

Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Tuesday, November 25, 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 now proceed with the Order Paper. Tributes.

TRIBUTES

In recognition of International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women

Hon. Mr. Fentie: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to the White Ribbon Campaign. This campaign launches every year on November 25, to mark the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women.

The purpose of the white ribbon is to demonstrate men's commitment to working toward gender equality by speaking out against violence and discrimination against women. The White Ribbon Campaign is a worldwide effort of men working to end men's violence against women. The White Ribbon Campaign addresses issues of gender inequality and encourages men and boys to speak out in their workplaces and communities against violence done to women. Mr. Speaker, Yukon women and girls should not have to live in fear of violence, nor should they have to face discrimination because of their gender. We all have to stand up and put a stop to it.

To wear the white ribbon is to signify a man's pledge to never commit, condone or be silent about violence against women and girls.

As men, we must speak up and speak out against violence and discrimination at work, in our homes and in our communities. As a man, and as Premier, I feel it is my responsibility to do my part in taking action against violence toward women. Wearing a white ribbon is but one example. Other initiatives include supporting public education campaigns to create awareness of this issue; promoting and supporting the grass-roots work of women's organizations to advance women's equality and, most importantly, addressing the root causes of violence toward women.

Men must continue to work together to eliminate gender inequality and to better support women and girls who are experiencing violence and discrimination. I encourage every man to make a pledge to treat women and girls with respect, because by remaining silent about all of these things, we simply allow the violence to continue.

Change can and will occur if we work together.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Mitchell: Je me lève aujourd'hui au nom de l'opposition officielle pour rendre hommage au jour blanc de ruban à l'élimination de la violence contre des femmes.

I rise today on behalf of the Official Opposition to pay tribute to White Ribbon Day for the elimination of violence against women. The White Ribbon Campaign believes that men can and must be part of the solution.

Wearing a white ribbon is a personal pledge never to commit, condone, or remain silent about violence against women and girls. November 25 is the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women. In Canada, we wear the white ribbons until December 6, the anniversary of the Montreal Massacre at l'École Polytechnique and Canada's National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence against Women.

Le port d'un ruban blanc est un engagement personnel pour ne jamais à commettre, pardonner ni rester silencieux au sujet de la violence contre des femmes et les jeunes filles. Le 25 novembre est le jour international pour l'extirpation de la violence contre des femmes. Au Canada, nous portons les rubans blancs jusqu'au 6 décembre, l'anniversaire du massacre de Montréal chez L'école Polytechnique, et le jour national du Canada du souvenir et de l'action sur la violence contre des femmes.

Violence against women can come in many forms: physical, sexual assault, sexual harassment, psychological abuse and emotional abuse. Not all violence leaves visible scars. Emotional violence includes regular subjection to demeaning jokes, domineering forms of behaviour, and sexual harassment.

Many men will never be physically or sexually violent toward women, but there are other ways they try to control women. They dominate conversations, put them down, limit their activities or withhold finances. These are all forms of abuse and a way of asserting power, privilege and control over women. Wearing a white ribbon provokes discussion, debate and soul-searching among the men around us.

The ribbon is a catalyst for discussion; it is a catalyst for change. Respect for girls and women and equality between men and women are preconditions to ending violence. This won't happen overnight; real solutions are truly long-term solutions.

One of the most important things we can do to help end violence against women is to speak out against it. As men who care about the women in our lives, we can take responsibility to help ensure that women live free from fear and violence. It is very important that we teach our children by example that all forms of violence are unacceptable. We must pledge not to remain silent and pledge to challenge the men around us to act to end violence.

This year, in the "12 days to end violence against women project", artwork is being displayed in merchants' windows on Main Street in downtown Whitehorse. Two themes of the artwork are, "How violence looks in the world" and "Envision a world free from violence against women."

Let's all work together to change our attitudes and behaviour and take a stand to end violence against women.

Mr. Hardy: I rise on behalf of the NDP caucus to pay tribute to this International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women and to recognize the White Ribbon Campaign, which goes from November 25 to December 6. I'm proud to

say that the White Ribbon Campaign started in Canada, and even one of the leaders of the national parties was one of the co-founders of the White Ribbon Campaign.

It is one of the largest movements for men to show their support for working against violence against women. Wearing the white ribbon shows we have a responsibility to speak out against violence. We are stating we will never commit, condone or remain silent about violence against women or children.

The United Nations has declared the decade from 2000 to 2010 as a decade of non-violence. It is discouraging to look back over the first eight years of this decade to see that internationally it has certainly not been a non-violent decade so far, and it seems to be escalating. The so-called war on terror has expanded, resulting in extreme violence against civilians, mostly women and children. Our federal government has supported that action, unfortunately.

Violence against women and children — has it lessened in the past decade in Canada? It hasn't, Mr. Speaker. A Canadian woman is assaulted sexually every three minutes. Every day women are killed by men who batter them. Women and children live in fear of their lives. Much of this violence is hidden from view and is easier to ignore than to do something about it, it seems.

We are pledging this day to prevent abuse. With the white ribbons, we are showing support for organizations that help Yukoners deal with violence, such as transition homes, women's non-governmental organizations, victim services and the family violence prevention unit.

We pledge to challenge stereotypes of women as passive and less important than men. We will speak out for human rights, including social structures that result in discrimination and poverty, often the root of violence.

Mr. Speaker, a few years ago, my colleague and I stood on Main Street handing out white ribbons and trying to raise awareness among people on the street about the situation and importance of this campaign. And there were many, many men in our society who refused to take a white ribbon. We were shocked and ashamed that that was the case.

Now, all children must learn at an early age that oppression and violence of any kind is not acceptable, and we support the school programs that teach children about bullying and sports organizations that recognize that hazing is a form of violence. It has been in the news lately. We urge parents to seek ways that aren't physical to discipline children.

I can tell you on a personal basis, Mr. Speaker, that in those sports arenas, in those locker rooms, the words that are used by children on many occasions are derogatory toward women, and it is incumbent upon the coaches and people involved with children to nip that in the bud. Do not allow that to happen. When I was involved, I made sure it didn't happen. I was shocked at the number of young people who used language that was very derogatory toward women. We must stop that. Every one of us has a responsibility for that, and it has to be dealt with. No one deserves to be abused no matter their gender or age. If you use physical force to control anyone in their life,

you must get help and there is help out there. It is readily available.

Speaker: Are there any other tributes?

Introduction of visitors.

Returns or documents for tabling.

Are there any reports of committees?

Are there any petitions to be presented?

Are there any bills to be introduced?

Are there any notices of motion?

NOTICES OF MOTION

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

THAT this House urges the Minister of Education to bring forth amendments to the *Education Act* as required by law in order that:

(1) the recommendations of the *Education Act* review committee be considered;

(2) the recommendations of the education reform project may be considered;

(3) recommendations of New Horizons project may be considered; and

(4) that Yukoners can be empowered to be part of their children's education.

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

THAT this House urges the Yukon government to invest in expanded home care, community support programs and supported/assisted living in order to keep individuals out of the acute care and facility-based, long-term care system and to provide a better level of appropriate services at a lower cost.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Minister of Health and Social Services to provide the chair and board of the Yukon Hospital Corporation with an annual letter of expectation that improves accountability by:

(1) providing the hospital board with a written mandate;

(2) articulating the minister's expectations for the board, and;

(3) outlining the minister's obligations to the Hospital Corporation.

Mr. Cardiff: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Yukon government to work with the RCMP and the Kluane First Nation to continue a pilot project in the summer of 2009 to provide a full-time police presence in the community of Burwash Landing.

Speaker: Thank you. Are there any further notices of motion?

Is there a statement by a minister?

This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Watson Lake multi-level care facility

Mr. Mitchell: Mr. Speaker, the never-completed Watson Lake multi-level care facility is a matter which is causing Yukoners much concern. Here are the facts: the project was originally costed at \$5.2 million. According to the government's own statements, \$4.1 million has been spent to date. The supplementary budget shows another \$950,000 being spent in the current fiscal year, bringing the total to over \$5 million. Congratulations would be in order but for one little detail: the building is a shell, half unfinished, boarded up, needing extensive modifications, and highly suspect of being contaminated with mould. Those are the facts, Mr. Speaker.

Now, Yukoners would like some facts from the Premier. They deserve to hear an explanation of why and how \$5 million of their taxpayers' money was wasted, much of it by sole-source contracting. Will the Premier factually explain how his government, in the Premier's own constituency, managed to squander \$5 million on a shell of a building?

Hon. Mr. Lang: The member is wrong. The project is — he's right on one thing. There is \$4.1 million being spent on the ground there. It includes a structure. It includes a thorough engineering overview of the existing infrastructure that has been there for 35 years, and certainly we're moving forward with finishing the project.

But as far as anything the member says on the floor here today, this is a go-forward project, and this is good for southern Yukon, regardless of what the member opposite thinks.

Mr. Mitchell: Well, I suspect the people of Watson Lake are more than a little upset about how this project is going forward. How often does a community get a \$5-million project, only to have it wasted? If someone had bothered to ask the citizens of Watson Lake what they wanted, it would probably have saved taxpayers a lot of needless expense.

The minister responsible for the Yukon Housing Corporation said yesterday, in reference to seniors housing facilities: "... a project which is underway in Watson Lake ..."

He then went on to say, "... have specific seniors projects — the former athletes village, the project at Haines Junction and the proposed projects in areas such as Teslin, Watson Lake and Dawson in the future ..."

Mr. Speaker, this is alarming. This government apparently doesn't know whether its projects are actually underway or merely being proposed. Can the Premier or minister tell us: is there a new seniors housing project already underway in Watson Lake? Yes or no?

Hon. Mr. Kenyon: For the member opposite, yes, the project is well underway and has been announced. I guess he missed that memo.

Mr. Mitchell: Well, Mr. Speaker, I look forward to seeing the minister's definition of "well underway". Mr. Speaker, we now have a situation where the government is trying to shoehorn a new hospital inside an existing shell that clearly does not remotely suit the design needs of a hospital. They may or may not have a new project underway for seniors housing in Watson Lake. There is an existing hospital that

clearly does not meet current codes which would take millions to renovate. These are the facts, Mr. Speaker.

This has become a "can't" government — can't plan properly, can't budget properly and can't get the job done on time. A government with such a record is an empty government. It is devoid of the ability to properly manage the affairs of this territory. What will the Premier do to fix his government's inability to get a project done and get it done properly?

Hon. Mr. Lang: It's so refreshing to listen to the member opposite. We did discuss and consult with Watson Lakers on what they needed in their community. He's right on one thing: in the engineering and the overview of the existing hospital, it turned out it needed some structural repairs. We're going to do that, but we are also going to have a health facility for people in Watson Lake and southeast Yukon. That's what this government will do, and it's doing it today and it will be done in the near future.

Question re: Contract audit report

Mr. Mitchell: Here's the question that just won't go away, mainly because we're getting no clear answers, and that's on the audit. Let's get to the facts: the audit was called because, "Internal audits and reviews performed since 2002 had shown many deficiencies in the way contracts are issued, managed and controlled, raising some general concerns as to whether departments were adhering to the contracting authorities ..." This is directly from the audit report done more than five months ago. It points directly to this Yukon Party government's time in office, period. Yet this Premier will not answer as to what is being done to correct this and if any of the recommendations are being instituted.

Will the Premier please tell us the plan for making sure these recommendations are put into action?

Hon. Mr. Lang: Mr. Speaker, the member opposite is wrong. We were the ones who directed the audit to take place. We're the ones who are working with the auditor to repair the department. It's called a "management tool". That's what the government is doing with this audit. We're moving forward with it, and we're acting on the recommendations.

Mr. Mitchell: Well, Mr. Speaker, words this minister should be focusing on are words out of the report. For instance, quote: "The current management framework does not promote consistency of contracting activities within departments or facilitate the monitoring of contracts with a focus on risk," and "...managers, administrative staff and finance officers who play major roles in the contracting process do so without necessarily having the benefit of adequate experience and expertise."

So will the minister tell us how he plans to revamp the current contracting practices in the delivery of services, so that greater efficiency, economy and choice will result and no further taxpayers' money will be wasted?

Hon. Mr. Lang: The member is taking snippets out of a whole report. The government here is working with the audit. It has been public knowledge that we have been moving forward in the contracting and procurement process in government. In this supplementary budget, we're looking for \$140,000 to do just that. We're looking at improving the process, Mr. Speaker.

We're working with a very fine department; it's not a rogue department like the Leader of the Official Opposition likes to label it. This department is a hard-working department that does a lot of positive things within our communities. There isn't a community in the territory that's not touched by individuals who work for this department. So we'll work with the department. They're open to suggestions; they're open to change. You understand the procurement and contracting process has not been touched for 10 years; we're modernizing it, and we're doing it now.

Mr. Mitchell: Well, Mr. Speaker, this minister should stop describing the department as a "rogue department", because what I said is that it "isn't one rogue department"; that the government's not providing any clear political direction. The government's not providing oversight.

Mr. Speaker, if the minister will give me an hour of his time, I'll read him more than snippets; I'll read him the whole report.

Now, this minister needs to stand up and be accountable for this report. He should stop laying blame on other people, especially the people in the departments. Yukoners don't want to hear about how this has been happening since the beginning of time and watch this Yukon Party government justifying that it continues to repeat the same mistakes. They want to hear that the government is fixing this, that all their money is being managed in a fiscally prudent way. Now, I see the Premier is eager to be on his feet, so will the Premier start doing the hard work necessary to implement these recommendations and clean up the contracting process to restore public confidence in his government?

Hon. Mr. Fentie: Mr. Speaker, the member now wants to speak about factual statements in this House, so I'd like to quote from *Hansard* the statement of the Leader of the Official Opposition when it comes to his view of the government, its officials, its departments. The member said, on November 19, 2008, page 3417: "So, this isn't one rogue department that's not following" — I emphasize "that's not following" — "the political directives of the government, Mr. Speaker; it's pretty widespread, because the examination was across 11 different departments."

The member stated clearly on the pages of *Hansard* what he thought. Now, Mr. Speaker, the definition of "rogue" is "an individual that is dishonest and unprincipled." This member has said it's widespread; it's across 11 departments. How many thousands of employees is he referring to who are dishonest and unprincipled?

Speaker: Presumably, it's the Member for McIntyre-Takhini's turn. So you have the question, sir.

Question re: Pharmacare program

Mr. Edzerza: We have already given the Minister of Health and Social Services some idea of what can be done to reduce the cost of drugs purchased by his government.

The cost of drugs drives the cost of health care upwards, but there are other costs in the Pharmacare program. Pharmacare is operating under an agreement that is 11 years old. The terms of this agreement mean the Yukon is paying higher

markup rate on the cost of drugs than any other jurisdiction in Canada. Will the minister negotiate a new agreement now before waiting for public consultation on the health care review?

Hon. Mr. Hart: For the member opposite, he or members of his party previously brought up this issue with regard to Pharmacare. It was also brought up in the review that the cost of Pharmacare was high in the Yukon. He also stated that we have an agreement and that agreement has to be honoured until the terms of that agreement are complete. I will state that the agreement is coming due soon and we intend to review that with those involved with the hopes of getting a better deal for all Yukoners.

Mr. Edzerza: The minister didn't come close to answering the question. We hope the report on the audit of the Pharmacare and extended health benefits doesn't show how this government runs its other programs. The report says that the Finance department's procedures for verifying and approving payments for drugs was inappropriate. The program lacks the necessary information for reporting to internal and external users. The software that runs the Pharmacare system is inadequate for today's reporting or control needs. The pharmacies we pay for the drugs in the program are not audited to recover funds or to deter potential abuse. When will the minister correct this simple management problem?

Hon. Mr. Hart: For the member opposite, we are currently reviewing the situation that he speaks of. We are taking measures to improve the process. Our department has also upgraded its technical aspects with regard to IT to improve the monitoring of the Pharmacare system, to improve its production for the health care system. We are also looking at other measures identified in the report, to implement them and to produce an efficient department.

Mr. Edzerza: Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind the ministers that while their review is taking place it is costing Yukoners a lot of money. There has been a 67-percent increase in the cost of this program. Three years ago the cost was \$3.5 million.

The audit report states that the Pharmacare program has an almost unsustainable funding draw on resources if the program costs increase at the rate expected. The audit covered the period from 2003 to 2005.

What has the minister done in the past three years to correct the disturbing findings in the audit report?

Hon. Mr. Hart: I've already tabled the health care review in the House, which identifies the issues currently out there with regard to the entire health system in the Yukon. We are looking at taking that out to the public to garner the input of all Yukoners on ways to improve our health care system for all Yukoners.

