gwitchin, you have 24 minutes left.

Mr. Elias: Again, it's always an honour and a privilege to rise on behalf of my constituents and address the Assembly in response to the budget of 2008-09. Yesterday, as debate adjourned, I was speaking about the caribou issue. I think it's important to note that in a recent poll conducted in the United States of America, 50 percent of Americans still oppose drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge in Alaska, and 42 percent of Americans still support oil drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge in Alaska.

There is an issue in my riding with regard to education, which I do believe needs some attention here in the House today. Mr. Speaker, there should be no child left uneducated in our public education system, yet in my community of Old Crow, there is still a small group of students who simply do not fit into the current system.

We need alternative learning opportunities for these children as soon as possible. One idea suggested by a parent could be that we initiate a satellite program operated out of Yukon College in Old Crow with curriculum being delivered by the Individual Learning Centre here in Whitehorse. This is an idea to do something for these children who do want to be educated but simply don't fit in the system. I'm speaking of about five to seven children here, Mr. Speaker. We need to find funding immediately to address the situation and find a way to deliver some special program support, and a satellite program could be one solution to the problem.

I ask this because one of the parents of the children asked me what the education system is doing for these children in Old Crow. I said that I didn't know but that I would ask the minister and get back to him. So I hope that the Minister of Education is listening and can answer this parent's concern and question of the Yukon education system and how they are providing for these children who don't necessarily fit into the Yukon education system. It is my hope that the minister can find a way to be responsive and act quickly regarding the situation.

Another issue in the Chief Zzeh Gittlit School is the lack of an education assistant. It's an issue that has arisen with a couple of parents why isn't there any funding for an education assistant in the Chief Zzeh Gittlit School? So that is another question that I hope the minister could address and why it's not addressed in the budget.

I will conclude by saying that, yes, it is important to upgrade the Whitehorse Airport and the Campbell Highway and the new initiative for the nursing program at Yukon College -- that is a great initiative -- and there is the \$685,000 for capacity development for First Nation in the budget and \$175,000 for the Forty Mile cultural heritage site. However, what is not in the budget is also important.

Social assistance: there is no money for an increase. There is no money for the downtown receiving home. There is no money for the dying trapping industry, which is the oldest industry in our territory. We have been advocating this on this side of the House for a long time, and there is still no money for the dying trapping industry.

There's no money to open the Thomson Centre. Where is the implementation money for the education reform project? A new F.H. Collins Secondary School -- again, no money in the budget. There's no money to continue the rate stabilization fund, which means higher power bills for every Yukon family. I wanted to touch on an issue with regard to the \$36.5 million, which is, in my opinion, a catastrophic error in judgement of the government. Some leadership styles are different. If the Premier and the Deputy Premier had stood up and told Yukoners that they had made a mistake, that would have been good. "We're not perfect, and here are the steps how we are going to correct that error."

But what I've heard over the days is that it's everybody else's fault; it's the banker's fault; it's the officials' fault; it's the Auditor General's opinion; it's everybody else's fault except the minister responsible. Difference in leadership -- express you are deeply sorry; find out how to correct the problem and move on. But that's not what I heard from this Yukon Party government -- it's everybody else's fault but theirs.

In closing, I would like to continue to impress on the government that these issues are important to my constituents and Yukoners and I will continue to be a strong voice for the Vuntut Gwitchin riding in this Legislature and hopefully continue to make a positive difference. I wish all MLAs well in this sitting, and that's all I have to say.

Hon. Mr. Hart: Honourable members, it's a pleasure to be back in the House representing my constituents of Riverdale South. My riding has changed substantially over the years since I was elected the first time. The demographics have changed substantially with regard to the people living in the riding.

Right now, we have probably had a 20- to 25-percent turnover in those people living in the riding. Many of the new people coming into the riding now are young families. Because Riverdale South has five schools within the riding area, it is very favourable for young families with children. It accommodates all their needs, besides the fact that it is also close to downtown.

As I stated, there are five schools within the riding: two Catholic schools, two elementary schools and one high school.

With regard to other aspects in general, Riverdale South is like many other constituencies within the City of Whitehorse. Many of the concerns are urban in nature; however, I will say

that thanks to you, Mr. Speaker, and to the assistance of our officials, we are looking at developing a youth centre -- or at least looking at the possibility of a youth centre in Riverdale. We are currently looking at providing a questionnaire that will go out to the constituents of Riverdale South and Riverdale North. Depending on the results of that, we will move forward on the issue of a youth centre for Riverdale in the very near future.

It gives me great pleasure to respond to the 2008-09 budget -- the second budget of our second mandate. The capital and operation and maintenance budget for 2008-09 is the largest Government of Yukon budget ever, at \$899 million. The operation and maintenance budget totals \$697 million, of which \$61 million is recoverable.

The capital budget totals \$202.7 million, of which \$81.7 million is recoverable.

In October of 2006, we presented Yukoners with a vision of the territory in our election platform entitled *Building Yukon's Future Together: A Clear Vision for a Bright Future*. From our platform, our government's vision is based on four major pillars: achieving a better quality of life for Yukoners, protecting and preserving our environment, promoting a strong, diversified private sector economy, and practising good governance with strong, fiscal management.

With the budget, we are able to implement our vision for the Yukon and we are able to strengthen the four pillars of our platform to build a better life for Yukoners. We are making progress toward our vision. Under a better quality of life, our vision is to improve the health, safety and social and economic well-being of Yukoners and Yukon communities. Our government is committed to providing Yukoners with lifelong learning opportunities and to provide opportunities to increase knowledge and skills. By providing learning opportunities, Yukoners can enrich both their personal lives and their working lives.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to mention some highlights in the 2008-09 budget that demonstrate how this budget supports our platform and strengthens the four pillars I mentioned earlier.

I will just touch on some of these items covered by the Department of Education. The education reform project aims to provide a broad review of what Yukoners are looking for in our education system. This has been a collaborative project with Yukon First Nations. The Department of Education will work with the Council of First Nations and other partners to develop the implementation plan.

Another successful project is the whole child program. It is a fine example of how a school community can work together and build a positive environment for children. The program includes two schools and their students and families -- Whitehorse Elementary and the Elijah Smith Elementary School.

Literacy, of course, is an important aspect of lifelong learning, and this government supports literacy through a number of programs. There is a partnership with the Yukon Literacy Coalition and public libraries to promote family literacy and reading throughout the Yukon communities.

Each May, there is a week-long Yukon writers festival promoting Canadian literature and literacy. There are readings done by the authors throughout the Yukon and it allows people to hear literature spoken by the authors -- a special event indeed.

The Whitehorse Public Library has expanded its service to include separate programs for babies, toddlers and pre-schoolers in order to promote pre-literacy and social skills. This provides an environment for little ones that fosters lifelong reading enjoyment.

The public libraries branch is introducing a program that allows a subscription to electronic databases. This program will enhance library resources by providing public access to subscription databases, including information on auto repair, encyclopaedias and reference sources, history, book reviews and homework support for students. Yukon libraries have something for everyone -- young, old and all ages in-between.

L'École Émilie Tremblay school has introduced a new experiential learning program called Académie Parhémie and for the high school grads, that allows young francophone Yukoners to become engaged and feel a sense of belonging while remaining true to their heritage.

The road for many people, after spending time in the education system as students, is to enter the workforce. In fact, in our platform on page 1, there is the heading "Educating Today for Jobs Tomorrow".

In this area this government is also making progress, and in today's thriving Yukon economy, we all know there is a shortage of skilled and entry-level workers. Our government is undertaking a number of initiatives to address this demand for workers. A labour market framework will be developed to address labour market shortages over the next 10 years.

A growing economy and a growing population mean growing pressures on the health care and social service systems. The Department of Health and Social Services is addressing this growing need. The territorial health access fund provides money that will be used to support a number of projects: advancing the health and human resource strategy; improving emergency planning and risk management; implementing a nurse information line service; enhanced dental health services in the communities; improving supports to community mental health; early identification of mental health concerns; improved support to increase tuberculosis patient outcomes; implementation of advanced directives; expanded telehealth services; development of a palliative care program; increased health promotion activities related to reduction of tobacco use, new health promotion initiatives related to injury prevention and healthy living; nutrition; advancing policy work on health information; and privacy and electronic records issues.

We will continue to focus on keeping Yukoners and their communities safe and healthy. The transfer of emergency medical services, or EMS, to the protective services branch in the Department of Community Services is advancing as planned. The branch met with the community representatives and the EMS volunteers and with other key stakeholders, where we had an opportunity to hear their perspectives on the Yukon's EMS service. The EMS staffing is being filled through recruit-

ment, and 160 community-based EMS volunteers are actively involved in 15 communities, delivering emergency medical services to the general public.

Mr. Speaker, we have hired two full-time primary-care paramedics, or PCPs, in Watson Lake and, at this time, we have one in Dawson City and a second one will be hired very shortly. I'm very pleased with the work completed to date in bringing the EMS program into the protective services branch of EMO.

Mr. Speaker, dealing with alcohol and drug abuse was a major commitment in our 2006 election platform and our government has continued to initiate measures on the Yukon substance abuse action plan.

The Department of Justice is undertaking an initiative called the development project and the funding will be provided for the community justice coordinator, who will work with the communities to facilitate development and planning to identify the particular factors that contribute to substance abuse in the communities.

The Community Wellness Court is another initiative established under the Yukon substance abuse action plan. The wellness court provides court-monitored treatment for offenders with drug or alcohol addictions, symptoms of FASD or mental health issues.

Another major undertaking is the development of a new Yukon *Corrections Act*. The new act will be modernized to support correctional systems that promote healing and accountability, as well as offenders taking responsibility. There is a consultation team that works with the partners from the Council of Yukon First Nations and the Kaska to consult with Yukoners in creating the new *Corrections Act*.

Mr. Speaker, the Women's Directorate is responsible for ensuring that gender considerations are integrated into all aspects of the government policy-making, legislation and program development, and to advance the social, legal and economic equality of women in the north. To that end, the Women's Directorate is focused this year on addressing aboriginal women's issues and developing housing for single parents that provides a safe place for single parents and their children.

Mr. Speaker, these are some of the areas that this government is working on to support our platform commitments to build Yukon's future together.

I'll just briefly go over a couple of the other departments, highlight a few of their items and carry through.

With regard to the Housing Corporation, they are working in collaboration with the Women's Directorate on a single-parent housing facility, as I mentioned previously. This facility has been identified by the Women's Directorate as a very important need, especially for single parents with children. It's an item that has been identified very clearly by the Women's Directorate. It's very important for this particular segment of our economy to feel safe and protected. This is the method with which we will be going out there to try to meet their needs, as well as protect them.

We are also looking at adding three additional suites to the Haines Junction facility for seniors.

In addition, Mr. Speaker, many of us here will know of the flooding situation last year in Marsh Lake. We are working on that flood relief program through the Yukon Housing Corporation. We have a substantial number of claims within the corporation to date. We are currently working with a consultant who is reviewing the flood situation throughout the Marsh Lake area. We are expecting a draft report from that consultant sometime next month, with some recommendations on what we can look at in the future and what our possibilities are for mitigating some of the situations that we faced last year.

I will say though that from talking with many of the residents in the Marsh Lake area, I found that they are very thankful for what the government has done to assist especially those who were directly affected by the flood. Many of them are looking forward to hearing from the consultant on what the ideas or recommendations will be for their area.

In addition there are six new energy initiatives, including grants and loans at low or no interest, which will be handled through the Yukon Housing Corporation. Basically these will make the facilities throughout the Yukon more energy efficient, thereby reducing the cost of fuel to the households. Given the cost of the price of oil these days, it can't be too soon for many of the units throughout the Yukon.

With regard to Community Services, we are also this year making an increase. This is our first initial take of the increase to the comprehensive municipal grant to our communities throughout the Yukon. That is an increase of \$805,000 that will be made available to these communities. We will carry on with a similar increase over the next four years. It is money that is much needed and will be much accepted by the municipalities, especially in the rural areas.

I have received many letters from the mayors and councils of the rural areas thanking the government for this initiative, as well as the fact that the money will be ongoing. I am looking forward to working with other members of AYC in the future.

Also during the community tour, we came upon issues that required some immediate attention in some of the rural communities and the need to assist some of the unincorporated communities with some of their much-needed facilities. We did provide some funding to assist those areas and get the immediate work underway for this upcoming year.

