

**Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Wednesday, October 29, 2008 — 1:00 p.m.**

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

Prayers

DAILY ROUTINE

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

Tributes.

Introduction of visitors.

Returns or documents for tabling.

Reports of committees.

Are there any petitions?

Are there any bills to be introduced?

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 62: Introduction and First Reading

Hon. Mr. Lang: I move that Bill No. 62, entitled *Act to Amend the Animal Protection Act*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Minister of Community Services that Bill No. 62, entitled *Act to Amend the Animal Protection Act*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Motion for introduction and first reading of Bill No. 62 agreed to

Bill No. 55: Introduction and First Reading

Hon. Mr. Hart: I move that Bill No. 55, entitled *Act to Amend the Social Assistance Act*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Hon. Minister of Health and Social Services that Bill No. 55, entitled *Act to Amend the Social Assistance Act*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Motion for introduction and first reading of Bill No. 55 agreed to

Bill No. 56: Introduction and First Reading

Hon. Mr. Cathers: I move that Bill No. 56, entitled *Act to Amend the Territorial Lands (Yukon) Act*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Hon. Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources that Bill No. 56, entitled *Act to Amend the Territorial Lands (Yukon) Act*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Motion for introduction and first reading of Bill No. 56 agreed to

Speaker: Are there further bills for introduction?
Hearing none, are there any notices of motion?

NOTICES OF MOTION

Mr. Nordick: I rise today to give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to explore avenues to further assist people with fetal alcohol spectrum disorder who are engaged in the justice systems as victims, witnesses or offenders.

Hon. Mr. Cathers: I rise to give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House shall stand adjourned from its rising on Thursday, November 6, until 1:00 p.m. on Wednesday, November 12, 2008.

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

THAT this House urges the Yukon Party government to recognize the obvious shortcomings of Bill No. 59, the *Forest Resources Act*, in that it fails to adequately address the cultural and ecological values of the forest, or even provide a definition of “forest”, while predominantly focusing on harvesting timber, and therefore should be renamed the “Timber Harvesting Act,”

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Yukon Party government to allow Yukon residents, organizations, First Nations and other levels of government sufficient time to consider the significant impacts of Bill No. 59, the *Forest Resources Act*, by not scheduling it for debate or passage in this House before the next sitting of this Assembly, expected in the spring of 2009.

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

THAT this House urges the Yukon government to work in collaboration with the City of Whitehorse, First Nation governments and the Friends of McIntyre Creek to establish a park for all land along McIntyre Creek and its wetlands, from the headwaters on Mount McIntyre to the confluence of the Yukon River, excluding the area below Mountainview Drive that encompasses the old dump and extending from the mouth of the river in the west to the beginning of the wetlands at the base of Mount McIntyre in order to protect and control:

- (1) nesting area for birds;
- (2) viewing and studying of flora, wildlife, waterfowl and other birds;
- (3) fishing interests;
- (4) salmon spawning areas;
- (5) water quality;
- (6) cross-country ski trails;
- (7) hiking trails;
- (8) the use of motorized vehicles;
- (9) student experiential science curriculum;
- (10) tourism potential; and

THAT a moratorium be placed on granting any new permits for land use that would involve clearing of land or construction of roads within 500 metres of the proposed park.

Thank you.

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

THAT this House urges the Yukon government to recommend to the Government of Canada to remove the requirement in the Building Canada fund that local governments embarking

on large projects fully consider public/private partnerships and to eliminate the financial incentive to provide subsidies to innovative public/private partnerships in order to:

- (1) allow municipalities a clear choice of action for large projects;
- (2) increase efficient construction and management of large projects;
- (3) eliminate the risk to municipalities and taxpayers of private company bankruptcies;
- (4) be openly accountable and democratic as governments;
- (5) keep construction operational costs reasonable and affordable; and
- (6) keep public infrastructure in public hands.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Yukon government to recommend to the Whitehorse General Hospital Board that no public/private partnerships be put in place for any construction or administration under their direction in order to:

- (1) assure Yukon taxpayers that the best possible use will be made of their money;
- (2) ensure that Yukon taxpayers will enjoy the maximum economic and social returns from government investment in infrastructure and programs under government control;
- (3) increase efficient construction and management;
- (4) keep construction and operational costs reasonable and affordable; and
- (5) keep public infrastructure in public hands.

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

THAT this House urges the Premier to provide full disclosure to the people of the Yukon on the status of all investments made, returns received or lost, the name of the funds or investment instruments our money is invested in, and the types of activities and industries that our investments have supported.

Speaker: Are there any further notices of motion?

Hearing none, is there a statement by a minister?

This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Budget supplementary

Mr. Mitchell: The Liberal caucus has attempted to put forth suggestions to the Finance minister to take to Ottawa with him as positive, constructive ideas. His response was essentially that he was doing all of that anyway. Well, quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, we didn't expect him to jump up and down, thanking us for our input. However, we did expect him to put forth a direction that he would want his discussions to go in.

Yukoners expected the supplement to the 2008-09 main estimates to be delivered last Thursday, given the seriousness of the times.

Today, almost one week later, still nothing. This does not instil public confidence.

Mr. Speaker, we realize that tomorrow is his deadline. He must table something tomorrow. By law, he must present his

budgets, if he is going to present any, and he must present the public accounts for the previous fiscal year.

Can the Premier explain why his government is not better prepared for this sitting of the House?

Hon. Mr. Fentie: Mr. Speaker, what the member, the Leader of the Official Opposition, conveniently ignores is we've recently, as recently as last spring, debated the 2008-09 main budget. That's the critical document that is at issue here.

I would remind the Leader of the Official Opposition that the opposition benches did not spend a lot of time debating that budget. So now they have become experts after the fact and we, as a government, are working in a coordinated fashion with all provinces and territories and our national government. We are a member of the global community. There has been a great deal of direction given. We've talked about that over the last few days in the sitting.

We do accept input from the opposition benches and we would have really valued that input last spring when we debated what is the economic road map, the budget for 2008-09.

Mr. Mitchell: Mr. Speaker, this minister's homework assignments are late and we're hearing excuses. Perhaps the dog ate it. Mr. Speaker, much has changed since this minister tabled the budget last spring. It is important that consumer confidence remain high in Yukon. Businesses will suffer if Yukoners fear the economy here is adrift. The Premier set the date of this sitting, yet he was unable to table a budget. It appears he has been rewriting it.

The Premier's long-term vision and planning does not even apparently extend from September to October. Mr. Speaker, can this Finance minister explain to Yukoners why this government was so ill-prepared to deal with the situation that practically every other government in Canada, and indeed around the world, has been dealing with for weeks and months?

Hon. Mr. Fentie: It's an interesting conclusion being drawn by the Leader of the Official Opposition on what is actually happening.

Mr. Speaker, the evidence shows the government has been prepared all along. In fact, the government has been prepared since 2002. That is why, given the work since then, the Yukon today is in a much better position to manage our way through a global cycle than we would have been if we had not been prepared and done that work. Mr. Speaker, no matter what the government side would say to the Leader of the Official Opposition, it will not be accepted; we understand that. In the meantime, Yukoners do remain confident. We are engaged daily in discussions with key stakeholders.

We all recognize this is a global cycle and we all recognize the Yukon is well positioned to manage our way through it.

Mr. Mitchell: Well, let's talk about some of this Premier's preparation. First of all, he has apparently parked \$36.5 million of Yukon's hard-earned and needed money in some kind of permanent sinking fund, despite the fact that he doesn't believe in permanent funds. The Watson Lake hospital was unplanned, not budgeted and never consulted on, but we hear that sort of announcement. Earmarking \$60 million over several years for the Premier's constituency does not instil confi-

dence. A clear plan, well executed with a clear vision and a timeline for action is what is expected.

Yukon families don't take a huge amount of money out of their savings to suddenly buy a new quad or snowmobile without having a discussion. They expect no less of their government. Yukoners understand the importance of good fiscal management. Budgets being changed at the last minute and poorly planned spending will only further their concerns and reluctance to spend.

Will the Premier stop making last-minute, ad hoc, seat-of-the-pants decisions and show Yukoners that his government can plan and deliver projects in a consultative, well-planned way, on time and within budget estimates?

Hon. Mr. Fentie: For the member opposite's file, the government is not making last-minute changes at all to the supplementary budget. That said, the member talks about plan and vision. Let me point out a few facts about that plan and vision.

It began six years ago. It has resulted in taking this territory's fiscal position from year-end deficits of approximately \$400 million to \$500 million, to a fiscal capacity of \$900 million, approximately, and six year-end surpluses in a row. That's point number one.

Number two: the investments that we've made in infrastructure across this territory to stimulate the Yukon economy — part of the plan opposed every step of the way by the members opposite, specifically the Leader of the Official Opposition. Our negotiations for health care in this territory, where we realize significant investment outside the per capita funding formula for Yukoners' health concerns and access to health care — done. And it has been opposed by the members opposite.

The strengthening of the social safety net — opposed by the members opposite. They have no plan; we do, and we're implementing it.

Question re: Watson Lake multi-level care facility

Mr. Mitchell: The Auditor General of Canada released the results of a performance audit in February 2007 on the Department of Highways and Public Works. Paragraph 54 of the audit report speaks about the Watson Lake multi-level care facility.

According to the report, the construction project began around September 2003, but two years later, in June 2005, the Minister of Highways and Public Works at the time "declined responsibility for the project". This, of course, is the same building the Premier now wants to turn into the Watson Lake hospital for an additional \$25 million — or more — of taxpayers' money.

Will either the Minister of Health and Social Services or the Minister of Highways and Public Works confirm for us who has full ministerial responsibility for this new project?

Hon. Mr. Lang: Public Works is overseeing that project to date.

Mr. Mitchell: And we've seen Public Works once before have to punt this over to another department. Let's follow that bouncing ball.

The phantom health care centre in Dawson was also mentioned in the Auditor General's report. Now, both of these

Yukon Party government health care challenges suffered from poor project management and lack of clear accountability. The Department of Highways and Public Works was said to be participating after the fact. The project manager was excluded from project meetings. Departmental staff was barred from the design meetings. And the Minister of Highways and Public Works at the time ultimately washed his hands of both projects, and we can't blame him.

But now, the Watson Lake project is back on the books — bigger, better and much more expensive. Does the Minister of Health and Social Services think that the Watson Lake hospital project is the best use of such a large portion of Yukon's health care budget?

Hon. Mr. Lang: In addressing the member opposite, the Watson Lake facility is a needed facility for that community. It will be built by this government. We made a commitment; it's work in progress, and we are doing just that: supplying health care for the community of Watson Lake and area. So it is needed in the community, regardless of what the member of the opposition thinks.

Mr. Mitchell: Well, Mr. Speaker, we're certainly pleased to hear that the Minister of Highways and Public Works believes in the project that he's now managing, but we were wondering if the Health minister thought this was the most important priority of the portfolio for which he is responsible. Now Health ministers come and go through revolving doors in this Cabinet. Otherwise responsible departments don't want responsibility for the Premier's pet projects. Sole-source contracts are let to friends and supporters. Five years of construction, millions of dollars have resulted in a facility —

Speaker's statement

Speaker: You insist I interrupt you, sir, when you make those kinds of allegations, in terms of illegal practices, in essence, by the government, and I'd ask the honourable member not to do that. You have the floor.

Mr. Mitchell: I certainly didn't mean to imply illegality, and I apologize if that's what appears to have occurred. Now, Mr. Speaker, we see the cycle start all over again. Take a failed project, announce a high-priced solution, ignore the health care priorities in the rest of the territory and buy time to dream up more excuses for poor performance. After two terms in office and so many broken commitments, when will this government finally finish something it started?

Hon. Mr. Fentie: Now that the member has alluded to this being a "pet project", I'm going to challenge the member. Explain to Yukoners how the significant increase in investment in health care is a "pet project" of the Premier in his riding? Explain to Yukoners how taking care of their health care needs on an ongoing basis and ever increasing our ability to meet those needs is a "pet project" in the Premier's riding? Explain what's on the contract registry — the long list of contracts issued for this project, delineating exactly the work done and the cost. Yet the members say this was sole-sourced. The members are seriously challenged for credibility.

Question re: Budget supplementary

Mr. Hardy: This is day 4 of the legislative sitting and the Finance minister has not yet tabled a supplementary budget. This is highly irregular and contrary to how governments operated in the past. It is definitely contrary to governments that claim to be open and accountable. This causes me great concern.

How can we do our jobs and scrutinize government expenditures when we don't have a supplementary budget? How can members of the public tell if their government is spending their money wisely and in their best interests? By delaying the supplementary budget, the government risks being accused of lacking accountability and lacking transparency. Why has the minister not tabled a supplementary budget to date?

Hon. Mr. Fentie: The members opposite accuse this government of accountability issues and transparency issues always. That's not at issue here at all.

The members opposite — unless I'm missing something — have 28 days in this sitting to debate the public's business, which includes legislation — very important to that business — and a supplementary. What the member is missing — as is his colleague, the Leader of the Official Opposition — is that they had ample opportunity a few months ago to debate, once again, one of the largest budgets in the history of the Yukon, and they did nothing of the sort. They had an opportunity to debate in full the economic plan of this territory and the expenditures that go with it. They chose not to.

There is no hurry here. The supplementary must be tabled, by Standing Order, by the fifth day. It will be done, and there is lots of time for the members opposite to debate the supplementary and all of the public's business.

Mr. Hardy: Well, Mr. Speaker, aren't those words of wisdom.

Now, I want to take a few moments to suggest some of the reasons why I think we have not seen a supplementary budget. First, this government was caught flat-footed by the economic crunch that has happened since the springtime; the impact that the ABCP will have on our finances; other investments this government has that are "going south" — we're not going to make money that we thought we were going to make off of them due to poor investment decisions by this minister; over-expenditures; lack of financial oversight by this Premier. It could also explain why the Premier's statements about running a deficit have popped up all of a sudden.

Now, this is a Premier that has condemned other governments, yet he's talking about running his own deficit. Well, this NDPer is very concerned about the finances of the territory and what's going to be happening.

So my question is: will the minister confirm that his government will not be writing down significant sums and that's why he has not tabled a supplementary budget?

Hon. Mr. Fentie: Well, what a shocking display and dissertation of what reportedly might be the facts. Unfortunately, not one of the examples listed has anything to do with facts. This is a pointless discussion, because the members opposite refuse to recognize the evidence — that this government and this territory is well-prepared, and all key stakeholders and

others recognize that, except the members opposite. One can only wonder who is flat-footed. And, by the way, I'd rather be flat-footed than a flat tire.

Mr. Hardy: I would like to remind the Premier that he was voted in under a minority vote. The majority vote was against this government. So let's keep in mind who you serve in this territory — not just your friends. As to facts, the minister, the Premier —

Unparliamentary language

Speaker: Order. The honourable member has compelled me to interrupt again. The member knows full well about that terminology, "serving your friends". All members in here are honourable, and we take them at their face value for that. Please keep that in mind. The Leader of the Third Party has the floor.

Mr. Hardy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Now we know this government made at least one bad investment decision, which he is struggling to try to cover up — pardon me, I'm sorry — not "cover up" but to avoid the issue. We know that. Everybody in the territory knows that, except for the Premier.

We've asked the Finance minister through access to information if there are any other bad investments floating around here. We asked them last spring. He refused to give the answer. Okay, I'll get to my question. Very simply, I'm just going to repeat this one again. Will the minister confirm his government will not be writing down significant sums?

Hon. Mr. Fentie: Mr. Speaker, we have not written down significant sums at all. We've increased the fiscal capacity of the Yukon Territory. To my esteemed and honourable colleague — we did hide the facts and that is why we fully disclosed them in the public accounts. That is why we turned them over to the Auditor General. That is why we accept the Auditor General's findings — it is because we hid the facts.

Question re: Employee engagement survey

Mr. Hardy: I'd like to talk to another minister, I think. I have a question for the minister responsible for the Public Service Commission. I understand an employee engagement survey has been circulated among the public service and that a report of its findings exists. In the spirit of transparency and accountability, which this government tries to create an image of, will the minister table that report in this House, as well as any other reports regarding employee satisfaction and concerns with a breakdown of all department-specific concerns and problems?

Hon. Mr. Rouble: It is my honour and pleasure to rise today as the minister responsible for the Public Service Commission. Mr. Speaker, this government recognizes the value and the tremendous hard work of the employees in the Government of Yukon. We recognize that it is the responsibility of elected officials to provide the direction and the road map for the territory, but that the actual implementation or the heavy lifting, if you will, will be carried out by the employees who work for the Government of Yukon.

Mr. Speaker, the Public Service Commission recognizes that we are in a changing environment in being an employer, not only here in the territory but around Canada, and indeed, around the planet. There are changing characteristics that employees are looking for. It's not just about compensation or remuneration. Employees are looking for flexibility, for additional training, and that's why the Public Service Commission has been very proactive and engaged Ipsos-Reid, a research company, to do a survey, because not only is it important for the government to know about the feelings of the employees, but it's also very important for the Public Service Commission to know how our employees are feeling, what they're thinking and what their concerns are.

Mr. Hardy: Mr. Speaker, he didn't answer the question. He completely avoided the question. This is unbelievable. Where's the transparency? Where's the accountability?

Contrary to what the minister says, morale among members of the Yukon public service seems to be extremely low. We've heard reports that some departments have installed revolving doors to cope with the high turnover of staff, because they do not like the environment they're working in. We've heard of workers stuck in auxiliary and casual positions for years, where they don't receive full benefits. They're giving up on this employer. We've heard of tremendous staff dissatisfaction in key departments.

I asked a simple question. Let us bring on to the floor the survey so we can see what the employees are saying across the board — not just my constituents and other people who come to me, who are concerned about this.

So will the minister do that as well? Will he confirm there is a survey that suggests this alarming trend is due to turnover and very low staff morale?

Hon. Mr. Rouble: Yes, I will confirm for the member opposite that the Public Service Commission did work with Ipsos-Reid, a market researching company, to survey employees. I will not, however, confirm his other assertions because they don't bear a relationship to the reality of the findings.

I apologize in my first answer. I was trying to provide a bit of the background information and I ran out of time. But I would like to send over to the member opposite a copy of the 2008 Yukon government employee engagement survey employee report. This has been provided to public servants. It has also been discussed with our deputies, with the directors in the department. I believe it has been posted on the internal Web site.