Question re: Solid-waste management

Mr. Cardiff: There are two major issues when it comes to solid waste management in the Yukon: (1) garbage continues to be burned in open pits, causing the release of toxic fumes, and (2) the organizations, whether municipalities or non-profit societies, are not treated equitably when it comes to funding these facilities.

Last November in response to me raising these issues, the Minister of Community Services said, “We have an RFP” — request for proposals — “underway for a management plan for a strategy for regional operations to reduce burning and to look at our recycling and composting.” He then said, “Once we fully understand the strategy we must undertake and what the options are provided to us under that process, we will allocate the necessary resources to make it happen.”

Can the minister provide the House with an update on the status of the solid-waste management strategy?

Hon. Mr. Lang: We did say in the House that we were moving forward with this study. The study is expected on my desk before the new year. We look forward to moving ahead with the recommendations this spring.

Mr. Cardiff: Well, in the RFP document, there are a number of conditions that the successful contractor would have to fulfill in developing a solid-waste strategy. This brings back memories of the recent audit report on contracting. They are supposed to do approximately six to eight visits to various waste management facilities. They’re supposed to consult with municipalities, local advisory councils and some First Nations so they can provide input around their immediate and long-term objectives for their solid-waste facilities.

Now I’ve surveyed several municipalities and LACs and I can the minister that those conversations haven’t happened. I’ll also tell the minister that the final solid-waste management plan was due October 15 and the procedures and guidelines were due on November 15.

Why has the process gone off the rails and what actions will the minister take to address the many problems around waste management and recycling in rural Yukon?

Hon. Mr. Lang: To answer the member opposite, it hasn’t gone off the rails. We are looking forward to the final cut and I’m looking forward to that hopefully before the new year. We certainly are working with the communities; the contract has been let and hopefully they’re doing the job that they’ve been hired to do. They’ve been hired to talk to these First Nation governments, communities and some of the municipalities out there that need help. Certainly, hopefully that job’s being done.

Mr. Cardiff: Well, the previous minister refused to act. He was unwilling to do anything until the situation was studied and a Yukon-wide strategy was developed. I can tell the minister that the work’s not being done and they had better get a handle on this.

The government promised this strategy and they haven’t done the work. It’s not happening, but the environmental health problems persist: there’s a lack of fair and appropriate funding to community solid-waste management organizations and municipalities. In response to a YESAB-triggered project for the Watson Lake landfill, this is what the Department of Environment wrote: “The current regulatory structure in the Yukon allows open burning of solid waste. This regulatory gap should be recognized and addressed as soon as possible.”

Will the Minister of Community Services commit, right now on the floor of this Legislature, to drafting regulations that

would ban the practice of open-pit garbage burning in the Yukon?

Hon. Mr. Lang: I repeat myself: there is a study going on. It is happening, Mr. Speaker, and that’s where the member opposite is wrong. EBA Engineering is doing the overview of it. I’m expecting the final draft, either at the end of this year or very early in the new year. I’ve committed to going to the communities with a plan so we can answer some of the questions the member opposite has. We do take solid waste very seriously. We are going to work with the communities, and we are going to work on resolving their issues.

Question re: Silver Trail maintenance

Mr. Fairclough: My question is to the Minister of Highways and Public Works. Many of our Yukon highways are in pretty rough shape and I’m sure many on the government side have travelled these highways. For example, the Silver Trail is in very bad shape, especially between Mayo and Keno, and needs a lot of work. People in Mayo and Keno are saying it’s the worst they’ve seen in 30 years.

Why did this Yukon Party government allow this highway to deteriorate to the state it’s in now?

Hon. Mr. Lang: This government is putting money into highways on a daily basis. We haven’t let any highway deteriorate, not like the opposition did with the Campbell Highway.

We’re putting money into the Elsa road; we’re spending money throughout the Yukon. We spend a large chunk of our budget on road upgrading and maintenance in the territory.

Mr. Fairclough: I have the supplementary budget right here, and it doesn’t mention that at all, Mr. Speaker. The Silver Trail does need the government’s attention. It cannot be left alone; it’s too important for this government to ignore.

What will this government do to improve the conditions of the Silver Trail? There’s no money earmarked for that in the supplementary budget.

Hon. Mr. Lang: I would like to remind the member opposite there were no questions on highways anywhere in the territory during the main estimates in the spring. So what is the big interest from the member opposite? One of the largest segments of our budget is the Department of Highways and Public Works, and there was not one question from the opposition last year.

We are putting money toward all highways in the territory for maintenance and upgrading. In the supplementary estimates, we do have some resources. When we go through the supplementary estimates, hopefully the opposition will participate.

Mr. Fairclough: Well, we didn’t get any answers last year, or the year before, or the year before that from this minister and the government side on this. What’s going on here? We’re talking about the supplementary budget. This is an opportunity for the minister to give some answers. Now, the people in Mayo and Keno want answers. What is this government doing to improve the conditions of the Silver Trail? Lay it out clearly.

Hon. Mr. Lang: Well, I enjoy the member opposite, but I’ll tell him a fact here on the floor today: you won’t get the

answer unless you ask for the answer, and that's what those people didn't do when the main budget was read this spring. We'll spend resources on all of the highways in the Yukon. We've done it in the past, and we'll do it in the future.

Question re: *Human Rights Act* amendments

Mr. Inverarity: I'd like to thank the Minister of Justice for an opportunity to work on the Select Committee on Human Rights. I'm passionate about this issue, and I appreciate all that I've learned from the work we've done on this committee. There has been lots of feedback from the public, and some very good suggestions have come forward as part of this committee's report. Would the Minister of Justice consider bringing forward some of the suggestions for amending the *Human Rights Act* this sitting?

Hon. Ms. Horne: I thank the member opposite for his question. It was a pleasure to work with the two members opposite on the Select Committee on Human Rights.

As I've indicated in this House on several occasions before, when we work together as a team, we work constructively with positive results, and the quality of the report that came forward speaks for itself.

Currently our officials are reviewing the report from the select committee and we will move forward.

Mr. Inverarity: I'd like to thank the minister for her answer. There have been many good suggestions in the report by the Select Committee on Human Rights. Clearly, there are some suggestions that could be implemented without delay. The Select Committee on Human Rights has effectively brought all the parties together for the good of Yukoners.

In keeping with the spirit of this committee, we could bring forward relevant amendments to the *Human Rights Act* in a timely manner.

Is the minister willing to consider the suggestion? Will the minister work with us to bring forward relevant amendments to the *Human Rights Act* this sitting?

Hon. Ms. Horne: I have asked the officials in my department to examine the recommendations put forward by the select committee. I think that some of their recommendations can be implemented in the very near future, and others of course will require further consultation.

Most of the recommendations deal with the internal functioning of the Human Rights Commission Board and the Board of Adjudication. These changes will streamline the complaints process and ensconce balance between the complainant and the respondent equally.

Major changes will take time and will be given more scrutiny by way of public consultation. For instance, one of the 25 recommendations is to enhance education in our public schools, and this is already in the *Education Act*. I have asked our officials to examine what areas are already covered and those that are not and what will be the outcome of making the changes.

Mr. Inverarity: Well, there is still time in this sitting to bring forward important amendments to the *Human Rights Act*. We have come this far for the benefit of all Yukoners and we need to take this last step. Bill No. 102 remains on the Order Paper. It can be amended, based on suggestions from the

report from the Select Committee on Human Rights. They can be done, and we are the people to do it.

Will the minister agree to work with the committee members to identify amendments to the *Human Rights Act* and bring it forward this sitting?

Hon. Ms. Horne: As the Premier has stated, human rights and freedoms are not to be used as a political football.

We will indeed be moving ahead with the changes as soon as feasibly possible.

Question re: *Burwash Landing activity centre*

Mr. Cardiff: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to give the Minister of Justice one more opportunity. I asked a question yesterday about RCMP being stationed in Burwash Landing. My understanding is that it was a temporary program that was requested by the Department of Justice. The RCMP had a presence in Burwash last summer and it was well-received. In the summertime, there's lots of tourist traffic, lots of traffic on the highway. We've heard about the conditions of the highway out that way and the need for improved maintenance and the dangerous conditions on that stretch of highway.

I'd like to give the Minister of Justice one more opportunity to respond in a positive fashion and assure the people of Burwash Landing that this program will be continued again next summer.

Hon. Ms. Horne: I want to point out to the member opposite that it was this government that saw the need. We brought this into place in Burwash to protect the citizens of Burwash. As I said yesterday, we're looking into the feasibility of continuing this project in Burwash. We have received favourable reports from the community and we are going to make sure that if it has worked out positively, which indications are it has, of course it will be continuing.

Mr. Cardiff: Well, the answer's not good enough. The minister can't even take a compliment. I recognized and said it was the Department of Justice. The Minister of Justice brought this forward last year; it was a good idea. I'm asking her to commit now to continuing it.

Her colleague sitting next to her, yesterday stood up and talked about how much money they're willing to put into the Burwash Landing complex. Will the Minister of Justice urge her colleague sitting next to her to ensure that the money is there for the youth and elders activity centre in Burwash Landing so that there will be an office for the RCMP next summer in Burwash Landing?

Hon. Ms. Horne: I'd like to point out to the member opposite that community safety is not just about policing. We had a meeting in Burwash Landing October 23, and we discussed all this with them. They're aware of what is happening.

We are working with the RCMP. We don't order the RCMP to do anything or make promises on their behalf. We are concerned about the safety of Yukoners and Burwash Landing. We will ensure that they are covered and that their community is safe.

Mr. Cardiff: Mr. Speaker, I recognize that the minister doesn't order the RCMP what to do but we do have a contract for service and the government can specify what is in that contract. With regard to the youth and elders activity centre

where the community is proposing the RCMP office could be housed, the minister's colleague said that there was \$300,000 up front and there was \$1.6 million committed.

Can the minister tell us why there has been no progress on this facility going forward? The facility hasn't been started.

Hon. Mr. Lang: The member is right on the figures. There is \$1.6 million committed by this government in total. We are working with the Kluane First Nation. I remind the House that they are the lead on this project. Foundation work has been done on where the building is going to go. We look forward to moving forward this spring. Hopefully, they can be in their new complex by late 2009.

The Kluane First Nation is the lead on this project. We are partnering with them. We have committed \$1.6 million toward the project. They have committed resources. They are going to work on the ground. Some work has been done. Design work has been done. All of that kind of work — the consultation — all of that work that has been done in the community is on the ground in Burwash Landing today.

We are looking forward to spring and the start of the project. We are moving forward with the project.

Speaker: The time for Question Period has now elapsed.

Notice of government private members' business

Hon. Mr. Cathers: Pursuant to Standing Order 14.2(7), I would like to inform the House that the government private member does not wish to identify any items to be called on Wednesday, November 26, 2008, under government private members' business. We will be foregoing that day in the interest of providing the opposition more time to debate the public's business, which they appear to need.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BILLS

Bill No. 12 — *adjourned debate*

Clerk: Second reading, Bill No. 12, standing in the name of the Hon. Mr. Fentie; adjourned debate.

Hon. Mr. Rouble: Mr. Speaker, it is my honour and pleasure to rise today in support of the supplementary budget that is before us. Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin by thanking the Premier and my Cabinet colleagues for their work in putting together this supplementary budget. I also certainly thank the officials throughout all government departments — the Department of Education, the Public Service Commission and all other departments that are responsible for working with the political arm of government and establishing the priorities of government and putting forward the solutions as to how we will go about addressing the needs of Yukoners. I'd like to thank them for all of their hard work in putting together this supplementary budget.

In order to put some of my comments in context, I'd just like to mention a function that was held last Friday evening, and that was the annual apprentice award and dinner. Graduation ceremonies are always incredibly positive and forward-

looking events. They are a time when we can celebrate the efforts of our students, celebrate the efforts of our teachers and look forward to their futures. I think all members who have attended graduation ceremonies know, whether they be through the elementary schools, the secondary schools, the college, or the apprentice dinners, that these are great events — very positive and very forward-looking. And this event certainly was no different. The feeling of optimism was strong in the room, the feeling of excitement, the can-do attitude and the sense of accomplishment from the recent graduates — well, you could feel it in the atmosphere.

Apprenticeship in the territory is certainly one of those things that, as we're seeing an increase in the economy, is also on the increase. Currently, we have 413 Yukon residents who are registered in 31 different trades throughout the territory. In comparison, over the past five years, we've had 176 graduates who have achieved their trade certification and 46 apprenticeship certificates were earned in 2007. Compare that to 2003, when 23 apprenticeship certificates were issued.

Our annual number of graduates now is double that of only a couple of years ago. I think there are a number of different factors to recognize in that. There is a faith in our economy, there is a faith in education, and there is a consistency to invest in people, skills and training, and to prepare for the future.

This year, Yukon's trade graduates — 35 earned their interprovincial standards for red seal approval. This ensures that their certification is recognized across Canada. In 2003, only 19 red seal certificates were issued.

While I mention that we're experiencing an increase in apprenticeship enrolments, we're also seeing an increase in the number of women and number of people of First Nation ancestry who are entering the apprenticeship field.

On September 30, 2008, eighty-five Yukon apprentices were members of Yukon First Nations and 41 were women. In comparison, five years ago only 56 of Yukon's apprentices were Yukon First Nations and only 13 were women. So we're certainly seeing some significant movement of including women in trades and also including people of First Nation ancestry.

I think these are great statistics that all Yukoners can take pride in. In particular, I'd like to thank the teachers, the parents and students who were very involved in these, and the employers also played a great role.

We've had organizations out there, like YWITT and Skills Canada, who have played a great role. Not only are we seeing a resurgence in our economy, but we're also seeing a continued investment and growth in the educational opportunities for Yukoners. We are preparing Yukoners for Yukon opportunities.

One of the other key points in the supplementary budget before us today is more work on addressing our education system and our labour needs, including trades and technology, and those are some of the significant investments in the Department of Education. One of the key initiatives going forward is our new labour framework exercise. We're going through in working with all our partners in education. Members opposite will recall that a symposium was held last month that included rep-

representatives from various orders of government, from government departments, from different organizations such as the Chamber of Commerce or the Tourism Industry Association, and also different employers.

We're engaging all the stakeholders in this to ensure we have the best strategies that will serve the territory not only for today, but also for tomorrow.

Again, we're looking at preparing Yukoners for Yukon opportunities, and we're going to work with all Yukoners in order to do this. We're working with our stakeholders to put together a comprehensive skills framework, national recruitment strategy, immigration strategy, employee retention strategy and labour market information strategy.

Mr. Speaker, we all know we have some very good programs in these areas already, but we're going to work to fine-tune them, look at them in a holistic manner to ensure we are appropriately allocating resources, that we are getting results from our investments and that our results are what is needed in the territory. This is a very positive process that we're going through, including many Yukoners, and I would like to thank them for their participation in this process.

After the recent symposium, I took the opportunity to contact many of the participants — labour organizations, the Chamber of Commerce and employers — and asked for their input. They had some great ideas. Already they are going to be incorporated. We've seen many of these ideas that have come forward already being incorporated in the various departments in the Government of Yukon. Our employers told us they needed more employees. We then went out and looked at what we could train people for. We also then started looking at some of the other barriers that were prohibiting people from participating in the workforce, things like childcare. We've heard the numerous announcements from the Minister of Health and Social Services about addressing that area.

We've heard other issues coming up about social assistance. Again, we heard the Minister of Health and Social Services come forward recently with changes to our social assistance practices, to encourage people on social assistance to participate in the workforce sooner, to not have as much of their social assistance clawed back. This is just one more step that the Government of Yukon is taking to ensure that we have a healthy and productive workforce here in the Yukon.

A lot has been said about consultations in the Assembly in the last couple of days by many members in the opposition seats. Consultation is something that Yukoners have strongly said they wanted. They wanted to see more involvement; they wanted to have an opportunity to bring forward ideas; they wanted to have government listen to them, take everything into consideration and to have a role in decision making.

That is certainly what this government has been doing, whether it has been consultations on areas such as the *Workers' Compensation Act* review, devolution agreements and the successor legislation around that. The list of consultations goes on. Earlier today we heard questions about human rights legislation and how this government worked with an all-party committee to go out and consult with Yukoners. We did this earlier as well with the *Smoke-free Places Act*. Mr. Speaker, there is a fairly

significant list of areas where we have demonstrated the capacity to work with members from the opposition benches and to go out and listen to Yukoners.