We're also working with the Association of Yukon Communities under Community Services to go forth with consultations on changes to the *Municipal Act*. This is underway; I believe consultations are due to be completed tomorrow; the results of that consultation will be put together over the next month or two and recommendations will come forth, proposed changes will be made and we will go forth with legislation, hopefully this fall.

As I also mentioned previously, the movement of emergency measures services from the hospital to Community Services and the modernization of the entire system of our first responders is well underway. We have had very good success with EMS people to date. I have been to Watson Lake and viewed the facilities there and talked to the paramedics. In addition, I have been working with our team that is putting together the necessary facilities and equipment, as well as identi-

fyng the needs in each and every community throughout the Yukon. Our staff has been to all the areas throughout the Yukon and gotten feedback from all of our first responding agents throughout the Yukon.

So we're putting information together and looking at providing a very modern facility for all our first-responding areas throughout the Yukon covering EMS, EMO, our volunteer fire department, as well as search and rescue. In addition to that, we are also providing new fire trucks and ambulances to the fleet.

With regard to sport and recreation, we are continuing to provide funding for enhanced athletes, coaching and development. We recently signed a bilateral agreement with the Government of Canada to extend our best ever program from 2004 to 2007 and our new agreement will take us to 2010. That fund will be to utilize and enhance our coaching facilities, as well as provide additional support for aboriginal and rural athletes throughout the Yukon.

Under Tourism and Culture, funding for museums, interpretive centres and First Nation culture centres continues. Funding for the Yukon Arts Centre is still there. We also have provided funding for the Dawson City Arts Society. We have worked with the Vuntut Gwitchin on access to the Forty Mile historic site, which is also another example of the collaboration between the Yukon government and First Nations.

On protecting and preserving the environment, as the Premier indicated, we are working on a climate change action plan. We are also continuing with the project on the Yukon River Inter-tribal Watershed Council to determine the climate change impacts on the Yukon River.

We are looking at the preservation and protection of the Porcupine caribou herd and the harvest management strategy. We're maintaining park officer programs, ensuring parks and campgrounds are family-friendly; this is a service, I might add, that has been very well-received by the tourists and many of the locals who utilize our parks throughout the Yukon, because it basically keeps the rowdiness down to a dull roar in our park facilities. As I said, it is being very well-received throughout the Yukon.

We are also looking at the completion of the Tombstone visitor reception centre, which is scheduled for completion this summer. We are also looking at running, through the Public Service Commission, the recycling program for government documents, which is currently diverting approximately 30 tonnes of material from the landfill every year and employing people with disabilities.

Statistics Canada reports indicate a capital growth of the Yukon of 15.1 percent in 2008 over 2007. The Government of Yukon capital spending is decreasing and private sector spending is increasing and this is a very good sign of health for the Yukon economy. I think it was mentioned by the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources that the mining industry is expending more money in the private sector than the government currently, and this is a very good sign.

The Department of Energy, Mines and Resources is implementing a new placer mining regime. Energy, Mines and Resources is developing the first energy strategies to address

energy production and supply, as well as management, consumption, efficiency and conservation of energy.

Through Energy, Mines and Resources, our government is working with the First Nations to fully involve them in the resource sector. Examples include the following: ongoing support for the Alaska Highway Aboriginal Pipeline Coalition; successful collaboration with the Selkirk First Nation on the Minto mine development; working with the First Nations in Teslin, Watson Lake, Ross River and Haines Junction to complete and implement the strategic forest management plan. Our government is also working cooperatively through partnerships with the First Nations to develop closure plans for abandoned type 2 mine sites such as at Faro and Mount Nansen.

Mr. Speaker, tourism is a major driver the Yukon economy. There has been a national marketing campaign launch of an initiative called "Destination Yukon", which is designed to promote the Yukon as a tourist destination. We are using a new Web site, www.travel yukon.com, to do multimedia advertising and television advertising, such as can be seen on *Hockey Night in Canada*, the Jay Leno show, et cetera.

Following up with the national marketing campaign, we are promoting Yukon for the 2010 Vancouver Olympics with unique marketing initiatives with our sister territories, Northwest Territories and Nunavut, called "Canada's North". The Whitehorse Airport terminal will expand to accommodate more air traffic. After a successful pilot project, there will be continued use of the old fire hall in Whitehorse in partnership with the Chamber of Commerce and the Yukon Arts Centre. The Destination: Carcross initiative will upgrade the Carcross Visitor Information Centre.

Under Highways and Public Works, the Shakwak project expenditures for this fiscal year include construction of the Slims River bridge, reconstruction of the Duke River bridge, removal and disposal of the existing Donjek bridge, reconstruction of the Alaska Highway from kilometre 1700 to 1717, and pavement construction from Haines Junction to Haines, Alaska. This is a continuation of the work done in 2007-08. We are looking at BST application and re-vegetation from kilometre 1700 to 1717.

Also included is the deck replacement of the Lewes River bridge at Marsh Lake and many other highways and infrastructure projects throughout the Yukon.

The Department of Economic Development's community development fund assists community groups to undertake projects that help build social and economic capacity. The Department of Economic Development is also working on the film and sound incentive program and producing great value to the Yukon and also providing additional exposure.

Finally, practising good government involves training, developing, recruiting and retaining a representative professional public service, working in a safe and healthy workplace. It also involves working with all levels of government across jurisdictions in a healthy and positive way.

First Nation Training Corps -- filling positions with First Nation employees, cooperating with the First Nation governments for secondments -- these are all items that show our col-

laboration with the First Nations, and we all gain benefit from these secondments.

Also, the French Language Services Directorate increases our capacity to deliver government services in French, meeting our obligations under the *Languages Act*.

I thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for your time.

Mr. Hardy: I am very pleased to be able to speak briefly on the budget of this government, one of many I have seen, but definitely one that I feel has really lost momentum for the Yukon Territory and has not demonstrated any vision, sense of direction and no real commitment to Yukon families and communities from my perspective.

So, of course, it's going to contradict what you hear from the Yukon Party government side. There are a substantial number of issues we need to cover. First, I'd like to thank the riding I represent for the support I've received, which I've always said is probably the only real urban riding in all of the Yukon.

Many provinces, of course, have many urban ridings that share common issues, but Whitehorse -- downtown Whitehorse anyway -- has a lot of issues that are shared by urban ridings Outside but not necessarily by other communities throughout the Yukon.

Like everybody in here, we all feel our riding is unique and has very unique needs and characteristics and also reasons why we actually live in that riding.

I have been asked that on many occasions: why do I live downtown? There are many people in the Legislative Assembly here, including yourself, Mr. Speaker -- in a conversation we had awhile back on a plane, you had indicated that you had lived downtown before you moved to other places around Whitehorse.

Most people have lived in the downtown core. They started their life in the downtown core or when they arrived here, they rented in the downtown core. Once they got steady jobs or became more financially secure, they often bought places either in Riverdale or Porter Creek. Back then, the main areas were Riverdale, Porter Creek, Hillcrest.

Now, of course, there are more choices. What that means and what I am saying is that the downtown core, the downtown riding, has a very high degree of transient population. We have people who come there and live there from six months to six years. We have long-term people who have lived there most of their lives. I am one of those who has lived predominantly in the downtown core for most of my life. I have lived with the wonderful experience of being in a downtown core, but also with all the side effects and the problems that we face.

It is a unique riding in that it is seeing a tremendous amount of activity in that area. There is a building boom that is happening right now. Most of it is around condominiums and not rental units.

That's a change for the downtown core. It's a different type of lifestyle and it's attracting a different type of people. Of course, they come with their own wants and needs for the area they live in. Sometimes that clashes with the people who have lived there for a long time and sometimes it clashes with people who are only there for a short time. But there are common

themes that everybody wants -- and what I think is a common theme in the Yukon -- and that's safe communities. There's a common theme that they don't want to see drugs and alcohol on the streets; they want to have a place where children can be raised in a secure and a harmonious environment.

They want a clean environment; they want a healthy environment; they want legislation; they want regulations; they want people to act in a manner that's respectful of each other's rights as individuals, but also as a society or a community. Trying to find that balance is not always easy, but it is reflective, of course, of the needs and wants of other communities as well.

In my riding the issues that we face are a huge challenge. Poverty is very, very high in many of the areas. Housing shortages are very high and I don't mean the high-end condos that are being built, because they are high-end. Most people in my riding could never afford them. We need social housing; we need affordable housing. That's one area where this budget doesn't meet that requirement and I'm very concerned about that; and I think people in this Legislative Assembly know how much I care about housing and have spoken very much about it. I still, after five years of this government, do not see any real initiative in the housing area, especially affordable housing. I'll come back a little bit to the housing issue.

There's a lot of violence in the downtown core -- and there's a lot of violence that we have to face everywhere -- but the number of bars in my riding is really out of proportion to the number of people who live there. One of the big problems that has come to my attention and one I'm really worried about, of course, is what has been happening outside a couple of the bars, one in particular. I've heard five to six examples of this already, where a person will step out at closing time -- they could have been having a good time dancing or whatever -- they will come out of the bar and there will be four, five, six, seven guys standing there. They will let him walk a bit away from the bar and then they'll jump him and beat the living heck out of him. I'm not joking when I say they beat him. A few of them have ended up in the hospital.

Then they'll leave him lying there. This is becoming common, and I have heard this from people who go to these bars for a night out, a break. They have seen it and they have experienced it. I have talked to the people this has happened to and I have talked to people who have seen it. Two weeks ago my daughter, who is a medic, had to stabilize a person who was lying on the ground when she came out because he had been jumped by a multitude of guys.

This is what is happening on some of the streets in my riding. Talking to some young people, I heard that this is about the sixth or seventh incident at one particular bar in the last four months. There is a common denominator here and it could be the same guys doing this.

This does not create an environment anybody really wants to live in, and yet they are getting away with it. That raises the question of what is happening in our society that something like this can go on and be repeated and still be repeated at the same location, and nothing is happening.

Drugs, of course, are a huge issue in the territory. What is the government doing? What is in this budget that indicates any

concrete steps for dealing with this? I know we had a substance abuse summit -- it was a gathering of five or six people, who I arranged years ago to meet with to talk about something like this. Out of that meeting, which was in a downtown hotel, the substance abuse summit came together in which over 200 people participated. A lot of great ideas have come out of that, but I don't see much of it reflected in the budget. I would ask the government, if they consult with people, to at least take that consultation seriously enough to follow through with it, or else tell the people that it is just a talk session and you don't plan to do much about it.

Shelters are a big problem. Shelters for youth, for women and for men are a necessity that we need to address. The government has indicated that they are going to build a shelter and second-stage housing for women. I applaud them and thank them for that because it is a good thing to do. However, that is just one group of people and there are other groups that need it just as bad.

The youth need a shelter and we have asked this government time and time again to address that. Again, it is not in the budget. And yet, I have heard the Premier stand there and say that there is a \$107-million cushion. That is a lot of money for this little territory. Don't you think that some of that money could be put toward shelters, Mr. Speaker, and many other areas?

This is a massive budget -- \$900 million -- and yet in many areas that money is not getting to the people and to the needs of our society, and that has to be addressed. There are a lot of revotes in this budget. It would be interesting at the end of the day, probably in the fall, to see how many revotes there really are being carried over. How much of this is really new money and how much is just being carried over from year to year to year and being announced half a dozen times? People keep thinking that something is happening but very little is moving along.

We have many, many problems in our society. We also have looming -- I say this, but I hope it doesn't come true -- a recession. It is definitely being felt in the United States. I have lived here long enough -- 40-some years -- to have experienced the boom and bust and ups and down. When you are on an up, things are great, governments work well, there is lots of money and you don't have to make too many hard decisions. The big decision is where you are going to spend your money. It is like going grocery shopping when you have money in your pocket. When you have a lot of money, you buy a lot of stuff; it is not a big decision.

When you don't have money and you have to go shopping and feed your family, you've got to make some really tough decisions. How do you spread that money out as much as possible to feed the family and ensure the nutritional values are there? How do you do that?