We recognize the tremendous value the employees in the government put forward for the territory. We're working very hard in the Public Service Commission to be an employer of choice, to recognize how we can change as an employer to ensure that we engage employees. We continue to have people of the highest quality working with the Government of Yukon. We're looking at things like flexible workweeks or additional training. We're looking at other ways that we can engage our employees. I'll be happy to send a copy over to the member opposite and a copy to the Official Opposition as well.

Mr. Hardy: I hope it is the complete report, and not just a selected part of the report.

Now, when it comes to respecting, appreciating and retaining our public sector workers, this government's record hasn't been very good. Workers have been undermined and undervalued, and when valued employees leave, it costs a substantial amount of time and public money to find replacements and train them. As well, services to the public are often affected in a very negative way.

We've heard a lot of talk in this House about recruitment strategies. We just heard it — about plans, about flex hours, about this, about that — but there are massive changes happening within the structure of this government. People are not being put back into positions as people retire or leave their area of expertise. Those positions are not being filled. People are working far more. There are two stories being painted here.

Very simply, can the minister stand today and tell me what is the summary of the report, good or bad?

Hon. Mr. Rouble: One of the highlights in the report are that the majority of Yukon employees would continue to work with the Yukon government if they were offered another opportunity.

I'll give the member opposite a chance to take a look at the report. It's a very good one. It has a comparison to other jurisdictions, where we'll see that Yukon is doing well in comparison to other jurisdictions. It will be a tool that our managers, directors, deputy ministers, and assistant deputy ministers will use when they manage their departments. As we've discussed on the floor of this Assembly many times, ours is a political role, a role to give the broad direction to enact legislation to establish the budgets. Then we entrust the carrying out of that to our public service.

We're giving all our public service people — our managers, directors and employees — the tools that they need to do their job, and we'll continue to support them and continue to make best efforts to make the Yukon government an employer of choice.

Question re: Healing centre, female inmates

Mr. Inverarity: Yesterday I asked a question of the Justice minister. Specifically, I asked her how she was going to handle the overflow of female inmates within the Whitehorse healing centre. I did not receive an answer to either her questions or from the Premier's reply. Perhaps the minister will simply tell this House today how much the proposed new healing centre will cost and what the anticipated completion date is.

Hon. Mr. Lang: As we move forward with the facility that we're building, because of the women's issues, we're fast-tracking the women's component to this facility, and looking forward to construction this winter, weather permitting. So that will be seen on-site. There will be work done through the winter months as long as the weather holds. We are certainly looking forward to moving ahead with the structure. The planned completion date is 2010, 2011. We are looking forward to keeping those dates in mind and structuring the construction through those dates.

As far as the final cost, the final cost will be brought forward as soon as the final plans are in place for the bigger struc-

ture, and we are certainly looking forward to that in the spring. But at the moment we're working on the women's transition home, and that should be completed, weather permitting, in the coming season.

Mr. Inverarity: Mr. Speaker, as in many projects, not all costs are included in the tender calls. For example, the \$25 million Watson Lake hospital does not include fixtures, furniture or equipment. Nevertheless, we realize that these items must be included and added to the total cost. Can the minister tell us if the interim women's transition unit is included in the total cost of the new proposed healing centre, and what that cost is?

Hon. Mr. Lang: As far as the women's transition facility, we're looking at prices independent of the main facility because of the size of it. We're looking at a cost of approximately between \$1.6 million and \$1.8 million by the time we're complete with that facility, so it's not part and parcel of the final cost. In essence, it will be, but the bidding process has been out in the community, and the estimated cost is \$1.6 million.

Mr. Inverarity: So we're seeing the projects increasing in cost as we speak. However, it appears that my questions are now being answered by the Minister of Highways and Public Works, so here's the final one of my three for today: Minister, if there were 12 female inmates in the current healing centre, and you subtract nine female inmates that will be going into the new transitional unit, how many female units are left, and where will they go?

Hon. Ms. Horne: I'd like to correct the member opposite. This is not a healing centre, it is a correctional centre in the true sense of the word. The transitional women's living unit will house nine inmates low security to medium security, and the remainder will stay in the main centre, the existing centre.

Question re: Salmon conservation

Mr. Elias: This summer we experienced yet another poor run of chinook salmon in the Yukon and Porcupine rivers and the worst ever on the Klukshu River. Yukon-wide conservation closures were once again in effect all across the Yukon. Only 399 salmon got through the Whitehorse fishway, and normally we would see about 1,300. The Klukshu situation was even worse. They only counted 465 chinook, the lowest on record. Normally they would see about 1,500 show up there.

Inaction is damaging the very fabric of our Yukon society by turning a blind eye to the needs of our fish and wildlife populations. We need a firm response to the Alaskans that expresses the need to conserve the salmon. What are the minister's plans to help save our chinook salmon stocks?

Hon. Ms. Taylor: As the member opposite knows full well, in my capacity as Minister of Environment, three weeks into the position, I had the opportunity to raise that directly with the federal minister responsible for salmon in Canada, that being the federal minister responsible for the Department of Fisheries and Oceans. I had the opportunity to raise first-hand with him, as well, our concerns regarding the low runs of salmon within the Yukon drainage. I had the opportunity to also raise first-hand with him concerns that have also been

voiced by First Nations and recreation and commercial fishers in the Yukon.

Likewise, our Premier also had the opportunity to raise these concerns directly with the minister responsible. He also had the opportunity to raise first-hand with the Prime Minister of Canada the very concerns and the need to take diplomatic action and raise these concerns with Alaska and with the United States government to work out a better agreement as to how we have been managing the salmon in the past.

Mr. Elias: Well, it's good to hear that dialogue is continuing, but the federal minister she speaks of is now retired. So it's clear that the international *Yukon River Salmon Agreement* is not working and that the Alaskans are taking too many chinook salmon. It is clear that the pollock fishery bycatch is in the hundreds of thousands out in the open ocean and that the parasite *Ichthyophonus* is hurting the salmon run. It's not clear why the salmon fry are not surviving very well or returning home.

So here's one thing the minister can do: she can be a part of an international joint effort to conduct a complete and thorough examination of why our agreements are not working and where and how the management of our chinook salmon runs have failed, and work to fix it.

When is the Minister of Environment going to make the Yukon chinook salmon run a priority issue?

Hon. Ms. Taylor: Mr. Speaker, as I have clearly articulated, over the last number of months, we have indeed raised these concerns at the respective appropriate levels with the respective political figures who are responsible for salmon in the territory and certainly, in the Canada drainage.

Mr. Speaker, we will continue to raise these concerns with the new federal minister responsible for the Department of Fisheries and Oceans. I would assume that we will be hearing who the new Cabinet will be. After all, we just went through a federal election and we shall soon see who will actually be in that particular post. I will be following up with the minister responsible for Department of Fisheries and Oceans. We recognize that there are lots of issues.

We recognize, also, there are a number of particular mechanisms in place to certainly oversee fisheries in the Yukon, including the Yukon River Panel and including certainly the North Pacific Fishery Management Council, who is responsible for looking at chinook bycatch and setting salmon escapement targets as well.

So, Mr. Speaker, we are very much committed. This is a concern of ours and it will remain a top priority.

Mr. Elias: When is this minister going to get it? The salmon are in trouble, and she says it's not her responsibility. Tell that to the proud small business owners who had to close their store because of the lack of wild salmon. Tell that to my community of Old Crow, who caught only seven chinook salmon this summer. Tell that to the commercial salmon fishermen in Dawson, who can't earn an income. Tell that to the retail store owner downtown who lost \$85,000 to \$100,000 because the salmon season was closed this summer. And tell that to the elderly woman who asks, choking back the tears, "How did we end up in this situation?"

It's these Yukoners who have to shoulder the social and economic burdens silently in pain as they watch their chinook salmon stock suffer. And this minister waits for someone else to act. When does the Deputy Premier plan to get the attention of the Alaskans on this issue?

Hon. Ms. Taylor: Just for the member opposite's correction, in fact, we are part of the process. We do have representation on the Yukon River Panel, and we will continue to have representation on that panel. We'll continue to raise it with the Prime Minister of Canada. We'll continue to raise it with our respective colleagues in the Department of Fisheries and Oceans. We'll continue to work with Yukon First Nations on dealing with the issues of salmon escapement targets. We'll continue to work on the issues of the pollock industry, the by-catch.

Again, there are appropriate mechanisms and we are very much committed to and we are very much represented on the respective areas of concern. Let there be no issue with respect to our commitment and certainly our level of action in terms of impressing upon our federal counterparts to ensure that the State of Alaska and the United States authority live up to their side of the agreement, when it comes to the international treaty.

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

Motions other than government motions.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

MOTIONS OTHER THAN GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

Motion No. 492

Clerk: Motion No. 492, standing in the name of Mr. Nordick.

Speaker: It is moved by the Member for Klondike THAT this House urges the Parliament of Canada to review the effects of recent changes to the *Canada Elections Act* regarding information voters are required to present, to provide identity, to determine if identification requirements need to be adjusted to prevent northern residents from being deprived of their ability to exercise their democratic right to vote.

Mr. Nordick: Recent change to the *Canada Elections Act* with regard to the identification voters need to provide have resulted in many Yukoners being disenfranchised.

For the October 14 election there were approximately 22,700 eligible voters in the Yukon. There were approximately 14,500 ballots cast. Voter turnout was 63.9 percent. However, there were Canadian citizens who were unable to vote because of the impact of the changes to the *Canada Elections Act* ID requirement. For example, university students living outside of the Yukon who came from the communities or fringes of Whitehorse, who had mailing addresses but not residential addresses, were not allowed to vote, not even by special ballot. There are people living in country residential all across Canada who only have post office boxes.

Recently, returning officers have notified Elections Canada that many electors do not have complete civic addresses that

can prove their residence. This problem arises across Canada but is particularly evident in some of the regions of Saskatchewan, Newfoundland and Labrador, and especially the territories. It has been estimated that over one million voters could be disenfranchised by the identification requirements of Bill C-31. Even passports are not valid identification.

In Yukon, and in particular my riding, we have a large percentage of citizens whose mailing addresses differ from their residential addresses; therefore, the ID would not necessarily include their residential addresses, which resulted in a lot of confusion on the 14th. The B.C. Civil Liberties Association has launched a *Charter* challenge against the government because university students across the country could not vote since they had yet to receive mail at their new homes with their names and residences on it.

These conditions and similar circumstances are reputed to be the cause for the lowest voter turnout in Canada's history. In spite of this, Yukon had the highest voter turnout in Canada, which makes me proud to be a Yukon citizen — approximately 23 percent of Yukoners voted in advance polls. I believe that every Canadian citizen has the right to vote and I fully support this motion to urge the Parliament of Canada to review the recent changes in the *Canada Elections Act* in regard to voting ID.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Speaker: Order please. The Minister of Environment.

Hon. Ms. Taylor: I would just ask all members to join me in a warm welcome for my mother, Dianna Raketti.

Applause

Mr. Inverarity: Over the last few months I believe that you have all heard me speak about Yukoners who have had problems with their personal identification.

These problems are usually couched around problems relating to travel, or renting cars, or having their identity questioned when they are asked to prove who, in fact, they are. In Yukon, most people use their driver's licence as a form of government-issued ID. However, this is not the only form of government ID. A lot of Yukoners use their passport or health care card as a form of government-issued identification. The passport is nice, mostly because it has a picture on it; it proves that you are a Canadian citizen, and you would think it would be suitable for us to use as a piece of voting identification. However, as I found out during the last election when I was working, it doesn't have a current address on it. In fact, it doesn't have any address on your passport, unless you write it in specifically, and of course that would not make it acceptable. And so, in fact, as a piece of identification required for Elections Canada, it doesn't pass muster. Our passport — you would think that as proof of citizenship that would be the minimum requirement that one would need to go and vote in Canada. Another piece of identification, the health care card that I mentioned earlier — well, the Yukon health care card is in fact just a little piece of sticky that's put on a piece of plastic, and as a piece of identification it has no picture on it and in fact is quite

frankly useless as a piece of personal identification outside of the Yukon, except for, perhaps, at the hospitals in British Columbia and Alberta, where they now recognize it from years and years of use.

Of course, another form of identification is the Yukon liquor ID card. It has a photo on it, and in fact one could put a permanent address on it, as opposed to a box number, and it would then be perhaps acceptable as a valid piece of identification. But most adult Yukoners do not choose to use this as a form of government identification. And in fact it may not even be acceptable for the purpose of travel outside of the Yukon, and as a result would render itself as a useless piece of identification, except for perhaps going into the liquor store and only if you look like you're under or around the age of 19.

This leaves us, Mr. Speaker, with the Yukon driver's licence and while most Yukoners drive, it is not inclusive of all Yukoners. Many challenged individuals don't drive, and they may never need to travel internationally, and so don't have a passport. They may not even be able to afford a passport every five years, which is about \$90 and is quite expensive.

So, what would they use for a piece of identification? During the summer I had one constituent who approached me and said, "I have a son who is challenged, doesn't speak" — non-auditory was his particular challenge. His mother and the son went down to get the Yukon liquor store identification, and when he was challenged to actually say he was over the age of 19, he could not respond. His mother tried to explain that in fact the issue here was that he could write out the answer, that he was over the age of 19, but that was not acceptable to the individual at the Yukon liquor store.

I realize it was probably just an oversight or there may have been some other issue around it, but it goes to show you that we need to develop some better identification for those people who choose not to have a Yukon driver's licence.

All of this begs the question: who is responsible for providing its citizens with a piece of actual identification to prove they are a Yukon resident or to prove, for example, that they are a Canadian citizen? My birth certificate is in fact the ultimate proof of my citizenship. But as you know, they don't come with pictures on them and if they did, mine would be a little bit out of date.

Not all voters were born in Canada and, as a result, they don't have a birth certificate. They receive a citizenship card when they become a Canadian citizen. My understanding is that that actually does have a piece of photo ID on it, but they're actually in a better position to vote than the rest of the citizens of Canada who were actually born here.

The issue of who can vote and who cannot vote seems to be a big question. This goes to the issue of the voter registration list that my colleague on the other side mentioned earlier. There are in fact people on the voter registration list who are not citizens of Canada and have no right to vote. I know of at least one in my constituency who didn't vote but did appear on the voter registration list. So we have some big issues around registration and voter registration and the whole electoral act, and I beg to say that I think all these issues need to be addressed as we move through this process.

One might argue that this motion is not one that Elections Canada needs to address but rather the Government of Canada — or at least the Government of Yukon — needs to address. Clearly when it comes to national voting, some sort of identification check needs to be in place to verify that an individual is a qualified voter and that the person presenting themselves to the polling station is who they say they are.

We only have to look at the number of countries around the world to see voting discrepancies. We don't even have to look that far — just south of the 49th parallel — to see voting discrepancies that occur from time to time. I believe in the last election, Florida was a big issue. I don't recall how it was resolved, but it was out there.

I would beg to say at this point that it's also incumbent upon the Yukon to address the issue of voter electorate for our own general elections. It seems to me that there is no real form of positive ID for any Yukon citizen to get on a voter registration list and prove that they are in fact qualified to vote within the Yukon Territory.

Do I think ID needs to have a physical address on it to be valid? Probably not. But it could include the mailing address, and perhaps a piece of valid identification could also have a permanent address. But does this address homeless people? No. Do they have post office boxes or do they even have a physical address? No, it doesn't address that. So, as a jurisdiction in Canada, I think we need to address this issue of how we identify our citizens and how we address this unique democratic right that we have in Canada to exercise our franchise to vote.

Should valid ID have a picture on it? I think so. Does it need to be unique? Does it need to be something that is highly secure for transborder travel? I don't think so. Most people are quite happy with a driver's licence that isn't being forged by high school students.

I think we can address these issues of identification and how we build our electoral list of individuals that we have. Our voters list is important. Perhaps the Yukon should be looking at a territorial-wide voters list that could be formed as part of the electoral list that is created at the national level. Surely the two should be talking to each other.

Whose responsibility is it to provide acceptable ID to vote, or to drive, or to travel? Well, I don't think it's necessarily Elections Canada's position to do that.

I do think that it will ultimately fall to the territorial government to provide some form of acceptable identification that allows its citizens to exercise its franchise and to travel and to prove who they are, either within the jurisdiction or outside of it.

If Elections Canada requires a physical address on a piece of picture ID, then the government needs to take the responsibility for issuing acceptable identification to Yukoners. We have no concerns with this government asking Elections Canada to change the voting rules to accommodate Yukoners, but we do have a problem with this government's failure to issue acceptable identification to all Yukoners.

Thank you.

Hon. Mr. Cathers: Following the Member for Porter Creek South is often an interesting experience. I was a bit shocked to hear that member stating he didn't think it was Elections Canada's responsibility to ensure that citizens are able to vote. Mr. Speaker, that's their mandate. Their mandate is to run elections for Canada, and it is Canadian citizens' democratic right to be able to exercise a vote.

Of course, we all recognize — I think it's fair to say — the need to prevent electoral fraud, and there needs to be some standard for identifying that you are indeed who you purport to be. However, that being said, there are several things that must be considered. The example of homeless people is one that has been mentioned. They do not have a physical address and may not have identification. There are also students — young Canadians, young Yukoners — who may be in a situation where they may not necessarily have a driver's licence. Most would. They may not have all the requisite identification — photo ID, et cetera.

If members were to take a look, if Yukon citizens take a look, at the identification we have, I think it's fair to say that, for most of us, a driver's licence is common. Many of us also have in our possession an acquisition licence for firearms or a possession-only licence, but that piece of identification — federally issued — does not include a physical address or mailing address. Someone who is not a firearms owner and does not have a driver's licence may not have those types of identification.

I would suggest this would predominantly apply in larger numbers to younger Yukon citizens, but they are no less voters than anyone else. It may also apply to others; it may even apply to senior citizens. There are some people — and we all probably know some — who do not have a driver's licence, have never had a driver's licence and never will have a driver's licence.