We do realize, though, that when we do go to these lengths of involving others, when it's not just the case of a minister scribbling a solution down on the back of a napkin, that this process does take longer, and we recognize that. But we also recognize that it makes for a much better solution.

Mr. Speaker, in Education we have seen some of these processes continue through the education reform project. I thank very much the members on the education reform team for their hard work in putting together their recommendations. When the principals and I received — and by principals I mean the other members of the education reform executive, as opposed to principals in our schools — this report, we talked about how we would go about implementing it, and we came up with our implementation strategy, which is the New Horizons project, as to how we'll cooperate and go forward in order to implement and address the themes brought forward in the education reform project.

Also recently, we've seen the school facilities study that has gone out and worked very closely with community organizations to look at the issues of F.H. Collins, Porter Creek Secondary School and the potential for a new school in Copper Ridge. Also, Mr. Speaker, we've also recently released the secondary school programming review, which is available to all members. I did drop off copies at their offices, but if they would like additional copies, or if they would like the copy of the actual final report which, Mr. Speaker, is about two and a half centimetres thick, or the additional reference materials, which is again about two centimetres thick, they can contact my office or download them. Those pieces of information are available on-line, and I would encourage all members to take a really good look at them, and to look at the many different recommendations that are in there for how we can go about improving an already very good system.

Also, we've heard a lot in here about consultation, and unfortunately some members in the Assembly aren't giving it all the due or credit it deserves. In fact, one issue came up yesterday, and I was particularly dismayed by the Liberal Party with their comments regarding the Copper Ridge school issue.

Mr. Speaker, when I took office, one of the first issues that we took a look at was how we could include the community in addressing that issue. We created a Copper Ridge school advisory group, which included representatives from the school councils in all the affected areas. It included the principals from the affected schools, and it included residents at large. We had them work with a consultant to look at the demographics with the current situations, with the current school populations, with the whole distribution of populations through the current school, with the other options, and with the other alternative schools in the area that were a short bus ride away.

We gave them the resources they needed to come up with their recommendations. I thank them for their recommendations. I met with them when the report was released. We sat down in one of the offices, and I went through their recommendations with them. Their key recommendation was that the

decision concerning whether to build a school in the Copper Ridge area, as well as what grade configuration any potential school should have, should be delayed for up to five years.

Now, I appreciate the work that the Copper Ridge school advisory group put into this, and I would ask the members on the opposite benches to also respect the hard work, commitments and conclusions that they have also reached. If members opposite would like a copy of this report, it's also available on-line.

Now, I've also been a bit dismayed and discouraged by some of the other comments we've heard from the opposition benches lately. We've heard —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Hon. Mr. Rouble: The member from beautiful Mount Lorne has also said “compliments”, and I appreciate those too. There are accolades that do come from some Members of the Legislative Assembly, and they are very much appreciated. They haven't always been the case or the rule or the practice in this Assembly in recent days. We've heard terms like “disingenuous”. We've heard terms — well, “rogue”. We've heard other terms that are beyond the normal political rhetoric that one would assume or expect in the Assembly.

There is a role for the opposition. We all recognize that. They certainly have a responsibility to their constituents to represent their views. They also have a role in holding the government accountable. But, Mr. Speaker, some of the behaviours lately have just been extremely frustrating for me as a Member of the Legislative Assembly. We have seen some members stand up and loudly complain about something and then quietly vote for it. We have seen members speak for an issue for over an hour and a half and then support it. We have had members complain on the floor about something and then literally pat me on the back and thank me for the efforts just outside the bars of this Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, the opposition has demanded that legislation come to the floor of the Assembly early in this session. We received the motions. We heard the members opposite demand that pieces of the legislation be brought forward early. We responded. What happened then? Well, the opposition then complained that we hadn't brought the budget forward early enough.

Mr. Speaker, the opposition can't always have it both ways. I am extremely frustrated when I hear members defend some of these practices by saying, “Well, that is just politics.” Mr. Speaker, I didn't go to the constituents in my riding and say, “Please send me to the Legislative Assembly so I can go and play some political game.” I asked them to please vote for me and support me and the platform that I believed in, because I thought it would make a difference in the lives of Yukoners. I encourage all members to forget about playing the political game and get on with the business of working in the best interests of all Yukoners.

Mr. Speaker, at least the NDP leader had commented that there were some very good initiatives that this government has brought forward but that he could not support the Yukon Party because of his socialist beliefs. Mr. Speaker, I congratulate him for that. At least that is a valuable argument. I don't agree with

it, but he makes a point, which is much more than I can say for the opposition that claims that the government has failed at everything and, “If you vote for me, we'll do everything that they were going to do, only we'll do it better.” Mr. Speaker, let us get beyond this political rhetoric. I think the members need to give more credit to Yukoners. Yukoners can see through this. Yukoners know where the territory is going. When I talk to Yukoners on the street, Mr. Speaker, they are very optimistic about the future. Mr. Speaker, they see the opportunities; they see the protection of the environment; they see the investment in the community, they see the growth in areas; they see a government that's being responsive to issues and concerns — whether it's the issue of solid-waste management or including them in the decision-making in education, or responsive to addressing the needs of long-term power or Health and Social Services — this is a government that put forward a plan and a vision and we're working on our plan. We're including Yukoners in it, and we'll continue to do that in this supplementary budget and in future budgets.

This budget does some great things for the beautiful Southern Lakes. There are initiatives in there on solid waste and communications. I should add that we have been working with some of our partners such as Northwestel, for example. Northwestel has just put in place a new cellular transmission tower and, until it's up and running, they've agreed to leave the analog tower, which is great; that will help the constituents in my riding.

There are great initiatives in here for the Public Service Commission and for Education, and I would ask all members of the Assembly to support the budget so we can move forward in the best interests of all Yukoners.

Mr. Cardiff: It's good to be here today to speak to Bill No. 12, the supplementary budget. I'd like to take this opportunity to once again thank my constituents for the privilege of representing them here in the Legislative Assembly and being their voice.

The budget and the supplementary budget is this government's opportunity to show the people of the Yukon — show my constituents and the constituents represented by other members of this Legislature — its vision for the Yukon. It's hard to see sometimes exactly what that vision is. It seems to go in lurches and steps backward, and we don't really know sometimes exactly where this government is going.

The world and the country and the Yukon itself are facing some economic uncertainty. The Premier likes to call it a global cycle but there are millions of Canadians who are worried about their jobs, their pensions and their savings. This is an immediate concern to all of these people. The government likes to take credit and tell us how great — and right up until this year they were telling us how great — the mineral industry was doing and how much exploration there was. All indications are it's not going to be like that next year, more than likely. We hope the predictions are wrong and there is continued economic activity here in the Yukon to provide jobs for Yukoners, but the initial indications are that's not going to happen.

We can see that right here on the streets of Whitehorse and on the streets of our communities throughout the Yukon. Mineral exploration companies and mining companies have laid off some of their employees early. I've talked with construction workers who have been employed over the last two or three years just about continuously, and they're also being laid off.

That causes concern for constituents throughout the Yukon — constituents I represent — and people I see on the street are concerned about that. They're concerned about their families, their pensions and they're concerned about their future.

The government has an opportunity to play a role in the economy by bringing forward projects that would stimulate the economy. We heard in Question Period today when I asked the Minister of Highways and Public Works about the elders and youth activity centre in Burwash Landing — he said they put \$300,000 up front and that there were foundations.

But there is nothing happening in Burwash Landing right now around this project. The government could be doing something to move that project forward. They had a project manager on that file and the project could be moving forward over the winter and providing employment for people in Burwash Landing. I'm sure they would welcome that. Maybe the minister — when he has an opportunity — could tell us whether or not the contribution agreements have been signed and just exactly how much of that \$1.6 million has actually flowed, and whether or not there's a commitment to further funds for that project to make sure that it does get completed.

I'd like to talk a little bit about my riding and some of the needs in my riding and some of the disappointments — and some of the lack of vision where the government can't show its vision and its ability to follow through. The Burwash project is a project just like that. This has been promised for years and they haven't been able to complete that. It is like the Watson Lake project: again, a lot of money spent, a lot of money promised, a lot of money lapsed, a lot of money revoked; promises to ensure that there are pieces of necessary infrastructure in place in communities throughout the Yukon but an inability to complete the project. We read about that in the audit report on contracting.

I had the privilege of attending the Premier's tour in Mount Lorne and I'd just like to take the opportunity to once again remind him of some of the requests that were made in my community and some of the disappointments. When you go back to the spring sitting, I asked the Minister of Community Services — there was money identified from the gas tax money for projects in Mount Lorne. I believe there was some signage around the fire hall, there was some lighting that was supposed to take place around the fire hall and the community centre, and some road improvements. I think there was \$15,000 the department was proposing to spend out there. Again, another project the government failed to follow through on and couldn't complete — a \$15,000 project. There were three sums of money of \$5,000 each: one was for signage, one was for lighting and one was for road improvements around the community centre.

Other concerns in the community of Mount Lorne are, again, this year as last year the same questions seem to come up.

There were questions about signage about the hunting corridor along the Annie Lake Road. That was a request that was made in the fall of 2008, to get that sign improved and get it to be more visible. Pretty soon, I may have to go over there myself with a chainsaw and an axe and clear the brush from around the sign because the Premier doesn't seem to be able to get it done.

An upgrade on the Annie Lake Road — the Premier heard that one loud and clear, that a large portion of the surface of the Annie Lake Road has basically been graded off into the ditches, and the road needs to be reshaped and capped, in order to drain properly and to improve the safety on that important artery. That road also services, not just my constituents who live on the full length of the road, but it also services the Tagish Lake Gold Corp. property, which is also an important contributor to the Yukon economy — or has the potential to be — and has provided jobs in the community of Mount Lorne.

It has provided jobs in the community of Carcross and for people in Whitehorse as well. So it would make sense to ensure that the road is kept safe and is upgraded. This is the second or third year that this request has been made.

As well, I would like to recognize that the government provided this year, in the main budget, funding for a new state-of-the-art pumper truck — I understand it's the only one of its kind in Yukon, in rural Yukon for sure — with a compressed-air-over-foam system. It is a welcome addition. I would like to thank the government for that. At the same time, the needs of rural fire departments are many. I would like to congratulate the Mount Lorne Volunteer Fire Department as they recently applied for and got Revenue Canada charitable status. My hat is off to them for that good work.

They are doing fundraising in the community to supplement the funding that is provided to them by the Government of Yukon. It was a privilege to be there at their annual general meeting to hear about the good work and their plans for the future. Some of the work that they would do with that funding is providing necessary equipment for the volunteer firefighters. I think that that's important and it would be great if the government could contribute some to that as well.

As well, while we're talking about volunteer fire departments, I just yesterday had the opportunity to pay tribute to one of the chiefs of the Golden Horn fire hall, who passed away this past fall: Phil Todd. I'd like to thank the government for finally getting the funds flowing and the ground broken.

I recently drove by the new Golden Horn fire hall, and it looks like it's going to be successful as well, and it's a much-welcomed addition to that community at the Carcross Cutoff, protecting not just the Golden Horn subdivision and the residents down Gentian Lane, but also through the mutual-aid agreement with the City of Whitehorse, rural residential properties within the City of Whitehorse, constituents in the riding of Mount Lorne, Cowley Creek, Mary Lake, Wolf Creek, Copperbelt and Pineridge. They're in a great position to be able to respond should the need arise there. They do a great job and

that new fire hall will be a welcome addition. It will improve the safety of the volunteer firefighters when they're responding to fires.

The thing about the Golden Horn fire hall is that it was promised years and years ago and it took some time. It's another example of the government promising to deliver on a project, putting the money in the budget, lapsing the money out of the budget and reannouncing the project. It is a little disturbing the way the government does that. In some instances in communities like Dawson City, they get projects announced that never seem to materialize, like the multi-level health care facility that they were promised several years ago.

I'd like to go back to Highways and Public Works and talk a little bit about the rural roads program. This is another matter of public safety. I've had constituents I've dealt with on a regular basis. I've had some success with having some roads in my riding upgraded and, in other cases, I can't seem to get the work done that needs to be done to improve the safety of the roads, to reshape them and ensure the people who live on those roads can travel to and from in a safe manner.

When we look at the Department of Highways and Public Works, the minister says we've criticized them for all the money they put into the Campbell Highway and they say it was neglected and, therefore, they need to spend all their money on the Campbell Highway.

They are spending other money on other highways; there are other needs. We have heard about it. I have raised it in the Legislature about the Dempster Highway and the stretch as well on the Alaska Highway from Burwash to Beaver Creek, and the Member for Kluane has raised that as well.

It is about priorities and it seems like every year the department turns down year after year, all kinds of applications for the rural roads upgrade program. But every year the allotment for the rural roads upgrade program stays the same. When we are talking about the safety of the travelling public and the safety of people travelling on these roads, I think that we need to be more responsive and listen to the needs of Yukoners.

I would like to go back to the tough economic times that some people are facing and that some people have yet to face. When talking about stimulating the economy, yes, I believe there are ways for the government to stimulate projects and to stimulate the economy. What we have seen is, again, an inability to deliver on some of these projects.

Part of it is the government's willingness to work with First Nations and municipalities. There's a project at the airport — the expansion of the airport terminal — that is at a stalemate right now because of the government's inability to work with and recognize the agreement it signed with First Nation governments on projects like that.

We see years of delay in the Whitehorse Correctional Centre moving forward. We see the ground broken on a facility for women — a nine-unit facility. It's a welcome addition and we congratulate the government on moving forward, albeit a little late on this project. But when it comes to stimulating the economy, as I said, I'm still talking to construction workers, tradespeople, plumbers, electricians and sheet-metal workers who have either been laid off or they've had to seek work outside

the territory. That was a favourite expression the government liked to use about the exodus of workers from Yukon. Well, it's happening again. Tradespeople are seeking work outside the territory already.

Another program the government could have used to help stimulate the economy — and if they had shown some vision in the supplementary budget — would have been to ensure there was money in the home-renovation loan programs. I believe there was a \$7.9-million increase in Yukon Housing for capital spending, but there was no money for the home-renovation loan programs.

Consequently, the Yukon Housing Corporation is turning people away until the next fiscal year in order to access that program. That program would have provided an opportunity to put people to work this winter as well.

I see my time is running out. I look forward to asking questions in my departments of Justice, Community Services, Highways and Public Works, Yukon Housing Corporation and the other areas that I have critic responsibility for and I look forward to receiving answers from the ministers.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to Bill No. 12, and I look forward to further debate.

Hon. Mr. Kenyon: It gives me great pleasure to make some comments and answer questions on the supplementary budget and correct some of the misconceptions that are out there. It has been a great pleasure to represent the people of Porter Creek North and continue to represent the territory in Economic Development, housing and energy.

Unfortunately, the Minister of Education has stolen some of the things I'd like to say, but I join him in both frustration and a bit of embarrassment at the decorum in the House. This system of government sort of does dictate that that happens and it's a problem that probably none of us will solve, certainly not rapidly. I do have some concerns. I don't mind being held accountable; I think that's an admirable thing for everyone, but when allegations and comments are made that are sometimes confusing, sometimes inaccurate and sometimes perhaps misinterpreted — for instance, I appreciate the Member for Porter Creek South's comment about our feelings early on in our first mandate that we actually had to address the out-of-control spending trajectory. In fact, we did say that. It was true and yes, we have almost doubled the size of the budget since. We did such a poor job of that that we made \$142 million to put in the bank while we were doing it.

Now, I understand that the member who made that comment may not have business experience but somehow I am a little confused at the lack of understanding that, while there is an expense side of a ledger, there is at the same time an income side of that same ledger.

I wonder why that same member complained in this House about there not being a budget debate until this point in the sitting and how terrible this was that so little time was available to debate the budget. Yet today he made the comment that "there is still time in this sitting" — that's a quote — to deal with other matters. I am glad that he has had a chance to think

about his statement and correct it that there is, in fact, plenty of time for this debate.

When someone expresses the feeling that that is not enough time to debate a budget, and then gets up in this House and the first two items for discussion are tattered flags and drivers' licences — I'm not really sure what this has to do with the budget, but you know, what can I say? It is interesting to know, though, that while his concern about drivers' licences is, to a large degree, valid — I don't think there is anyone in the territory who would debate that — but given the fact that United States Homeland Security has not made decisions on drivers' licences, we can approach that two different ways.

We can issue a driver's licence at expense, and then in a year or two when U.S. Homeland Security makes their decision, we can do it all over again, at expense. Our government would kind of like to do it all in one motion, and I speak not as the minister responsible for that department, of course, but as former past president of the Pacific NorthWest Economic Region, or PNWER, that has been working for a number of years for all jurisdictions to bring that file in line.