It is easy to be government when there is a lot of money. It is not easy to be government when there isn't a lot of money, and that is the real test. The Yukon Party has been very fortunate the last five years: there has been a lot of money. But there are indications in our structure that that might be coming to an end, and it might be two years, or three years, or four years -- it

is a cycle. We've gone up; we may come down. Hopefully, if we do come down, it won't be very far and we will be able to ride it out quite well.

But, it is incumbent upon a government to know that we live in cycles and to budget accordingly, to put money in areas that will have the best return, even when you are wealthy and you have a lot of money -- put the money where people want it. Be fair and equitable about it -- how to benefit the Yukon the most. Then when the hard times come, maybe there are other pillars to hold that community together and help people. But if there is no sense of vision, no sense of direction when it changes, you won't know where you are going and you won't know what to do, and people will suffer. They will suffer because the government wasn't looking down the road and being prepared.

That is the concern I have about this budget and others I have seen. It is interesting when you look at that and what was said when the Yukon Party was first elected. Five years ago it was said that it is a simple fact that the growth in government spending cannot be sustained. We hit an economic upturn and guess what -- the growth in economic spending in government has not been sustained; it has been accelerated. The reliance upon the federal transfers has also increased.

The interesting side to that is the amount of taxes collected -- and some people look at it as paying our own way -- and regenerated back into the Yukon has dropped. So, is that working toward diversification? No, it's not. Is that working to strengthen the Yukon -- a greater reliance upon federal transfers? No, it's not. It's nice to get more of that, and I will applaud the government and the Premier for the work they've done in getting our fair share, as he likes to point out.

I applaud the joint venture of "one voice across the territories" -- Nunavut, N.W.T. and Yukon -- for working together to make that come about. That's a good thing. But we can't just rely on that. We can't assume that that flow of money will never cease and will continue to go up and up and up. That's not reality. That's not planning ahead. There is no sense of direction and there is no vision.

What we need to do is take that money and stimulate this economy in ways that, if one sector goes down, the other sectors hold it up. Those are your pillars; that's your strength. You don't put it all on one pillar when all the other ones are weak. It will tip over; it will fall. And I'm worried that that's what this government has relied upon far too much and, because of that, we have an economy that is vulnerable.

In 1999, federal transfers were 67.7 percent of the budget; territorial revenue was 12.6 percent. Roughly 10 years later, in 2008, federal transfers were 72.3 percent. We have increased our reliance on the federal government by almost five percent -- on a percentage basis. I'm not talking about dollars -- how much.

Territorial revenues were 8.9 percent and that's including the \$4 million that is being predicted for the new tobacco tax, so I don't know what it would be -- maybe it would be eight percent. But that's a drop of over four percent in what we generate here in our tax base.

Now, if the federal government decides to turn the taps off or cut back, and we don't have the tax base here to absorb that, there are going to be cuts; there are going to be tough decisions to be made. From my perspective, it's the inability of this government to not pay attention to that. It's not good enough to brag about how much money you get from Ottawa; what you need to do is look at how you're strengthening the economy within the Yukon.

We all know that the economy right now is being driven by a few factors, but the majority, the one thing that hasn't changed, is our economy is still driven by federal transfer payments. The amount of people employed by government is higher than ever. No other private sector businesses combined - I shouldn't say combined -- no private sector economic engines, such as mining or tourism come anywhere near the amount of money that is put into the economy from those transfer payments.

There are very few other industries that this government has been able to stimulate with a vision -- I don't mean just giving them money, but having a vision of what that money will build. I'm talking about building for the future, not just getting one budget to the next budget to the next budget, but actually building. Again, that takes vision. I don't see it here.

I'm very concerned about that. Now, I've already recognized the good work that has been done in regard to increasing the funding to the territory, and that is good because it has helped us a lot. I would also like to recognize a program that is being offered -- the licensed practical nurse program. I'm glad to see that because we asked for it, and everyone in the Legislative Assembly has asked for it. The Yukon Party government has obviously listened to a lot of people and felt it was a good thing themselves, and that is going forward. I'm really pleased to see that, because it has long-term applications for some of the needs that we have in health and social services.

Pre-employment trades training at Yukon College continues and that is excellent as well. There are so many other areas that are still being funded on an ongoing basis, and I'm glad they have not been cut yet.

There also has been a lot of talk about ABCP investments - I'm still talking about Finance here. You know, we could stand here and ask questions over and over and over. The Finance minister will get up and give his version of it, and we on this side will give our version of it. The Auditor General obviously gave her perspective and version of it and truthfully, we're not going to get very far, because no one is going to agree. It has become very, very clear to me -- I didn't ask any questions about ABCP, and there is a reason why I didn't today. I wanted to know what happened for the record. I wanted to know for the people of this territory how we got to this type of investment and why we invested so much? What was said in this Legislative Assembly last fall? Where are we today and what may happen? That is for the people.

I am not interested in assigning blame and fault where it shouldn't be or being malicious about that.

I don't believe -- and I agree with the Auditor General -- there was malicious intent by anyone in these investments. I

agree with her. But, still, we need an explanation so it does not happen again.

The people need to know how it happened, because it is the taxpayers' money. It's the Yukon people's money. Of course they have a right to know, but asking those questions in the Legislative Assembly doesn't get us very far.

I would like to see those questions asked in hearings with the Public Accounts Committee. Maybe I feel a little bit of ownership. I feel fairly attached to the Public Accounts Committee, because I did put a fair amount of my energy, time and belief into that committee.

To see the state that it's in today saddens me personally. It also saddens me that the people of this territory do not have one more vehicle within their elected body as an oversight of the financial actions of the government. It has a role to play; it should be used.

It's my belief that the Public Accounts Committee is as important as the Legislative Assembly. It has a role to play.

It is the responsibility of each and every one of us to sit on that committee, to put aside partisan politics. That is a responsibility; it is not a luxury. It is not something like we pick and choose when we turn on our political stripes or not. When we walk into that room, we leave politics behind and we do the people's work.

It would be nice if it were non-partisan but it's not now. It was basically shut down in 1991 or 1992 -- somewhere in that period -- because politics entered into the meetings and basically destroyed the Public Accounts Committee. It became dormant and didn't do its task for almost 11 years, and that was a loss for the people of this territory.

That was something that all politicians should be ashamed of, because you are elected and you are hired to sit on these committees and do them to the best of your ability. It was resurrected and I believe good work was done because we as people on that committee -- and I do thank the people I sat with; I was the chair of it at the time. I thank the people I sat with and my colleagues because we seemed to have been able to work together. We took on some tough issues, but we were able to do it.

Now it doesn't function any more and I put the blame on both the Yukon Party and the Liberals.

I would ask that we move on from that, resurrect Public Accounts Committee and, again, that people do the tasks they're assigned to, fulfill the roles that they're expected to do and that they're paid to do. Let's not forget that we're paid to do this; we're not volunteers here. We're not volunteers on these committees. People expect us to do this work. If we're going to collect a paycheck, then let's fulfill all our duties, not just the ones we want to.

Let's get the Public Accounts Committee up and running again. Let's utilize the Clerk's office and the Auditor General's staff to continue the work that is necessary to ensure that the spending priorities and the actions of the government -- it doesn't matter which government -- that the government has a committee that can be non-partisan and take a look at it in a non-partisan manner to get to the point where departments are once again accountable to such a committee, that the boards are

once again accountable and the government is once again accountable. That's my request in that regard. It would help a lot in any kind of budget planning.

There is very little in this budget for environmental initiatives -- very little. The Minister of Environment talks a lot about adaptation, but we have to go far beyond adaptation. That's a nice word, but we can't keep adapting. We also have to try to get out in front of adaptation and make changes, both in how the whole structure of government works and sets examples -- what their priorities are -- but also in how people themselves impact the environment and what direction we want to go in.

We have very serious issues in the environment, and they are going to continue to grow. Let's not pretend that tomorrow we're going to wake up and there is going to be an announcement that there is no longer an environmental issue in the world or in the Yukon. This is a problem that will continue to grow unless we as a territory make changes and the country makes changes, Canada-wide, which hopefully we could influence by our actions up here, and internationally as well. We need to make that commitment for a future to be possible for our children and our grandchildren and even for ourselves as we age. It is probably the single most important thing facing the human race today, and we still treat it like we don't have to pay much attention to it -- economics overrule everything. That is not the way that it is going to work. I don't want to be 30 years down the road looking at environmental devastation, knowing full well that we had a chance to make a change, but we didn't.

I was talking to some people this week about land shortages. There are no lots. This government dropped the ball. They didn't keep a stock of lots available, and it drove prices up and it created serious shortages. In many ways, it is part of the problem around affordable housing, but it is also part of problem for people who want to build their own home. There are businesses that rely upon lot availability and all of a sudden, it wasn't there.

I spent 10 minutes sitting at my desk thinking about what is coming down the pike in terms of lots over the next three years. I think that I counted, in 10 minutes -- and I'm missing a lot -- over 400 lots and this is going to be all at once -- in three years. There is going to be a massive amount of property available.

That's your boom-bust planning. We have no lots for two or three years, and then all of a sudden we probably have an over abundance of lots. So we stop developing lots and all of a sudden we're back to no lots. Then prices go up, builders and construction workers don't have work, lots aren't available. Then all of a sudden there is a tremendous number of lots, more work, and prices drop -- instead of consistency through the economy.

And that is a reflection of what this government has been doing around their budget planning and their lack of vision for the future. This is again an example of that type of planning, and it's not good for the people of this territory. That's not the way it should be. This government should always have an availability of lots in stock. And you know what? They will get criticized by the Auditor General for doing that, because when

we were in government, we got criticized for it. But you know what? It was good for the people. It might not have been good for the Auditor General, based on our financial analysis and books -- it was considered then to be carrying too many lots and we should get rid of them.

Well, I think the government listened to the Auditor General in this case and got rid of them, and look what it caused in our society and our communities. I would rather take a small amount of criticism from the Auditor General and meet the needs of the people in this regard than not listening to the people and their needs, just so that the books balance better.

We have a lot of government waste, and that has to be addressed. We have some projects that should have been done a long time ago, and they're still not done. They're costing double and triple. There is no reason in the world they should be like this.

That is ineptitude. That is just poor planning. That is not being accountable enough for the cost. Everybody points to the Watson Lake health care facility, and in many ways it is a disaster. It is way out of price and has all kinds of problems. It is still not built. People are still not able to use it. How many years has this been going on?

Railway studies -- where is the railway study? What has it really generated? Lots of consultants got paid, but where are we going with it? It was a waste. The federal government wouldn't put any money into it because they knew it was a waste. But, oh no, Yukon has so much money we'll pay for it -- \$3 million, and it's another load of paper sitting on a shelf somewhere. We had a Liberal Member of Parliament running around praising it. Of course, his government didn't put any money into it, and I sure haven't seen him step forward and contribute to the \$3 million of taxpayers' money wasted in that regard.

The bridge study -- the P3 project. Well, where is that? That was close to \$3 million. Do you know how many houses that could build? Do you know how many organizations, FAS-SY -- the list is endless that that could have supported -- new programming, women's programming, children's programming. Do you know how much good \$6 million could have done just on those two reports for the people of this territory, and how many communities it could have helped?

Instead, we got nothing for it but a bunch of papers and a bunch of words, and everybody with any common sense knew they weren't going to get built.

How about our relationships with First Nations? Has it improved? Are we working together?

There are different levels of government -- municipalities, First Nations -- but specifically with First Nations. They are big employers in this territory with lots of dreams, and they are willing to move forward on many issues and programs. Is this government listening? Is this government working closely with them? No. We should be doing this together as one community. We shouldn't be dealing with these many issues separately.

Of course, there are different issues; there are directions you may want to go in that are separate. That should be respected; however, there are so many common issues and values that we share as people that we should be doing it as one com-

munity together, pooling our resources and making this a better place for all people of the Yukon. That's a failure, from my perspective, Mr. Speaker.

Since I have only a couple of minutes left, I'll close with thinking about my riding again.

It will continue to change; there will be a lot more pressure on it; there are a lot more people moving into the downtown core for a lot of reasons -- gas prices, just convenience, the revitalization. There are going to be a lot of changes.