One thing that is cause for concern is the fact that a passport is not sufficient proof of citizenship and residency to vote in an election. In the Elections Canada list of the identification that was acceptable to allow voting, there was the requirement for identity cards, which contained a number of options. A health care card, social insurance number card, birth certificate — birth certificate most people should have, but there are some who have lost them. Again, this is one piece of identification, and the requirements authorized by the Chief Electoral Officer of Canada state that both pieces must contain your name and one must contain your address.

My point in this case, particularly in rural and northern areas, is that there will be a significant number of people who do not necessarily have that address. For example, if you look down at the list of original documents that are acceptable to prove your location of residence, a credit card statement — in most cases, for someone who had a post office box as their mailing address that would be sent to their post office box; a bank statement, the same; utility bill for residential telephone, cable TV, public utilities, hydro, gas or water — that would likely state the physical address. But there are a number of Yukon citizens and citizens in other areas within the north and rural Canada who do not have a connection to the power grid.

They would not have an electrical statement. They would operate by generator or by solar power. Perhaps they would not even have that. They may use propane for their lighting, and they may use another source entirely for their heat.

Property tax assessment — that works for property owners. Not everyone owns property. And it's quite common that even when a couple owns property, the title may be in the name of one of that couple, not in the names of both.

A school, college or university report card or transcript — again, some people would have that; many would not.

Residential lease, residential mortgage statement or agreement — well, again, that only applies if you own or lease property.

A Canada child tax benefit statement — certainly, for those who do not have children, that doesn't apply.

And another point, if I can take a step aside for a moment, is noting that when Canada formed the permanent voters list, that is attached primarily to the filing of income tax. And on income tax forms — very commonly, including for me — the address referenced on the income tax form is a mailing address — a post office box number, not the physical address. So the very list provided by and maintained by Elections Canada, in partnership with the Canada Revenue Agency through the income tax, would, in many cases — and I would suggest for a very significant number of Yukoners — not refer to a physical address.

Other examples of acceptable identification include: an income tax assessment notice — again, the same — it may not contain that physical address; insurance policy — same again; government cheque or government cheque stub number with elector name; statement of employment insurance benefits paid; Canada Pension Plan statement of contributions; statement of old age security; statement of benefits from provincial workplace safety or insurance board; statement of direct deposit for provincial disability support program — again, all examples of types of statements that are likely to reference the mailing address, not the physical address, in the case of Yukon citizens and others who do not have their mail arrive to their place of residence.

Vehicle ownership, vehicle insurance — again, the same thing — the mailing address would likely be on the form. An attestation of residence issued by the responsible authorities — shelter, soup kitchens, student or senior residences, long-term care facilities — I give him credit for including that as an example, but if you are not a resident in one of those facilities, you cannot have the director of that responsible authority attest to your residence — in other words, a letter from a public curator.

So again, in all these cases, there are a significant number of Yukon citizens and other Canadians, particularly in rural Canada who, if they did have those statements, if they did have one or more of the original documents that fall into that category — there is a very good chance that that document would not contain any reference to their physical address.

Primary identification: of course a passport would be acceptable for an identity card proving Canadian citizenship. Going through the list of identity cards that are available, a sig-

nificant number of these do not have any reference or may not have reference to a physical address. Health cards, social insurance number card — the SIN card — of course contain no reference to an address.

Birth certificate, of course, refers to the location at which you were born and is not a current piece of identification for address. A driver's licence, in the case of the Yukon and other jurisdictions, does not necessarily contain the physical address. Canadian passport — no reference to the physical address.

Other examples include certificate of Indian status, certificate of Canadian citizenship or citizenship card, credit or debit card with elector name, Canadian Forces identity card, Veterans Affairs, Canada health card, an employee card issued by employers. Again, examples, Mr. Speaker, of identity cards that are likely not to, or do not, contain a physical address: old age security identification card, public transportation card, student ID card, library card, liquor identification card, Canadian Blood Services or Héma-Québec card, hospital card, fishing licence, wildlife identification card, hunting licence, firearms acquisition card or firearms possession card, outdoors cards and licences, provincial/territorial identification card and local community service centre card.

Again, Mr. Speaker, I went through the whole list to give the examples, and to point out for those who are looking at this, that in those lists of documents that can be used to prove identity, most of them do not contain a physical address, or very well may not. This is not just a Yukon issue. Of course the reason that the Member for Klondike brought this issue forward is that we are concerned about this issue. I know the member has heard from constituents. I have heard from constituents. I believe all the members of the government caucus have heard from constituents who were unable to vote or who had trouble voting. This is an issue that we are concerned about, and we believe that it's appropriate to bring forward to the Parliament of Canada, to all parties, particularly considering it's a minority parliament, and have them consider this issue, to have them recognize the fact that the low national voter turnout very likely had something to do with the changes in identification requirements. The Yukon, as the Member for Klondike pointed out, had the highest voter turnout in Canada, yet still, we had what I believe is a record low voter turnout for the Yukon, a voter turnout of 63.9 percent, with only 14,500 and some ballots cast, out of a total of 22,700 eligible voters. So again I ask all members of this Assembly: why was this voter turnout so low? Probably every member of this Assembly has heard from someone who had trouble voting.

The Member for Porter Creek South, the member of the Liberal Party, was trying to turn this into an issue that is about Yukon drivers' licences. Well, I know that is a personal pet stalking horse, for lack of a better term, of the Member for Porter Creek South. However, some of his claims about the driver's licence and its acceptability in jurisdictions are not accurate. His claims about the health care card and its acceptability at Canadian hospitals, again is not accurate.

The member ought to know, as the third party is well aware — their critic commented on it back when the Member for Porter Creek South was placing ads in the paper. The third

party's critic understood the reason behind the process that is taking place for changing the drivers' licences and the benefit of working with British Columbia in trying to have a document that, once we spend a significant amount of taxpayers' money changing the system, will be acceptable for crossing the border as well.

There is no point in dwelling on that issue. It is a red herring and I am disappointed that the Member for Porter Creek South chose to focus on it and to try to politicize debate in this Legislature on this topic when the intention, I know, of the Member for Klondike in bringing this forward, and the intention of the member from the government side, is simply to have this motion brought forward for what we hope will be a unanimous vote in the Legislature to send a strong message to the Canadian Parliament and to all parties in that Parliament that we are concerned about this situation. We are concerned that we do not want Yukon citizens to be deprived of their democratic right to exercise a vote in a federal election because of issues around identification.

It has been mentioned by the Member for Klondike about the B.C. Civil Liberties Association and a *Charter* challenge loss because of university students not being able to vote — again, students who have yet to receive new mail in a home with their names on it. Even for those who do receive mail, as you'll recall from me reading the original documents, the mail documents, that would be acceptable. Those types of statements do not necessarily come to all members within a household. They may come to the husband or the wife and not to the other or they may come to the parents but not to the children.

Now, I will be the first to recognize the importance of taking appropriate steps to prevent electoral fraud. It is important to ensure that appropriate steps are taken to prevent people from voting when they are not Canadian citizens or where they are not entitled to exercise a vote in a specific area.

But when one is looking at the requirements for proving both identity and location of residence, I think it is worthy of consideration that the potential for someone with a Canadian passport having arrived at a polling station, demonstrating they are a Canadian citizen and therefore eligible to vote somewhere in Canada in an election — it may be cause for concern in Vancouver or Toronto where that person could vote in multiple polling districts. In the north, the chances of someone doing so are quite remote. It is not simple to walk down the street to another riding. If steps are taken as far as the communication between polling stations of who has been sworn in at the polls or who has identified or proven their Canadian citizenship, but has not identified their location, the chances of them exercising a vote multiple times are remote.

It is not my intention in debate, nor was it the intention of the Member for Klondike in his motion, to be too prescriptive to the Parliament of Canada in what changes should be made.

We recognize that this is a complex matter. We recognize that the reason these changes were made to the federal elections law, the *Canada Elections Act*, was because of concern that, particularly in urban areas, there may have been some abuse of voting — either duplicate voting or people who were not entitled to vote in the first place were exercising that vote. How-

ever, again, I point out the very low voter turnout. I heard from a number of people and I know others have heard from people who had difficulty exercising their vote or who were unable to vote and suggested that the system needs to be looked at again. Parliament needs to review what occurred nationwide in this last federal election — the 2008 federal election. The north particularly is my concern, but also, I would suggest that there is a nationwide need for some consideration of whether that by trying to solve one problem they may have created a greater problem and be disenfranchising a significant number of Canadians of their democratic right to vote.

Another point worthy of note is that there are communities within our sister territories that are even more remote and have less access than we in Yukon. Of course, in Yukon we have the community of Old Crow and I would suspect, although I do not know for certain, that there are individuals there who do not have many of the required pieces of identification, particularly elders who may have spent most of their life living in the community and have lived a lifestyle that is subsistence based or at the very least is not connected to areas where they would receive some of these specific letters that assist or allow someone to prove their place of residency and may not have those primary pieces of identification to prove their birth and their citizenship.

So, Mr. Speaker, I understand that I am running out of time. I appreciate members' attention this afternoon, and I hope that members will not do as the Member for Porter Creek South did and politicize this issue. I will not suggest, as did the Member for Porter Creek South suggest — the Liberal member — that it is not Elections Canada's responsibility to ensure people are able to vote.

I hope that all members of this House will recognize the importance of Elections Canada taking the appropriate steps to allow people to prove their identity, to prove their place of residence and to vote in a federal election and to ensure the standard is reasonable and is not depriving Canadian citizens of their democratic right to vote.

In closing, I would note one example. A constituent of mine was not able to vote. This is someone who would be known to probably over three-quarters of the residents within the area — had lived in the area in excess of 20 years, a long-time resident — but simply did not have the required paperwork and wasn't able to vote. I know of others — witnessed others — who had difficulty proving their eligibility to vote. Again, these were long-time Yukon citizens who either were deprived or were almost deprived of that democratic right to vote.

I would urge all members to support this motion and urge the Parliament of Canada to review the requirements of the *Canada Elections Act* with regard to identification and consider whether they should be changed.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Hardy: I hope I won't be as long as the previous member. I will state right up front I support the motion. There's no problem with it.

I heard many stories during the last federal election, and I talked to many people about some of the problems they had. Indeed, when I went to vote, I was asked — though I knew the person very well. I think it was a neighbour of mine. I was asked to produce the sufficient ID and all that stuff, and fortunately I had it.

So it was an interesting experience. One of the things we have to ask ourselves, though, is what is the real problem here? Of course, we have to have rules and requirements in order to prevent fraud or a person voting in other areas, or a party's abuse of the voting system. That's not a problem.

But what is the real problem here? The real problem is that people aren't engaged in democracy any more. We're not, as a society or as a country, very democratic any more. We don't believe in it, if we don't vote. It's lip service, if we don't vote. And we have watched the continuing erosion of the percentage of people engaged in our democratic right, which people before us have fought so hard for and used to have a great deal of passion about this right to vote.

I remember stories of immigrants coming from countries where they did not have that right, and immigrating to Canada, and becoming Canadian citizens, and how much that meant to them — to be able to go and cast their vote. They believed so strongly in it. And in walking to the polls — they'd walk by young people, they'd walk by old people with attitudes — “It doesn't matter. It doesn't change a thing.” — who would not go into the voting booth and cast their ballot. They could not understand that because where they came from, that's what they dreamed of — the chance to have a voice, even if that voice is so small and you may think it's insignificant; it is not. It is not, when people as a whole believe that it will have an impact. It only becomes insignificant when you don't exercise it.

So what is our country becoming? It's not a democracy any more. We are now getting in the area of 50 percent of people who are no longer engaged enough to come to a polling station to vote. At some point we could be below 50 percent. Half the country — those of eligible voting age — is no longer interested in having a democracy. Half the country is saying they don't really care any more — why? There could be many reasons and I'll list some of them.

Voting has been dropping consistently, and it has not just been dropping at the federal level — it's dropping at the territorial and provincial levels across this country. It's dropping at the municipal level, which is always low and also a shame. We all take responsibility for that. My children all know they have to vote; it's mandatory in my house. How I enforce that, I won't tell you, but it is mandatory. They would never say they didn't vote. As a matter of fact, when they vote they come straight home or phone me and say, “I voted, Dad.” I feel great; they know it's something I expect of them; and I remind them on a regular basis why they should vote.

We're all part of this.

I remember that we used to send people out door to door, into the bushes, into the communities, up to communities that don't have road access, to enumerate people, to get them on the voters list. That was a duty of the government. Now it's trans-

ferred to the individual. Many individuals no longer care. Are they really going to put themselves on the voters list if they don't care? Probably not. Is there any more contact, any more discussion or engagement — even a tiny bit of engagement of people knocking on your door and asking who the residents of the house are, who is eligible to vote, and putting them on a voters list? Then if they exercise their right, they're on that list. There are also other ways to get on the list if they're missed.

Since the government made a decision to stop doing that, there has been a greater drop in engaging people to vote in this country.

That's one problem that has happened and that's one less contact around the importance of being engaged in our democratic process. What are some of the others?

First past the post. For 20-some years, I've been arguing, along with many, many other people, that the first-past-the-post system that Canada, the United States, the United Kingdom — and I can definitely be corrected by the Clerk, who has greater knowledge in this area that I do on which countries are using it — but those are the three main countries that I know of that have populations over eight million people, that still use the first-past-the-post system, in relation to some form of proportional representation.

Now, there are hundreds of forms of proportional representation. There's a multitude used by many countries around the world, successfully. Of course, certain people always like to point out the ones that they think are a problem. I just was following a slight debate around this argument of why proportional representation would not be good for Canada, and the example they used — they almost always like to use the Italian example. Well, you know, Italy's doing quite well, thank you. I think they're a very engaged and active voting population. They use a proportional representation model, and yes, they do change governments and they have coalition governments. There's nothing wrong with coalition governments, nothing wrong with us getting along, Mr. Speaker. You may have different views, but we can agree on many points if we can sit down and talk. That's what we should be doing in here as well.

However, there was one example in which — and I can't say it's Italy; it's skipping my mind, but there was one example just in the last couple of days that I read about, in which one of the big media outlets, *The Globe and Mail*, *The National*, *La Presse* or something like that — I'm not sure which one — had said why proportional representation wasn't bad. They said that the government had gone to the polls — what was it? Three times in six years — something like that. What they didn't mention —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Mr. Hardy: Israel. Thank you very much. What they didn't mention was Canada, with the first-past-the-post system, has gone to the polls four times in six years, or something like that. So, there was really no difference which — I mean, it's how you omit things in this. Anyway, it was an interesting analysis. I totally disagree with what they were saying.

I'm a believer of proportional representation of some form or another. I think it's going to happen in Canada and I think it will have a better impact upon the voter turnout. Definitely

we're failing in the method we're using. We do not have this engagement that is so desperately needed in this country: democracy education in school, teaching people about their rights, teaching people about politics, teaching people about the political structure that we live under and that influences each and everyone's life at every different level, whether it's education, health, environment — at a million levels — your street outside, the improvements to your road, and how you can be engaged in that debate.

We don't teach it in the schools. It is wonderful to see the teachers who do bring their students here, but this should be on a regular basis definitely for all the high schools. We should see every class come in here over the course of a year. We should have them come down and meet at the Clerk's office and meet with you, Mr. Speaker, to talk about it and to engage with us, the various parties, and then to see us in here. Maybe we'll behave better, I don't know. However, we need to engage people at an age where they can be engaged.

I'll tell you right now, when you're in school, you're a captive audience, unless you want to skip out.

Another consideration: mandatory voting. A lot of people don't like to talk about it in Canada but, guess what? I believe Australia still has mandatory voting. Many other countries have mandatory voting. They stand by that and they stand by it because, if people want a democracy, they had better exercise it. If they want to believe that a democracy is better than a non-democratic country, then they had better make a commitment to it. Maybe that has to be considered in Canada.

Other areas: confusion about voting rules. We have federal rules, we have territorial rules, we have municipal rules. It confuses people — it totally confuses them — on what their rights are and what the conditions are, where they go and vote. There are different rules. We need to bring those rules together and harmonize them, make it understandable and simplify it for people, as well as make it engaging for people.

What's happening in the United States right now — and they're voting next week — is extremely exciting. There's a phenomenal engagement happening down there. People have come alive after many, many years of sleeping in the States around their democratic rights. It would be very interesting if, for the first time in many years, the United States has a higher voter turnout than Canada. Because if it does, shame on us.

I want to mention a young person from the Yukon who has made a very significant mark around this area, and that's a person who went to school here. As a matter of fact, she came back just this summer and interviewed me and my wife and many people throughout the Yukon about the changes in regard to this. She was working for Elections Canada but she created Apathy is Boring. Apathy is Boring is to try to engage young people in our democratic process once again, and she has worked so hard to do that. She created that; she was recognized as one of the most influential young people in Canada — or up and coming in Canada — a few years ago. Iona Dougherty — many people might know her in here. She has worked very hard to make this happen. She does it out of Montreal.

I only can imagine, because I haven't had a chance to talk to her recently, but I can only imagine what she felt when she

saw the numbers in this last federal election — lowest ever, in the 50s. In the Yukon we had a little bit higher, but nothing to be proud of — definitely nothing that I would be bragging about across Canada.

Those are my comments. I support this motion. I think it is just a small piece of the puzzle, though, and I don't think that it necessarily addresses what the real problem is when it comes to voting, whether it is the apathy people feel or the fact that they feel ineffective in their vote.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Ms. Taylor: Mr. Speaker, I would like to also lend my support to this motion here today before us. I would like to also thank the Member for Klondike for bringing it forward for discussion purposes. I'm not going to be long, although the previous speaker said he wasn't going to be long either and certainly took some time. I can very much appreciate his words and he spoke very passionately about democracy and the democratic right to vote.

Of course, we in this Legislature, as representatives, all too clearly know how important that right to vote is. Of course, we haven't really had that right very long here in this country, unfortunately. I speak of aboriginal Canadians and I speak of women. Certainly it is a relatively new practice here in this country, but we do in fact have the right to vote.

The previous speaker just spoke to the root causes as to why more individuals do not cast their ballot. Of course, I think we all have our own views. Going door to door in our respective areas, we certainly hear first-hand, particularly during election time, about some of the issues and some of the challenges, in terms of being able to have that right to vote. I think that is why, in fact, through our own Elections Office, housed within the Legislative Assembly Office, there is, in fact, a periodic review undertaken of the *Elections Act* from time to time, and I believe we have made significant improvements over the years.