I will have some comments about the Development Corporation and Energy Corporation. I'm frustrated when the Official Opposition seemed, in questions the other day, to favour housing of dogs rather than our senior citizens and the elderly and ill.

The Yukon Housing Corporation has very distinct guidelines, and I apologize when dogs don't fall into that category, but they don't. I'm concerned when members opposite and other speakers have commented on the fact that there is no money available in Yukon Housing Corporation for home repair programs. I guess they missed the \$6.35-million warrant. Maybe they missed that memo as well. It's there. It's something that will be debated in due course, but to accuse this government of not looking after the home repair program, I think, is ill-advised, to be politic.

I have concerns when the official critic for the Yukon Energy Corporation seems to suggest that fairly massive subsidies are more desirable than promoting conservation. Yukon ratepayers pay a little under 80 percent of the cost of electrical generation, and we are working very hard to address those issues. But to simply throw money at the issue — one person said that we could write a cheque for \$1,000 to every man, woman and child per month until we run out of money, and we'd be heroes. But when we run out of money, suddenly we're goats.

Good fiscal management — we have \$142 million in the bank while we have been so — in the words of one member — “out of control with spending”.

We have looked at a number of different areas. Today the Member for Copperbelt — the Leader of the Official Opposition, the Leader of the Liberal Party — was critical of seniors housing in Watson Lake. I made the comment at the time that maybe he missed that memo. We have been proceeding with design and construction of a 12-unit seniors heritage housing project. Completion was tentatively set for late 2009, predicated on the fact that we could get the footings and the foundation in before the snow started flying. Well, I'm not convinced

we're quite where we want to be, so we might be a little bit delayed. It's based on the Haines Junction model of very energy-efficient construction, barrier-free units, common areas, lounge, capacity to accommodate meal preparation and a common dining area.

Again, maybe the member opposite missed the memos. Maybe he missed the announcement by the MLA for Watson Lake, Premier Fentie, who announced the construction of a new seniors housing building in Watson Lake. Maybe he completely missed the articles that were out on that. Maybe he missed the fact that we had consultations — fairly extensive consultations, actually — with the seniors. We met with them on August 19, and we met with them on August 28. We actually took a number of them to Haines Junction to see what we had done in Haines Junction.

Again, I'm very pleased to hear the Leader of the Liberal Party practising his French. I apologize — I don't speak French, but I hope he has more to say in French than he does in English, because he is wrong.

Globally, we are experiencing a historic period of fluctuation. We know that; however, the Yukon economic activity in 2008 is remaining strong, with indicators showing considerable support. We will be affected in some ways, but we are also insulated in many ways. We're so affected, for instance, that retail trade in September 2008 was \$46,779,000, which is an increase of 8.9 percent over September 2007. And if you actually looked at the whole amount of time in there, it is something like 8.3 percent, and that compares to 5.6 percent nationally. So we're not doing too badly.

Unemployment has remained at historic lows. Year to date and wholesale sales have gone over the previous year, and the population of the territory has continued to increase despite the Member for Mount Lorne, who just claimed on the floor of this House that there was another exodus of workers. Gee, I guess they got their GPSs wrong or their compasses wrong, because the population went up last month. It has gone up the last number of months.

Do we have problems? Of course we do. But that is an overstatement that I cannot let go unchallenged. Preliminary gross domestic product growth in 2007 was 3.8 percent — well above the national average of 2.9 percent. And, yes, while our economy remains strong, we do require now, more than ever, a considered and thoughtful approach to managing the growth of Yukon's economy — thoughtful, metered and measured. We have money in the bank; we're prepared to invest in infrastructure, and to go ahead and deal with all these things that we're going to have to do in the coming months — we know that — and perhaps coming years, but it will come.

We need to continue to promote and facilitate business and industry. Economic activity in 2007, for instance, remained strong, with the impacts of hosting the 2007 Canada Winter Games, strong mineral exploration and mine development and continued activity in tourism.

Mineral exploration in the territory, even with the downturn, is predicted to be \$100 million in 2008 — not to the extraordinary year of 2007 with \$132 million, but still relatively strong. There are other sectors of the economy that will be

coming up where we don't expect to see a huge difference from where we were. There will be ups and downs; some people might be displaced in one area and have the chance to move to another, but it's not looking as bad as the members opposite would suggest.

I had the good fortune of being in Vancouver a few days ago and while the national news — one of the members opposite made the comment, and I think he used a term that was previously ruled out of order, so I won't throw it out there, but the media can actually cause a lot of the downturn. By constantly saying how bad things are and bad they're going to be, people get nervous and start contracting. On the national news, one of our national news services was going on and on about how terrible this was going to be — and to be honest, the federal government, our own Prime Minister, was on saying how terrible this was going to be.

The following article, the same news service but local, was commenting on how absolutely packed all the malls were and how shopping is up, and there was an interview with a gentleman from Sears, who said sales were up three percent.

Where's the disconnect? Are we going to continue to scare people into reacting? That's not to say they shouldn't be cautious. That's not to say that people shouldn't be aware of what's happening globally, but we have ways of working our way through that.

The year-to-date value of permitted building construction activity is \$45 million while the value of residential construction in 2008 was \$28 million. Continued strong economic activity in the territory contributed to the unemployment rate remaining one of the lowest in the country in 2008. Even with what has happened globally now, we are among the very lowest in Canada.

The Department of Economic Development continues to invest in Yukon businesses through a variety of funding programs. The strategy industries development fund supports this government's commitment to foster the development of Yukon's sustainable competitive advantage by funding strategic projects and initiatives that create secondary spinoffs to the economy. Since its inception in 2004, the fund has contributed more than \$3.8 million for 65 projects across the territory.

Private sector-driven applications have increased, replacing projects advanced by industry associations or initiatives led by government. This reflects the increasing role of the private sector as an engine of growth and diversification of Yukon's economy. The enterprise trade fund stimulates and supports the growth of Yukon business by focusing on the development and expansion of external markets in attracting investment capital for business. In fiscal 2008-09, a total of \$366,800 has been approved in support of 66 applications.

Since its inception in August 2004, \$1.678 million has been approved for 249 applicants. The department maintains ongoing consultation with key industry stakeholders to ensure that the Yukon businesses achieve competitive advantage in external markets. We have the regional economic development fund. This fund fosters regional and community economic development. The regional economic development branch continues to develop a strong network of contracts in all Yukon

communities, First Nations and their development corporations. The total approved funding for August 31, 2008, was \$133,887 allocated among six projects. Since fiscal 2004-05 to date, the fund has invested approximately \$1.4 million on 64 Yukon projects.

We can talk about the film training fund and the various programs of our Film and Sound Commission — the success of *Anash and the Legacy of the Sun-Rock*, which is now going into season two. This is cutting-edge technology, Mr. Speaker, and it lives in the Yukon. It's thanks to our Film and Sound Commission and the good work of the Film and Sound Commissioner and the staff there. We've had success in the music industry.

The primary goal of the community development fund, or CDF, is to fund projects and events that provide long-term sustainable economic or social benefit to Yukon communities.

To August 31, 2008, the program has approved 44 projects, for a total of \$2.184 million in funding. Since the reinstatement of the fund in June 2003, after previous governments kind of neglected to put it in their budgets, we've spent a total of \$16 million in funding, and every Yukon community has received benefits from CDF. We have new investment capital, which is critical for growth, enabling Yukon businesses to expand operations, pursue new opportunities, and explore potential.

Some of the recent successes of our investment strategy — in October, Yukon Nevada Gold and Northwest Non-Ferrous International Investment Co. Ltd. signed a \$3-million agreement to form a new Canadian company that will explore and develop mineral resources in the Yukon. In July 2008, Yukon Zinc's Wolverine project was purchased by Jinduicheng Molybdenum Group and Northwest Non-Ferrous International Investment Co. for approximately \$87 million. More was spent of course, in working that up and we are looking forward to that mine coming into operation in the very near future.

The Member for Mount Lorne mentioned Tagish Lake Gold Corp. In August 2008, Tagish Lake Gold accepted an offer of \$5 million in financing from Yukon-Shaanxi Mining Inc.

I should mention that the Yukon Zinc Wolverine project — we just came back from Shaanxi Province and meeting with those groups — is the largest investment by China in Canadian mining history and all of the Yukon. We were very, very pleased to take over eight Yukon companies, the largest delegation from Canada — actually I believe the largest delegation from anywhere in the world to the China mining conference. All of those companies have come back with good leads, good opportunities and good discussions and we're looking to see good product coming out of that.

China Mining Resources Ltd. now owns 18.56 percent of the issued and outstanding shares of Selwyn Resources Ltd. Certainly, things are coming along in that respect. There will be more development all the way through here.

I recently attended the fall summit in Whistler where I was talking with various northwest leaders in homeland security, energy, workforce mobility, high tech and the rest of the things. So the Yukon is poised to continue its advance on the pathway

to growth and prosperity by continuing the vision and direction that was established back in 2002. With good fiscal management, we have done what we wanted to do; we have done a great deal more. We've done it and put \$142 million in the bank so that we can be assisted in weathering this recession. Our vision is building Yukon's future together — a clear vision for a bright future.

Mr. Speaker, the future for Yukoners looks brighter than ever. Thank you.

Mr. McRobb: It's my pleasure to have the opportunity to also speak this afternoon. Here it is, day 17 of a 28-day sitting, when we're finally getting to debate the budget. By the way, Mr. Speaker, this is a deficit budget. It's due to the change in accrual accounting that has disguised the fact that it is a deficit budget.

I want to speak awhile on good governance because several previous members have spoken about that topic and I believe it's something that can certainly be improved upon. The Yukon Party members frequently state that we are against specific projects contained in the budget. This is because we may have voted against that budget. That approach is simply wrong and many previous speakers have also responded to this matter.

Often the reason why the opposition votes against the budget is because of what isn't in the budget, not because of everything that is in the budget. This has been explained to the Yukon Party members several times. Members know this but they continue to make these allegations. Again, this proves the Yukon Party members don't listen to the members of the Assembly and would rather digress into, shall we call it, "unproductive debate."

Furthermore, government-side members often state that we cherry-pick. Well, we heard it again earlier today, Mr. Speaker. But what do you call picking a project from a budget we voted against because we found it to be lacking and then concluding that we are against some of a particular project that is contained in that budget? Wouldn't that be cherry-picking? I believe so, Mr. Speaker, and it would be by any reasonable person's definition.

Yukoners deserve better. We do need reform of the rules in this Legislature. The Yukon Party's election platform promised legislative reform to the voters. The Yukon Party promised it to opposition members two years ago. I recall how we on this side of the Assembly agreed to shorten the length of the sitting in fall 2006 when the government side agreed to engage in legislative reform measures and to make good progress on it.

But what have seen? The answer is, no progress. Now the Standing Committee on Rules, Elections and Privileges, known as SCREP, was charged with the responsibility to deal with legislative reform measures.

The chair is the Member for Klondike. We've been attempting to hold meetings to make progress and there have been one or two meetings in two years with virtually nothing concluded, no studies undertaken and nothing done — and nothing on the near-term radar either. As a matter of fact, I recall the Member for Klondike saying he was too busy to hold a meeting.

That doesn't speak very well for the priorities of this Yukon Party government and for the ability of the Yukon Party government to hold true on its promises to Yukoners and to other members in the Assembly. Obviously, legislative reform is not a very high priority.

I want to also mention how the government-side members are constantly taking words out of context. There was a recent example earlier today. It involved the use of the word "rogue". This was taken out of context when the Premier read a quote from *Hansard*, but he stopped short of the very next sentence, and I shall read the next sentence on the record. "The only conclusion that we in the opposition can draw from this is that the government is not providing any clear political direction. It's not providing oversight. It's not at the helm of the ship, and that's not something you can blame officials for. That's something that is the responsibility of elected members, starting with the Premier."

The Leader of the Official Opposition made reference to a report and concluded that the audit report was critical, because the Yukon Party government wasn't providing clear political direction. He also said it's "not something you can blame officials for". Now that we know the rest of the story, look at what the Premier and his Yukon Party colleagues have said. They have referenced the Leader of the Official Opposition as incorrectly calling several government departments "rogue departments". That is not right.

I heard the Minister of Highways and Public Works mention this at least a dozen times last Wednesday, and several other members have mentioned it in their responses to the supplementary budget. It is not fair to do that to any other member. That is not what Yukoners expect from their government, and it certainly isn't practising good governance. The Yukon Party's election platform promised good governance, but it hasn't delivered.

Mr. Speaker, remember the platform theme "Imagine Tomorrow". If some of the characteristics of this Yukon Party government were contained in the platform, how would it have more accurately read? How about, imagine tomorrow: a Yukon Party government that will cherry-pick comments, pull them out of context, use them to criticize the opposition and are confusing to the public. Or, imagine tomorrow: a Yukon Party government that will cherry-pick projects from a budget that opposition members didn't vote for because of what wasn't in it and then criticize the opposition for voting against a specific project that was in that budget.

We saw a recent example when members alleged that the Member for Mayo-Tatchun was against the Carmacks school, because he voted against the budget. Mr. Speaker, Yukoners deserve much better than this.

Or how about the Yukon Party's failure to answer questions? We heard the Minister of Highways and Public Works today complain how the Official Opposition chose not to ask any questions in the previous budget debate for that department. Well, Mr. Speaker, he's completely ignoring the comments that were put on the record, such as: What's the use? We don't get answers anyway. Time is getting short; we're better off to spend our time elsewhere in the hopes of getting an an-

swer from another minister, because that one doesn't provide anything useful.

Now, instead of answering questions, the government members frequently practice an "evade and attack" technique. This is not good governance. It's our job in the opposition to hold the government members accountable to the public. The opposition members are the voice of the people. The questions we ask are often requested by the public. These are matters that are important to Yukon citizens. It's our role in the Legislative Assembly to ask the questions; it's the government members' responsibility to answer the questions, but we don't get answers, we get responses. We need to move beyond such unproductive rhetoric in this Assembly.

The Yukon Party government has been in office for six long years. It needs to finally accept responsibility for its actions or its lack of action. Continuing this evade-and-attack approach is not good governance, and Yukoners deserve better. Again, based on what we've observed so far, the 2006 Yukon Party election platform would have been more correct if it had stated "Imagine tomorrow: a Yukon Party government that refuses to be held accountable and will instead blame others."

Mr. Speaker, let's talk about openness and transparency, because that is another frequent term we hear from the Premier and his Yukon Party colleagues. Something to the effect of, "We are open, accountable and transparent." Well, they are not, Mr. Speaker. There are several instances to evidence that fact. The Yukon Party has refused on several occasions to provide opposition members with important documents. These are documents already in its possession, yet the Yukon Party members refuse to provide them. These are documents that are paid for by the taxpayers. These are documents that should be available to all members of the Assembly. Mr. Speaker, how can we have a good debate otherwise?

I'll give you an example. Currently we are discussing Bill No. 59, the *Forest Resources Act*. Well, the minister, the Member for Lake Laberge, has refused to provide material he has referenced in his presentations, such as the legal opinion on the Liard First Nation's position paper. He referenced it, but he wouldn't provide it.

Here's another example: The same minister referred to stakeholder submissions to government as part of the process. Well, members on this side rightfully asked for copies, but again the minister refused to provide them. How can we have good debate when the minister doesn't lay all the cards on the table?

Mr. Speaker, previous governments have provided such documents in the past. I've been in this Assembly when it has happened. There have been legal opinions provided; there have been stakeholder submissions provided; there are lots of precedents for that, but the Yukon Party government has chosen to not provide such documents that have been requested by the members of the Official Opposition and the third party. Mr. Speaker, that's not being open.

Here's another example: the previous speaker said that I supported massive subsidies to power bills, rather than energy conservation. Again this is not an accurate representation of the facts. The issue at hand was the Yukon Party government's

failed promise that power bills would not go up. Anybody with a power bill can easily ascertain that bills have gone up — about 20 percent up. When the smoke clears, by next year at this time, power bills will go up again. As a matter of fact, at that point consumers will be paying at least 25 percent more for their power bills than at the time the minister made the promise. For higher consumption users, such as those with large families or electric heat, their power bills will be in the neighbourhood of 50 percent higher or more.

So, this is all about government promise and how it was broken. It wasn't about how I or any other member favoured massive subsidies over conservation. Any such allegation simply does not make sense.

I refer members to the energy commission's final report. It clearly stated that Yukon should be encouraging the development of energy conservation programs. By the way, for the government opposite, it also had a recommendation to expand the electrical grid. So we see a lot of this being told in a different way, and it's good to finally get the opportunity to address some of these matters.