What we do need to do is address many of the problems as well. We need to ensure that all our communities -- including my riding in the downtown core, Whitehorse Centre -- have the ability to move forward in a progressive way that ensures a quality of life that is second to none, anywhere. I hope that the next budget I see -- because I don't see it in this one -- has a sense of direction and vision, and we can have a more constructive debate around it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Fairclough: It's a pleasure to respond to the budget and the budget speech that the Premier has put forward once again. Like others, I would like to thank my constituents for their continued support and direction throughout the year and I thank them for also bringing issues to me to be raised in this Legislature. I'm not going to go into the budget in detail; I think we can do that in departmental debates.

But I would like to talk about my riding a little bit and focus more in that direction than anywhere else.

As many may or may not know, the Mayo-Tatchun riding is a fairly big riding, land-wise. It takes up close to 25 percent of the entire Yukon. It goes from 20 miles south of Carmacks almost all the way to Old Crow and its borders run down the Yukon-Northwest Territories border. So, land-wise, it's a huge riding. There are a lot of issues there and the riding covers a vast area.

I have two municipalities and three First Nations in that riding, which is five separate governments. I have the hamlet of Keno City and I have another community whose numbers continue to grow and that's the community of Stewart Crossing.

The riding on the Klondike Highway goes past the Partridge Creek Farms. So they are among my constituents and they were on the voters list, although there were some communication problems for the two ridings, the Klondike riding and the Mayo-Tatchun riding. There were some candidates who were in there campaigning to them. So it is a big riding and many, many issues do come to me. I want to start out, I guess, with some of them.

But I want to start off first with the budget itself. I know that I heard the Premier's argument for why we have special warrants and it is understandable, perhaps, that the trust is not there, but when you look back into the history of who was the one who filibustered in the Legislature, it was the Yukon Party that kept government from coming to the point of voting on an interim supply and therefore basically gave no spending authority to government to continue to pay its workers, its employees or any of its bills.

But we have plenty of time and this is proof, right now. We have the interim supply bill before the House; it has passed and has given the government the ability to continue to spend money for a short time. That is how it should be, if we can do it and we can do it, should the House sit in ample time before the end of the fiscal year, as it has this time around.

It is a disappointment to see abuse -- or what I'll call abuse -- of the use of special warrants; there is no need for it. We understand it and I'm hoping that, perhaps one day, we'll see the government understand that also.

When I talk to my constituents, they like to hold people to their word. If you make a promise, fulfill that promise. I have raised questions for many years in this House about government saying one thing and then they do something different once elected. We are experiencing even now broken promises from the Yukon Party side on what they said they would do versus what they are doing today. It is unfortunate, but we are going down that road again, and it shouldn't be.

The other thing is that all Yukoners are thankful to see that the Yukon has an increase in dollars coming in. That is always a good thing to have, but I can remember the Yukon Party campaigning and part of a budget speech and a throne speech was about the government spending trajectory -- that was a big thing -- and its reliance on Ottawa. Guess what? We have a bigger reliance on Ottawa right now. One of the things that the Premier, the Finance minister, forgets to put in his speech about the large difference between now and even five years ago is the fact that we have devolution that played a role here and a huge amount of money that is coming to pay those federal workers who are now under the Yukon government.

When I talk to people in my community, particularly those who are involved in government, either municipality or First Nations, they understand that and they understand it well.

We don't want to see the Yukon heading down that same route of having a boom-and-bust economy. I know this has been a mistake by many governments in the past -- not steering the Yukon economy in a diverse way. I've mentioned this in the House before. Others have recognized it across Canada and have done well in diversifying their economy. Alberta is a prime example of that. Their economy seems to be strong all the time because they have looked at different ways and different sectors of the economy and used that as part of their base and their strength.

But we're heading down this road, and there is a lot of interest right now in mining. I want everyone to have an understanding of that. Of course, my riding has a lot of potential for development in the mining sector. I'll get into that area a bit, but I have to say that it was interesting to once again attend the Mineral Exploration Roundup in Vancouver and talk with many different mining companies and many people who are involved in the service industry to the mining outfits, mostly in B.C. and the Yukon -- the people I've talked with.

Those have resulted in follow-up meetings back here in the territory since then. It has been good to keep in touch with some of the mining outfits here in the territory, particularly those in my riding.

I suppose that's one area maybe I should go into.

I offered the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources to come on a road trip with me, just to have a look at my riding and what it looks like. That offer went out to the Minister of Highways and Public Works as well, because I have issues there with the roads and I wanted to have people see first-hand what it looks like in my backyard. There were no bites, but the offer is still there.

The community of Carmacks has been dealing with the issue of the impact of development for quite some time now. I know the minister and the government side takes great credit for saying, "Well, we have one mine up and going" -- it's Minto Resources. Cantung was done long before, but Minto came on stream while the Yukon Party has been in government. But I have to say that it is no thanks to the work of the Yukon Party government, but actually big thanks to the First Nation who worked hard ensuring that section of land was under their land claim agreement and had a lot of discussion with the promoter of this development.

I could remember talking with this particular individual back then, his name was Lutz Klingmann. He was straight out of South Africa and he was promoting this particular development. He talked a lot about apartheid. He knew very little about First Nation final agreements and what abilities First Nations had. It took a lot of educating to bring him up to speed by people who are very knowledgeable on the final agreements like the Selkirk First Nation lawyer, Jim Harper, who has been involved.

I would say that perhaps this particular development got up to speed quicker than most would, although it took years to do. Now, as a result, it is benefiting the communities. It is benefiting Selkirk First Nation, it is benefiting the community of Carmacks, and the community of Carmacks has seen continued potential development. There are the Freegold properties -- Mr. Speaker, I would recommend the government side talk with the CEO there. He is very much geared to the interest of the community, more so than I have seen with any other mining outfit in the territory so far that I have dealt with over the past close to 12 years that I have been elected here and beyond. They are very open to letting people know exactly what they are doing.

The other one is the Carmacks Copper properties. Both of these -- the Carmacks Copper properties, the BYG -- Riddell Resources at the time -- and Minto Resources are mining outfits that I had to deal with before I was elected to the Yukon government. So I am familiar with some of them, and I have seen some of the mistakes that have been made in the past. I also relay those to the outfits that are willing to talk.

There is also a lot of placer mining going on in my riding. I was a bit surprised on my rides up to these outfits -- there are hunting grounds that are back there, so I go there once in awhile -- to see different faces out there -- new owners, and so on, always inviting me to come down and look at their property or to be around.

With that, I extend that offer to those on the government side who would like to come with me on those trips. I know that there is a lot of interest, for example, as there was in the past 20 years on the Casino Trail, which starts off in Carmacks and works out toward Prospector Mountain and beyond. There

is a winter road that goes close to there. I've been on that road for about 139 kilometres because I clocked it the last time I went out there -- that is as far as you can drive by vehicle.

The reason for asking the Minister of Highways and Public Works to come on this trip with me is to see where governments can make small improvements that could save money in the long run. I mentioned this -- this was one of the ones that I mentioned -- and I didn't see any of that reflected in the speech or in this budget, but just to resurface some of the wooden bridges that they have out there so that they don't break up and rot away and get into the heavier base of these small bridges. If that could be done, you'll see a lot more traffic out there. I know that it is increasing right now and it will save people from going through those bridges or knocking them down.

So that was one of the reasons why and the other is that a lot of this road, the Freegold Road or Casino Trail, is a one-lane road and there are a lot of dangerous spots there. I think that a little bit of money put into the road could improve the safety aspect tremendously. The one example that I gave in the past was the \$50,000 that went into rural roads and made improvements to the Mount Nansen Road. They took out a couple of very dangerous corners and cleared some of the brush so that they could see a little further beyond what was there before.

Although no organization from that community has applied through the rural roads program for upgrades to this road, that's why I've asked the Minister of Highways and Public Works or the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources to perhaps look into this. I really think that it's very important to have that first-hand experience, and I'm willing to do that with the members opposite.

Another thing that was really big on the Yukon Party agenda when first elected and during their campaign back in 2002 was their commitment to completing land claims negotiations with all First Nations. It was a big pillar of their platform. They talked about how this would create certainty in the Yukon and would therefore bring development and so on.

I know there is a lot of control over what happens in the land claims negotiation process with the First Nation itself. I understand that. But I haven't seen or heard any interest on the government side to try to make things move -- to try to get things completed -- and we're going to be stuck in that. Here's one example that's very clear and will be a stumbling block, not just to developers, but to other First Nations. It's called land use planning.

In the Carmacks-Pelly-Mayo area, they were going to jointly do a land use plan, and I think that broke up and is no longer the case. But one of the stumbling blocks is that the Carmacks traditional territory has a large number of First Nations that overlap, and you need agreements from those First Nations to continue with a regional land use plan.

Ross River is one of the First Nations that overlap on Little Salmon-Carmacks First Nation traditional territory, and there's no movement there.

There's no land claim agreement in place and that's what they want. They want a land claim agreement in place. So it slows up the process. In the meantime, we have a north Yukon

land use plan in place. Na Cho Nyak Dun want to put a land use plan in place in their area too.

Part of what's happening here, Mr. Speaker, is that there is a big pot of federal money that has been sitting there for a long time, not being used for land use planning. Every year it goes back into the federal government general revenues. We ask for it back and it does come back, but we haven't been using it for a long time. Now we have.

One of the things we didn't realize is the amount of effort, resources and time that has to be put into a land use plan. Therefore, what we have seen are lots of dollars going toward the land use plan. That pot of money, the \$7 million, is definitely not enough to have all the land use plans put in place in the Yukon Territory.

Also, Mr. Speaker, there is the Kwanlin Dun and the Ta'an Kwach'an who have been asking for land use plans because they feel a tremendous impact in development in their traditional territories. They are ready to do it, willing to do it, wanting to do it. I know there is not a desire to jump into this one right away because there is always a direction that governments -- not just the Yukon government -- want to go in to try to complete those that they can.

Now, the land use plan in and around Whitehorse here would definitely take a tremendous amount of effort, and probably time, but I think it should happen; we shouldn't be finding ourselves in court over and over because we lack the ability to go forward with land use plans.

In cooperation with First Nations, we shouldn't be finding ourselves in court more and more. It's not what we want as Yukoners and it's not what the First Nations want, but we're finding that is the route that people are going if they're so frustrated that they can't get any action out of government or get the government to hear their views and understand the position they may be in. They are in the infancy stage of developing their own government or there is the lack of resources within the First Nations to move quickly on this.

It's unfortunate that I'm even seeing my own First Nation in court with government, but this one could be a very big one in regard to the land claims agreements in Little Salmon-Carmacks First Nation and the agricultural land that has been given out. I feel -- and I've said it in this House -- that it doesn't matter who the winner is, it will be appealed and eventually end up in the Supreme Court of Canada. In the end, that's the place it should be.

We could have avoided that if we believed in the processes that took place. Now we have lawyers fighting over this and it's back-and-forth and things are in limbo; things are not moving; it's a frustration I know Ta'an Kwach'an has when it comes to agricultural land; no one wanted to see spot land transfers any more; they wanted to see planned areas; they did not want to see abuse when it comes to giving out agricultural land. Those who are truly using the land for that purpose even show that frustration. No one wants to see these lands subdivided and sold off. So of course that is a big issue in my riding too.

The other one that is very visible, as far as the development goes, and one that has been kicking around for a long time is the transmission line. The transmission line between

Mayo and Dawson went through its problems. We should learn from them and, from the information that I'm getting from government, they are taking those problems and trying to learn from them. I'm hoping that it happens because I don't want to see additional taxpayer dollars go into this needlessness either. It is a huge project and it will tie the grid together once it goes all the way to Stewart Crossing.

I have seen the poles come up and a lot of them are being stored at McCabe Creek, which is close to Minto. The poles are stocked up in huge piles. I have also seen, before that happened, the trucks coming up from Alberta that stopped in Carmacks and had to stay there for days because there was nowhere to put these poles. Hopefully things have been ironed out and things are moving quicker. The minister said that it will be on budget and on time and we're all hoping that it will be the case.

Also, I am fully aware that Minto Resources is going to be tapping into this grid, which is much needed, and it could go beyond that. The way I understand it is the properties of Carmacks Copper are not all that far from Minto Resources. I'm hoping that things move quicker on the Carmacks Copper project. I was talking to the company recently and it looks like it will be another year delay before things move ahead.

I am hoping that they would also be working with the community a lot closer.