There are always going to be issues along the way, but the key is to really recognize those challenges and to bring them forward for consideration and to see how it is that we can be able to resolve some of these issues of concern.

You know, I just refer to my own riding of Whitehorse West. In the last election actually there was an 85 percent voter turnout. I think it was 85 or 87 percent voter turnout. It was perhaps the highest voter turnout in Yukon's history in that particular riding. I would say very much that all citizens — those who were registered to vote that is — did in fact, by and large, exercise their right to vote. For that, it is much appreciated.

In the territory, I think that Yukon has, by and large, experienced certainly above the national average, a high degree of voter participation. That's not to say that we don't have issues. In fact, it's incumbent on each and every one of us to reach out to individuals at every opportunity to encourage them to cast their ballot, to encourage them to become involved. I would encourage them to run for office, put their name on the ballot and so forth. Just recently, I was able to have the opportunity to attend a women's forum. The theme of the Women's Forum that was hosted by the Women's Directorate and the Yukon

Advisory Council on Women's Issues was all about women and leadership and how we can better engage women — young women, women of all ages and from all backgrounds — to become more engaged in the political system. It was very enlightening to hear some of the issues that were put forward by women.

But the biggest and best way of engaging with individuals is by coming together and speaking about some of the challenges, speaking about our own personal experiences as elected officials and be able to help them, to provide the tools in terms of how to become better engaged in terms of running for office and so forth.

My mother was a long-time returning officer in the Yukon. In fact, if memory corrects me, she served approximately just under 20 years as a returning officer in the Watson Lake region. I recall after the completion of a territorial election some of the experiences and some of the efforts that returning officers and the Elections Office here in the Yukon go toward engaging Yukoners. I'll never forget one story where they were flown out to Stewart Lake, for example, to engage an individual or two or three, I should say, at that time. As it turned out, the weather came in and they were camped there for a couple of days.

It just speaks to the importance of reaching out to individual Yukoners. I think our officials within Elections Yukon are to be commended for their efforts. I refer to the officials housed within the Legislative Assembly Office right down to the enumerators, to the polling clerks and so forth. It's not an easy job to reach individuals. Sometimes individuals aren't home on the third try, but at least you can say every effort has been made.

With respect to this motion, I think it speaks to the very essence of the Yukon and living in the north — some of the challenges that perhaps others aren't privy to experiencing, living south of 60, you could say.

As this motion points out, recent changes that were made to the *Canada Elections Act* have posed a great number of challenges to those living in rural Canada, particularly in northern Canada. Of course, it all comes down to identification. We could probably spend the rest of this sitting talking about the appropriate level of identification, but the point is that identification has really evolved and continues to evolve immensely, especially since 9/11. One only has to talk about the western hemisphere travel initiative, for example, and what level of secure identification will be required as of June 2009 in terms of a flow of individuals visiting America and certainly returning home to Canada.

Obviously when it comes down to identification, there is some significant evolution in terms of technological improvements, some challenges and of course it comes down to privacy challenges, as well, when you talk about improvements.

The bottom line is there are some issues experienced as a result of these changes to the *Canada Elections Act* on the national scale and we certainly experienced some of those and have heard some of the electorate speak to those very loudly in the last federal election, which just wrapped up recently.

There's no doubt that changes are required. In fact, what this does is lend the strength of the Yukon Legislature, to add

our voices from a territorial level to those in other jurisdictions in the country. For that, it's a good reason to support this particular motion.

There were just some discussions about the use of passports, the use of fishing licences and health cards and so forth. Again the bottom line is that there are some issues that have been identified and we need to work with the Parliament of Canada to recognize and acknowledge these issues and work with them to resolve these.

Like our own *Elections Act*, their act is always subject to review.

And this is an opportune time because one can only guess when, in fact, Canadians will be off to the polls again in terms of electing or re-electing another national government, given the outcome of what had happened just recently in Canada.

So, again, I just wanted to thank the Member for Klondike for bringing this motion forward, and we certainly look forward to hearing other comments put forward by members, as well.

Mr. Edzerza: I'd just like to add a bit to the dialogue that's going on here today with regard to this issue because, in Canada, we truly advertise across the world how democratic this country really is. When it comes to elections, I believe we have to question the democracy, really.

I would like to put on record some things that came from Barbara Odenwald, president of Fair Vote Canada. This was sort of some summarizations of results from the last election. They start out by saying: "Once again, Canada's antiquated first-past-the-post system wasted millions of votes, distorted results, severely punished large blocks of voters, exaggerated regional differences, created an unrepresentative Parliament and contributed to a record low voter turnout.

"The chief victims of the October 14 federal election were the Green Party: 940,000 voters supporting the Green Party sent no one to Parliament, setting a new record for the most votes cast for any party that gained no parliamentary representation. By comparison, 813,000 Conservative voters in Alberta alone were able to elect 27 MPs. Prairie Liberals and New Democrats: in the prairie provinces, Conservatives received roughly twice the vote of the Liberals and NDP, but took seven times as many seats. Urban Conservatives: similar to the last election, a quarter-million Conservative voters in Toronto elected no one and neither did Conservative voters in Montreal.

"New Democrats: the NDP attracted 1.1 million more votes than the Bloc but the voting system gave the Bloc 50 seats and the NDP 37."

How can anyone consider this a real democratic representation? The logic just doesn't add up here.

Now, there's a good comparison here. Had the votes on October 14 been cast under a fair and proportional voting system, Fair Vote Canada projected that the seats allocated would have been approximately as follows: Conservatives, 38 percent of the popular vote — 117 seats, not 143; Liberals, 26 percent of the popular vote — 81 seats, not 76; NDP, 18 percent of the popular vote — 57 seats, not 37; Bloc, 10 percent of the popular vote — 28 seats, not 50; Greens, seven percent of the popular vote — 23 seats, not zero.

So, Mr. Speaker, when we look at this kind of analysis of an election, it really does lead into the question of whether or not this is real democracy. I would like to just talk a little bit more about elections, and it has to do with this territory. Members of this Legislature are concerned about the national election process, but what about closer to home? I know the previous speaker talked a little bit about some of the election results in the territory. Today we are discussing the requirements to produce identification before one votes in the national election. I believe we have more extreme, serious flaws in the Yukon *Elections Act*. I will talk to only one that I experienced in the last election and that had to do with the enumeration of voters. As a candidate in the last election, I spent two weeks of the campaign period enumerating voters who were not enumerated in the McIntyre-Takhini riding.

I enumerated 110 voters who would not have been able to vote at the election polls on election day in the territory had I not gone from house to house to check and see if people were on the voters list. I find that absurd, unbelievable. Lo and behold — after doing all of this paperwork and taking it to the poll, I was told then that I could only enumerate 10 people. Now I was sent back out to find 10 more people to come with me and enumerate 10 each of the 100 applications that I had solicited myself.

What is wrong with this process? I believe it's far more important for the members of this Legislature to clean up the act at home before we start worrying about the national elections.

I could speak on this for quite some time, but I'm not going to. There are many other flaws in Yukon's *Elections Act*.

I certainly hope they're going to be addressed, because candidates who come forward in the election had better read all the fine print. Otherwise, you will be going into the election thinking all your family was enumerated, and probably none of them were. When they go to vote in the election, they won't be able to support you because they're not on the voters list.

In conclusion, I believe producing two pieces of ID would have been much easier than going from house to house to confirm whether or not the household members were in fact on the voters list and would be able to cast their vote.

Mr. Mitchell: I will be brief, because I think most of the points I would have covered have been covered by others. I certainly can support the motion, "THAT this House urges the Parliament of Canada to review the effects of recent changes to the *Canada Elections Act* regarding information voters are required to present to prove identity, to determine if identification requirements need to be adjusted to prevent northern residents from being deprived of the ability to exercise their democratic right to vote."

I'm going to stay pretty narrow on the topic at hand. I know the Member for McIntyre-Takhini was talking about Fair Vote Canada and proportional representation, and those are all interesting and worthwhile topics. On motion days, you allow us a great deal of latitude, Mr. Speaker, and we thank you for that, but I think I will constrain myself to speaking to the motion as written.

First of all I want to thank those Elections Canada officials within Yukon — the chief electoral official for Elections Canada and all her assistants — because they did make every effort to ensure that every citizen residing in Yukon was able to exercise their right to vote. Having said that, they were constrained by the law and the rules and policies that were in effect. I think there were interviews done on the radio and in the newspapers, there were advertisements placed repeatedly trying to apprise Yukoners that the rules had changed, that things were different in terms of past practices of showing up on the day, and they did their best to inform Yukoners to make sure that people would not be disenfranchised.

Having said that, I think the rules are flawed. I know there's a reason for the rules. We have seen — not so much in Canada; I'm not aware of a whole lot of horror stories in Canada regarding federal elections or, for that matter, elections within Yukon in terms of voting abuses. No doubt there are some instances but I think they are really a minority. But we've certainly seen it in the United States and we've seen it elsewhere in the world where there's massive voter fraud.

I believe the changes that were made were not to intentionally disenfranchise people but in the belief it would better ensure it was one person, one vote, and that those people who did vote were actual citizens and qualified to do so.

However, we know within rural Yukon that people regularly have a post office box as their address. Very few people in many of our rural communities use a street address. It's a post office box or even general delivery. Even within the City of Whitehorse, many people choose to get their mail at a post office box. We also know that many Yukon residents do not hold a passport. They're expensive and if people haven't had reason to travel beyond our borders, they haven't necessarily seen a reason to get a passport. There's still a significant number of Yukon residents who don't hold a driver's licence.

It could be because they never learned to drive, because they can't afford to drive; it can be because they're a senior citizen who no longer feels that they want to be driving or that they're able to drive. It can be people who are differently abled and who haven't found a way in which they can operate a motor vehicle. And those are the two primary means of photo identification that people are expected to have, and I think it's an unfair expectation. I am not going to suggest what the solution is; I am only going to support this motion and say that it is critical that every citizen exercise that right, or at least have the opportunity to exercise it, and every citizen should exercise the right.

We've seen voter turnouts in Canada, and within Yukon, falling in recent elections. It was only a few years ago that we used to see very high voter turnouts — you know, high 70s, 80-some percent in every Canadian election, and we would kind of look south at the very low voter turnouts in the United States and kind of shake our heads and say, "Well, that's part of why they're having the problems they're having; they don't vote, but then afterwards they complain about the outcome."

Well, I'm concerned now that for a variety of reasons, and some of them may be that people are fed up with the results of elections at all levels; they just don't feel that the politicians are

representing them and their issues as they'd hoped; they don't believe that it makes any difference. You hear more and more people on television, on the radio, on the street, saying, "Well, what difference does it make whom we vote for? You're all the same." That's a very, very unfortunate thing. I don't believe we're all the same. I believe every member who runs for office at the territorial level does so because they have strong beliefs in making the Yukon a better place for everyone, for their constituents and for all Yukoners. I don't doubt that of the members opposite. I don't doubt that of the members in the third party, and I know that that's true of the members in our caucus, but people are getting jaded. We should not be adding to that by making it that much more difficult for those people who truly do want to be able to vote to do so.

Now, there were some changes that were made in this last election that I think were positive, and I think we should talk about them. There was the sort of rolling ability to vote that didn't mean there was simply a one- or two-day advance poll, but that when you went down to the Elections Canada Office and presented the information that was required, you could in fact register your vote right then and there. I know I voted before the names were actually on the ballot. You had the ability to write in the names of people that you knew were running and that was valid. I think those rules were good improvements, because there were people who weren't going to be in the Yukon for the advance polling days and they weren't going to be here on election day. If those people were here earlier during the writ period, but were then going to be gone — either through work, holiday or educational reasons — they were actually able to vote over a large number of days. That was a positive. So there were some things in the new rules that I think we should not lose.

I saw a television program last night, and in 30-some states they have that same process in place. I don't remember the exact number. I guess there are 19 that don't, so we can do the math then on how many must have it. I believe in those 31 states that they have a similar situation. I think they showed that Nevada had set up voting machines in airports and shopping malls. They were interviewing people who said, "Well, it was really easy to vote. It was easier than voting on *American Idol*," one person said, which is kind of a pretty scary comparison, but nevertheless, I think it's important that we make sure that we encourage people to vote.

As I've said, I think that some of the other recent changes regarding identification are counterproductive. I understand what the intent was, but I don't think that the intent had the desired result. I have no problem supporting a motion to encourage the Parliament of Canada to review the effects of those changes and see if we can get it better for next time. Considering that Canadians elected yet their third minority government in a row, it appears that we will have a next time in the not-too-distant future.

With that, I know there are other members who may want to speak, and I will thank the Member for Klondike for bringing forward this motion.

Hon. Mr. Rouble: Mr. Speaker, it is an honour and a pleasure to rise today in our Assembly to debate this motion that is before us. I'd like to thank the Member for Klondike for bringing it forward. I know that it has been an issue that I have heard on the street and in my home and had raised with me in my neighbourhood.

Mr. Speaker, one of the factors that is fundamental to being Canadian really is the rights entrusted to us — “entrusted” really isn't the right word — the right recognized in us as Canadians. We as Canadians have certain inherent rights that, by definition of being a Canadian, we have recognized our rights outlined in the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. One of the key rights identified there is our ability as Canadians to participate in the election process and in the whole democratic process. In creating a political system that we as the people have the ability to have a say in.

In fact, this right to vote is simply fundamental to being Canadian and fundamental to our whole political system. The disenfranchisement of this right or having the ability to vote to be taken away, I think, is something that has very serious ramifications. While I recognize some of the intent behind the changes and regulations that were put forward, really, what it resulted in was that people who were legitimate Canadian citizens, who had the legitimate right to vote, were not able to do so. There were cases, Mr. Speaker, where people checked to see if they were on the list or received a card and said, “Yes, I'm good to vote. I am on the list.” And then they showed up and were told, “No, you can't vote.”

It's a quintessentially un-Canadian thing — to show up and expect to vote, to have invested the time and energy to go to vote, to have made the decision, and then to be told, “No, you can't.” That's quite a significant and extremely inappropriate situation.

While I recognize there are important steps to take to ensure the integrity of the election system, I also think that Canada has a federal responsibility to ensure that Canadians have the ability to participate in this process. It's very unfortunate that the recent changes about proof of your home location and the identification requirements, and some of the other challenges that Yukon students faced who were at Outside schools or Outside jurisdictions, have had some very negative results.

We've already heard other speakers commenting on the recent trends in electoral voting practices, but I really believe that we as Canadians have a responsibility to participate in the political system.

Now, when I received my voter identification card, it did have on it my physical address; however, it was mailed to Box 2703, which I think we all know is the mailing address for the Yukon territorial government. So I appreciate the lengths that someone went to in order to get the card to me, and I did receive it; however, my mailing address for personal matters is certainly not Box 2703, and I'm sure we all agree that voting is certainly one of those personal matters. So I do appreciate the lengths that the people in the system went to to get this to me.

I would also like to voice a note of thanks to the officials with Elections Canada because they did have new regulations, new practices and new policies to deal with, and they were

challenging to deal with in our community because, in our community, we don't all have pieces of identification that have our physical home address on them. I know I don't. It was only a number of years ago that I actually went from having a Whitehorse post office box to the opportunity of having a mailbox in my community. So my identification includes my Marsh Lake mailing address.

Now when people ask me about my physical location, I usually draw a picture or tell them to turn down a specific road in the specific subdivision and then look for the seventh or eighth driveway on the left-hand side, depending upon how you define “driveway” and depending upon whether it has been plowed or not and then give some physical characteristics of my house so they can find it, because my house lot is known by a lot number — which, when a lot extension went through a previous owner, changed the lot number from the original number to a new lot number. So there is no relationship between my physical lot number and the lot number of my neighbour. In fact, when I've even gone in and said to people like fuel delivery or utility companies that I'm at lot such-and-such, they've pulled out their maps and said, “Well, we don't have that lot on our map,” then I have to remind them that it's time to get new maps because the maps they had from the year 2000 or the year 1995 aren't consistent with the lot numbers.

So there are some challenges with that. Now in our community and in other communities in the beautiful Southern Lakes, we've gone through a system of street addressing and street naming. We now have a physical identifier for what is my house number, so we now have a new system in place. If I needed to phone the fire department, I can tell them a specific house number to come to. Now, that house number is nowhere on any of my identification. It's nowhere on anything that is mailed to me. I'm not even sure if I've received anything from the government saying that's a number. In fact, we don't even really know if that's a recognized address at all or if it's just a convenient way of recognizing where the homes are in the community.

So providing identification for where I actually live is often a challenge, especially since my wife and I have different last names. Many of the bills for power or home heating fuel or propane are not always in both our names. So there is mail that comes to us that does have an address on it. There is actually one piece of mail that comes that says, “Physical address is: green house, seventh driveway on the left-hand side.” Now, I don't think if I took that into Elections Canada they would accept that as meeting the criteria that were established.

So there are challenges that I know even from my own situation. I have other constituents who have lived in a home for many, many years where again they don't have ownership of the residence — it might be a partner's residence or a landlord's residence — and if they don't have a fuel bill, they don't have that type of identification either. However, they certainly are Canadian citizens who do have a right to vote and that right must be recognized.

I also know of another case, Mr. Deputy Speaker, where the young lady had been enumerated in her home and received a card that said that this was her physical home address. She

took the card into the elections office beforehand and was told, “Yes, you are good to go.” They told her to call this number if there were any problems. Sure enough she did have a problem when she went to vote because she did not have identification that corresponded to that card. She was entitled to vote, she had been enumerated, she was on the list; other government entities had recognized her ability to vote in that situation; however, now, because of some change in the regulation or change in policy or change in practice, she was prevented from voting and turned away.

So this is someone who had gone to extreme lengths already in order to be a willing participant in our democratic process. The good news, Mr. Speaker, in this case, is she did go back to the elections office and did invest pretty much an hour of her time; she was able to point on a map to where she was and someone initialled the card and she was told that, “Yes, you can now go back and vote.” But I have to ask, how many people would be willing to make that type of effort in order to vote? And, why should they have to go to such extremes?