Taking comments out of context, such as on the power bills — again, that's another example of not practising good governance. But when I questioned the minister responsible for the Yukon Energy Corporation on this, he pointed to the so-called arm's-length relationship with that corporation. Well, what about yesterday's newspaper?

It seems the Premier had no problems reaching his arm over to throw the switch on the new power line. So the Yukon Party obviously has a convenient and flexible interpretation of the term "arm's length". It seems the arm is too long to reach over on matters such as the frequent power outages or higher power bills but it is a very short arm when it comes to photo opportunities. Mr. Speaker, is that practising good governance? We don't think so.

Here is another example of many of the things that are said in the House and the difference those matters have in terms of what will happen in the future. The Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources said yesterday that the *Forest Resources Act* would provide certainty. Well, he is right in a partial way, Mr. Speaker. It will provide certainty all right, of coming legal challenges and turmoil and a dark cloud over the forest industry in the Yukon.

The dark cloud will span the entire territory. How do you think potential mining investors outside may interpret the territory when they see this dark cloud of First Nation disputes? I know, Mr. Speaker: they will shy away and look elsewhere.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

Speaker: Member for Lake Laberge, on a point of order.

Hon. Mr. Cathers: We've listened to several minutes of the Member for Kluane's very entertaining dissertation on another piece of legislation before this House that has nothing to do with the supplementary budget, and I believe the member is in contravention of Standing Order 19(b), by speaking to matters other than the question under discussion.

Speaker: If the Member for Kluane wishes to stand on the point of order, go ahead, but —

Mr. McRobb: On the point of order, Mr. Speaker, you have allowed a lot of leeway in the responses to the supplementary budget, as has been past practice. The member himself spoke about these other matters for several minutes. I'm not aware of any requirement that a certain portion of the speech has to pertain to the supplementary budget itself.

Speaker's ruling

Speaker: There is no point of order. It's simply a dispute among members. Member for Kluane, I believe you have about a minute and a half left.

Mr. McRobb: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and time is running short. There is a lot to say at this opportunity, and obviously time won't allow it.

I certainly understand how the minister responsible for the forests doesn't want discussion today on this matter, but it is important to investing in the Yukon; it is important to government revenues, and therefore, it's directly connected to budgets in the territory, Mr. Speaker.

I'm concerned because today the Yukon Geoscience Forum is continuing and we should be presenting a good investment climate in the territory, but instead we're seeing letters being sent to the minister from renewable resources councils that are stating they have not been properly consulted as stated in chapter 17 of the *Umbrella Final Agreement*. We have had submissions from a First Nation in the territory that basically feels it's being backed into a corner and will have no recourse but to challenge it in court.

Mr. Nordick: Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure today to rise to speak to the supplementary budget. I am very pleased with the financial position of this government and this supplementary budget, and I support this budget. I'd like to thank the departments, the officials, and all those involved in the preparation of this supplementary budget.

Before I continue to speak to the supplementary budget, I would like to thank the people of my riding, the Klondike. I am very proud to represent the people of the Klondike. It gives me great pleasure to listen to their concerns and bring those concerns forward to my colleagues. It gives me great pleasure to be able to resolve most of their concerns.

Mr. Speaker, when I got elected I committed to hold open houses and I have. I enjoy the open houses and I truly enjoy and appreciate all the people who come to speak to me during my open houses.

Education is one of the key departments in this territory and in this supplementary budget there is \$804,000 dedicated for EAs and learning assistants. Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the principal, the teachers, the educational assistants, the learning assistants and the administration staff of the Robert Service School. Without them our education system would not be viable.

I would also like to thank the volunteers who support the staff of Robert Service School. I would like to congratulate the school councils on being newly elected to the councils and I

would like to congratulate them and thank them for the hard work they are doing for the education of our youth.

The Department of Education has a key role in the education of our youth, and I'd also like to thank them for all of the work they do in preparing our youth for the future. Education is the key for our youth.

Another part of education is the Individual Learning Centre that has just been established in Dawson City. I'd like to welcome Peter Menzies back to our community and thank him for the work he is doing on this front.

Speaking of schools, the Leader of the Liberal Party, during his reply to the supplementary yesterday, spoke in great detail about his political idols, like Mr. Dion, yet spoke very little on the supplementary before us. But I do need to correct one of the statements he said yesterday. Actually, it's a statement that the members in the opposition say all the time — that there was only one school built in this territory in the last six years. Why do the members opposite keep ignoring my community and the citizens, including the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in, who partnered with the Yukon government to build a school?

The way I count, that's two at least — the School of Visual Arts. It's nice to actually finally see cheers from the opposition and to see that they do support at least some of them. I see the Member for McIntyre-Takhini supports the School of Visual Arts and I thank him for that.

I encourage the Liberal Party to acknowledge the existence of SOVA and the benefits to my riding, to the Yukon and the citizens of our community. This attitude that this school does not exist is unacceptable. I'd like the Leader of the Official Opposition to stand up and acknowledge that SOVA even exists. I walk by it every weekend. I see it there. Maybe he needs to show up in my community once in awhile. I hope the members opposite can support this initiative as we continue through the future.

On that note, I think the member opposite actually said there was no increase in daycare spaces in the Yukon — once again, ignoring my community, ignoring Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in's initiative, ignoring the partnership in which I was proud to be involved in building new daycare spaces in my community. I'm not sure if the members opposite have been to my community, but on the north end of Dawson, across from the Chief Isaac Incorporated, which is a development corporation of Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in — there's a building. I think there are 64 childcare spaces there. Once again, the members opposite are ignoring the fact and ignoring the hard work this government and my community have undertaken in the Yukon. I'd like to thank Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in and the Department of Health and Social Services for this project. Now back to the supplementary budget.

In this budget there is \$500,000 for destination marketing. This is a campaign that builds upon the success of the national marketing campaign that was struck a year ago. It focuses on the gateway cities of Calgary, Edmonton, Vancouver and other eastern communities. Tourism is extremely important to my community. I'd like to take this opportunity to thank the Klondike Visitors Association, the Dawson City Chamber of Com-

merce and all the workers in my community who support this industry.

The businesses that promote tourism in the Yukon in my community are the backbone, the pillar, of this industry. Once again, I'd like to thank all of them.

In this supplementary budget there is \$250,000 in support of the recycling depots and initiatives in the Yukon. It's the duty of all of us in this Assembly and the Yukon to recycle.

This \$250,000 investment, on top of our previous investments, proves the support that the Yukon Party has for recycling.

Mr. Speaker, with regard to tourism and labour shortage in Yukon, we are investing \$276,000 for the first of a two-year initiative to develop a labour market framework for Yukon, which will see the establishments of five strategies to assist Yukoners and Yukon businesses.

Mr. Speaker, one of the main things I hear in my community is not lack of an economy, not lack of tourists, it is lack of workers, lack of people, lack of bodies to fill the jobs that are available. I have had many conversations with local business owners on this initiative, and I encouraged all of them to take up a lot of the programs that the Department of Education is offering.

Mr. Speaker, health care in the Yukon: we have just recently signed an agreement with the Yukon Hospital Corporation for \$3.7 million for a three-year funding agreement. This provides stable funding to ensure that Yukoners get the quality of health care that they deserve. Mr. Speaker, on top of that \$3.7 million, we have also allocated \$325,000 for O&M and \$200,000 for capital for a secure medical health unit in the hospital.

Mr. Speaker, in this supplementary budget, with regard to Dawson City, there is money to move the playground. The members opposite don't show up in my community very often, so from their lack of knowledge of the daycare and SOVA — there's a playground behind the nurses' station. There's money in the budget to work with the city to find a new location for that playground, for the future home of a new health centre in Dawson City.

Mr. Speaker, my intention, my goal for my community, is that if a member or a citizen whom I represent was born in the Yukon and in Dawson City, raised in the Yukon, most importantly, Dawson City, they should be able to spend their last days with their family and in their home town, Dawson City. That is my goal, and the long-term viability of health care in my community is to increase services and allow seniors and family members to spend their last days in my community with their family, not in a hospital in Whitehorse.

On that note, I'd like to thank the nurses and the doctors for their hard work, for maintaining quality health care in my community. Mr. Speaker, I have had friends who had unfortunate circumstances when their family members had to use our health care services in the Yukon. Every time I've spoken to them about this, they were very pleased with how the doctors and nurses all across this territory have treated their family members. So we can't lose that in context; we have a very good health system in the Yukon.

I know the members opposite complain all the time about it, but my friends and family members, who have experienced the unfortunate situation of having to rely on the health care services we provide, were pleased with those services.

Another part of health care in the Yukon is social assistance. It is my goal and my colleagues' goal to get people off social assistance and help them find jobs — help them fill the needed spaces in the grocery stores and the gas stations. We have increased social assistance rates by \$1.4 million, and I do believe this is the first time they have been increased since 1995. It is the intention of all of us on this side to work with people on social assistance and prove to them and help them come to the realization that work and being productive in society is much more enjoyable.

Mr. Speaker, another aspect of health care is emergency medical enhancements. Mr. Speaker, in this supplementary budget there is \$1.4 million for emergency medical enhancements. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the EMS staff in Dawson City, the volunteers of our local avalanche volunteer organization, for they are the first responders. I have heard nothing but positive stories and incidents from people who have been in one of these bad situations in my community and these dedicated volunteers and staff came to support them. I would also like to thank the fire chief and the volunteers of the fire department for the hard work they do to maintain the safety of our community.

Mr. Speaker, recently we announced the 811 nurse line. Mr. Speaker, we established the 811 services, the Yukon HealthLine, which has been very beneficial. In the first three months of operation, there were over 2,500 calls and a noticeable reduction in emergency usage. Mr. Speaker, we are currently investigating 911 services in Yukon.

In this supplementary budget there is over \$6.2 million for a new mobile radio system. This ensures the vital communication link is improved, expanded and maintained. There is \$1.1 million for airport firefighting — this is an airport fire rescue vehicle.

I'm going to move on to the placer mining industry. There is \$500,000 in the resource access roads initiative. On that note also, since I'm on placer mining, I attended the Geoscience Forum last night. I'd like to congratulate Ross Mining for receiving the Robert E. Leckie Award. I'd also like to congratulate HC Mining, Haydon Cowan and his family, for their honourable mention.

We all know placer mining is the backbone of the Yukon — always has been, always will be. I wish my fellow citizens of the Klondike and this territory luck — because sometimes it is luck, but mostly good fortune — next season, for I know the gold prices are higher now, and lower oil prices might allow them to have a more successful season.

I'd like to assure all my friends that I do support them, and this Yukon Party government fully supports placer mining in the Yukon. I'd like to thank the Klondike Placer Miners Association, the Yukon Chamber of Mines, and all of the businesses that support placer mining in the Yukon.

Mr. Speaker, I could speak all day about placer mining, but I know I only have 20 minutes, and my time is just about up. This summer, there was a washout on the Klondike and Dempster highways. I was there. I was driving up toward Dawson City, and I waited in line for a couple of minutes with other Yukoners during this washout. And do you know what? I have to congratulate the employees of Highways and Public Works for the fine work that they did during this washout. They actually turned that endeavour into a positive outcome. I was there. The employees were very efficient and very happy. I have nothing but thanks for the work they did when that road washed out.

The Member for Mayo-Tatchun said that the road between Whitehorse, Mayo and Dawson was the worst in 30 years. I know the member doesn't travel up the road very often, but 30 years, Mr. Speaker? I take issue with this. All the work that the department and contractors have undertaken in the last 30 years, and he says it's worse than over 30 years ago? I'm almost speechless with this comment. This explains how far out of touch the Member for Mayo-Tatchun is. I suggest he get in a vehicle and drive our highways; he will see great improvements.

Once again, this comment almost leaves me speechless, but it did come from a Liberal member and we are used to these highly imaginative and incorrect statements. Once again, thanks to the highway workers, the Department of Highways and Public Works and its employees for the fine work they do.

Mr. Speaker, I know I'm running out of time, but I'd like to touch on the Tombstone visitor centre for \$1.94 million. This is an investment in tourism. I'm not sure if the members opposite have driven up the Dempster or if they want to ignore this investment in tourism also. That's another partnership with Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in as well.

Another investment in infrastructure: there is over \$3.2 million in this supplementary for Hamilton Boulevard. This provides a second access to the neighbourhood.

In closing, this supplementary and previous Yukon Party budgets allow us to have financial resources as opposed to net debt. We do not have to rely on the future revenues to provide the needed services of today. Once again, thank you to all members. I support this budget. Thanks to everybody in my community and I hope they have a joyous season over Christmas.

Hon. Mr. Lang: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would likewise like to thank the people from Porter Creek Centre for voting me to represent them here in the House in this territorial government, and working with me in my second term as the representative of that constituency.

I certainly have listened to the members opposite on the supplementary budget speech, and I found that there was lacking any sort of overview of the supplementary budget per se. It was more a conversation about individual ridings, and I understand the importance of them because of the impact that different members have in their ridings, because of the responsibilities. For the ridings in our rural areas, the members are certainly taxed a lot more than we are in the City of Whitehorse

because we have a municipal government that takes care of a lot of the things that the citizens look at from the territorial government in the outlying areas.

As Minister of Highways and Public Works, and of Community Services, I certainly carry some of that responsibility with being the voice for the departments.

Both departments have a full complement of people and have listened to members opposite in their comments about the department on different levels and the qualifications of the department and the jobs that are being done. The members obviously don't realize the responsibility that goes with the Department of Highways and Public Works in respect to the number of kilometres that we maintain on a daily basis. Almost 5,000 kilometres — 4,500 kilometres — are maintained by our very capable highway division. That is done in good weather and bad weather over a 12-month period. All of those people, especially the members who live in outside ridings, are a big part of the community that they live in. I defend them and I admire them and I compliment them for the job well done.

A lot of the other comments today or over the last couple of days about the Department of Highways and Public Works and the pros and cons of doing audits — we certainly are an open and transparent government. When we do audits or we do reviews of departments, we look at making sure that part of our operation is very public and open, not only to us in the House, but to the general public.

That's how our government sees ourselves growing, and we certainly are growing. You have only to look outside in the territory today, with all of the economic expansion that's happening in the Yukon — the population is growing. The Minister of Economic Development gave a thorough review of the dollars that are out there today and the growth.

The growth in the last six years is quite amazing regarding the number of people who live in the Yukon, full-time jobs, average income and, certainly, what we do as a government. Whether you're looking at health care in the territory — we do get some pressure from the opposition on our plan on health care. We put together a group of very highly qualified people to critique our health care system and, of course, they came back with a report.

The members opposite, the members of the Liberal Party, asked the question: why didn't you bury that report? That was quite a shock to me.

Why would you have a report of that calibre, and even have a question: why didn't this government bury the report? That was the Member for Kluane, and that's an interesting attitude from the member from the Liberal Party. This afternoon we had discussions with — the Member for Mount Lorne was talking about Justice, and the pros and cons of an individual being in Burwash, an RCMP member. One of the initiatives this government put forward was safer communities and also part of that was a partnership with the RCMP to do the job they have to do, to be on the ground in our communities. Certainly the Minister of Justice answered that question today. Again, that's another part of our government that we've beefed up the resources to. Certainly the RCMP are going to come back to us on that question and probably have a review of the whole

summer project, not for just Burwash; we want to look at all of our communities and make sure they're safe and manageable from a Justice point of view for the whole territory. So when the members opposite talk about — the Member for Kluane is always discussing the fact that he only votes against things because he doesn't like particular parts of it.

The statistics in his riding — or he worries about the Shakwak funding project that we've had in the last 20 years. For example, in the last six years he has voted against every resource that the Shakwak project has put forward. But to date there has been \$1.8 billion spent on the Alaska Highway from the Shakwak. Now that includes some of the infrastructure that we are putting together now and have done in the last couple years — Donjek River bridge, the Duke River bridge and we'll also replace the Slims River bridge. These are all projects in north Yukon that we see as a real advantage to us in our partnership with the American partners so that we can spend those kind of resources on the Alaska Highway to get that corridor up to a national standard. It is being done, Mr. Speaker — by the way, without the help of the Member for Kluane who votes against it. Those resources were committed by this government and those commitments are there today and the supplementary budget reflects that.

The member opposite talks about the issue and how this government is neglecting the permafrost issue on the north highway. Again, we have addressed that in this supplementary budget. There is \$200,000 for the intelligent transportation system permafrost test site instrumentation which is 50-percent recoverable from the Government of Canada. Again, that is another partnership we make with other governments to help us in our jurisdiction to solve some of our issues.