I want to talk about an issue that I'll be back and forth on because it is definitely one that is going to be impacting my riding a lot, and the mining industry. The transmission line itself I know is tough to get used to seeing between Mayo and Dawson City. It is an eyesore, and I know there were mistakes made in the buffer zone between the highway and the transmission line. It was a bit shocking to drive down between Carmacks and Pelly Crossing and see all the clearing that has taken place and the logs that have been piled up as a result of the clearing, not the poles themselves.

I want to talk about something I just attended. I have talked to a lot of people in my riding lately, particularly at the Northern Tutchone bonspiel that they had lately. It's amazing, everywhere you go, how people are in tune to the \$36 million that we can't tap into right now. For the ministers and members opposite, there are a lot of issues in Pelly Crossing, but one of them is in regard to sports and recreation. They get, I believe, \$35,000 toward a rec director and recreation. There is some other funding that goes toward the maintenance of the swimming pool and so on. That is a small amount, and they ask us, "Well, why can't we get more funding? Why can't the community get more funding? We've been asking for it, we need it, we want it."

It's an unincorporated community. It's not like a municipality where funding has been increased. I am hoping the government side would work with our community. If they would like, I can give them the name of a person to contact in that community, and try to improve things in that small community.

Pelly Crossing recently had a celebration of a couple of programs they put together. It was called "the trappers and sewers program". It was done through northern strategy money. I'm not sure if any on the government side were invited to that.

I believe they were, but there was no one there. I was invited to it. It was honouring those who have participated in these programs. I believe 19 people signed up for the trappers program and 19 for the sewers program. Well, what is it, anyway?

Well, I walked into the Link Building in Pelly Crossing, and they were all set up. Tables were set up and they were going to have dinner and honour the trappers who took this course. It wasn't just the trapping course. They had to actually go out and trap and get hands-on experience. They did this throughout the winter -- throughout the trapping season.

I came in and I was a bit surprised. They had pelts up on the wall. They had a nice black wolf up there, many lynx, martin, wolverine, coyotes, foxes and so on. To me, that was a success, right off the bat. I've talked to some of the trappers -- some of them who have been around for a long time probably didn't need any teaching at all, but lent their knowledge to teach others, and they really enjoyed it.

Then there were the sewers. I looked over at this table and there were beaver hats and moose skin mitts and so on. The sewers were giving a gift to the trappers. They were honoured and the community showed recognition through them.

It was interesting to have the organizers say a few words. One of the things they said is, "We're implementing chapter 22 of our final agreement." In one small way, they were implementing chapter 22 of their final agreement.

These small things were working toward self-reliance. They recognize, like many other Yukoners, that the trapping industry is down and a lot of the older trappers are just disappearing and not doing that work any more and they thought, this is not a big industry, but it's a healthy way of living. They put this together. It was many things -- the elders and the people who have put their personal time into making this a success.

I want to talk about Carmacks for a couple of minutes in regard to issues there. I did mention that people would like to see improvements to the off-roads into some of the mining outfits. One of the people who really expressed an interest in it, from the Firestone properties, travels on the Casino Trail but they have to fly out about 30 miles through the property. Again, that is in the Tintina Trench area.

But in the community of Carmacks, the municipality has been dealing with the issue of the increased traffic that we see right now. I know the Premier and some of the other members know about this one, but there is a continued interest in the bypass road that is there. I thank the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources for his response in letter form about the cost of this bypass road. It is still of big interest to the people in the community and the municipality. We have gone many, many years without seeing any upgrades to that road, and part of it is wondering what was going on -- whether governments will continue to see this as a necessity and something that will improve the community and how they would be helped by government.

I'm hoping that renewed interest is put on that road. I know that there is interest from governments on other roads when it comes to ensuring that the resource sector and the mining community are on roads that are safe and that the community is safe too.

Again, I was thankful to see the continued dollars that are flowing to the municipality of Carmacks for the sewage treatment facility there. Not much is happening, but people really want to see this thing go ahead, even though it is serving only 40 percent of the community. It is an expensive facility for 40 percent of the community but, once the sewage lines are put in, we'll see an improvement in the roads throughout the community and, right now, the municipality is not willing to do that.

I would like to see continued work on the Campbell Highway between Carmacks, Faro and Ross River. There was only a short section of road that needed to be completed, to have BST on it, and it won't take much to improve that. It is the most used part of the Campbell Highway -- the piece between Ross River and Carmacks. There are lots and lots of complaints that have come in over the years from people living in Ross River.

Here is another one, and I know that the government was working on this in Pelly Crossing, and that is building a Yukon College community campus. Obviously the people in Pelly Crossing want to see that. I know that I'm running out of time here so I'm going to try to flip through the list here and mention a few more things.

I keep bringing up the road improvements to the government side, and what I get back is, "It's a First Nation road." But it has never bothered government to make improvements. In Teslin, for example, there is BST put on many of the roads throughout the First Nation, which was funded by government. Pelly Crossing is a First Nation but it is an unincorporated community and should have the attention of government.

Here is another one that I had in that community, and I want to go through this quickly. I asked the Minister of Highways and Public Works to look at this carefully, and that is improving the highway and the exits off the road before each side of the bridge. It is brought to my attention over and over again -- put a separate lane in for turning right and the same coming off it on the other side. A lot of the kids in Pelly Crossing use that bridge for recreation, just for skate boarding, because there is nowhere else to go.

There also needs to be some improvements to the bridge there. It needs to be painted and the work needs to be done there.

As far as Stewart Crossing, Mr. Speaker, I ask that the minister look into putting in some lighting coming into the community and, hopefully, one day down the road we will see that.

Another area that really needs to have some work done is around Yukon Crossing. I get this complaint time after time: someone says they ran over a big rock and took out the bottom of their car, and it cost them \$5,000 or \$10,000, and who pays for it? It is them. What they want to see is something better than what is there right now and perhaps a concrete barrier between the hill and the road so we don't have all these rocks flying over. I know that it is a constant problem.

I have to thank the Minister of Highways and Public Works though. I did bring up one issue many years ago, because an elder in Pelly Crossing brought it up to me, to see if we could get some indicators on a road near Coffin Lake, about

three miles south of Twin Lakes, and that was put on -- there is a concrete barrier there.

I keep bringing these out; we are talking about the budget here and I want to see some improvements. I'd like to see more things happen in my community than are reflected in the budget.

If it's not too much for the government side -- I know I am right out of time here -- to provide a community breakdown on government expenditures, community by community, for us on this side of the House, for the public, because it's so easy for them to read and see what they are getting in their community. It's useful for the government side too.

With that, I thank you for allowing me to say a few words.

Hon. Ms. Horne: Gunilischish, Mr. Speaker.

It is indeed with personal pleasure that I rise today to reply to the Budget Address. First and foremost, I would like to express how proud I am to represent the riding of Pelly-Nisutlin. I have such a diverse riding of proud, self-sufficient individuals from whom I have learned so much and gained many new friendships. Gunilischish.

I also thank all those individuals who have taken the time to give me advice, and also the chance to represent them in this government. I would also like to thank our department officials for their great help in preparing this budget. Gunilischish. Merci. Thank you.

I will now assess what we've committed to Yukoners that we would do, should we be re-elected. Our first commitment was to achieve a better quality of life for Yukoners. Our second commitment was to protect the environment. Our third commitment was to promote a strong, diversified private sector economy. Our fourth commitment was to practise good governance with strong fiscal management.

I would like to talk about how this budget contributes toward accomplishing those commitments. I would also like to mention a few items of particular interest to my portfolio. However, I will hold most of my comments related to Justice until our debate in Committee of the Whole.

Mr. Speaker, as I crafted this speech, I quickly realized that I did not have enough time to address all the positives that are in this budget for my riding.

Under each point of our platform there is something in this budget for my riding, as well as all Yukoners. Mr. Speaker, as the MLA for Pelly-Nisutlin, I am very proud of what this budget means to my riding.

I see in it money to improve our transportation infrastructure by addressing areas in need, like the Robert Campbell Highway between Faro and Carmacks. It means money for highways in my riding to replace washouts and to replace culverts. It means money to do subsurface improvements in the Teslin area. This budget will mean upgrades to the Faro and Ross River airports. It means money to do water treatment in Ross River. It means a new standby generator for Teslin. It means money to buy equipment to help our officials carry out their good work.

Mr. Speaker, investing in roads and airports is the kind of action that speaks volumes to communities, to residents and to

businesses that we are committed to them. It may not be as glamorous as other kinds of expenditure but it is the kind of investment that means a great deal to those driving the highway and to those who use our airports. That, Mr. Speaker, is everyone who lives in my riding. It means that we can access services in Whitehorse and beyond with less wear and tear on our vehicles. It means a safer drive. It means a more enjoyable drive for Yukoners and tourists. Thank you to my ever-astute colleague, the Minister of Highways and Public Works.

It means money to train Yukoners for our health care system to care for Yukoners, and that, Mr. Speaker, means a great deal to my communities.

Good government is one that provides the context in which its citizens can grow and prosper. We want to help Yukoners achieve a better quality of life. You know as well as I do the sorry state of Yukon's economy in the late 1990s and early 2000s. I remember vividly the little tear-stained faces pressed up against the back window of vehicles as they passed through Teslin -- their little eyes getting the last view of Yukon on their way south, because there was no work in the Yukon. We have been working diligently to resurrect our economy to revive Yukon as a land of opportunity. We have been successful. Today we are all aware that Yukoners have a rich selection of job opportunities. Few things help to personally achieve a better quality of life than having a meaningful, rewarding career that provides for our needs and enables us to be contributing members of our society.

Having already addressed in our first mandate the economic plight we inherited, we are now working on other areas to improve Yukoners' lives. This means addressing areas like caring for and protecting our family members, including our children, youth, our elders and seniors. It means looking after education, employment, promoting the arts and culture, as well as supporting sports and recreation.

I would like to talk for a few minutes about caring for and protecting our family members, including children. An area that saddens me as a First Nation mother and grandmother is the disruption to families because of the consequences of residential schools and other historical impacts.

I am deeply saddened that there are still so many First Nation children in care. This government recognizes that a socially healthy and economically prosperous Yukon requires participating, healthy and functioning First Nation communities. I can see that now transpiring in the Yukon.

In any culture, children are the future. Therefore, it is understandable that First Nation families and governments want more say when their children are taken into care. I am very pleased that this government recognizes this priority, which is reflected in the new *Child and Family Services Act*. That is why we, this government, recognized that the current *Children's Act* was antiquated, outdated, and we embarked on a jointly agreed process to modernize the legislation with a special view to meeting the needs of First Nation families and children. In my view, this is a state-of-the-art piece of legislation. We have recognized the importance of the child advocate to represent and ensure the protection of our children, our future.

Mr. Speaker, one of the areas that is extremely important to me is caring for families. I just spoke about the importance of children. I want to talk about caring for other members of our family. As I noted earlier, we are working on ways to address our health care issues by locally training licensed practical nurses. We have children who have so many challenges in front of them, including some pretty severe disabilities. I am so pleased that we have budgeted \$418,000 to support families of children with disabilities.

Some children begin their lives with significant challenges. Unfortunately, these can be overwhelming for families. Parents of newborns and toddlers tend to be younger people at the beginning of their career trajectories, who may not always have the financial resources to address some of those issues associated with severe disabilities. I am also pleased that we are stepping up to the plate to assist these children.

In addition to our \$1-million increase in our childcare funding, which brings it to a total of \$6.3 million, I would also like to mention that we are moving ahead with our social assistance reform. I understand from my colleague, the Minister of Health and Social Services, that the consultation period between Canada and its partners has now concluded and we are now moving ahead with the next steps in this process.

Mr. Speaker, a few moments ago, I spoke about coming together today for our future tomorrow. One of the important areas we can help build our future is through an education system. This budget addresses a strong education system. I often think about what makes for a good education and how the effectiveness of education is measured. Is it a piece of paper hanging on a wall saying, "I have met the necessary requirements to obtain a certificate"? Is it the ability to quote and discuss long-dead philosophers? Is it the ability to make lots of money? Is it the ability to interact and succeed in our daily lives? Do we think of it as having meaningful relationships and a loving family? Is it an ability to foresee the future and to prepare today for coming events?

I often think of my grandmother, who had no formal education, in that she never attended a school. She never got a degree from a prestigious institution of higher learning. She never got a certificate saying she had completed grade 12.