Mr. Speaker, I believe that the federal government has a responsibility in this area. Our *Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, in fact what makes us Canadian, is our ability to vote and they must recognize that and must take steps to ensure that Canadians have the ability to exercise their right to vote. Mr. Speaker, I do support this motion. I think it is very positive to hear that there is support coming from the three corners of this Assembly.

I believe this will be a good motion to send to the federal government. I think it will be important that we can all come to a unanimous conclusion on this and fully support it, so that we can encourage them to make the appropriate changes that they're responsible for making to prevent future Yukoners from being disenfranchised in this way. So, Mr. Speaker, I would like to again thank the Member for Klondike for bringing it forward, and thank all members in this Assembly for their support.

Mr. Fairclough: I'd like to be brief in my response to this motion. I think previous speakers have basically laid out the concerns that I think we all have here in the Legislature and many of the concerns that have been raised across the territory. I have to say that I'm in agreement with the mover of the motion, which happens to be the Member for Klondike. I don't know if any changes to the *Canada Elections Act* would have made any difference in this past election in that particular polling station, but I can definitely see the need for improvements.

I just want to give a couple of examples of that because, during the election campaign, I'm sure this was common among every one of the election campaign offices, the very first thing they did was come forward and say “This is going to be an issue in the elections,” and that was showing identification before voting. We've gone through this same situation with the territorial elections, something similar to that, but what I've found that is even a bigger problem than producing two pieces of ID to show proof of address is the fact that I think Elections Canada did such a poor job in getting people on the

voters list. I heard the Member for McIntyre-Takhini say the same thing.

In my own community of Carmacks, I've been in the polling station and have witnessed people come in and not vote simply because they were not on the voting list. Even though they could have been sworn in by another person on the voting list, to go through that process of getting on the list, it's just a few minutes of too much trouble. Really, that's what took place.

And the majority of the votes also come in right at the tail end of the day between 4:30 p.m. and 7:00 p.m. That's where we see some of the problems. I've seen people I know come into the polling station wanting to cast their vote. They're not on the voters list and leave because they basically have no time to deal with getting on the voters list. They're out of town. This was quite normal.

I think it was around six o'clock before I left. I did not return to that polling station but there were between 30 and 40 people who were not on the voters list but were put on the voters list. I'm not talking about those who just left without voting. For that small community, it's pretty significant, particularly when these are people who have lived in that community for a long, long time and still didn't make the voters list. I think that is one of the reasons why we see a poor turnout come voting day in a federal election.

I think that the Canadian government — Elections Canada offices — really need to make some improvements in that regard. The other is that people move more often than we think. I'll even use my own example. I've been elected here almost 12 years now and I think I've moved almost six times in Whitehorse alone. Some of it was because of the housing boom and people are just selling their units and basically forcing me out where I had to move. I moved in January, but of course not everything moves over. Your ID definitely doesn't change, and I keep my community of Carmacks as my home base for all my ID, so my mail goes there. My ID has my Carmacks address. I'm registered to vote in a Porter Creek poll and I have to bring the necessary paperwork to prove that I'm a registered voter. That is listed on the paper that we get from Elections Canada.

So I had to go through that process. I think a lot of people would not go through that process. I think that's really an area that needs improvement, as is pointed out in the motion.

I understand why Elections Canada came up with this. One of the things that was said to me was, “When you get this piece of paper in the mail, it says that you are a voter, you are a registered voter.” Well, it comes with all the junk mail and when you look at it, it is just a square piece of cardboard and people chuck it straight into the garbage. I know in the bigger centres, people look for that kind of stuff and pull it out of the garbage and that is where the fraud begins — people who don't even know they voted actually voted. Here in the Yukon Territory we've gone through some of that in territorial elections where people who have passed on have cast a ballot. I find that even hard to believe, but things like that do happen.

I understand why Elections Canada would come forward to try to correct things and make things better. During the elections, I was quite surprised to see this happen. Producing ID to

vote was something else, because in the small communities the returning officer sits at the table and it may be their own child or stepdaughter who comes forward and doesn't have ID and they get turned away. I wondered how strict are returning officers going to be in enforcing this rule?

I'm glad to see that the returning officers were quite strict in enforcing this rule, because they have to be. It is one of the things they commit to in taking on that task. In the community of Carmacks having this person come forward and saying, "Don't you know me? I've been here for 30 years. You know, I'm on the list. I don't have my ID, but I could run home and get it", I think that has been part of the problem.

It was really funny to see that same thing exist even in the territorial elections. Part of the problem with the territorial elections is that they don't have the full name on the list of people who can vote. It would be — I'll use an example of the last name, "Charlie". It would have 10 "C. Charlie's", and you would have to sort out what their address is. In the community of Carmacks, like other small communities, they use a box number. So for those who want to drive people to the polls, it is a bit of a challenge.

It's also a challenge for the returning officer to go through that whole list. Which of the C. Charlies are you? That is the question they ask. I don't mind one bit at all if this Legislature takes a message to the Government of Canada, to the elections office, and say, "We have heard from many Yukoners that this is a problem and you need to do a review of it and try to make some corrections."

With that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are in support of this motion. It's pretty simple and straightforward. I think there are other improvements we could make during election time. Let's learn from this when it comes to the territorial election and let's get more people on the voters list. That's what I would encourage the most.

Hon. Mr. Lang: I will be very short in my comments this afternoon regarding the motion that was brought before us today. The essence of it is the process of identifying voters in Canada. There is definitely an issue with how Canada goes about identifying the electorate and also the obligations they've put on individuals for identification addresses. They seem to complicate it.

It was interesting that this motion would come forward today, because last night I was watching on television and some organization in the United States brought to court the question of how homeless people have access to the right to vote. Of course, there were questions about legalities and questions about whether in fact they would get to vote.

The decision the courts made in the United States was that you couldn't deny these individuals the right to vote. The statement was made in the court decision that it was an obligation of the country, the United States of America, to get a system that works for people who are homeless or without an address, and that that system be as easy to work with as possible. In other words, by complicating systems you take away the right to vote. That was a decision that happened in the election coming forward in the United States.

So those are the kinds of things we look at from a legal point of view. One man, one vote: America was built on that system and our system is much the same.

So it's important that people vote, and it's very important that people participate, and it's very important that we have a system in place that addresses that and makes it as simple as possible, as convenient as possible for individuals to go and cast their vote for whomever they choose.

Now, in the process that we have in Canada at the moment, it seems to me, running in the territorial election and being a candidate, like the Member for McIntyre-Takhini was saying, the number of people who weren't on the voters list and how to get them on was a question, and certainly we had that as a candidate. Of course, once the candidate has it, it affects the voters in the territory. On the national level, look at the amount of participation in federal elections, and how the numbers are shrinking. In the Yukon, as the other members have brought forward, we had, I guess, one of the better turnouts — somewhere around 63 percent of eligible voters participated — and that's not a very high figure. Sixty-three percent was the best jurisdiction in Canada. Well, that's a question we have to address.

Now, obviously, in the mix are Elections Canada and the *Canada Elections Act*, which was just changed recently by putting these provisions in place. What we've got now is something that should be re-addressed and I agree with the House that we have to send some communication to Ottawa, and we want this thing reviewed. It works for certain people in the community, and it doesn't work for others. Like the Member for Southern Lakes was saying about his dilemma: where is his address? Is it the box number, is it the street number, is it the house number? Is it a physical description of where they live? Again, complications. We've run elections in this country for 100 some years. Now, I understand that we had a much smaller population 50 years ago, but we ran a pretty effective election, I think, and probably had a better participation percentage-wise than we do today.

We could maybe go back to that and look at the procedures we had in place in 1950 for that election and see what worked and what didn't work. Now, I understand the question about legality and vote fraud and all of these buzzwords that are thrown out there. The important thing about this is that everybody has the right to vote. That's important.

And there's a certain amount of trust in that. Certainly, a small margin of individuals participate in vote fraud, I would imagine. I've heard of the word. I've never witnessed it. But, obviously, somewhere down the line in bigger centres, there is that question. So we can't ignore that.

But we have to simplify the system. We have to make it user-friendly, and we have to enhance the number of individuals who utilize that system to participate in our government and in Canada. It's important that, as Canadians, we have individuals participate in our system. Now, the argument people use many times is, if you don't vote, you shouldn't complain.

You have no right to complain. I've heard that many, many times. In other words, not only did we complicate it and eliminate a certain level of participation — whether it's on an

academic level or whether it's on a home situation — we've taken those people and sidelined it. Then we tend to complicate things. When I went to vote this time federally, I had my ID; I had everything. I was coached before I went in there. I had my identification. I had this and I had that. I had the little piece of paper, then I did this, then I sat down, then I waited in the line, and all of these things happened.

The Member for Porter Creek South was talking about the need for better identification. Whose obligation is that? Well, a passport is an identification document that they sell at a very costly level. It's roughly, as the member said, \$80 to \$90 to get a current passport. It's got a five-year life span and it's certainly now in our area in the territory, being as close as we are to America — which is Alaska, which is Skagway and other places that we all go to and enjoy.

We're all being forced into the situation of identification.

But to go to vote in your country — to go and cast a ballot and find out that your passport is in fact not identification — it's got your picture, and it's got your name, but it hasn't got your address, so in other words, it's void. It's not acceptable. Now, the current driver's licence, which is an old piece of documentation — and certainly, this government is looking at enhancing it and moving forward with a better and tighter driver's licence and working with the Province of B.C. to see if we can get some cooperation cross-border-wise, so that we could have a driver's licence that would be enhanced and would not only be a form of identification, obviously, because you have your address on there, but it would also come up to an international standard with America. It certainly wouldn't be something you would show at the border if you were entering England. You would have to have a passport there.

But being as our jurisdiction here in the Yukon has as much communication physically and also we utilize both jurisdictions, it would be nice to get some form of identification that would be easy to use at the border, plus it would serve as a driver's licence, which we're certainly looking forward to, and we are looking forward to the end of that review.

So in this motion, it's important that we do send this to Ottawa. It's important that we follow up on things like this because I think, as a jurisdiction and as Canadians, it concerns me when I look at the voter turnout. And it concerns me when — and certainly, as a Yukoner — I'm not pointing fingers at individuals who run the voting thing. I mean, they're just doing the job they're assigned to do. I mean, they hired on to do a job. They have to follow the rules. The rules are set. They don't make rules. So, I'm certainly not pointing fingers at them. I'm just saying that there has to be, in this world we live in today, a simpler way of people identifying themselves at the poll. And it doesn't have to be complicated.

And it doesn't have to be a situation where people are expected to do all this paperwork and filling out forms but also expect them to have all of this detailed information on themselves. Now a driver's licence is handy. I'm not ignoring the fact that we need passports and we need identification but I am sure that the government in Ottawa is getting comments about the *Canada Elections Act* as we speak here today.

I have read many articles on it, on the shortcomings of it, understanding that there can be — I guess there are always two sides or three sides to a story. But I think in this story it is way too complicated and we are minimizing the number of people who can participate in our system. Our system is based on maximizing that, Mr. Speaker. We want as many capable individuals who are of age and we have to encourage them and work with Canadians to upgrade the number of people who cast a vote in this country.

When we are below, like we are now, Mr. Speaker, in the numbers — I think the numbers are 52 or whatever the percentage is — it doesn't bode well for us as a country. It doesn't bode well for the fact that almost 45 percent of the people didn't think Canada was worth enough for them to go across the street and vote. They decided whatever they were doing on that day was more important. That is a fact. If, in fact, these percentages are right — I'm not a believer in percentages but if those percentages that I see in front of me on the last election — we have concerns in the country. Because if people don't participate, they don't get out and vote, it does not bode well for the country as a whole.

My recommendation as we talk around the floor here today, about options and whatever — my option is, if I were in Elections Canada, if I had something to do with it, I would look at simplifying it and I wouldn't focus on voter fraud more than I would focus on participation, understanding there are always issues with whatever we do.

But I wouldn't base a whole election process on the fact there might be somebody out there who is going to take advantage of the process and might vote two or three times. I would concentrate on simplicity, on the identification and the process of voting and I would look very positively at maximizing the opportunity for people to vote in our country, encourage them to vote and provide voter education.

I think with the margins — I guess we could take a look at this thing and debate this for a long time. I'm glad Elections Canada or the Government of Canada has this responsibility because it's a large responsibility and obviously it has some holes in it. The *Canada Elections Act* obviously has some mix that isn't working today. But there is a way to fix it. I think all of these jurisdictions across Canada should write a letter of concern. We in this House don't have all the answers.

I'm just one Canadian. I do vote. I take voting very seriously and I will do whatever they tell me to do to vote. I might not be happy, but I will vote, because I come from a family that voted in elections, participated in elections and found it very important to do just that. It was a responsibility we had. It was something that was not told to us. It wasn't something that we learned. It was something we got by just being a family unit, the concern for our country and the process. How do we encourage other people in this country to participate and how do we make it possible to do that? So I agree with the motion. I look forward to comments around the floor here today, to moving this forward and sending it to Ottawa. Hopefully other jurisdictions do the same and we can resolve this on a national level so our voting system is simpler and it's accessible to all

Canadians. Let's look at a higher number of participation of the participants over the next election span.

Thank you.

Mr. Cardiff: The previous member said he was going to be short and brief, but I'm going to try and be briefer than he was.

There's an important issue here and a lot of people have spoken to it and so hopefully I won't have to go into too much detail.

The motion talks about determining if the identification requirements need to be adjusted to prevent northern residents from being deprived of their ability to exercise their democratic right to vote. And I think that it's important to recognize that it's not just here in the north where this situation has arisen. The fact that you need to present two pieces of ID, one with a picture and one with your physical address doesn't just — I mean, it is really valid here in the north, but it's also valid in a lot of other rural areas of Canada, northern areas of the provinces, the prairie provinces and Ontario and Quebec, I'm sure. A lot of that has been touched on. I think what we've seen over years is the voter turnout going down. Fewer people are participating in the electoral process — federally, provincially and territorially. I don't know that we've actually seen it go up. Part of it is about apathy; it's about people's belief that their vote doesn't count, and that was touched on by the Member for McIntyre-Takhini — whether or not people actually get the representation that they believe they want, and whether or not their vote counts in the big scheme of things. And the other one, I think, is dissatisfaction with the whole political process, what people see. The only people who can fix that are the people who are here in this Assembly, people who are in the House of Commons. But there's also, I think, dissatisfaction with the process, and we shouldn't be trying to make it harder for people to vote. A lot of this has already been touched on: the fact that some people don't have a driver's licence, for various reasons, whether they can't afford a car, or they choose not to drive. There are only so many pieces of picture ID available to people, and it could depend on where you live, if you live in a smaller community, and you choose not to have a driver's licence, or a passport because you don't travel. I think it discriminates against a group of people; it discriminates against people who, for whatever reason, are disenfranchised. It could be the level of poverty. Typically people with low incomes don't drive vehicles. They don't have the need for those pieces of identification. People who are homeless, people with low literacy levels, people who are disabled mentally, people who live a transient lifestyle won't have current ID — and it can be because of the work that they do. Maybe they travel around the country. Should they be denied the right to vote?

Students who go to school in one area and reside in another don't necessarily have the identification that would allow them to vote where they are going to school. We need to make it easier for people to vote in the community that they want to vote in. If they are going to school in Calgary or Kingston or Montreal — wherever they are going to school — if they want to vote there they should be able to vote. They are Canadian

citizens. The vote should be transferable, in my opinion. You should be able to vote as a Canadian citizen where you are at the time. Your place of residence doesn't necessarily need to be a factor if you are a student or if you are worker of a transient nature.

It might have been said best by the Member for Western Arctic. Actually, I think what we need to do, Mr. Speaker, is trust Canadians. Canadians are trustworthy people. We should not throw barriers up in front of them by constantly asking them to provide pieces of identification to do various things. We should take them at their word that they are who they are, and we should allow them to swear who they are at the polls, that they are Canadian citizens and that this is where they live and that they should have that right to vote.

I think that people should not feel disenfranchised, and they shouldn't feel apathetic about the electoral system. They should enjoy the ability to participate. And I think that, as Canadians, we should trust each other — that, for the most part, we're not going to abuse that right, because I think we cherish it. It's part of what makes us truly Canadian. We've seen the voter turnout go down, and we've seen the participation go down at all levels of voting and people exercising their democratic right.

If we got back to trusting Canadians and trusting each other, I think people would be a lot more encouraged, rather than discouraged, by the roadblocks thrown up in front of those who just want to exercise their democratic right.

So those are my comments, and I thank the mover of the motion for bringing this forward. I look forward to hearing what other people have to say.

Mr. McRobb: I will be brief. Several good points have been put on the record, which don't bear repeating.

There's only one circumstance I want to mention and that is sometimes the enumeration isn't what it should be. I have a couple of constituents who were missed due to problems with Canada Post. They didn't receive any instructions. They weren't aware of how they would go about rectifying it. Even if they were aware, it would have required driving several miles and leaving their business unattended. These are people who have served in the front line of the Yukon tourist industry for 40 years. It's a disgrace to exclude such long-time Yukoners from the voting process. I realize this may not be dealt with specifically in the act, but it certainly is part of the federal electoral process.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Speaker: Hon. Mr. Kenyon.

Hon. Mr. Kenyon: I'd like to invite all members present to welcome Jenine Helbesma from the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, who has joined us today in the gallery.

Applause

Hon. Ms. Horne: The right to vote is the hallmark of Canadian democracy. It is that right that reflects all that we hold dear as a nation. Before I talk about some of the recent changes, I want to talk about the importance of the vote and how long it took to enfranchise Canadians.

I would like to talk for a few minutes about the need to guard against systemic disenfranchisement of voters. In other words, having worked so hard over so many years to obtain the right to vote, we have to be very careful about putting obstacles in people's paths to exercise that right. To say that one has the right to vote, but to make it a practical impossibility, effectively means that one does not have the right to vote.

The process of enfranchising our nation has been one that has been long and difficult. Speaking as a woman and as a First Nation person, who are two groups who have not always enjoyed the right to vote, I care about preserving people's right to vote. It was not that many years ago when only certain individuals had the right to vote. I would like to share with you some of the information I learned about the right to vote from the Elections Canada Web site.