This money will be used for working with monitoring or maintenance of what we are doing now and how we could mitigate some of the maintenance costs that we do. I remind the House that we spend in excess of \$2 million on the north highway managing that section of road for the travelling public. That is one of our bigger investments on the highways. Now the Member for Kluane won't recognize that but that is a large part of our small budget — when you think that we have 4,500 kilometres of highways to maintain. In that partnership, we have quite a group of individuals working with us. We have the U.S. Federal Highway Administration; Public Works and Government Services Canada — so there are two governments — Transport Canada — another part of the Canadian government and Alaska University Transportation Centre in Fairbanks. Mr. Speaker, it's a very interesting partnership — and the University of Laval here in Canada.

These testing sites on the north highway are getting a thorough overview and we're working toward trying to mitigate the permafrost issue. So again, the Member for Kluane is wrong; this government is investing money on the ground and also mitigating some of the issues we have on the north highway.

A lot of the other interesting conversations we've had today — or the dialogue from the members opposite — is that of the Mayo situation — the Elsa road, the Keno City road. Certainly resources have been put on that on a regular basis. By the way, we also monitor the traffic. We have statistics that we

monitor on all our roads. That's part of the management tool we use on maintenance. We understand how many people — what is the head count on the Annie Lake Road and what is the head count on the Mayo Road. All of those statistics are put in play when we put our budget together. That's how we plan on budgeting.

Now there are questions about bridge renewal which we've done on a regular basis. The members opposite talk about lack of direction and lack of management tools. We have over 400 bridges we manage in the territory.

That's a large responsibility. We have a program and engineers in place and a monitoring system in place — we prioritize these bridges, and we're working toward a rotation system, so that these bridges are looked at on a regular basis and certainly upgraded on a regular basis. This government does that. This department does that. The Department of Highways and Public Works does this. This is all part and parcel of the department's responsibilities to Yukoners.

That's when I say to the members opposite in the House, when we talk back and forth and it gets quite heated in the debate about issues about departments — I feel that these departments do an excellent job.

Now, we listened to the Minister of Education. All of the things the members opposite have insinuated have not happened are happening, and the facts are here. The facts are out there — the statistics. The number of individuals we have in the apprenticeship programs doubled and tripled in the last five years. Those are statistics you can't turn your back on.

The Member for Mayo-Tatchun talked about his riding and talked about only one school in six years, neglecting to mention the learning centre in Dawson City and the learning facilities we have here in Whitehorse — again standing up in the House, cherry-picking a situation, jumping up and making a statement that misleads and misdirects the general public on what's happening on the ground in the Yukon.

When we go to Mayo, the member's riding, we look at the investment this government has made over the last six years in the rec complex. When we go up to United Keno Hill we look at the investment the mining companies are making in that area; if we look at the Mayo dam and the resources there on the hydro end of things; this government is investing money in that riding for the betterment of the whole Yukon, not just Mayo, not just Carmacks, Dawson City or the Klondike. This government has taken the energy crisis one step forward in the sense we just finished tying in the Carmacks-to-Pelly grid.

The Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources, the minister responsible for Yukon development and the Premier were at an inauguration yesterday where they turned the power on to Minto mine, Mr. Speaker. The tonnes and tonnes of CO₂ that that eliminates in our environment — by the way, Mr. Speaker, another plus: we took a small community, Pelly; not a large community, Mr. Speaker, but a community, and we took it off diesel.

So what has this government done? This government has taken the territory one more step into self-sufficiency on clean energy. That's what we did yesterday. We're not going to stop there as a government, regardless of what the members oppo-

site say. We have committed to go further and tie in the Pelly and Stewart section. We have committed to look, and have an overview and an economic study, of the Mayo 2 dam — that infrastructure. We're talking about a huge investment for Yukoners.

So when the Member for Mount Lorne talks about the tradespeople leaving, and the statistics say that our population is growing and that there's construction shutting down — well, I've lived here all my life. In November and December, outside construction shuts down in the territory, placer mining shuts down in the territory, exploration shuts down in the territory, but today we have one more thing going for us, one more producing mine that hasn't shut down. They employ many people at the Minto mine. A lot of that infrastructure was put together over the last three years and a big part of that workforce comes from the community of Pelly.

Again the members opposite are wrong. What we're talking about in this supplementary — I know my time is running out and I could talk for hours on the positive things that are happening in Community Services, which again touch every community in the territory. This supplementary budget is coming forward and will address most of the issues the members opposite have talked about: investment in bridges, investment in infrastructure, investment in airports, investments, investments. What are we doing in the communities? I look forward to debating that with the members opposite and giving the long list of things that this government — not that government, but the government of the day, the government of the last six years — has been successful in doing.

You only have to look at our communities, Mr. Speaker, to see the change on the ground, the attitude. Go to Pelly and talk to the individuals there. Go to Carmacks and talk. Go to Mayo and look at the optimism in the community. That grows with economic development and a trust in their government and that the government is going to do the right thing by our citizens.

On this side of the House we are committed to do exactly that. We will not be thrown off our mark or our goalpost by the members opposite giving statistics here that have no bearing with fact. We will proceed with this government moving forward with our goalpost in front of us, maximize the benefits to Yukoners for every invested dollar that the Yukon has to invest on the ground, and working with our population to make sure that, at the end of the day, Yukoners get the best bang for their buck on the investment.

We've done that in six years and we will proceed to do it in the future. We will do it, Mr. Speaker, with the help of the Yukon people and the trust we've built with them in the past. I look forward to the next two or three years working with those individuals to show the Yukon what we can do and how we can look forward to a very, very positive future.

So, Mr. Speaker, I support this supplementary budget. I look forward to the debate in the departments I'm responsible for and thank you.

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

Hon. Mr. Fentie: Well, Mr. Speaker, for the last while we've been listening to the comments provided by the opposition on our supplementary budget. It is a budget that covers up to and includes the period 5 variance for this fiscal year of 2008-09. It certainly, within the overall budget, demonstrates clearly the positive position that the Yukon is in.

I know the members on the government side recognize fully what's in the budget. They understand the budget, understand the finances of the Yukon, and understand the direction the Yukon is going, but the Official Opposition is clearly lost in that regard. And there are signs, once in awhile, that the third party has an understanding and I give them value for that, but there are many misguided opinions that have been drawn over the last day or so and indeed all through the course of the mandates this government has been providing the leadership for this territory.

I want to touch on some of the comments, just by way of rebuttal, and I want to impress upon the Member for Mayo-Tatchun that to stand in this Assembly and criticize the government on any account requires that the member do the member's work. I can tell you this, Mr. Speaker, every time we, the government and our representatives, are in the riding of Mayo-Tatchun, there's one common comment that continually comes our way: they see the government MLAs and the government ministers in the riding more than they see their own MLA. So I'm not sure how the Member for Mayo-Tatchun can come to any terms of criticism when the member is in his riding less than we the government side is.

That's why we are able to come up with initiatives and strategies for the riding of Mayo-Tatchun like a school in Carmacks, like the investment in the Mayo community centre, like the work we've been doing with the Na Cho Nyäk Dun First Nation in developing the mining sector in the region, like the investments — as the Minister of Highways and Public Works has just stated — provided for highway infrastructure, operation and maintenance, reconstruction, and the list goes on.

To the Member for Mayo-Tatchun, if the member wants to continue to criticize, the thing to do would be to go out at least into his riding to garner some information so his criticism is not void of substance.

The third party, true to form, has clearly positioned themselves — as they always do — they are not all that supportive of the approach we take in budgeting and investments and building this territory's future. They have some restrictive principles that guide them and that is unfortunate. On the other hand, the third party does bring forward a number of measures in this House that this Assembly has accepted as intended and has gone forward to conclude processes that allow for implementation of those good ideas and constructive measures that the third party has brought forward. We congratulate them, though I would make sure that the public record clearly represents this: that the third party is mistaken in many of its areas of criticism on what is in this budget and how it affects the Yukon today and going forward.

The Member for Kluane, by the way, we are in a budget debate and this shows the impossibility — it is like trying to reconcile the irreconcilable — in talking or debating with the

Member for Kluane this budget. The member has just stated here on the floor that this budget does not represent a surplus but is actually a deficit.

Well, if that is the member's view of what is in the budget document and what has been stated and accounted for in the budget, it's impossible to have any sort of debate with the Member for Kluane, because the member just does not understand the budget itself. We can try to help. There are technical briefings — there's other assistance we can make available. I'll even lend the Member for Kluane some money to go to school after hours and at least take some fundamentals when it comes to budgeting so he's not standing on the floor saying things like, "This isn't really a surplus; it's a deficit." That's absurd, Mr. Speaker, and I think the Leader of the Official Opposition is quite concerned that even his own colleagues have limited or no understanding of the budget; however, there is a reflection of leadership always when it comes to those who follow.

I now want to touch on another rebuttal, and it has to do with the Leader of the Official Opposition. Once again I will go to a quote. This leader, this member, definitely has a propensity to say everything that comes to his mind, and that's why the member gets into trouble. We're pointing that out, as we should. It's our responsibility to make sure the public understands and that the public record is correct and that there's no confusion or misunderstanding in the Yukon public about what the government is doing and what is happening in the territory.

The member said, November 24, on page 3470 of the Blues, and I will quote. This is directly from the Leader of the Official Opposition: "Will the Finance minister in fact do just that: throw out his stale-dated supplementary budget and table a new one?" I'm going to challenge the member on that. I would hope in the coming days of this sitting, the member will stand in this House and explain to Yukoners why he has such a vehement opposition to this budget and the expenditures therein.

So let us begin: the Leader of the Official Opposition wants us to throw this out. So what the member is actually saying is that we should disregard \$54.7 million of additional expenditure for key areas of importance to Yukoners, and I'll start listing those areas of importance. That's what the member said; the Leader of the Official Opposition said to throw out that \$54.7 million addition expenditure for Yukoners.

Let's go to infrastructure. The member has just said to Yukoners — and this is the member's position so I take it it's the Official Opposition's position — the Liberals — that we should throw out \$7 million of strategic infrastructure money for Yukon. Throw out \$3.226 million for the construction of Hamilton Boulevard. Throw out the \$1.756 million in work well underway on the airport expansion and the parking lot improvements with another just over \$10 million in total budgeted. The Leader of the Official Opposition has said and it's here in the pages of *Hansard*, "throw this out."

I wonder, when the members stand and question the government on what it's doing for the economy, what this would do for the economy — throwing these millions of dollars out?

The Tombstone visitor reception centre — \$1.194 million — throw that out; \$2.6 million for Slims River bridge — throw

that out; \$560,000 for maintenance on the North Canal — and we keep hearing how the members berate the government about highway maintenance and construction — throw that out; \$500,000 for resource access roads for industry development, for the resource sector — throw that out.

There is \$702,000 for emergency washouts and maintenance on the Dempster Highway and the Klondike Highway. The member has criticized the minister for our investments in those highways, which are deemed and designated as part of the national highway infrastructure. Here is an example of what we are doing, but they say to throw it out. Mr. Speaker, the list goes on.

Let's talk about another area of importance to Yukoners: public safety. This member has said here on the floor — recorded in *Hansard* — that when it comes to public safety, the \$1.4 million included in this supplementary for public safety and enhanced medical services should be thrown out. That's \$1.4 million. Also, \$898,000 of increased operational support, including investment for the review to improve and enhance our 911 service — the Leader of the Official Opposition has said, "Throw that out." Disregard it. Who needs 911? In fact, if you follow the member's logic, Mr. Speaker, and listen to the Leader of the Official Opposition — who needs public safety?

Mr. Speaker, there is \$1.195 million for emergency medical services facilities in Watson Lake — an area where paramedics and volunteers cover a radius of hundreds of miles, servicing a number of communities and mine sites in rural southeast Yukon. The member says, "Throw it away. Throw it out."

Mr. Speaker, there is \$6.224 million toward a new mobile radio system. This supplementary demonstrates a total of \$18.5 million over three years for a new modern communications system in the Yukon, which enhances our connectivity. Mr. Speaker, that contributes to public safety, to development, to growth, to infrastructure, to amenities, to attraction, to asset. Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Official Opposition says, "Throw it out."

Mr. Speaker, there is \$1.1 million for an airport rescue firefighting vehicle — \$1.1 million. He says, "Throw it out." It serves no purpose — stale-dated, Mr. Speaker. \$132,000 for forest fire management contracts with First Nations — throw it out. Stale-dated, no good — and I'm sure the First Nations who work diligently fighting fires each and every summer are quite pleased that we have contracts and the resources in this budget, but the Leader of the Official Opposition says, "Throw it out."

In public health, Mr. Speaker, once again, this supplementary budget that the Leader of the Official Opposition said is "stale-dated; throw it out," includes a \$3.7-million contribution to the Whitehorse Hospital Corporation. It's a three-year agreement negotiated with the Hospital Corporation. It wasn't that long ago the members were on record talking about the issues of the Hospital Corporation and how the government was doing nothing. Well, here it is in the supplementary: a three-year agreement, \$3.7 million including \$325,000 for O&M and \$200,000 for capital for the support and creation and operation of a secure mental health unit. He said, "Throw it out" — it's no good. I guess they've changed their minds.

\$185,000 supports Yukoners who require psychiatric and mental health services outside of the Yukon, but the Leader of the Official Opposition throws it out. He says, "Throw it out." And I remind us all, Mr. Speaker, that the Leader of the Official Opposition is to be represented as the alternative to government.

When it comes to public health and safety, when it comes to infrastructure and when it comes to public health, I think Yukoners have a great deal of concerns and questions in their minds about the Leader of the Official Opposition's actual ability.

It goes on for immunization, but there's another one. Under the leadership and commitment of the former minister responsible for the Women's Directorate, ministers of Health, and the new Minister of the Women's Directorate, non-governmental organizations receive a great deal of attention from this government. The members talked about social conscience. This government has demonstrated through its investment and commitment to non-governmental organizations, the Hospital Corporation and to all concerned — to all Yukoners — what a strong, committed and dedicated social conscience this Yukon Party government has. We reinstated the Women's Directorate, putting women in this territory in the forefront of government policy-making. Yet, the Leader of the Official Opposition says to throw out the investment in Kaushee's Place and throw out the investment in the Many Rivers initiative and throw out the investment in the Help and Hope Society. That's the Leader of the Official Opposition demonstrating their social conscience.

The list goes on: there's the corrections action plan, the women's transitional unit at the Whitehorse Correctional Centre for a \$1.027-million investment. The Leader of the Official Opposition says to throw it out. There is the labour market and capacity building for millions of dollars of a joint investment strategy with First Nations. The Leader of the Official Opposition said that this is stale-dated, throw it out. In my next conversation with the chiefs, I will be sure to have this discussion on what their views are of the investments we are making through the northern strategy trust and the enhancements and capacity building for First Nation governments that are underway. In fact, tomorrow, I will be at Yukon College, along with the Chief of the Champagne and Aishihik First Nations to open and start a very important initiative of capacity building within Yukon College.

Mr. Speaker, the member — the Leader of the Official Opposition — said to throw it out. Millions of dollars invested in Yukon and Yukon's future. The community development trust, the labour market framework and all the areas that we have worked on to enhance the labour market issues here in the Yukon and fill the gaps to the extent possible — the member says to throw it out. I am sure that the business community of the Yukon is quite comforted that the member is on the opposition side and we, the Yukon Party government, are leading this territory into its future.

Mr. Speaker, marketing and tourism — the member asks what are we doing about the Yukon economy? Marketing tourism is a pretty important step and it is an investment in this

supplementary budget. The member says throw it out and, indeed the government side did reinstate and put the priorities necessary in place for the Department of Tourism and Culture. The Leader of the Official Opposition said to cast it away; it is no good.

Mr. Speaker, the list goes on. There is the bus for the City of Whitehorse, the new technology, addressing our biophysical areas, and more investment for seniors through the income supplement. The Leader of the Official Opposition — the Liberals, Official Opposition in this House — says to throw it out. I'm sure the seniors are quite disturbed about that position that the Official Opposition has taken. The list goes on and on and on.

Mr. Speaker, the budget is really quite simple in summation. The budget demonstrates that we have once again projected a year-end surplus. The budget demonstrates that we have a net financial position in excess of \$140 million. Throughout the budget is an investment in Yukoners, investment in infrastructure, investment in public health, investment in public safety, and investment in Yukon's future.