What she did have, though, was an amazing wealth of knowledge, wisdom and understanding. She was able to see that my generation would be faced with the challenge of living in two cultures -- the First Nation culture of our ancestors and the then incoming culture of our new neighbours who were moving into the Yukon on the Alaska Highway.

Mr. Speaker, I was born the year the Alaska Highway was completed. My grandmother innately understood what the future held. She was very perceptive and very wise. She told me that it would be my charge to help build the gap that would exist between cultures. However, I think that what truly made her special was her moral character and her commitment to honour our traditional ways, as well as accept the change to our lives, which was inevitable.

In this budget, for instance, we have measures to address education reform. I am very pleased that one of my constituents sits on this committee and that we are recognizing the First

Nation perspective. Under the leadership of my colleague from the Southern Lakes, Yukon has taken great strides forward in our education system. This budget further builds on the solid foundation that our previous budgets have established.

Mr. Speaker, I am so very pleased to see that my colleague understands and appreciates the importance of First Nation culture in our educational system. I am very pleased that this government has made this area a priority.

We have funds to examine school growth issues. Mr. Speaker, I was very impressed that this government, in our last mandate, became aware of an issue in Carmacks where a new school was required. It was this government that went out and built a new school in Carmacks. If one looks at what we spent to build a proper facility and the number of students who attend, one will certainly see that we really do invest in our children and our young people.

Our student-to-teacher ratio is among the best in the country. We have invested heavily in educational assistance as well. For those who go on to post-secondary education, we have indexed the Yukon grant, which means \$104,000 more for this program. We are committed to helping our young people get the proper education they need to lead fulfilling and rewarding lives by being contributing members of society and by taking their rightful place in leadership with the skills, talents, and capacity to successfully build our society. This means students from Teslin, Ross River and Faro can get the education they need to help our communities now and into the future.

I was recently at the Teslin Tlingit Council General Assembly and I was so impressed as I looked at the young people participating in our First Nations leadership. There were young women and young men who have completed their high school education, gone on to university and returned to help lead our First Nations. They have refined their talent with education and experience to greatly improve their effectiveness. This, Mr. Speaker, bodes well for the Yukon's future.

In speaking with my constituents in Ross River and Faro, they too have emphasized the importance of an education, opening the doors of opportunity. Ross River, for example, has a wealth of mining-related jobs in the area. I am told by a local community representative that one company alone could hire all of the available labour in Ross River. I am also pleased that my colleague, the Minister of Education, has brought forward a plan to address aspects of our current needs on the health care front.

I am pleased that he has announced a plan to train licensed practical nurses. This is a win-win situation. We will be helping Yukoners get the education they need to have a rewarding career and be contributing members of society, as well as providing help Yukoners need for medical assistance.

Of course, Mr. Speaker, the thing that helps people the most to find employment is an abundance of jobs from which they can choose. Speaking of giving people choices for their employment, I had a discussion with a constituent of mine who is a wonderful gentleman. He has served in the public capacity for many, many years, and has contributed enormously to our community. He was retired from his position because he reached the age of 75. During our conversation I was again

reminded that people, such as this gentleman, have so much to offer and they can take great joy in being contributing members of society. It is because of this that I am so pleased with the targeted older workers program. To me this program is all about finding new ways to help experience and wisdom find expression.

Mr. Speaker, we are all aware of the challenges of finding people to fill jobs. Everywhere there are jobs looking for people to fill them. In my riding there is an abundance of mining jobs. In fact, during one of my community visits, I found that many of the people I would normally meet with were, in fact, working at different camps. One of my constituents contacted me to say that he was finding it difficult to attract people to work at his commercial operation because there were so many other higher paying jobs in other sectors of the economy.

As I reflected on this issue, it reminded me of how much things have changed in just a few short years under this government's watch. As an artist myself, I care deeply about our culture and expressing ourselves through art. I'll come back to this point in a few minutes.

I am very proud of our carvers in the Journey Far carving program. I was delighted to travel with them to Ottawa, as they showcased their talents to the nation. The carvers in this program are not exclusively First Nations but are young people from across Yukon. What a wonderful way for Yukon First Nations to enrich the cultural fabric of Yukon and of Canada.

I am very pleased to see the School of Visual Arts in Dawson City be supported by this government. We have also set aside money for the Yukon Arts Centre. These investments contribute to a stronger, healthier Yukon.

Last year, we hosted the most successful Canada Winter Games. I am so proud and pleased with how this unfolded. I applaud this government for continuing to fund sports and recreational programs as part of our decade of sport and culture. Providing our young people with healthy, constructive, interesting and positive alternatives is one of the best things that we can do to enable them to make good choices.

I applaud you and the Member for Riverdale South for what you are doing in setting up a youth centre in Riverdale.

Protecting the environment is also very important to me as a First Nation woman, as well as for all Yukoners. It is the one main reason why my constituents and I live where we do. The natural scenery is unmatched.

In reflecting on the environment, I am reminded that regardless of what is happening in Alaska, the Porcupine caribou herd numbers appear to be dropping. We made a commitment to the mapping of air, land, water and wildlife resources. The issue that I think that we have to focus our energy on is what we are going to do to understand the causes of the decline and then to address it. I am pleased with the direction that the Premier has outlined for this government. I am pleased to see that we are focusing our efforts on mitigating climate change. I think that a research centre of excellence is the appropriate way forward.

In my tours of my riding, I remain convinced that the best solution for many of our social challenges is a meaningful career. Few things are as empowering as the pride that comes

from earning one's way in life by being a contributing member of society. I look at the communities in my riding and reflect on how just a few short years ago the situation was very, very different. People were packing up and moving away, especially young people, because they saw no hope. I'm reminded again of those blessed little tear-stained faces pressed against the rear window.

Today things are different. Real estate prices are up across my riding. I see ads in the paper for people looking to buy property in my riding. When I talk to young people, they are thinking of staying in the riding, because that is where their circle of family and friends are. They are a part of the community and they don't want to leave.

Mr. Speaker, one of the commitments that we as the Yukon Party made was to promote resource investment. As I have noted previously, the resource sector of our economy is providing employment for my riding. I am very pleased to see that so many of my constituents work in this field. The impact of these jobs is felt many, many times over in our communities.

I am given to understand that the private sector will be leading the way in terms of spending more money on capital projects. I think this is wonderful news. It speaks to the confidence people have in the Yukon and our economy. One of my constituents joked that the previous Liberal regime also promoted small business. Of course, the punch line was that they started with large business and they stifled them.

We have come a long way since 2002. One of the things I see government doing that can really help is the BizPaL program. This allows people to see what the regulatory requirements are for the area they will have to satisfy to start a business. This means that entrepreneurs know up front what their obligations are, and that means better information for their decision-making process.

Many of my constituents make their living through tourism-related products and services. I appreciate the work the Minister of Tourism and Culture is doing in promoting our tourism industry. I know her recent trip to Germany was extremely successful. I am grateful that we have an ambassador for Yukon who is so willing to market on behalf of the territory what it is that we have to offer.

I applaud this government and this Premier for the strong fiscal management demonstrated by this budget. This budget addresses Yukon's needs without breaking the bank. I am proud of this budget and also of this government. I encourage all members of this Assembly to support it.

Earlier in my comments, I mentioned the Journey Far carver program. What impresses me about this program is that we are helping young people find a way to express themselves through their carving. Each carver has a real talent, and I see the potential in some for national and international recognition. I look forward to the day when these enterprising young artists are self-supporting and contributing members of society.

In addition to helping the individual carver, this program also helps by sharing First Nation culture with others throughout the Yukon and indeed throughout the world.

My colleague -- the minister responsible for the Women's Directorate -- and I have been working with our caucus col-

leagues on improving the lives of women in our territory. I think many of you are familiar with the work that we have done to date on the Aboriginal Women's Summit, which was held in Watson Lake and here in Whitehorse. One of the sad realities is that aboriginal women are more likely to be victims of violence. As a government, we have set aside \$100,000 to address their concerns.

In addition, we are working on a new, special housing project of up to 30 dwelling units in Whitehorse to address the housing needs of women and children. This is an important project that will make the lives of women and children safer and, therefore, better.

As you know, we are working on addressing the situation of women at the correctional facility. I find the members opposite hold two opposite positions on this matter. First they complain that any repairs or changes are a waste of money. Then they complain that the living conditions are not appropriate, but we should do something to fix it. However, when we do earmark money in the budget, they complain we are wasting it. The members opposite were so anxious to build something, anything, that they would have built the wrong building, using the wrong layout, based on the totally wrong correctional philosophy. It was this Yukon Party government that said no, we will not build until we have consulted with Yukoners. Let's not forget that part, Mr. Speaker. The Liberals were all set to build the wrong building because they didn't want to listen to anyone. We did listen; we went out and consulted Yukoners and now know what it is Yukoners want in their correctional facility.

We are going to build the right facility to do the job of helping Yukoners find health, healing and wholeness. Just because we are building a new facility does not mean that it is okay to let the old one fall apart in the meantime.

We have been entrusted by the courts to safely and securely house those inmates. We have obligations to the employees who work there to provide them with a safe and secure work environment. Unlike the members opposite, we will honour those obligations. We are not going to abandon the inmates in our care to their plight because they have made wrong choices.

As to our existing building, we are committed to ensuring those inmates the courts have entrusted to our care will be housed in a safe and secure facility.

Let me be clear, Mr. Speaker. We are not going to abandon our responsibilities to our employees and to those the courts have entrusted to our care. Let me put this in perspective. We are spending approximately \$5.30 per day per inmate to make that facility a better place for staff and inmates. Our highest priority is to address the living conditions of our female inmates. Other changes will help us switch to an improved supervision model and will also give more options on the programming front.

I would also like to note that we are moving forward with a plan to address the needs of victims of crime. While I am grateful to live in a country where those accused of a crime have access to due process, I am also aware that victims may face a very great challenge as they navigate the criminal justice system. I was pleased to participate in the recent victims of

crime conference here in Whitehorse. I look forward to finding ways to help them. This is important to me, because I do believe that victims do matter.

This is a great budget. It addresses the commitments that we made as a party to the Yukon. It addresses the commitments that I made to my constituents. It means money to improve our Robert Campbell Highway between Faro and Carmacks by surfacing it with BST. It means money to replace culverts and repair washouts in my riding. It means that we will have sub-surface improvements made to our highway in the Teslin area. Mr. Speaker, roadwork may be out of sight, but it is not out of mind.

This kind of work does matter. It means money for water treatment in Ross River and it will bring a new standby generator for Teslin. It means money to help buy equipment to improve program delivery and services in my riding. I am so proud of this budget. I am proud of this government. I urge all members of this Assembly to support it.

Gunilshish.

Mr. Nordick: I see by the looks on the faces across the way that nobody wants to speak to this budget any more. I know that there are a couple of members that have, so I guess that I will speak out of rotation. I appreciate this opportunity to speak to this Budget Address. It means so much to me, so I will speak to this.

It is an honour and a pleasure to speak to this budget, but what is even more of an honour is to represent the citizens of my riding -- the Klondike.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to start off by thanking the citizens of my riding. Thank you to every single individual who spoke to me at my open houses. I'd like to inform everybody I will be having another constituency open house this summer and, Mr. Speaker, one of my constituents asked me to look into lights for the school yard.

Safety of our children is always a concern to me. I'd like to thank the Minister of Education for facilitating lights to be installed in the schoolyard of Dawson City. I'd like to remind all the citizens of Dawson City that, if they have concerns, bring them forward to me.

I'd also like to thank the Minister of Health and Social Services for his commitment to reinstate a second nurse on call: another critical accomplishment for the well-being of the citizens of Dawson City.

I'd like to also thank all the organizations that make the Klondike succeed. I've enjoyed meeting with the Klondike Visitors Association, the City of Dawson, the Chamber of Commerce, Dawson City museums, the Conservation Klondike Society, and also I enjoyed meeting with the Tr'ondek Hwech'in Chief and Council.

Mr. Speaker, there are a lot of other meetings and a lot of other organizations that I have met with throughout the last year and a half, and I do appreciate every moment I have been speaking with them. At this time, I'd like to recognize Rick Reimer and congratulate him for his recent election to the city council of Dawson City.