For example, in 1867 — which would be the first general election after Confederation — only males over the age of 21 who met certain property qualifications were eligible to vote and run as candidates in a federal election.

I should note that women, registered Indians and members of certain religious denominations were excluded. In other words, Mr. Speaker, people like me were not able to stand for office or even to vote. The right to vote, even in federal elections, was governed by provincial, not federal, legislation. This meant that some immigrants from Asia were not allowed to vote in some provinces.

In 1917, during the First World War, Parliament adopted the *Wartime Elections Act* and the *Military Voters Act*. The vote was extended to all British subjects, male and female, who were active or retired members of the armed forces, including Indians and people under the age of 21. Civilian men who did not meet the property qualification but who had a son or grandson in the army were temporarily given the right to vote, as were women with a father, mother, husband, son, daughter, brother or sister who was serving or had served in the army.

At the election of December 1917, some 2,000 military nurses became the first Canadian women to vote in a federal election. The following year, in 1918, the right to vote at the federal level was extended to all Canadian women 21 and over who were native-born and satisfied any relevant property qualifications. The next year, women obtained the right to run for a seat in the House of Commons.

In 1920, the federal election legislation was amended to institute universal suffrage for men and women. British subjects by birth or naturalization were now entitled to vote. It was not until 1948 when Canadians of Asian origin received the right to vote. Two years later, Inuit, who had their right to vote taken away in 1934, were given back that right. It was only in 1960 when registered Indians living on reserves received the right to vote. Mr. Speaker, that was 1960. Not that many years ago.

In 1970, the minimum age to vote or stand for office was lowered from 21 to 18. It was then that proxy voting was also introduced for fishermen, seamen, prospectors and students away from their electoral districts. In 1982, the new Canadian *Charter of Rights and Freedoms* entrenched the right of all Canadian citizens 18 years of age to vote and stand for office. Mr. Speaker, I want to flag a few key dates there. In 1919, women received the franchise. In 1950, Inuit re-acquired the right to vote. In 1960, registered Indians living on reserves received the right to vote. Clearly within Canada the path to find ways to enfranchise Canadians has been long and difficult. In other words, we have worked to find ways to enable Canadians to vote. We do this because the right to vote is so intrinsic to our identity and to what it means to be Canadian. Every vote is vindication and a validation of democracy.

Especially in my role as a minister responsible for the Women's Directorate, I think often of the women around the world who do not enjoy that right. I hurt for those women and it makes me sad for their communities because I know how much those societies are missing by excluding women. Like all other members of this Assembly, I believe in the democratic process.

It bothers me when I learn that Yukoners who are legitimately entitled to vote are excluded because of the process issues. I want to say in my comments that follow that I do not intend to criticize the local people who superintended the recent election in Yukon. I recognize that they were applying the rules as laid out in the *Canada Elections Act*. My issue is not with the people, but rather with the legislation itself.

This reminds me of the post office issue we dealt with not that long ago, where some policy gets changed to address a concern in one area and ends up generating all kinds of difficulties for others. It brings me to my concern that the recent changes have, in effect, put in place systematic barriers to people wanting to exercise their right to vote. It reminds me of stories about people who were told that they had the vote, but then they had to pay a poll tax or prove their literacy in order to vote. These barriers only serve to eliminate potential voters. By implementing requirements that effectively eliminate the ability of northern residents to reasonably demonstrate their identity, these changes have effectively disenfranchised Yukoners.

Given all of the work that has gone into securing the franchise for us, I think all of us agree that we should defend our right to vote. I support this motion. It calls on Canada to review the effects of recent changes to the *Canada Elections Act* regarding information voters are required to present to prove identity, to determine if identification requirements need to be adjusted to prevent northern residents of being deprived of the ability to exercise their democratic right to vote.

I agree, and I urge all members of this Legislature to support this motion.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Mr. Kenyon: It gives me great pleasure to enter into the debate here and add a few more comments to this motion.

There were a lot of problems in the election. Certainly, I think all of us saw these things. And when you're into the range of identification and all of the issues around that, the issues are huge.

I can remember being involved with the Yukon Quest years ago and having one of our mushers from Fort Yukon, Alaska, fly out with his dogs and get a ride into the Yukon, where he was almost scraped off at the border because he didn't have a driver's licence and the poor guy at the border couldn't understand that the reason why he didn't have a driver's licence was because they don't have any roads in Fort Yukon, Alaska.

We have come a long way since then, I think, in people understanding what is going on, but have we really — when bits of legislation like this come about and you look at challenges, I'm sure, within the community of Old Crow. When you get into Nunavut and all the problems there in some of the remote communities in the Northwest Territories, there are no roads. Even in central Alaska, working with the Iditarod, I was in one very nice vibrant community that had four cars. That was the sum total of it, and all of them were getting quite elderly. So, there are challenges all the way through on that.

There are also problems in terms of simple passports. I do have some concerns over that. I have had the great opportunity to do a lot of travelling. I have also had the great opportunity to twice have a machine gun put in my face, one by a United Nations police officer who at least didn't scare me too awfully much, but another time at the China-Burmese border and they weren't smiling. So, identification becomes a huge issue at borders, and it becomes a huge issue when you integrate that into the electoral process.

One of the interesting things that comes out of this — I have had the very good fortune over the last few years to be involved with the Pacific NorthWest Economic Region, or PNWER, and to be on the team that basically did many of the initial discussions of border security and the so-called western hemisphere travel initiative. Even one of the former presidents of PNWER turned WHTI or "whitti" into a verb "to be whittied" when he was refused entrance on to a plane to fly from Seattle to Vancouver and had to go back to his home to get his passport which he had left on the desk.

The Member for Porter Creek South started getting into valid identification on the territorial basis and that, again, is a huge issue. I think when Homeland Security and the Government of the United States started looking at border security, they took everything — as usual — to its more illogical conclusion. By tying things down so tightly, it becomes almost difficult to understand the rationale for any of this.

Yukon is a part of this whole thing, and until we know what the requirements are going to be at the border, et cetera, it makes precious little sense for us to jump the gun and make huge investments in new drivers' licences, new IDs and new liquor cards. All that will be integrated in the final analysis, I suspect. But until we know what the actual requirements are, it's simply premature to jump there.

In terms of our old driver's licence, which ironically was accepted when I voted, it has its own set of problems, for sure.

All the horror stories that the Member for Porter Creek South has collected — I've collected a few of my own, one of which was a guy stopped for speeding and when the cop saw his driver's licence, he just said, "I don't want to deal with this, get out of here," and told him to drive away.

I've not had any problems; I've heard a lot of laughter, but I've never had a problem with that.

Some of the other interesting twists that make very little sense, especially when you look at the post office box situation, when you look at not even a post office box, but when somebody gets general delivery — boy, what do you do with that? We had a couple come in — this would be three or four years ago — both 18, with a young baby, and they were visiting from the Lower Mainland and had their wallets stolen. They had return tickets — the tickets were somewhere else in the suitcase, or whatever — but that wasn't the problem. The problem was they couldn't get on the aircraft unless they had photo ID and their wallets had been stolen; they had no photo ID.

So what are the options? Sit here for a week while British Columbia issues a new driver's licence? Being what I thought was my usual resourceful self, I suggested they go down to the Liquor Corporation and get a liquor ID card, which would conclusively show that they can't drink. That wasn't the point, but at least it was a photo ID — to find out there was a small thing in the act that actually said you couldn't issue a liquor ID card to anyone unless they were eligible to drink.

In the final analysis, we sent them down to Cashplan, where they would take the picture and make a little ID, which they will do for anybody based on any information, because they had no ID — they had no wallets; they had nothing. And that was accepted by the airline to get on the plane.

Where is the sense in that?

We were visiting with the PNWER group in Washington. In the first office we walked into, the opening line was, "Well, what can I tell you?" That kind of set the tone for that meeting and that we weren't going to get very far. Later, the director of the Canadian desk for the U.S. Department of State, who just couldn't understand why we had these concerns, said, "The only problem I have had is when I was visiting friends in upstate Vermont, I didn't realize that I could have just gone across the border and gone shopping in Montreal. Gee, it's too bad I couldn't go shopping". She saw that as the only problem. I mentioned that in upstate Vermont the chances are pretty good that if someone is in a road accident and badly injured, they are going to probably be medevaced to Montreal. Well, she said, "That's in the act; that's all looked after and in an emergency situation I could do that." I said, "Oh, and can your children visit you? Can your husband visit you?" She went blank and said, "No, I guess they can't." I said, "Great, so now you're badly injured in a hospital in a foreign country and nobody can visit you unless they happen to have proper ID." She hadn't thought of it. She had completely missed that one.

There are a number of different problems with the passport issue. What is the alternative? Do we go to the old purple ink in the jar and you dip your thumb in when you vote?

For everyone laughing about the way it's done in other parts of the country, other parts of the world, maybe that isn't as crazy a situation as you would expect.

I tend to think I agree with other people who have spoken that we do have a real problem in terms of numbers of voters who voted. I've had some funny situations in the first election in 2002. I knocked on one door and the fellow answered, looked at me rather strangely and said, "I want you to know I've never voted and I never plan on voting. What do you think of that?"

My instant reaction was, "Great. That means you're not voting against me." He thought about it and started laughing. Actually we chatted for a minute and in the final analysis, he did vote. I don't know if he voted for me, but anyway, he voted and that's good. That has at least got him going in that direction if nothing else.

Voting is essential. I think the Minister of Justice has been very clear on that. Women were not permitted to vote; First Nations weren't permitted to vote. Voting is something that is precious to so many people in the world. To be denied that is just not acceptable.

So with those comments, the only thing I do want to say is I need to correct — I believe it was the Member for Mount Lorne — who said that our Member for Porter Creek Centre — the Minister of Highways and Public Works — was going to "be" short. I think what I heard was that he "was" short. I might be wrong.

Hon. Mr. Hart: I'd also like to speak to this motion. Many of the members have already discussed many of the issues that have happened to them and their constituents during the last election with regard to this issue. I would like to get on record indicating my support for this motion. I also experienced a little difficulty with the election process with one of my constituents whom I had to vouch for and I had to produce my driver's licence — the member opposite had indicated that even though it is still acceptable in the Yukon, that is something I had to do. This individual had a passport, was well known to me and a long-time Yukoner. She was very frustrated that she could not vote. She had just got off the plane that afternoon and was having great difficulty trying to vote.

Fortunately, I took the oath, and indicated I knew who she was, and we got her to vote and she carried on. But I think, as many of the members have already previously indicated, the Canadian passport indicates that you're a Canadian citizen. That's one of the issues of being able to vote. I believe that another form of identification — whether it's a health card or not — you know, that indicates where you're from, provides identification from the territory or province that you're in, that should be of enough assistance to enable a person to vote.

I think that I'd also just like to point out a couple of things with regard to that. There were a lot of incidents like this, especially for young students who are away from home, who are trying to vote. They all experience difficulty in trying to get the appropriate information and the ability to vote. I think that many of the persons who were asked to go home and get the

appropriate information or ID in order for them to vote, just didn't vote. They never came back; not worth it to their case.

You know, they've been voting for 20 years, and I think that really contributed greatly to the low turnout that was shown right across the country. I think traditionally in the Yukon we usually get low 70s for people voting, whether it's the territorial election or the general election. Most people in the Yukon exercise their right to vote.

I do believe during the last territorial election we had some difficulty also with how you can vote and that sort of stuff, but even then we still had a pretty good turnout right across the territory. I think it's important for everyone to vote, regardless how you vote or where, but you've got to have the ability to vote and it should be simplified such that we're not basically having to go down to the bank and getting somebody to certify who you are, or getting a notarized person to go down and figure it out. It should be your passport and some other small piece of information that identifies that you live in that particular territory or province; that should be sufficient for you to cast your ballot.

That's all I have to say, and I think most of this has been already said by my previous colleagues as well as the members opposite with regard to the subject, and I look forward to shipping this information off to the federal government to see if they can improve the service for the next election.

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

Mr. Nordick: I see from most of the comments around this Assembly today that there is overwhelming support for this motion.

It is our part and our job, as leaders and elected individuals, to encourage people to vote. But we should also oppose barriers that limit the ability of citizens of this country to vote. Once again, I believe that every Canadian citizen has the right to vote and I fully support this motion to urge the Parliament of Canada to review the recent changes to the *Canada Elections Act* with regard to voter ID.

Speaker: Are you prepared for the question?

Some Hon. Members: Division.

Division

Speaker: Division has been called.

Bells

Speaker: Mr. Clerk, please poll the House.

Hon. Mr. Fentie: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Cathers: Agree.

Hon. Ms. Taylor: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Kenyon: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Rouble: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Lang: Agree.

Hon. Ms. Horne: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Hart: Agree.

Mr. Nordick: Agree.

Mr. Mitchell: Agree.

Mr. McRobb: Agree.

Mr. Fairclough: Agree.

Mr. Inverarity: Agree.

Mr. Cardiff: Agree.

Mr. Edzerza: Agree.

Clerk: Mr. Speaker, the results are 15 yeas, nil nays.

Speaker: The yeas have it. I declare the motion carried.

Motion No. 492 agreed to

Motion No. 501

Clerk: Motion No. 501, standing in the name of Mr. Nordick.

Speaker: It is moved by the Member for Klondike

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to work cooperatively with the business community, labour groups, industry, educational institutions, non-government organizations, First Nation governments and others to develop a labour market framework that includes the following:

- (1) comprehensive skills and trades training strategy;
- (2) immigration strategy;
- (3) national recruitment strategy;
- (4) employee retention strategy; and
- (5) labour market information strategy.

Mr. Nordick: It has been said that the best thing a government can do to improve employment is invest in training its people. With the labour shortages the Yukon has experienced, the Yukon government is improving the training in several ways — support for Skills Canada is one way.

There are presently over 70 skills clubs in Whitehorse and the communities, which provide youth with hands-on trades and technology lessons and workshops. The advanced education branch has annual funding to support the activities of Skills Canada Yukon, totalling over \$340,000 in the last four years. Each year, Skills Canada Yukon holds a skills competition to prepare participants for attendance at the national WorldSkills competition. Last year's competition in Calgary had 35 to 40 participants from the Yukon. They showcased over 16 trades and technologies to over 1,000 people. Yukon apprentices won five medals at this competition two years ago.

Any time we are able to show the public that trades and technologies offer rewarding, viable careers, it helps us and helps the Yukon and, ultimately, all of Canada.

Community training funds: the Yukon government has provided \$1.5 million in both the 2007-08 and the 2008-09 budgets for these funds. The funds provide a variety of training opportunities for Yukoners in many communities that include trades, technologies, literacy, employee and skill development, heritage and cultural development.

One component of these funds operates out of the Whitehorse Correctional Centre, where 38 students have taken courses in initial-attack firefighting, small engine repair, welding, computer fundamentals and traffic control. These funds also support Women in Trades and Technology. This trades and technology program at Yukon College provides the opportunity to explore the skills trades and also develop personal

skills, which will enable women to function effectively in traditionally male-dominated workplaces.

The Yukon Mine Training Association began as the Yukon Mining and Exploration Training Trust Fund, a partnership between the Yukon mining industry and First Nations. They are committed to working together to maximize employment opportunities emerging from the growth of the mining and related resource industries in the north for First Nations and other Yukoners. The YMTA also ensures that safety training is developed and delivered, meeting industry standards.

The family physician incentive program helps in the repayment of student loans for recently graduated physicians, in order to attract and retain them in the practice of family medicine in the Yukon.

The health profession education bursary — the purpose of this bursary is to support Yukon students in attaining health profession education. The Yukon health profession education bursary is available to a minimum of four new students a year.

The Yukon nursing education bursary is intended to support people who live, or have lived, in the Yukon to attend nursing school. The bursary will be made available to up to four new students per year and the maximum amount available will be \$5,000 a year for up to four years of nursing school.

The licensed practical nurse program — the Yukon government provides Yukon College with the funding necessary to support two intakes to train a total of 24 students in the licensed practical nursing program.

Mr. Speaker, to combat the severe shortage of workers experienced recently in the Yukon we offer several initiatives. A temporary foreign workers initiative allows eligible foreign workers to work in Canada for up to two years if the employer can prove that they are unable to find a suitable Canadian or permanent resident to fill the job. Employers must provide a wage rate comparable to that paid to Canadian residents.

The Yukon nominee initiative is a program that involves skilled and critical impact workers, semi-skilled or entry-level immigrant workers. To date, there have been 252 applicants to the Yukon nominee program: 68 skilled workers and 184 entry level workers. There are three categories: business, skilled workers and critical impact workers. The business category is overseen by Economic Development and allows temporary citizenship for immigrants who operate a business or are self-employed. The skilled workers and critical impact workers are the responsibility of Advanced Education. The skilled workers category has approved medical personnel, engineers, management personnel, pilots, automotive technicians and librarians and 68 applicants have been received.

The critical impact workers category assists the employers in obtaining entry-level workers for the occupation requiring secondary school and/or occupation-specific training or on-the-job training. One hundred and eighty-four applicants have been received. The Yukon government is working on other labour market initiatives to increase the local labour pools, such as aboriginal people, older workers, youth, and the list goes on.

It is anticipated that the targeted initiative for older workers will provide the opportunity for 80 individuals between the ages of 55 and 64 to develop employment skills to find and

retain employment. The Department of Education is a lead department in the development of a labour market framework for the Yukon. It will guide the Yukon government's labour market activities over the next 10 years. The vision for the framework is an inclusive and adaptable labour market that meets the demands for a strong, diversified economy and provides opportunities for a better quality of life for Yukoners. We need to be able to adapt to events out of our control. The strategies developed must respond effectively to a global economic crisis and the impact the crisis will have on the Yukon.

Mr. Speaker, in closing, a labour market framework will help address Yukon's labour market development. One-third of the employers reported they have vacancies due to our low unemployment rate and growing economy. YTG has invited its partners, including the business industry, First Nations and other employers, employees, unemployed persons and the general public to contribute to the development and implementation of specific strategies to support the Yukon's labour market. The purpose of this labour market framework is to attract a range of workers from entry level to highly skilled occupations, which will ensure a strong labour market for the Yukon.

The framework will identify what strategies are needed to ensure Yukon has an inclusive and adaptable labour market, a strategy that will meet the changing needs of employers, employees and the unemployed.