That's what the government is doing on behalf of Yukoners, but the Leader of the Official Opposition and the Liberals in this House say "throw it out." Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Are you prepared for the question?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Motion for second reading of Bill No. 12 agreed to

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

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

Motion agreed to

Speaker leaves the Chair

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Chair: Order please. Committee of the Whole will now come to order. The matter before the Committee is Bill No. 59, *Forest Resources Act*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

Chair: Order please. Committee of the Whole will now come to order.

Bill No. 59 — *Forest Resources Act* — continued

Chair: The matter before the Committee is Bill No. 59, *Forest Resources Act*. Currently we are debating clause 7 and there is an amendment before the Committee. It has been moved by Mr. McRobb

THAT Bill No. 59, entitled *Forest Resources Act*, be amended in clause 7(2) at page 10 by: adding the following subsections:

(c) consult with affected renewable resources council(s) on the renewable resources council's preferred method of being involved in the planning;

(d) consult with the affected renewable resources council(s) regarding a budget for their involvement in developing the forest resources management plan.

Mr. Edzerza, you have approximately 18 minutes left on this amendment.

Mr. Edzerza: Mr. Chair, I believe this amendment should be taken far more seriously by the government than it appears to be taken. I believe that negligence to really adhere to the *Umbrella Final Agreement* on the sections involving renewable resources councils are really what will transpire into court action down the road. When the government is enforcing any of the act, I believe that is when there will be numerous challenges to this legislation.

It's unfortunate because this amendment being proposed today could probably divert, or at least minimize, some of the possibilities of court actions happening in the future with regard to this legislation, so it's important to try to get it right, as I know the minister has said over and over that the government always wants to get it right. Well, I don't know if implementing possible legislation that could possibly be challenged in court is really taking the time and effort to get it right.

For example, the Liard First Nation, in their position paper, says that: "The Bill has the potential to significantly impact Aboriginal rights and title. At the same time, it lacks the basic safeguards required by law to justify infringements of those rights or to meaningfully accommodate those interests until such time as they are proven in court." That's a concern from the Liard First Nation with regard to the responsibilities of the government to really truly consult, even though they are not a self-governing First Nation per se, according to the legal documents that one needs to be considered a legally defined governing First Nation. However, aboriginal title has been recognized and honoured in the Supreme Court of Canada without anyone or any document stating that they are a self-governing First Nation. First Nation people strongly believe right to this day that they were always self-governing and they don't need to have a definition by any other government to say if they are or they aren't.

Then we go over to the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in. They maintain that the Yukon government cannot delegate its lawful obligations to consult with the First Nation to any other body or process, including any environmental or socio-economic assessment. Then we hear those words again from another First Nation warning the government that they can't delegate their lawful obligations to anybody. I hope the minister writes down these questions that I'm going to ask because I would like to know: did YTG delegate their lawful obligations to consult with the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in at any time?

Then we go over to —

Chair's statement

Chair: Order please. The Chair would like to remind members that Standing Order 19(b) clearly states that members must speak to the motion or to the amendment. Currently we are debating the amendment before us. I just want to remind the member that he should focus his debate on the amendment.

Mr. Edzerza: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I am talking about renewable resources councils and I believe all of this information that First Nations have written in and put forward to deal with how much the government is obligated to consult with them is part of this amendment. I would like to know, even before I continue on, if that is in fact the case or not.

Hon. Mr. Cathers: I would again refer the Member for McIntyre-Takhini to section 4 of the act, which confirms — although it is not even necessary to include it, but we have provided surety for any who might not understand it; for the layperson, one might say — that the final agreements prevail. This act is governed by an act approving Yukon land claims final agreements. Those include the obligations to consult with renewable resources councils. As I have indicated before in the House in debate on this legislation, the Yukon government has more than fulfilled those obligations throughout this process, and we will certainly continue to work with those who have concerns about that, to inform them of the way the process works.

The *Umbrella Final Agreement* sets out RRC responsibilities. Renewable resources councils will be consulted under the act. If we get further on in discussion, members will see clauses that specifically refer to working with renewable resources councils in the development of plans. Again, I point out — which the Member for McIntyre-Takhini ought to know, as a former Minister of Justice — that the Yukon government does not have the ability to pass a piece of legislation which overrides the *Umbrella Final Agreement*.

It doesn't matter even if government or an opposition member were to bring forward legislation that said legislation superseded the *Umbrella Final Agreement*. That is not the law. The Yukon Legislative Assembly does not have the ability to override the legal obligations set out in the *Umbrella Final Agreement*. The member ought to know this by now.

The amendment proposed by the Member for Kluane is needless. Consultation will occur with renewable resources councils. This is following the Liberal Party's pattern of proposing amendments they're trying to make sound like motherhood and apple pie, but in fact they know are needless amendments. In many cases they refer to obligations that are already set out within other pieces of legislation. They are not necessary.

I hear kibitzing from the Member for Kluane. I know he's very eager to engage in debate, but Mr. Chair, I would encourage all members of the House not to waste too much time on this legislation and instead to move forward and recognize it's a good piece of legislation and pass this bill.

Mr. Edzerza: Well, Mr. Chair, regardless of the explanations that the minister stands up and gives, there still appears to be doubt out there from renewable resources councils

that they were in fact satisfied that they've been consulted. That's exactly what we are trying to clear up with the minister — the possibility of a court challenge very quickly. For example, the Laberge Renewable Resources Council states very clearly in this letter: "It is not satisfied that we have been consulted on the development of the *Forest Resources Act*, as per the definition of consultation in our final land claims agreement. We would like to draw your attention to 17.2.2 and 17.4.1.3 in Chapter 17 of the UFA." It states very clearly that both clauses describe that renewable resources councils must be consulted on legislation regarding forest resources.

Is the minister saying that the Laberge Renewable Resources Council is mistaken and that he is right in that they have already been consulted to enough satisfaction that it would not be jeopardized in the future, that they didn't consult enough?

Hon. Mr. Cathers: Mr. Chair, again, I will point out for the Member for McIntyre-Takhini — let me give him some examples. First of all, let me point out a few things to the member opposite. Legislation does not guarantee what anyone's opinion will be on a matter nor does it preclude that. I recall the Member for McIntyre-Takhini standing in debate himself — both on that side of the floor and on this side of the House and indicating when obligations had been met during his time as minister — making comments along the lines of noting that he could not preclude anyone's opinion and that they were entitled to their opinion. Again, that is the situation in this case.

The Yukon government has met its legal obligations and, in fact, has more than met its legal obligations. With regard to consultation with RRCs, pre-consultation began with renewable resources councils in October of 2005.

Department of Energy, Mines and Resources officials attended the October 2005 annual general meeting of all renewable resources councils. An update was provided at that point on the forest legislation process to the RRCs. The RRCs indicated a preference for more formal consultation to be initiated when a more tangible product and more detail was available. That, as per their request, was provided in the spring of 2008 during a 60-day consultation period, which consulted on the concepts of the *Forest Resources Act*, pursuant to 17.2.2.2 of the final agreements. A formal letter was issued to RRCs identifying the consultation obligation and that consultation was occurring pursuant to that obligation. The Laberge RRC had a meeting with department officials to discuss the issue — consultation, Mr. Chair.

Discussions were initiated with all RRCs, including Laberge RRC, in mid-March and a formal response on consultation material was received from the Laberge RRC on April 28, 2008. In fact, I can inform the member that many aspects of that consultation — I have again reviewed that document, as have officials of Energy, Mines and Resources — and where concerns were not explicitly stated in the act, there are many that are, in fact, recognized in principle. The renewable resources council might have chosen to have slightly different wording, but their concerns have been noted, have been respected and, where appropriate, have been incorporated into the act.

Further consultation with the Laberge Renewable Resources Council continued — and I would note that the consultation stage is applied, of course, to all renewable resources councils. Targeted consultation on the draft bill with renewable resources councils occurred during the summer of 2008 and that included — again, with regard to this specific renewable resources council, they provided a response dated September 2, 2008. Again, they provided their input, we listened to their input and incorporated it, where appropriate. But as I've noted before, in bringing together diverse opinions on a subject such as the forest and forest legislation which, as members know, has been going on for over a decade — debate on legislation, frameworks, et cetera — it is not possible to get unanimous concurrence on the exact text of legislation. What is important, and what the government did, was to work with all with whom there was a legal obligation to work, and to provide opportunities for all members of the public, with a particular emphasis on stakeholders and governments, provide an opportunity for them to contribute to the process, provide their perspective, and to bring those perspectives together to the best extent possible in a good piece of legislation.

That is what has been done and, Mr. Chair, the member can stand up numerous times and refer to whether satisfaction exists on the part of an individual council or body and, again, that is not something that the legislation speaks to. We cannot guarantee that anyone will be satisfied, when a legal obligation has been met, that in their opinion it has been met. However, I assure the Member for McIntyre-Takhini that officials have done good work. We have met our legal obligations and the member and other members of the opposition — particularly the Liberals — have raised the spectre of court action as a possibility.

I remind them, of course, the government cannot speak to who may or may not initiate court action on any piece of legislation. That is a right that exists of all citizens. What we do is do the good work of government, officials work with individuals and we move forward in a manner that is to the best of the extent, understanding and ability of both ministers and officials in the appropriate manner and come up with a product that, at the end of the day, we believe — to the best extent of our ability — is a good piece of legislation. Officials have done good work.

The involvement of others, including the successor resource legislation working group and those who participated in the process — again I have to remind members that we on the government side respect the opinions of those who would like a section of the act worded slightly differently. However, at the end of the day, we have listened to the majority of Yukon citizens who participated in the process. We have developed legislation that is — to the best of our belief and to the best of our abilities — appropriate.

The amendments members have brought forward so far — and the amendments they have indicated they are likely to bring forward — do not reflect the input of the majority of those who contributed to the specific development of the legislation. The members' perspective — as they've indicated it — does not reflect the best interests of Yukon citizens and good

legislation and therefore the government has no choice but to vote against the current amendment under discussion — and I suspect the amendments that the members are likely to bring forward.

I would encourage them — in the interests of expediting debate and getting to the budget — which members have so eagerly stood up — the Leader of the Liberal Party spent a considerable amount of time discussing a desire to debate the budget. I would encourage members to move on with this legislation.

The clause under discussion — of course, the amendment under discussion — is something for which I appreciate members' perspectives; however, renewable resources councils will be involved and must be involved, as spelled out in the *Umbrella Final Agreement*. We are going to go beyond that in involving them in this process. This amendment is a needless amendment.

Mr. Edzerza: Like I stated before, it's unfortunate that the minister feels that First Nation input into legislation is needless.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

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

Hon. Mr. Cathers: The Member for McIntyre-Takhini just imputed motive on me in saying that I felt that First Nation input was needless. That is clearly not what I said. I would ask you to call him to order.

Chair's ruling

Chair: There is no point of order.

Mr. Edzerza: The minister keeps on repeating and repeating that the amendments that are brought forward on behalf of the citizens — as he stated, the majority. Well, I guess maybe we're bringing concerns forward from the people he doesn't consider a majority. I don't know how he defines the citizens of the territory he talks to and how he categorizes them; however, I still have to say that you could listen to the majority of the citizens in the Yukon Territory by excluding six First Nations.

Now, the minister knows very well that First Nations are different. They are different only because they do have land claims and self-government agreements. They are recognized as another government and that's what I think this debate is all about: the government's lack of political will to really recognize that First Nations have to be treated differently when it comes to developing legislation. Because for most of them, in their self-government agreements and land claims agreements, it defines very specifically how the government-to-government relationship must take place.

I think it is critically important that the government respects that in order to avoid court challenges in the future. That is a point that I am trying to get across. Now, I would like to ask the minister one more question with regard to this. It has to do with consultation, because the definition of "consultation" in the *Umbrella Final Agreement*, page 2, refers to the party being given, "a reasonable period of time in which the party to

be consulted may prepare its views on the matter." Well, it appears that the renewable resources council from Laberge is of the opinion that they were not given reasonable time to respond to this proposed legislation and this new act.

In the minister's opinion, could he tell me that there is no doubt whatsoever that the renewable resources council of Laberge is inaccurate when they say they did not give reasonable time?

Mr. Fairclough: The minister is not going to get off that easy. Doesn't he want to have a debate on this? I thought we just talked about this. He wants to talk through this bill. Is that not correct? We're talking about an amendment that was put forward on the floor of this House. The minister should read the newspaper once in awhile. Today there is a very good article about how another renewable resources council feels about this government's approach to this.

Another thing that is really important here is that the wording of the final agreements be reflected in the legislation that's before us, and it's for good reason. The minister ought to know this, because he has experienced how First Nations have felt about certain things in their final agreements. He should know this. He ought to know it. There are a lot of arguments about what different clauses mean, and to take it out and away from the final agreements is not right.

Those amendments clearly state adding in the consultation with a renewable resources council — and I know the minister read section 17.2.2.2 and it does use strong wording, and not always is that wording throughout the final agreements. It does say, "The Minister shall consult with the affected Renewable Resources Councils." I don't need to read the other two to the member opposite, but why not include the wording that's in the agreements in this section regarding planning areas. Why not, Mr. Chair? Make it strong, so that any future governments, anyone who comes in and works within the department will have a very clear understanding about what that section means, because it's straight out of a final agreement. Here is a specific provision when it comes to forest management plans. I'm looking at the *Little Salmon-Carmacks First Nation Final Agreement*. It says this; it's under 17.5.4.1: "The Minister, in consultation with the Little Salmon/Carmacks First Nation and the Carmacks Renewable Resources Council, shall determine the timing for the development of Forest Resources Management plans for the Traditional Territory of the Little Salmon/Carmacks First Nation."

So why not include that? Why is the minister so against including the section to consult in this part of the bill? What's he afraid of? I could tell you what he's afraid of, Mr. Chair: this government is afraid of consultation.

It is to the point where we've gone to court or the First Nations have gone to court with the government over that very same thing. So why not have the opportunity to make it clear to the minister himself? He ought to know this and agree with the amendments. Consult with the renewable resources councils — it says so in the agreements.

I know the minister is going to flip to another section of the bill to try and justify that, but we're talking about the planning areas here and it's what renewable resources councils

have come forward to us to include in this bill. So why not do that? I haven't heard a good reason yet from the minister.

Why not have the strong wording: "consult with affected renewable resources council(s)" right in there? What's it going to do? Is it going to hurt the legislation? Is it going to hurt the bill? No. Perhaps it would strengthen it. All we get from the minister is no, no, no. This Yukon Party and the minister seem to know best. They don't seem to listen to Yukoners very well. We hear it over and over again — in letters written to him as minister and constantly in the paper — yet there is no movement on the minister's part. He ought to know this and have the amendments reflected in the legislation. Why won't he do it? Let's hear a good rationale for it. Why not have the same wording that is in the agreements reflected in the legislation? What is the government afraid of?

Hon. Mr. Cathers: Well, Mr. Chair, again I find debating with the members opposite interesting. They know the answers to the questions they frame. They are simply grandstanding on this issue here. They know very well that Section 4 of the bill specifically states —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

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

Mr. McRobb: On a point of order, Mr. Chair, the term "grandstanding" has been ruled out of order as it leads to discord. It therefore should be retracted.

Chair's ruling

Chair: The Chair feels that it is a dispute among members. There is no point of order.

Hon. Mr. Cathers: Mr. Chair, the members again are bringing up an issue here. They know it is reflected in the legislation. Section 4 is one of the clauses often referred to for greater certainty because it is not necessary to include it here. It states that the final agreements prevail. The members are suggesting that we should put excerpts from the final agreements in the bill. It is unnecessary to do so. It is not practice in legislation to reiterate every piece of legislation that supersedes it, particularly when it refers to the fact that the aforementioned superseding legislation does supersede the bill or the act. Again, this is needless representation by the Liberal Party and they know it.

We have followed the obligation set out in the devolution transfer agreement for involving First Nations through the successor resources legislation working group. We have also consulted as per the final agreements with renewable resources councils. I read examples of that before; I can read them in again for members opposite, but that would be yet another waste of time in this House.

Considering members were so eager — particularly the leader of the Liberal Party — to get debate on the budget, I will attempt to move things on, so they can get off of this clause we're discussing, move forward with this legislation, and get on to other debate, and perhaps still have time to talk about all their matters, such as the Member for Kluane's very lengthy dissertation earlier today about everything that bugged him.

Again, I would point out that we —

Chair's statement

Chair: Order. Order please. I think we should focus on the clause that is being amended. I would urge the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources to focus his debate on the amendment at hand. I'd also like to encourage all other members to focus their debate on the amendment at hand, please.