Mr. Speaker, at a recent Dawson City Chamber of Commerce meeting I attended, the issue of labour shortage was discussed. Our strong economy has resulted in the need for both skilled and entry-level workers. I am pleased to report that our government is addressing this issue by taking a broad multi-departmental approach that includes the departments of Education, Health and Social Services and Economic Development.

Mr. Speaker, the Yukon nominee program has 112 applications. This program will help Yukon businesses with the current and future labour market shortages. The goal of this program is to fast-track the immigration of skilled and semi-skilled workers in high-demand fields.

In addition, because of social assistance reforms, there will be new incentives to encourage social assistance recipients to enter the work force.

Another initiative was to increase the Yukon child benefit maximum level from \$25,000 to \$30,000 per year; there were also enhancements to the child care subsidy, which will help parents enter the workforce.

We are committed to support the business community to find solutions to help meet their labour needs. I will now go into a little detail on some of the initiatives we are currently working on.

The Yukon nominee program currently has three streams: "skilled worker," designed to attract skilled individuals, is the first stream. The second stream is "critical impact worker," designed to assist Yukon's business community to attract workers where survival of the success of the business is at stake. The third stream is "business nominee program," designed to attract businesses, expertise and investment capital to the Yukon.

Another initiative we're working on is a temporary foreign worker program, which is Canada's temporary foreign worker program. This allows eligible foreign workers to work in Canada for an authorized period of time if employers can demonstrate that they are unable to find sustainable Canadian permanent residents to fill the job. The entry of these workers will not have a negative impact on the Canadian labour market. Workers are allowed a two-year work permit and then must return to their country of origin, after which the employer can re-apply to bring the worker back. The Minister of Education is working with the federal government to ensure that the immigration process meets the needs of all Yukoners.

Another example is the targeted older worker program. The targeted initiative for older workers is a two-year initiative that helps unemployed older workers. It is targeted toward a community with high unemployment, a high reliance on a single industry affected by downsizing, or rural communities with chronic high unemployment.

Projects are designed to improve the employability of participants from 55 to 64 years of age and may assist in prior learning assessment, skills upgrading, and provide experience in new fields of work.

Mr. Speaker, we also host job fairs. One job fair was held in January 2008 to expose a wide number of students to a range of career and training opportunities. This fair was hosted by the Council of Yukon First Nations and the National Aboriginal

Achievement Foundation. High school students from all over the Yukon came to the fair and speakers were present from Yukon and other colleges, and employees from western Canada were hosted.

Another program is the STEP program. There are two student employment programs coordinated by the Department of Education. The Department of Education also assists Yukon employees with summer work shortages by providing wage and employment cost subsidies for students' summer employment. The student training employment program -- STEP -- is a project to provide \$368,000 toward assisting approximately 140 post-secondary student positions in the summer of 2008. The summer career placement program is projected to provide an additional \$114,000 toward assisting approximately 65 students or Yukon unemployed youth employment positions this coming season.

Once again, Mr. Speaker, these are just a few of the many initiatives our government is working on to increase the availability of workers in the Yukon.

I am happy to support the initiative of our government to provide a mental health nurse in my community. Although this position is based in Dawson City, the nurse will also consult rural residents throughout the north and western territory. We are also in the process of hiring two full-time primary-care paramedics to augment and relieve the strain on volunteers in my community. This is another increase of services.

I am happy to support in this budget the almost \$2 million provided under the territorial health access fund for a number of initiatives aimed at reducing reliance on the health care system, strengthening community-level access to services and building self-reliant capacity to deliver service in the territory. This increase will bring the total of THAF funding to approximately \$6.67 million.

I am also pleased with our government's increased support to the Dawson City Arts Society, to assist them with their operational requirements, as well as the advancement of the arts. Dawson City has a big role to play in the arts and culture of the Yukon and has attracted artists worldwide. I would like to thank the Minister of Tourism for providing a core funding of \$400,000 to Dawson City Arts Society.

I would also like to thank the Minister of Education for providing \$463,000 a year for core funding for SOVA, which is an increase of six percent for SOVA, which is the School of Visual Arts in Dawson City. This totals approximately \$863,000 per year for these two initiatives.

It is equally important to recognize our First Nation culture and history. The Tr'ondek Hwech'in government will be improving access to the Forty Mile historic site. It is a major cultural heritage attraction in the north Klondike region. This is a result of access funds from the northern strategy. \$175,000 is being allocated in 2008-09, with a further \$50,000 allocation in 2009-10.

I look forward to the July 2008 opening of the Tombstone visitor reception centre. This state-of-the-art building will be a welcome means to encourage visitors to travel in our area and stay longer. I believe, as stated in the budget speech by the Premier, that the Tombstone visitor centre is an excellent ex-

ample of collaboration between the Yukon government, Tr'on-dek Hwech'in and Holland America.

It is of paramount importance for my community to learn that exploration and mining activities in 2007 is expected to reach over \$140 million. Our mining industry certainly looks forward to the completed consultation on the claims administration and royalty amendments to the *Quartz Mining Act*, as well as the *Miners Lien Act* amendments. I am committed to working with my colleagues on this important issue.

I am happy to support the \$329,000 allocated in the 2008-09 budget to implement a new placer mining regime. This regime will affect placer mining operations in the 2008 mining season.

It will also recognize the importance of a sustainable placer industry in the Yukon. It will conserve and protect fish habitat, and it will incorporate experience and traditional knowledge. Mr. Speaker, placer mining is the backbone of my community and Yukon.

Other significant boosts for the Yukon and the Klondike economy are two oil and gas rights disposition processes in Eagle Plains and the Peel Plateau areas, valued at over \$22 million. Also very important to my riding are the approved amendments to the *Municipal Act* that provide an increase in the comprehensive municipal grant funding in each of the next five years, beginning April 1, 2008. By 2012, the grant will have increased to \$16,578,000. What does this specifically mean for my community? It means that in 2007, it will be \$1.2 million. In 2008, it will be approximately \$1,274,000; in 2010, \$1.4 million; and in 2012 it will be approximately \$1.6 million, Mr. Speaker. That is definitely going to help my community with its infrastructure needs and operation and maintenance.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to support the commitments of this government to review and develop plans for Dawson City emergency response facilities to include offices and training rooms. This is another increase of services to my community. Another very important issue is the 9-1-1 service in the territory. Community Services is conducting a feasibility study on expansion of the 9-1-1 service to more Yukon communities. My constituents will also benefit greatly from the \$1,696,000 in this budget to provide for a new mobile communication system for emergency responders and other Yukon government users.

Mr. Speaker, in closing, I would like to commit to working with the stakeholders in Dawson City on improving Front Street. There is an allocation in this budget for this process. I look forward to working with the Minister of Highways and Public Works on improving Front Street. Mr. Speaker, I support this budget. Thank you.

Mr. Cardiff: I thank the Member for Klondike for going out of sequence. That was partially my fault.

I would like to rise today to talk a little bit about the budget that has been presented to the Legislative Assembly for 2008-09. I would like to begin by thanking the constituents in the Mount Lorne riding for their continued support and guidance. There have been phone calls, letters received, requests and casework. This presents a challenge sometimes, but it is

truly part of what the work of being an MLA is -- helping guide people, whether they are our constituents or not. Some of them don't live in the Mount Lorne riding, but come to us for assistance. We guide them through the processes and ensure that government is meeting their needs and providing the services that they need on a daily and ongoing basis.

It is truly a beautiful riding to represent. Having lived in two different locations in that riding now -- in Wolf Creek and, within the past year, having moved now to the Carcross Road -- one of the things that I truly enjoy is the drive home and looking at the mountains and the wildlife along the side of the highway. Mount Lorne is truly a beautiful community, as is the whole community of the Yukon. It is something I think that we treasure as Yukoners, whether we have been here a long time or a short time. It is something that draws us all together as one community. It truly is a place where we can all make a life for ourselves and is a place for all of us.

It certainly is good to be back in the Legislative Assembly this spring sitting, and we have a lot of work ahead of us.

This spring, there is a multitude of legislation -- some rather important pieces of legislation, and some that we've been waiting for a long time. The government has taken its time to bring some of these forward. Some of them required time; others could probably have come forward sooner.

We are definitely glad to see the *Child and Family Services Act* finally come forward. We hope that our concerns and the concerns of the public, as was mentioned by the Member for McIntyre-Takhini earlier today, will be addressed by the minister and the government regarding the *Child and Family Services Act*.

We look forward to debating the long-awaited *Workers' Compensation Act* -- much overdue amendments -- a completely new act, actually. It's reorganized, and it's going to be a challenge to work through that. But I look forward to hearing from Yukoners -- working people and business -- about what they think of the new *Workers' Compensation Act* and whether or not it meets their needs and whether or not improvements could still be made. I already know there are improvements that could be made to it from just looking at it. There are some areas I have questions about, and I look forward to the briefing on that act.

There is a multitude of legislation. I won't go through it all, but it is going to be a challenge to get through budget debate and debate all of the legislation that has been put in front of us this spring.

With regard to the budget, it is a large budget. It seems that every year without fail the amount of money that it takes to provide services to Yukoners grows. We've become reliant on transfers from Ottawa and that is reflected in this budget as well, again -- the increased transfers from Ottawa. There is a good side to that -- I have to congratulate the government for representing Yukoners in Ottawa and getting these financing agreements in place that truly address the needs of Yukoners. One of the things that we need to do, I believe, is more work on diversifying the economy, and I will speak a little bit more about that later.

There are some things that we have been asking for, or that we have asked for previously, in this budget. I'd like to talk a little bit about some of the things specifically with regard to my riding, Mount Lorne, and some of the things in Mount Lorne that are of concern. Some of those things are contained in this budget -- some of them aren't contained in this budget. I would just like to go over a few of those things at this time.

One of the things that is in the budget that I think is important and has been long-awaited and has been shuffled off to the side occasionally due to extenuating circumstances -- the big year that we had with wildland fire. There was a large expenditure on fighting forest fires that year. The Golden Horn fire hall was slated to be planned that year, but unfortunately the money all got spent fighting forest fires, and we needed to do that.

I can see in this budget that there is \$880,000 for the construction of the Golden Horn fire hall. The one thing that I would say about that is that it is a little disappointing to find out that the project actually won't be tendered for another month or two. It was my understanding that all the planning work had been done in the previous year's budget in order to get this project an early start this year, and it doesn't look like that is going to happen.

But it is going to happen and I hope that the fire hall is completed in time for next winter. There is a health and safety issue for the volunteers who work there when they are responding to fires. The vehicles that are parked in there are large compared to the size of the building and it provides for an unsafe workplace for those volunteers. They have to arrive there, get into their turnout gear, get in the trucks and go respond to the emergency. So, we look forward to that.

One of the other things that is in this budget, and it is around the same area -- I believe there is money for a new pumper truck for the Robinson fire hall in the Hamlet of Mount Lorne, and that is going to be much appreciated. I'm thankful for the efforts of all the volunteer fire departments around the territory, but especially in Golden Horn because they have been waiting for years for the improvements to their hall -- in recognition of the good work that the volunteers in the Hamlet of Mount Lorne have done under the leadership of the fire chief there, Ron Adamson. They have come leaps and bounds in the recent years and I believe that that is the only volunteer fire department in the Yukon that has the same certification and has come up to the same standard as the City of Whitehorse fire hall. That is a benefit to all the citizens of Mount Lorne who fall within the area that they protect and serve as volunteer fire fighters.

I'm glad to see those expenditures in the budget this time around. I know that some of the other priorities in the riding are things like upgrading the Annie Lake Road. I know the Minister of Highways and Public Works responded to a need last year on the old Annie Lake Road, where there was extensive flooding. That road was put into better shape and is being maintained and I thank the minister for that. I hope that in both his roles as Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources and as Minister of Highways and Public Works, he is aware of the fact that there is a potential operating mine in the Wheaton River Valley that is serviced by the Annie Lake Road. There is a lot

of increased traffic and there is a lot of heavier traffic currently on that road. It raises concerns in my riding about the condition of the Annie Lake Road. It hasn't had an upgrade for quite a number of years and it needs to be looked at.

Another issue that was raised that I think is important is around land development. There has been a lot of land development south of town and we have seen some of the fallout from that reflected in the Electoral District Boundaries Commission. I recognize that the riding I currently represent is going to, should the Electoral District Boundaries Commission report be adopted by the Legislative Assembly this spring, drastically change my riding, but I intend to continue to represent all residents of the riding as long as I am their MLA, and residents of other ridings as well.