There are four pillars to focus discussions. The first pillar is training and development. This will promote and support lifelong learning and expansion of training opportunities for all Yukoners.

The second pillar is recruitment — encouraging inclusion of all interested Yukoners in the labour market and attract more workers nationally and internationally to the Yukon.

Retention — identify, promote and support initiatives to address labour retention making the Yukon an attractive and welcoming place to live and work.

The fourth pillar of labour market information is to identify and promote the accessibility of labour market information, which is useful for the development of public policy, education and training programs, business planning and personal career decision-making.

These four pillars form the basis for developing five new strategies. First is a comprehensive skills and trades training strategy. The existing Yukon training strategy is 10 years old. The strategy needs to be renewed to ensure that effective training initiatives are provided to meet the current labour needs and foster economic growth.

The second strategy is an immigration strategy. One of the most significant potential labour pools is international labour and the immigration strategy will address issues such as international worker recruitment, immigration, demographic growth in the Yukon and retention and settlement services for immigrants.

The third strategy is a national recruitment strategy, which is a marketing scheme and specific recommended initiatives developed to encourage potential employees from other jurisdictions in Canada to relocate to Yukon to live and work.

The fourth strategy is an employee retention strategy. A retention strategy will develop initiatives that will assist employers to retain their current workforce by researching other national programs and adopting the best practices of other jurisdictions.

The fifth strategy is a labour market information strategy. The enhancement of effective labour market information would feed into the development of all strategies. Existing data must be updated and disaggregated to reflect strategic sectors of the economy better. Data collection for the LMI must be ongoing and result in effectively dissemination to interested stakeholders.

Mr. Speaker, I know that in my community we have a severe shortage of workers from the grocery store clerk to the hotel chambermaid, right up to mechanics. There is a wide range. I know we have a fuel companies who are always short truck drivers. The list could go on and on, but one thing I am proud of is what this government — the Yukon Party government — is doing in involving all aspects of the Yukon and Yukoners in developing a strategy to basically eliminate the need for the daily conversations I'm having with my community members about what we're going to do about the lack of employees.

The biggest reason why the tourism industry, the mining industry and a lot of my local shops struggle year-round is because of the lack of employees. It's not the lack of housing, it's not the lack of work and it's not the lack of business. It's the lack of employees to operate these businesses.

I look forward to the unanimous support of this motion. I know the members opposite are very concerned that our businesses are also short-staffed. I don't foresee any negative comments with regard to this motion. I assume the members opposite might come up with amendments, but I'd like to reassure them that we are very much aware of what they're thinking we might need to do to improve the strategies. We're involving Yukoners in this strategy to get the feedback from them to implement this.

Thank you.

Mr. Mitchell: I thank the Member for Klondike for bringing forward this motion. It's amazing the Member for Klondike brings forward so many good motions that speak to things that need to be done in Yukon that I'm surprised he's not inside the Cabinet and that he has to do these from behind, on a government backbencher motion day. But it's good that he brings them forward.

I appreciate the fact that the Member for Klondike says he is well aware of what our positions are on this and he knows that we're supportive of it. We might have amendments. I think I'll have to take a look around the table to see if he's sitting in at our meetings.

First of all, regarding the wording of the motion, "THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to work cooperatively with the business community, labour groups, industry, educational institutions, non-government organizations, First Nation governments and others to develop a labour market framework that includes the following:

- (1) comprehensive skills and trades training strategy;
- (2) immigration strategy;
- (3) national recruitment strategy;
- (4) employee retention strategy; and
- (5) labour market information strategy.”

The Member for Klondike is prescient. There is not a thing he has said here that I don't support. So he's right, I do support these initiatives. I do question why, as we enter the seventh year of a Yukon Party mandate — as we enter the third year of the second term for the Yukon Party government — why we're only bringing this forward now.

There didn't seem to be much disagreement on this well before the last election. When I look through our platform in the last election — enhanced skills training. What's the first bullet? Develop a comprehensive worker recruitment and retention strategy. I will thank the Member for Klondike for incorporating that into his motion. We had “create a Yukon capacity development fund,” “establish a working group led by the Minister of Education, the Minister of Economic Development and the president of Yukon College to evaluate how to further enhance the ability of Yukon College to train workers.” So I appreciate the fact that he speaks to both the Minister of Economic Development and the Minister of Education. As a former member in this Assembly used to say, we're ad idem on that. I don't think we have any disagreement.

Elsewhere in our platform, we talked about, under education, “expand trades and skills training in the senior grades for those students who wish to pursue this path,” “establish an educational innovation fund where schools, teachers and school councils can apply to support their locally developed initiatives.” I'm not going to read all of it, because I'm sure that the members opposite are no doubt familiar with our platform, and they're no doubt familiar with their own platform.

I see that obviously there was a symposium held on Monday of this week, and from what I've heard there were a lot of positive reactions to it. The people who partook in it had positive things to say about it, those I've had an opportunity to talk to. Due to our duties in this Assembly, I did not have an opportunity to attend but I do appreciate that the work is going on. And good to the Department of Education and the minister for moving forward with this. But again, I ask, why so late in the day?

We had the Yukon Party's platform in the last election, and I'm not going to quote too extensively from their platform either, but I will reference a few things from the platform. They indicated in their platform a strong focus in Yukon high schools on vocational skills and trades, training as an alternate path of education with a corresponding investment in space, equipment and teachers. Some of this has been done; much more needs to be done. I have no criticism for those things that the government has accomplished; again, I only say, why are we into the third year of this mandate and we're only now debating this motion, apparently urging the government to do what they say they've been doing?

In terms of some of the other things, there has been a dramatic increase in focus on the Yukon College and its community campuses to increase skills and trades training in a sub-

stantive way. Some of that has been done; a lot more needs to be done. Work with the private sector to increase the enrolment of the Yukon apprenticeship program that provides a certificate and on-the-job training for approximately 46 designated trades. We agree. I know some of the work is going on. Again, why at the height of what is now a fairly well-known economic crisis around the world and in Canada are we debating for the first time doing this? The government had one complete term and is two years through their second term.

We have measures to encourage greater participation in vocational skills and trades training by women, persons with disabilities and students who do not wish to pursue an academic education. Again, we had items in our platform referencing this and so did the Yukon Party. My only question is: why hasn't more already been done?

Now, there are things that are for that matter an obligation of the government. The Member for Klondike made reference to initiatives for more aboriginal workers and that is very important. We know that there needs to be a multi-faceted strategy. We know that there needs to be work on the immigration front toward improving the access to the temporary worker program — as the member spoke to — toward streamlining and making the process more simple. I know that every member in this Assembly has constituents who have benefited from this program because they are now living and working in Yukon. They are contributing to our society. We know from the Filipino community — which is perhaps our largest community of people who have arrived in Yukon from elsewhere — that it not only is supporting strong families and strong family structures within Yukon but, in fact, so many of these workers, as we were told by the ambassador on his recent trip here, are also sending money back to their families in the Philippines and assisting their relatives to gain better education and in some cases to follow the path of their family members to Yukon and become members of our society, and that is a very good thing.

I have also heard, however, from First Nation members that they feel that for too long they have been overlooked. They say, “Why is everybody focusing on bringing more and more workers into Yukon. We've been here for tens of thousands of years. We've proven that we can live through season after season of 40 below weather, through the lack of daylight, through all of the challenges that we have and that we appreciate all of the benefits of living in Yukon.”

So I am pleased to hear that the government is going to focus more on being more inclusive for First Nation people, for our aboriginal people, to work here. I will point out that chapter 22 of the *Umbrella Final Agreement* — and most Yukon First Nations have now completed final and self-government agreements — states that the Yukon government has obligations regarding the employment of First Nation people in the following terms: where public service employment exists, the government shall assist in facilitating training and professional development of Yukon First Nation people so that they will have access to such employment opportunities, with particular emphasis on increasing the number of Yukon First Nation people in technical, managerial and professional positions in the public service.

I don't have the numbers in front of me, but I do know that progress has been made. Within Yukon's public service we have more people of First Nation ancestry than we did 10 or 20 years ago. But I also know, in speaking to First Nation people, that more progress needs to be made and, in particular, at senior levels. I believe we now have one person working at the assistant deputy ministerial level, and we know that person is focused on capacity development and assisting with implementation. That's something that we addressed in our platform going into the last election and that we felt was important. I'm pleased that the government has followed up on that.

We should be able to sit back and think of one person or two people — and there may be more than one person. There are people who work within the Cabinet offices. But what I'm getting at is that we should have a much more fully integrated public service in Yukon. We've heard this for years and years. This government passed criticism on previous governments for not achieving that, and I will say that we still have a long way to go. We still don't have enough that we've accomplished in that area.

The member spoke of other labour market initiatives — targeted initiatives toward older workers, toward young workers. These are all good things. But again I'm asking: why are we having this debate in the seventh year? Why not sooner? Since both parties — and presumably the third party as well — had initiatives identified in their platforms for the fall of 2006, we shouldn't need to debate this in the fall of 2008. The debate we should be having in the fall of 2008 is one on how well this has progressed and what the next stages are.

I don't fault anything in this document, except to say that it's a vision statement and it talks about goals and principles. It does provide some information on demographics, but I would have liked to have seen the government get to this stage sooner, because we've all been hearing from the private sector, in particular, that they've been struggling for years. They struggle to recruit and retain skilled workers in trades and professions where a great skill is required, and they often find that they lose workers back into the civil service or to other jurisdictions because there are better job opportunities there.

We know that in terms of entry-level workers, there is a huge shortage. We see it every day in the service industries. We have seen it over the last couple of years, when you go to a drive-through at a place that sells coffee and see a rope up saying, "Please come inside. Drive-through closed due to lack of employees". I find it somewhat ironic that now that we are moving into an economy that elsewhere in Canada is actually challenged for jobs, we are first discussing the need to recruit more people. Maybe with the difficulties that people are having elsewhere, in every challenge there is opportunity. Maybe if other jurisdictions are not able to keep people employed in some of the industries that are seeing hard times, such as the auto industry and elsewhere, it might provide us with some opportunities for recruitment.

I think that there are some things that need to be said. For example, apprenticeship has grown significantly in the Yukon. Ten years ago, in November 1998, there were 245 apprentices. With women comprising only nine percent of students enrolled

in trades programs at Yukon College, there is room for improvement. I know that there have been programs specifically targeted at this.

Again, I encourage the Education minister to carry forward with those programs, together with Yukon College. I know that there have been some apprenticeship programs and this is a real opportunity to get more and more women involved in the trades.

I know that apprenticeship changes constantly. I know that the Member for Mount Lorne has much greater personal experience in how apprenticeship training works — and I'm sure he will speak to it when he has his opportunity — than do I. I do know that Advanced Education works continuously with industry, including employers and employees, in other jurisdictions to make it better. There are barriers that may limit those opportunities, particularly in the communities and those must be reduced. Training trust funds are an important means of addressing these issues. I am pleased to see that the Member for Klondike has identified them and they are in part community-based and community-driven. Hopefully, they put decisions about training into the hands of those best equipped to understand those needs: the communities themselves.

They do represent a true commitment to a partnership between government and the private sector. It is very positive to see what has gone on with the partnerships with the private sector, with the work that started with the Mine Training association, which has expanded from there.

Skills Canada, and the success they've had — including the gold medal they received — in sending people now to the international competitions, is a tremendous credit to Yukon employers and Yukon employees on the level they have reached.

There are five areas here and I'm not going to speak to all of them because I want to make sure that other members have an opportunity to speak.

I will speak briefly to the immigration strategy which is to encourage the Minister of Education and the Minister of Economic Development to work in whatever ways they can with the Government of Canada, to continue to streamline those processes, because there are programs available that reduce the requirement to go through a very long process, that are partnerships between some of the provinces and Canada.

I know we're moving in that direction in Yukon and I encourage the government to continue that process so that people don't have to wait as long to get those approvals and go through the somewhat onerous process of trying to demonstrate the jobs have been advertised and there's nobody within the jurisdiction who can fill those jobs, but rather get to that process where certain categories are just identified as being lacking and accelerate the process.

I know some work has moved in that direction and I commend the government for it, but encourage them to carry forward.

The third point to your national recruitment strategy — again, it is important. A complete strategy that focuses on a number of possible candidate groups, especially those that are traditionally under-represented, and I've talked about some of

those already: First Nation people; women; there are others. But it's required to solve the crucial demand for workers. Maintaining the status quo in recruiting will no longer serve the government. Attracting more workers to the Yukon will require a continued, proactive outreach approach. This works in terms of assisting the private sector. It also works for the largest employer in Yukon, and that's the government.

A smart public service needs smart recruitment, and that's the basic finding of the new report by the Public Policy Forum on public sector renewal. Based on a survey of some 6,000 current community college and institute students from across Canada, the Public Policy Forum analyzed their views on career prospects and their skills, and compared the results with information on the current makeup and future needs of the federal public service, and I think that many of the findings would be applicable here too, to Yukon's public service.

What's more, current college students demonstrate that they want to work in the public service. Sixty-one percent of those surveyed — and again, this is a national survey — would prefer to work in the public sector rather than the private sector. I find that to be fairly amazing, but nevertheless that's the case. Almost 83 percent felt it important that their career choice contribute to the betterment of society, and working in the public sector is certainly one way that that can be done. Government is seen as a desirable employer, one that offers a variety of career choices.

Mr. Speaker, the lack of affordable housing is an issue that faces all Canadians, but it's also an issue that affects recruitment to Yukon. Some Canadians shy away from moving to Yukon because they have a perceived view of the high cost of living in Yukon. With housing prices actually being lower in Yukon than in many other parts of Canada, the government needs to market this. The government needs to point out to prospective employees that when they sell their houses in other regions of Canada, and particularly in some of the major centres like Vancouver and Toronto — and even though there has been a hit in Edmonton and Calgary, they will end up with more equity in their homes when they re-purchase the same size or nature of home in Yukon because they will get more for their dollar here, and that's a real selling point.

Even though I have now, like many of my constituents, experienced the odd Yukon traffic jam, they are pretty little compared to where these people are coming from. People don't have to live far out of town in Yukon to work in the capital city, for one thing. Obviously, in our rural communities, they don't have to live far away at all. These are an advantage, a Yukon advantage.

A government's success in being a strong government will be directly linked to its ability to acquire and retain the best talent. We know that we have an extraordinarily high number of employees in our public service who are over the age of 40 and a significantly high number of public servants who are over the age of 50. That means that they are perhaps within the last decade of working on behalf of their fellow Yukoners in the public service.

Key areas of recruiting can and should include any or all of the following suggestions: travel within Canada to recruit

workers on behalf of the government and small businesses in the Yukon. I recognize that many of these things are being done. I'm not going to separate them into what is and isn't being done, but just point them out. Provide more temporary and flexible staffing, particularly flex time, as that helps to accommodate young families who perhaps need both members of the family, or want both members of the family, to be working. But with children at home, it's handy to have more flexible hours. It also helps to allow some of the more senior employees to carry forward a little longer than they might have previously anticipated if they can have more flexible hours.

I think there needs to be a review of employment branding to promote the benefits of working and living in Yukon.

This one is being done. We need to do more of it, to develop relationships with post-secondary institutions in B.C. and across Canada, so that there is more penetration into the B.C., Alberta, and other post-secondary systems. And I do applaud Yukon College for the series of cooperative arrangements they have established with both British Columbia and Alberta, in particular, in terms of having programs accepted for transfer elsewhere, in terms of having people able to take programs elsewhere and then carry forward in Yukon, so it's bi-directional. Someday that might lead right to a university college of Yukon or a university of Yukon. It is a step in the right direction.

We need to develop key messages that clarify the benefits of a career in government, a career in the private sector and the benefits of living in Yukon. We need to go again and again into the local high schools and give presentations on the types of jobs available in government, and provide information on how to apply for government jobs. We need to assist the private sector in doing that, as well, and let them get increased entry to directly address students in their senior years who are their future employees.

We need to encourage more students to work during study breaks and part-time. As has been mentioned, we need to market to retired and semi-retired workers to come to the Yukon for a couple of years so they can experience the Yukon while they work — outline the benefits of living here — and market to all Canadians, promoting the Yukon experience. I would be willing to bet that perhaps more than half of the members of this Assembly came north for what was going to be a year or two years and have now been here for 15, 20, 25, 30 years or more. I know that some members are second generation or multiple-generation Yukoners.

I look over at my friend, the Member for McIntyre-Takhini, who can trace his ancestry back in the north a lot longer than I can. He came here for one year but he has a lot of northern relatives who have been here for a long time. I came here for one summer but it has kind of extended.

So allow students from outside of the Yukon, perhaps, to apply to programs like STEP. How many times, again, have I said or heard a Yukoner say that they came up to the Yukon to work for a year and ended up staying for 25 years?

Arrange with the high schools and Yukon College for more co-op places. The purpose of the co-op program is obviously that it provides post-secondary students with the oppor-

tunity to apply the theoretical knowledge of their discipline to the practical world of work. The process integrates students' academic study with related work experience normally in alternating terms. This program is also part of a long-term recruitment strategy for hard-to-fill positions and has been designed to encourage students to accept multiple work terms and also to consider Yukon for job opportunities following the completion of their studies.

Encourage older workers from other careers to experience a job change. Encourage human resource managers and senior officials to visit Yukon College and other campuses across the country to witness first-hand what those colleges can provide. Perhaps even provide bonuses to employees who bring in new employees — the private sector does that. We may reach a time when the public sector needs to consider doing that.

Provide on-site daycare. Now this is something that is done by public sectors elsewhere in Canada and around the world. It is done by private sector companies. Again, this is something that the Yukon government can look at as well. Provide more workshops on how to compete for and retain workers. Support cost-shared funding with private sector companies to encourage recruitment and retention.

The private sector has been having to face these issues for many years. We are now taking this up here in this Assembly as something that we should be assisting them with. Let's ask them for more and more of their input on what has been working and flip that around and use some of their ideas within the Yukon's public service to help us recruit and retain. We know that a few years ago I brought forward some suggestions on recruitment and retention of doctors and other health care professionals. I know that the former Health minister is very eager to get to his feet whenever I raise that and say, "The member opposite didn't invent the idea. We were going to do it too."