This is an issue that crosses riding boundaries. Anybody who travels the Alaska Highway -- any Yukoner, tourist or trucker -- should be concerned about the issue I'm about to raise. I raised it last fall a little bit, and the minister didn't seem too concerned about it.

The minister is aware of the improvements that have been made along the Alaska Highway in the Mount Sima turnoff area. That's only one part of the contract for the improvements to the Alaska Highway to deal with the land development in the Mount Sima subdivision. But what has happened with that particular piece of infrastructure is that they didn't really take into consideration all of the traffic patterns.

It's interesting, because I've had conversations with people who live along the Alaska Highway and were consulted during the process. The engineers even actually said the design should be changed to accommodate all of the RV traffic that turns in and out of the RV park in that area.

What the minister has done by not realizing, I guess, or taking into consideration, the traffic that turns in and out of the RV park there -- the Pioneer RV Park -- is that they have created a bottleneck. They have taken away what some people from Marsh Lake or the Hamlet of Mount Lorne or Teslin have said was used at one time for passing slower vehicles -- the RVs that are pulling out onto the highway -- and now there isn't an opportunity to pass them there, or to get by them, because there is no lane for them to pull over into.

That should have been taken into consideration. By the same token, all of that needs to be taken into consideration with the future work that is going to be done by the Department of Highways and Public Works at McCrae and across from the Mountainview Golf Course and with the Fox Haven subdivision, because the highway infrastructure there needs to be safe for lots of people. A lot of people, both from my riding and from the riding of the Member for Southern Lakes, commute on a daily basis along that highway. As more land development occurs there, there will be more commuters. That is part of what good land planning and infrastructure planning is all about.

Those are some of the things that I see as being priorities in my riding. By a long stretch, that's not all of them. I've raised with the Minister of Education the issue of catchment areas in relation to Golden Horn Elementary School and declining enrolments and how the minister needs to make that decision. He

needs to make that decision in time so it will have a positive impact on enrolments at Golden Horn Elementary School and won't negatively impact the funding or the staffing at the Golden Horn Elementary School, thereby negatively affecting the children who go to that school and who, I might add, come from at least three different ridings -- Southern Lakes, Mount Lorne and Copperbelt. These ridings are all in the catchment area for Golden Horn Elementary School and they have come forward with a proposal. I hope the minister will consider that.

While we're on education, there is something I don't see in the budget. I know that we have received the education reform report. There is a lot of information there. The minister expects the public to get copies of it and provide feedback to the minister and the committee on the education reform report, but I don't see any specific funds dedicated to that consultation in the budget documents. I don't hear any mention of it or anything about implementation. There are a lot of good ideas, but we need to move on some of those ideas so that we can improve the education system for our children.

One of the things that was a little telling in the press release, Mr. Speaker -- and I don't have a copy of the press release with me, but I remember reading the press release and thinking that they made announcements about millions of dollars for highways and various things in the budget, and then they said that there was \$1 million for the environment. If you look in the budget speech document at the pie chart and what the government spends on the environment compared to what it spends in some other areas -- and I'm not saying that the other areas don't deserve this or there isn't a requirement. We need good education and good health and social services. Highways and public works are an essential part of our infrastructure, and we need to maintain it.

We do need to pay more attention to our environment and to the effects of climate change. I think we're all becoming a little bit more aware of the impacts of climate change and the importance of good, clean water. That is important, as well, in the Mount Lorne riding, for sure. The Yukon River is fed from two sides, actually. Both the Wheaton River and Watson River flow into Bennett Lake and into the Yukon River. Then we have Wolf Creek and a couple of other creeks as well that flow from this side into the Yukon River. So, clean water is a very important issue.

We heard recently that the swans had returned to Swan Haven, and it just highlights, I think, how important it is that we maintain that ecosystem, because it is important to the migration pattern of swans, geese, ducks and all waterfowl. The fact that the water opens up so early provides that opportunity for the wildlife -- the birds -- to migrate.

When we look at the government's commitment to the environment in dollar value, we feel that the government could pay a lot more attention to some of these environmental issues. I know that the Premier and Minister of Finance -- and the Minister of Environment for that matter, because he wears all three hats -- would say that the total contribution from the Yukon to global warming as far as carbon emissions is next to nothing compared to other jurisdictions. However, the reality is, when we look at where we live and how we receive the

goods that we buy in the grocery, furniture, clothing, hardware and lumber stores, a lot of it arrives here by truck. Carbon emissions are associated with the transportation of all the products we import here.

Becoming more economically diversified and self-reliant would also be good for the carbon emissions and the environment here in the Yukon. I don't buy the Premier's argument or the minister's argument that because our contribution to global warming, carbon emissions, is negligible compared to other jurisdictions that we shouldn't do our part -- that all we should do is sit back and watch it all happen and adapt. I don't disagree -- I think we do need to adapt, because the changes are coming. But what I am saying is we also need to take responsibility for our own actions, and to do what is possible for us here in the Yukon as individuals, as citizens, as MLAs and as government. As government, we should be leaders. There are some initiatives that the government has undertaken but there are a lot more that the government could do as well.

If we all pull together as one community we can make a difference. There is actually an economic argument for this. I don't profess to be really knowledgeable about this, but my understanding is that you can trade in carbon credits. I don't totally understand it but if it is possible -- if we reduce our carbon footprint and we can sell those carbon credits -- if we could become a carbon-neutral territory, then other carbon emitters or jurisdictions would be able to buy those carbon credits from us.

In my mind, that would be something that I would consider -- diversifying the economy. That would be money coming into the territory from us doing something positive, not just for ourselves, but for the rest of the world. We all live on the same planet; we're all one community, like it or not. We may have our differences, but we all live and die on the same planet. We have every bit as much responsibility as anyone else, no matter where they live, to ensure that we're doing our part, and I think we could do more. I think the Minister of Environment, the Finance minister and the Premier should all take that under consideration.

One of the concerns I'd like to bring up in the budget -- we had an interesting briefing today about the property management revolving fund and the changes to the *Financial Administration Act*. It wasn't until afterward that I actually realized that I had flagged this in Highways and Public Works in the capital portion. This goes back to the Auditor General's report on the Department of Highways and Public Works: there are a lot of problems with the way that we look after our buildings, the fact that we lease a lot of buildings, and that some of the buildings are deteriorating.

When you look in the budget, there's actually a decrease. I'm not sure -- and I'm putting the minister on notice now -- that there's a 40-percent decrease in capital for building maintenance in property management. That wasn't what I heard at the briefing today and there isn't a significant increase in the operation and maintenance in building maintenance. That does not address the concerns that were raised by the Auditor General in her review of the Department of Highways and Public Works.

There will probably be more from me on this. When we look at the way that this government has managed projects, it

took years to build a school in Carmacks. It's taking years to build a health facility in Watson Lake.

I was in Watson Lake last fall at the Yukon Chamber of Commerce annual general meeting. I went by the building and, it's interesting, because I had been by I think two years before. There hasn't been a lot of progress made on that building. The government does not have an excuse. There is no excuse for a project not being completed for the amount of money that has been spent on that project. We can actually go and look at the building and see that this is, in my mind, a disservice to the people of Watson Lake, because it sits there in front of them as they drive by and they can't use it. We are developing buildings that are empty for years. That should not be the case. Most recently, we have interim space renovations at the Whitehorse Correctional Centre, which were promised last fall, but not delivered on time or on budget.

We have to wonder how this government manages projects -- how they tender projects and how they manage projects. We have the Watson Lake building, Whitehorse Correctional Centre, the Carmacks school, interim space renovations at the correctional facility, the athletes village -- all way over budget. We paid way too much. I realize the tight timelines and the fact that the Auditor General realized that. However, we should have taken the time, up front, and had a bit of vision about it. It was not like the government did not know that the Canada Winter Games were coming up and that there was going to be those needs.

We could have stepped in a lot earlier with a better solution. I know that my time is running out, Mr. Speaker, and I would like to touch on a few other important things in some of the portfolios that I have critic areas in.

One of the issues that I think the government is lacking in vision is the plan for a pilot project for one of the most pressing needs in our community. It is not just a pressing need in our community of Whitehorse, it is a pressing need in the community of Yukon, and that is a youth emergency shelter. The shelter may be based here in Whitehorse but there are buildings available here in Whitehorse, if the minister would look. They might even be buildings that his department has some control over. This issue could be addressed on a much longer-term basis. I think that is what we need.

We need more of a long-term plan to address the needs of our youth: those youth who are marginalized by the living conditions they have, because they live in families that have substance abuse problems or violence problems and they don't feel safe going home at night. They need a place where they can go and be safe.

They don't need to go to the detox centre, and they don't need to go to Kaushee's Place. Both of those institutions, both of those buildings, both of those organizations, serve a purpose and they serve a very important purpose, but they are not there for our children to go when they need a safe place to stay. I don't think it's appropriate.

The minister seemed to think it was appropriate that we're going to send some young person to the detox centre to spend the night, who is coming from a home where there is violence and substance abuse. I don't really think it is really appropriate

to send them to a place that is housing people with substance abuse problems. They need a safe place where they can stay, receive some counselling, and where there is a transition back into school to get an education, to gain employment, to become self-sufficient and to get safe, affordable housing so they can go on and live their lives, as they grow up and mature.

Last night I had the privilege of attending the launch of the crime prevention strategy by the Whitehorse Chamber of Commerce. It was interesting to be there and note the partnerships being created between the government departments, the City of Whitehorse and businesses, and I wish them well with that. That is another good initiative on the part of the community. It shows that, as a community, we can come together and build a community, we can build a place here for us all and that we care about our community. We care about the place we live in and we care about the people who live here.

I look forward to debating this budget. I hope that the ministers and departments will take our questions as constructive, and that the solutions we offer will be taken into consideration. That applies not only to the budget, but to the legislation that will be debated as well. I think we will have some valuable contributions to make to the budget debate, as well as to debates on legislation.

So I thank the members for their time today and I look forward to debating the budget further. We'll make further comments when we get into departments and Committee of the Whole.

Speaker: Minister of Health and Social Services, please.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Speaker: No, I recognized the Minister of Health and Social Services. Sit down, please.

Hon. Mr. Cathers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is a pleasure --

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Speaker: Go ahead, Hon. Minister of Health and Social Services.

Hon. Mr. Cathers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is a pleasure to begin second reading debate on the 2008-09 estimates. Before talking, as I will, about a number of the department initiatives, I would just like to express appreciation to some of my colleagues for initiatives that are important to my constituents in the riding of Lake Laberge. That includes the work done by the Minister of Environment and his staff and the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources and his staff in dealing with the elk management plan that involved both the Department of Environment and the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources, in working with stakeholders and working with members of industry, particularly farmers, and in working with groups such as RRCs in coming up with a plan to deal with the elk herd within the Takhini and Braeburn areas.

That, of course, through the significant increase in the size of this herd and change in their use of range, has had an impact

on constituents through the breaking of fences by animals moving into the area, as well as the concerns that have come to light with regard to winter ticks on those animals. I want to thank both ministers, and particularly the staff of those two departments for their efforts in this area and programs that have been put in place to assist those affected by the herd in dealing with and coping with that new occurrence.

Secondly, I want to again thank the Minister of Highways and Public Works for his indication that his department will be working on a plan to extend cell service in the Ibex Valley area. As the minister knows very well, this is important to my constituents there. As members will be well aware, this will be the next step in the extension of the cellular network, an important initiative that this government has undertaken to better connect all Yukoners.

Motion to adjourn debate

Hon. Mr. Cathers: Mr. Speaker, seeing the time, I move that debate be now adjourned.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Minister of Health and Social Services that debate be now adjourned.

Motion to adjourn debate on second reading of Bill No. 11 agreed to

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

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

Motion agreed to

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

The House adjourned at 5:26 p.m.

The following Sessional Paper was tabled March 27, 2008:

08-1-64

Absence of Members from Sittings of the Legislative Assembly and its Committees: Report of the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly on (dated March 27, 2008) (Speaker Staffen)

The following document was filed March 27, 2008

08-1-48

Yukon Zone of the British Columbia and Yukon Hotels' Association Tourism, Election Issues and response from Dennis Fentie, Leader, Yukon Party (dated October 2002) (Inverarity)