It doesn't really matter to me. I just think it's a good idea. It works and it can continue to work. I will commend this government for having expanded the program since they first introduced the tuition forgiveness and bursaries for doctors and they've expanded it to other areas. We need to continue doing that. If it's working in the medical profession, it can work elsewhere.

We do need, as has been said, to develop the untapped labour supply. We need to do more to assist people who are on income support to also be able to reintegrate into the workforce or work part-time. We need, as has been said, to work with people who are differently abled, which I think is the more correct term to use. I have a number of constituents who have repeatedly come to me with challenges they face because of their having differing abilities. In the case of several, they must operate in a wheelchair.

We need to look at how that impacts and what this government can do to assist those people. I have one constituent who has enrolled. She was a heavy equipment operator, so she had a marketable skill.

She had a tragic accident a number of years ago that made it impossible for her to carry forward in that profession. Since then, aside from having to go through surgeries, rehabilitation and a lot of painful medical procedures, having to change her

whole life and live in a different kind of housing that would allow things to be accessible to her, she has gone to classes at Yukon College to take different training. It is business training that will allow her to be fully self-sufficient and a fully contributing member of society again, which is her goal. She runs up against roadblocks. They can be roadblocks that are not of the Yukon government's making. There are challenges to getting sufficient access to the Handy Bus, which is a city-operated system, but is provided with funding support from the Yukon government. Since there is only one bus that operates, it has to try to accommodate everyone who needs it. There are times when she can't get to a class to pursue the training that she is trying to undertake to become fully self-supporting again, because the bus can't accommodate her. One thing that this government can do is to increase that funding and assist the City of Whitehorse to have more than one Handy Bus.

I know that under the term of this government they assisted the city in buying a bigger Handy Bus that can accommodate more people. But the problem with that solution is it's still one operating bus. Even though it can accommodate more people, it doesn't provide the flexibility of scheduling to accommodate people's different needs. So that's something this government can look at and I encourage them to do that.

There is a lot more I could say on this area, but I don't want to go on and on, on only one aspect of it and not get to others, other than to say again: copy successful programs from other governments. For example, the B.C. government has the following initiatives: the Pacific Leaders Graduate Student Fellowship will attract top-quality researchers to the B.C. public service while supporting research that benefits the provinces and addresses areas of skill shortage. Fellowships of \$20,000 each will be awarded each year to masters and Ph.D. students.

We may not have a huge need for lots of Ph.D. students in Yukon, but the model can be used.

Also, we need to look at retention strategies. Now, for those people — and that is the fourth bullet here — who came of age during the Great Depression, the most important possession that one could ever have was a job. It didn't matter what kind of job or how much it paid; the key was to have that job and keep it for as long as possible. I know in talking to my parents, who are children of the Depression, that was absolutely key to them. No matter how onerous working conditions were, they never considered quitting a job unless they had another work opportunity at hand.

We live in a different era today. Times have changed. Today's workforce, though often working longer hours and under more stress than even some of our parents and grandparents did, does not feel wed to a particular job or a particular employer. So instead, employees are concerned, and justifiably so, with career development and job satisfaction. So employers need to take on a whole new role to develop a more talented workforce. Successful companies in the private sector are taking a serious look at their recruiting and hiring activities in an effort to create a welcoming environment that encourages career growth and opportunity and fosters employee loyalty and commitment.

Most employees will spend more time in the workplace than they do at home or any other venue, giving them an understandable interest in their employers' business and affairs. You know, Mr. Speaker, when you go around the community and you see "Help Wanted" signs posted, you even see some of the benefits being posted, and it's phenomenal that today you can work in a fast food outlet or any of these other areas at these entry-level jobs and be offered medical benefits, dental benefits, employee discounts — there's a lot more that's being done than what I suspect you and I, Mr. Speaker, had offered to us in our entry-level jobs, and that's a good thing. But there needs to be more done.

I have to say that, again, when I look back at the document from the last election, I see that some of these things have started, and others have barely had the surface scratched. And I hope that the commitment to this area is going to be a full and ongoing commitment, because I know there are other areas in the last document.

I see some impact on my riding, such as "construct a new school in the Copper Ridge area". I don't see that happening and yet I know that the existing school, even with the change in the catchment areas, is again bursting at the seams. I see that there are other things that have been highlighted in this document that have not occurred. Another one in the document is to complete the construction of the multi-level care facilities in Watson Lake and Dawson City and the seniors facility in Haines Junction. Again, we are two years in and we are back to the drawing board in Dawson City. I guess we are back to the drawing board in Watson Lake, because we have been told that we will not complete the multi-level care facility. There will be a completely different facility built — a residential one and a hospital.

I hope the commitment that the Member for Klondike speaks to in terms of working cooperatively with the business community, labour groups, industry, educational institutions, non-government organization, First Nations governments and others to develop a labour market framework will be carried through and not just be more words. It's a good start, but it's very late in the day.

I simply encourage the Member for Klondike to continue to hold his colleagues' feet to the fire and continue to pressure the ministers to do the work that the Member for Klondike sees needs to be done.

With that, I know there are other members who want to speak. I know everyone on the government side will want to speak, and I will provide them with that opportunity.

Hon. Mr. Rouble: It's an honour and a pleasure to rise today to discuss and debate the motion that the Member for Klondike has put forward. I sense an awful lot of support for it — at least, from the first speaker from the opposition side. I do appreciate the comments and accolades that the Department of Education has received.

When we discuss creating a labour market framework, what we're doing is looking at things really through two lenses. One is a magnifying glass — what are we looking at today?

The other is a telescope — what are going to need in the future?

We ask ourselves the question: how do we ensure we have the right people, with the right skills, characteristics and attributes to take advantage of the economic opportunities that come before them and satisfy the needs we have in our community?

When we look at the economic opportunities in the Yukon, really one only has to look at the — what I have been referring to as the "yellow pages of opportunities". We know the businesses that we have here in the territory. We know that there are going to be future needs for employment in really all of those.

We know that virtually every facet of our economy has been going through a level of growth. We know the demographic changes in the territory. We know that people are aging and retiring. We know that means that there is going to be a need to bring new people along to fill those voids in our community. We need to take a look at where the territory is going into the future and to ensure that our students of today have the training, the skills and education to prepare themselves for the opportunities of tomorrow. But, Mr. Speaker, we also do certainly need to build on the programs of today.

Now, the Government of Yukon has taken a very broad and holistic approach toward this. In fact, really every government department plays a role in ensuring that Yukoners are prepared and able to participate in our economy and employment in the territory.

That can mean changes from the Department of Community Services, for example, in changing the graduated driver's licence in order to allow young people to drive home from work or to work with the workplace diversity office in the Public Service Commission, which is really a role model for Yukon employers as to how to include people with disabilities and people who haven't traditionally been involved in a particular type of employment in the government.

Also, Mr. Speaker, there have been changes in Health and Social Services to things like childcare programs to allow people greater flexibility in accessing childcare so that they can access employment opportunities. Another one in social services would be the changing of social assistance rates to allow those on social assistance to earn more employment income before it's reduced from their social assistance cheque and also allow them to access those employment opportunities much faster, so that they reduce the chance of disengaging from the employment situations.

Within the Department of Education, of course, there are significant programs that have been going on for quite some time. These include some of our traditional programs, such as our investment in post-secondary education for Yukoners.

Right now, Mr. Speaker, Government of Yukon contributes over \$4.3 million toward the post-secondary education for over 1,000 individual students. There are over 1,000 students, Yukoners, who are now receiving money — I think the average amount is about \$5,000 a year — to attend a post-secondary institution somewhere in Canada. One thing of particular interest is that, while we do have significant numbers of students attending Yukon College, these students also attend over 100

different institutions across North America and I think that is a statistic that we should be proud of.

Also speaking of Yukon College, the government continues to invest — last year it was in excess of \$20 million in Yukon College which, in addition to Ayamdigut Campus here in Whitehorse, has campuses throughout the territory. Again, this is a very responsive institution that is able to identify needs in a community and design programs that can really work with the citizens of the community to be responsive to the needs there. They can take a look at some of the labour market trends and some of the employment opportunities for people and some of the needs in the community and then create programs for that.

Mr. Speaker, our number one priority is to train Yukoners for Yukon opportunities, and Yukon College is a great tool to do that. We can see that with the programs there like the bachelor of social work program to prepare people for social work positions in government or in other orders of government. We see that with the YNTEP program. We see that with the master of public administration program. But we are also seeing some new programs that are responsive to the needs in the community, and these include the licensed practical nurse program that has just launched now. It also includes a program like the survey technician program or the School of Visual Arts in Dawson City.

We are looking at what the employment opportunities are and what the needs in our communities are and how do we train people for those. We need to have Yukoners trained to take advantage of the Yukon opportunities and to provide the necessary services here in our community. Also, we're taking steps to diversify the economy and we've seen that with investments in education into areas like the School of Visual Arts or into other areas such as tourism.

Mr. Speaker, these are some of the traditional programs that have been going on. Also, the Yukon Party government restored funding to community training trust funds.

These are an excellent opportunity, and I appreciate the comments coming from the Liberal Party now about their value and their merit to the community, because it does allow the community, whether it's an industry association or a specific geographic-based community, to identify the needs that they have and provide the training to allow people to be responsive in satisfying those needs.

These are some of the traditional areas that we've done for labour market development, and really, we need to — well, we have work in all of these areas: comprehensive skills and trades training, immigration, national recruitment and employee retention and labour market strategy. But really we do need to work with all of our partners on a more strategic level. While we have these great programs in place, we do need to go out and work with First Nation orders of government, with business communities, with labour organizations and with employers to identify what the opportunities are that are coming in the future and what their needs are, and how we can be responsive to that and to identify some very targeted initiatives that will satisfy the emerging needs.

Mr. Speaker, we know that we've had immigration in the territory for a long time, but in recent years we've seen a greater demand for it. There have been recent changes; the government has been responsive to the needs of employers in the territory and has changed things like the Yukon nominee program, or the critical impact worker program. But there's more that we can do and by working with all of our partners, they'll help us to identify some of the solutions, some of the areas, some of the pressure points, and I encourage members opposite to also identify their suggestions and their concerns and other ideas that they would like to see included in the strategy.

At the symposium held earlier this week, there were representatives from non-government organizations, from First Nation governments, from labour groups, from the business community, and educational institutions, and they put forward their ideas. The government certainly does not have a lock on all good ideas; we'll beg, borrow and steal them from pretty much anywhere, as long as they are good ideas that will help Yukoners.

So I welcome some suggestions from the member opposite, who sounds like he might have some ideas to share. I appreciate that he has a whole bunch. Now, I should qualify this too. We don't just need a whole bunch of ideas; we need a whole bunch of good ideas.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Hon. Mr. Rouble: I see he has some endorsement from his colleagues about the quality of the ideas.

And we'll certainly appreciate that, because we know that when we work together in an inclusive manner, and bring different people into the mix, and get different ideas, in the end our strategy will be better. That's why the government has launched this process and will continue to work with all of our partners and stakeholders in addressing some of the strategic areas we can focus on.

In the area of the comprehensive skills and trades training strategy, I've talked about the contribution we're making to Yukon College and how we're working with Yukon College in the communities. Also, in areas of skills and trades training, members in here have heard me talk about increasing funding for our secondary schools for vocational training and for experiential education. We're certainly continuing in that area.

We're also working to support the skills and trades training by helping with organizations like Skills Canada. Skills Canada recently held their national meeting here, and my hat certainly has to go off to Dan Curtis and his staff at Skills Canada for the great work that they do, and the idea of revitalizing skills training in some of our communities and our schools.

Now, on the immigration front, I mentioned the changes to the Yukon nominee program, on working on targeted initiatives with the critical impact category.

We also need to work with some of our employers to identify those people and those areas on the planet where the people would have the skills, and we can actually encourage them to come here. The Government of Yukon has gone on several immigration trade missions. These have included trips to Germany and France, but we do need to be influenced and to hear

comments from our business community as to other places they would like to see us go or where, indeed, we should go. We have also had meetings with the ambassador from the Philippines and have discussed a continuing relationship with them.

Before I leave immigration, I should add that the Yukon has presented its concerns at the national level. Earlier this fall, there was a meeting of the immigration ministers in Ottawa where, prior to the call of the election, ministers met and discussed the national issues on education and some of our concerns. They lobbied the federal government to make changes to its system in order to meet our needs. It was great to have the Minister of Immigration come up to the Yukon this past year and meet with our local business community to find out some of their concerns.

So indeed, we'll have to work with all our partners at a variety of government levels if we are to be successful with this.

With national recruitment strategies, we all recognize that we're likely going to need more people in the territory. As I said earlier, our number one priority is to train Yukoners for Yukon opportunities. However, there are cases where we do need more people or we need people with specific skills that we don't have here in the territory. In that case, we'll work with the variety of different departments, whether it's the Public Service Commission, Health and Social Services or with employers in the territory to help them to attract the right people with the right skills to come here to satisfy the needs in our community.

The labour market information strategy will be very important — gathering more data about our situation, the direction the economy is going in and looking at future projections. I believe we've had the conversation in the past with the Member for Mount Lorne about looking at additional information regarding post-secondary education students, the fields they're going into, and some of the data regarding educational performance and outcomes.

If I am right, can I get a nod? Thank you. It will be important to track these things and take a look at where our students are going. We know we have programs in place now to encourage Yukon students to come back, but we do need to have a bit more quantifiable data to know which programs Yukon students are graduating from and where they are going, if they are returning to the Yukon or if they are not. There are other areas in which we do need to have a bit more research and more data collection so that we can look at how to change our programs to be responsive to them.

It might mean recognizing that we have a new need for flex capacitor technicians. I am not sure what a flex capacitor technician is or what they will do, but I know that in the future there will be opportunities and positions that haven't been created today. If a couple of years ago, Mr. Speaker, you had told us all that we are going to need web administrators and Internet site optimizers and some of the other new positions we are seeing in our economy, we all would have scratched our heads, except maybe some of us who are looking to the future with a little bit longer lens.

We do know, though, that we need to keep an eye on the future and keep an eye on emerging technologies and be pre-

pared for them. So we know that there will be different jobs in the future, jobs that don't exist today, and we have to keep an eye on training people for those opportunities that don't yet exist. That will be a bit of a challenge for our education system, in order to teach people the skills they need in order to be adaptable in the workplace and to be constant lifelong learners in order to take advantage of those opportunities.

Now, the member previous to me also brought up some other initiatives — a great list of programs. I'm not sure if he was talking about existing programs or new ideas, because many of them are already incorporated into our systems — things like job fairs that go on in our high schools, or having the Public Service Commission attend job fairs to talk to young people about our programs that are ongoing, or changes to the STEP program. The member opposite might not be aware that the student training and employment program was recently changed to allow returning students — students who had recently graduated and had come back for summer employment. That's a great opportunity because it brings Yukoners who received an education funded by the Yukon an opportunity to come back to the community and have the security of a summer job that they can work at while they are exploring full-time opportunities.

Mr. Speaker, I really appreciate the Member for Klondike bringing forward this motion. It is a timely one. In this age of economic uncertainty, one of the things that we can really focus on and make investments in is educating people and preparing people to have a very trained, skilled, competent and educated workforce. By working with all of our partners — that includes the member opposite — by working with the labour unions, with business organizations, with our educational institutions, with our other orders of government, with municipalities, First Nations and the federal government, we can ensure that we have programs with meaning that respond to the needs of our territory, now and into the future.

I thank members for their continued support of this. I look forward to passing this motion. I look forward to hearing more good ideas from members opposite.

Mr. Cardiff: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

In the short time that we have left, I would just like to bring a few things to the attention of the Member for Klondike. Standing Order 29(1) says that "A motion is used to propose that the Assembly (a) do something; (b) order something to be done; or (c) express an opinion on a matter." I am not sure exactly what we are doing here. This is, to be honest with you, Mr. Speaker — I'm not asking for a ruling or anything like that, but it is almost like an opportunity for a ministerial statement. This is something that the government is already doing.

The minister gave us some details about the symposium that was held this past Monday, October 27, and if the Member for Klondike was there then he would have found out that the government had already interdepartmental working groups that were going to be reviewing those comments that were generated there. I'm going to table for the benefit of the member a copy of some of the session information guides and other information that was provided at that symposium.

I'm not saying that the motion doesn't have value. I think that there has been some very valuable discussion here and I hope that the member will bring this motion back for debate on a subsequent Wednesday so that other Members of the Legislative Assembly will also have time to participate in this discussion.

The minister mentioned all of the people who attended the meeting and that there were representatives of First Nation governments and industry. But it's my understanding that there were a lot of people from government. Government is a large employer and it is rightfully so that they should be there. They play a huge role in the labour market. It's very important that industry and Yukon First Nation governments especially be supported in the effort to develop this whole new labour market framework. It should be noted that at the symposium this past Monday, people who attended were informed that it has been 10 years since that strategy was updated. It's time to do it. We have heard over and over again from industry and non-profit organizations and First Nations that the resources available to them to enable them to participate effectively in these kinds of consultations are few. Government needs to play a role in that.

I would hope to see that funds are going to be made available for industry and First Nations to support their representation and participation alongside the Yukon government in this process. It's difficult for them. They have limited resources. The symposium was held on a Monday. There are a lot of businesses in town that have to carry on with business. We need to make sure that the opportunities made available to them are timely.

I've tabled the information and I hope the member will look at it. It speaks to the items that are in his motion — the comprehensive skills training — or trades and training strategy — the immigration strategy, the national recruitment strategy, the employee retention strategy and the labour market information strategy. If I had more time available to me, I would like to offer comments on all of those items. The member is quite right, I may even have proposed — if I had more time available to me today — amendments to his motion.

I think we need to ensure that the work that's being done is inclusive of industry and First Nation governments, and that municipalities — in particular rural municipalities — have an opportunity to participate and that they have access to the information that's gathered. I think that information needs to be shared, as well, with members on this side of the House. I think we need to ensure, as part of a labour market strategy or framework, that there are resources available and that the government can do its part in ensuring that there are meaningful impact benefit agreements. I spoke about this the other day.

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

Debate on Motion No. 501 accordingly adjourned

The House adjourned at 5:30 p.m.