Hon. Mr. Cathers: I appreciate your direction on this, and I apologize if I do stray off of this at some points. It's difficult to debate the very specific clause we have under amendment while attempting to respond to the comments coming forward from members opposite while attempting to respond to the comments coming forward from the members opposite.

I will confine myself to this amendment, of course — this proposed amendment. Again, the amendment proposed by the Member for Kluane is needless and he knows it. Adding a subsection that notes an obligation to consult with affected renewable resources councils is needless and the member knows it, because section 4 of the bill states very clearly — but I will read it again for members opposite, though I know they don't like it — "This Act is governed by an *Act Approving Yukon Land Claims Final Agreements*".

Maybe the problem is that members opposite are not aware that that is the name of the bill that put the *Umbrella Final Agreement* into place. Either they have not done their homework on this or they are bringing forward an issue that is not only needless, but one that they know is needless posturing and not reflective of an actual need or flaw in the legislation. The government is required to consult with RRCs as set out in the *Umbrella Final Agreement*, including section 17.2.2 and its subsections. That includes the obligation to consult relating to allocation and forestry practices and policies that would affect them.

These are matters that, again, the legislation here specifically links back to in certain areas. I point out again that members wanting us to lay out the consultation obligation in the act is completely needless and they know it, because section 4 of the act specifically reminds anyone who didn't know it that the *Umbrella Final Agreement* prevails.

So, therefore, Mr. Chair, this is not worthy of much more discussion. I know that the members are grasping for straws in trying to make an issue and stir the pot but, again, needless debate.

Mr. Fairclough: I know the minister thinks that it is needless. The First Nations spent 30 years negotiating their final agreements and would like it reflected in legislation where it can be, where it won't harm anything. This minister calls it needless and ought to be ashamed of that. First Nations spent a long time putting the words together to make things stronger and better in the territory.

I know the minister refers back to section 4 but that doesn't include First Nations that don't have final agreements. If the final agreements wording is in this section of 7(2) then it would strengthen, I believe, the agreement itself.

It's clear in the final agreements that the minister shall consult with the renewable resources councils. I haven't heard

the minister put out a good rationale, other than referring back to section 4, or reasons for not including these amendments in this section of 7(2), and I asked him to — perhaps if the minister does not fully understand it, he can put it aside, have more discussions with officials until he gets a better understanding of it, then come back and not call it “needless”.

I mean, we’re going to hear it time and time again from the minister: he called it a needless section to be included in the bill. First Nations negotiated 30 years, trying to get these wordings down, ensuring the renewable resources councils are consulted. They’ve agreed to it, and so has the Yukon government. The signatures are on there. I ask the minister to respect that and include it.

Mr. McRobb: I’ve had time to listen to comments from other members. I appreciate much of what I’ve heard. Unfortunately, it’s rather disappointing to hear the minister within the Yukon Party government refer to the role of these councils as needless. Mr. Chair, those were the minister’s own words — “needless”. Well, needless or useless — it’s all about the same.

As the Member for Mayo-Tatchun has stated, the land claim agreement took decades to negotiate and the intent was that clauses within those agreements would be reflected in future Yukon government legislation. That’s where this act falls short — at least, it’s one of the areas it falls short. This amendment would fix the bill to include the requirements as set out in the *Umbrella Final Agreement*. I can’t see why the minister is so against that.

Now the minister has said that all of the renewable resources councils were properly consulted. Well, Mr. Chair, not according to the renewable resources councils themselves. One of the councils, the one from Laberge — the member’s own riding — felt so strongly that it wasn’t properly consulted that it sent a letter to the minister dated November 24, a letter that I tabled in this House yesterday. In this letter, it’s very clear from the RRC’s perspective the Yukon government did not perform consultation as defined in the *Umbrella Final Agreement*, which is law.

So there’s a disagreement between the minister and the members of this renewable resources council.

Whom should Yukoners believe? (a) those responsible for fish and wildlife within the regions who are members of these important councils or (b) the politician from Lake Laberge? Well, Mr. Chair, I think the answer to whom Yukoners will believe is rather obvious.

Now we need to get to the bottom of this matter. The minister has referred to some of the correspondence that he has refused to share with members on this side of the House, then he challenges us to have good debate. Then we face accusations that amendments are useless and he won’t entertain any more — he is going to vote them all down. Well, Mr. Chair, I mentioned today in my reply to the budget speech: how can we have good debate when all members don’t have the information? This information should be put on the public record. This is like playing poker with someone who has cards up his sleeve, Mr. Chair. It is unfair. The odds are stacked against

you. How can you have fair debate under such circumstance? Is the minister now prepared to lay those cards on the table?

Hon. Mr. Cathers: Well, it is interesting to see the member opposite. We heard his leader extolling Mr. Dion yesterday in debate. Now we hear the Member for Kluane saying that is unfair. Well, this is not relevant to the discussion.

Chair’s statement

Chair: Order please. The debate currently is supposed to be focusing on this amendment. I am the Chair doesn’t have to read the amendment again. I would hope that both sides could focus their debate on the amendment, please.

Hon. Mr. Cathers: Mr. Chair, I have already answered the questions about this. I am not interested in spending a lot of time here — perhaps the members are — in debating something they already know the answers to. We are debating an amendment that they know is needless, because section 4 of the act specifically references and reminds everyone that the *Umbrella Final Agreement* prevails. Again, I remind members that the Yukon Legislative Assembly does not have the ability to pass a law that supersedes the obligations set out in the *Umbrella Final Agreement*, which is constitutionally protected.

So, Mr. Chair, let me use the member’s own words of June 22, 2000: “It wasn’t long ago when the Liberals had all the answers. Now they have none.”

Mr. McRobb: Oh, Mr. Chair. Is that all the minister responsible for forests has to say — dredge up some comments from eight and a half years ago? That’s rather dismal.

We’re talking about the importance of entrenching the role of the renewable resources councils in this piece of legislation, as is the law within the *Umbrella Final Agreement*. But the minister is saying, “Trust me.” Well, I’m sorry, but we can’t go there — not without the proof. The minister might have the proof in that folder over there, but we don’t know, because he won’t provide us with the correspondence.

But here’s something we do have — a letter from a renewable resources council that says proper consultation didn’t take place. Well, this clearly looks like there is a problem, and the minister is asking us to trust him.

Well, I don’t think too many members in the public trust the Yukon Party, Mr. Chair, and there’s no reason why we should trust it now. There’s no reason why Yukoners in future should trust the Yukon Party with the forest resources within the territory. This transcends any one political party’s responsibility. This is about the future of our forests. It’s about the future of the *Umbrella Final Agreement* and it’s about the future of the renewable resources councils.

I know, Mr. Chair. I see the minister shaking his head. Well, I know that some of them are very concerned about the precedent that is taking place here. The councils have been given the short shrift in terms of consultation. The law is the *Umbrella Final Agreement*. We’ve heard the minister keep referring us to it, but it’s apples to oranges and even the odd grapefruit thrown in. It’s not relevant to the discussion. We asked the minister to please get on the same page. The councils weren’t properly consulted as defined in the *Umbrella Final Agreement* about their role in developing this *Forest Resources*

Act before us today. Furthermore, Mr. Chair, they are very disappointed that their comments in an earlier phase were not reflected in this act before us today.

Furthermore, the government has a responsibility to explain to those councils why their submissions were ignored. According to the correspondence we're receiving now from these councils, there was no follow-up discussion to explain to the councils why their comments were ignored. So there's plenty of reason, Mr. Chair, to not trust this minister and this government. It won't lay the cards on the table. It won't reconcile what it wants us to believe with the facts we see on the table. Instead, the minister wants to stand up and talk about something somebody said eight and a half years ago that is irrelevant to this amendment.

Well, I guess that's about all we can expect, Mr. Chair. This government is empty when it comes to answers; it's empty when it comes to consulting with renewable resources councils; it's empty when it comes to drafting legislation by rejecting the input from the councils and other Yukoners; and it's empty when it comes to explaining to them why their recommendations were ignored. There's a lot lacking here. I'm reflecting a lot of the tone and concern out there within the Yukon public, including the members who sit on these councils. The minister should not take this lightly.

Mr. Chair, I have asked once already today — and I have asked before — will the minister provide the other correspondence so we can see what it says, too? Will the minister lay the cards on the table?

Hon. Mr. Fentie: Mr. Chair, you know, in listening to this debate, I think we have to raise the bar considerably and I would encourage the Official Opposition to recognize that. This member — the Member for Kluane — is asking about correspondence. I would suggest we debate the act. Now, if the Member for Kluane has any evidence that the act itself as written compromises our obligations under the *Umbrella Final Agreement* with respect to renewable resources councils, bring it forward. Mr. Chair, in the act, it is very clear.

With respect to the comments of the RRCs such as the Laberge Renewable Resources Council, there were comments that came forward, such as that the Yukon would institute — or will institute — an ecosystem-based forest management strategy, Yukon will institute a sustainable forest harvesting system and that Yukon will manage its forest primarily for the benefit of Yukon residents. Mr. Speaker, these things are entrenched in the act itself. I can't for the life of me figure out what exactly the Member for Kluane and the Official Opposition are attempting to do. It's time to get on with constructive debate.

Earlier today we heard the Member for Kluane state in this House that the supplementary budget is in fact not a surplus budget at all but a deficit budget.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

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

Mr. Fairclough: Mr. Chair, I ask you to draw the speaker's attention to the amendment. That's what we are talking about, not something that happened earlier today in Ques-

tion Period or budget debate. The amendment is right here. That's what we are talking about.

Chair: Mr. Fentie, on the point of order.

Hon. Mr. Fentie: On the point of order, if I may, Mr. Chair, be so bold as to point out that that's exactly what we're doing. We are trying to encourage the Official Opposition to get to that point and stand down on this needless debate.

Chair's ruling

Chair: Order. With regard to the point of order, the Chair has requested numerous times today that members speak to the amendment at hand. I would encourage the Premier to do that also.

Mr. Fentie, you have the floor.

Hon. Mr. Fentie: All right. Thank you, Mr. Chair. Then the Member for Kluane should recognize that, within the act, the consultations are evident — the consultations that took place with the renewable resources councils. The amendment that the Member for Kluane has brought forward is moot and has no place in this debate, because in the act itself, clearly what is entrenched is exactly what renewable resources councils, like Laberge RRC, wanted. While the words — and I will go into the detail — the words themselves of ecosystem-based forest management are not specifically mentioned in the preamble — I emphasize and repeat, the preamble — the very concepts of this type of management strategy are instilled within the act itself.

I hope that will help the Member for Kluane to understand what's in the bill. The concept of sustainable use of forest resources and management of forests for the benefit of Yukon residents is captured within the act itself and the statements guide how forest resources are to be in the Yukon.

We're having a debate here today on amendments tabled by the Member for Kluane that are actually enshrined in the act themselves. We should be debating the act, Mr. Chair, and moving this debate along in a constructive way so that we can conduct the public's business. However, that choice rests with the Official Opposition.

Now, I know they've sensitive because they haven't had a very good day, and a number of things have been pointed out on what the Official Opposition is doing, and here's another example of exactly that. I don't want to get into a discussion with the Official Opposition on what we would label this kind of conduct, but I would suggest that they raise the bar. Let's debate the act and the tomfoolery should cease.

Mr. McRobb: We'll take the Premier up on that challenge, and we feel we've met that challenge since this act was introduced. I'd invite the Premier to issue that same challenge to members within the Yukon Party caucus.

Mr. Chair, I'm not going to buckle under to those words by the Premier, the Member for Watson Lake. I don't sit at his caucus table so I don't have to. I will speak what I am hearing — the concerns I am hearing from Yukoners and renewable resources councils. There is lots to be concerned about.

The Premier questioned the connection between the material request and the amendment. Well, Mr. Chair, let me explain that first. That material is from the renewable resources

councils, at least part of it, and that is exactly the subject of the amendment on the floor currently, so nothing more needs to be said on that point.

The government — especially the minister and the Premier — seems awfully difficult to deal with respecting any improvements to this bill. The Yukon Party's whole approach is that it is "our way or the highway". They know best. They are saying that the concerns expressed by renewable resources councils, some First Nations and others are needless. We heard the minister previously state how many times that the Yukon government has the responsibility to do what is best for the Yukon and it will govern on behalf of everybody in the Yukon, and so on and so forth.

How can that be when we're seeing important stakeholders — these renewable resources councils that are mandated by law to be consulted properly — come out and expressly state their concern with the consultation process? At least one First Nation came out and expressly stated its dire concern with this act. How can the government possibly say that it's making a decision that's good for the entire territory? The government obviously has its mind made up and it's not open to improvement.

That doesn't bode well for democracy and it doesn't bode well for the purpose of this Assembly, which is to have debate on issues and try to resolve them — come to some common understanding of what's best for the territory and the people in it.

Well, in order for that to happen, we need some open-mindedness and flexibility, and we need that open-mindedness and flexibility on behalf of the Yukon government because the Yukon Party currently hold the majority of votes in this Assembly. We see today on this amendment, the members of the third party and the members of the Official Opposition are speaking entirely in favour of this. Yet the members on the government side are willing to vote it down. They're saying it's needless; it's useless. That is not the dichotomy that truly reflects the spirit and purpose of this Assembly and it does not reflect good governance when opposition members repeatedly are up against a stone wall, merely because the government feels it knows best. You know, when governments feel they know best, and they're closed to suggestions on how to improve a piece of legislation, there's a word that is commonly used, and that word is "arrogance." I believe this is a prime example of how that word applies to a government.

I don't use this word lightly, Mr. Chair. Well, I see the former minister responsible for the forests thinks that is funny. Well, I would imagine that he was laughing considerably after he got shuffled out of this department so he wouldn't have to face these concerns in here and the trouble that he has caused, Mr. Chair.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Mr. McRobb: Yes, clearly some members get a free ride.

Anyway, back to the amendment.

Mr. Chair, while I don't have all the correspondence the minister has — I only have a few pieces of correspondence, but based on what those say, there is real need to consider these

concerns. I would sure like to see what that other correspondence says because something tells me those concerns didn't evaporate — not when at the end of the process we are still getting letters complaining that their input wasn't respected and the process was shoddy, how the government didn't respect the final agreement and live up to the important roles of these councils, and how the government didn't get back to the councils.

The minister stands up and says, "Oh, all of this is in the UFA and we must do it, and nothing we can pass can override the UFA." Well, I pose the rhetorical question: if that is true, then why do these concerns exist, because those requirements are in the law now? And this government had a responsibility to abide by the existing laws in the drafting of this legislation, so why do those concerns exist now?

Well, we know why they exist: because the spirit and intent of the *Umbrella Final Agreement* is not being lived up to. That is the answer, and that is precisely why we need to embed in this legislation the requirement to consult with affected renewable resources councils on the renewable resources councils' preferred method of being involved in the planning, and furthermore, to consult with them regarding a budget for their involvement in developing a forest resources management plan.

I think an excellent case has been made for the first half of this amendment, and allow me to speak to the second half.

In the past decade, many of us have heard a lot of concerns from renewable resources councils about the lack of a budget to properly operate to fulfill mandates. I recall about eight or nine years ago, the Alsek Renewable Resources Council had to close down with several months remaining within its fiscal year because it ran out of funds. It was consulting on forestry matters at the time at the behest of the Yukon and federal governments, no doubt.

Well, there's a real problem. Over the years, there has been discussion in this Assembly about the budgets of these councils, urging the Yukon government to work with the federal government, because indeed the feds have a responsibility to ensure proper funding. But Mr. Chair, things have changed. We see more resources devolved to the Yukon government that were not its responsibility before; yet the budgets of these councils remain insufficient in many cases.

We must ensure that proper resources are provided in the future to allow these councils to properly fulfill their mandate. That is why the second half of this amendment is there in black and white. The minister says it's needless or useless. Mr. Chair, how should we assess that? The next time an RRC has to close its doors because it has run out of budget — because it took on too much of a government workload to try to straighten out issues related to fish and wildlife for the government — and the Yukon government won't give it any more so it has to close its doors, it puts the brakes on any local consultation. Well, how are we supposed to assess this matter? Mr. Chair, we can ensure that proper funding occurs in the future if this requirement is embedded in the act. It is as simple as that.

I believe I even recall the Premier, back in the days when he sat on this side of the House, and I believe much of the public supported his call for the government of the day to increase

budgets for renewable resources councils. Well, Mr. Chair, I would call on the Premier to signal to his colleagues to do the right thing and support this amendment to ensure that these councils are provided with adequate funding in the future to deal with developing forest resources management plans.

I ask the Premier: is he prepared to do that?

Hon. Mr. Fentie: Mr. Chair, I think it is clear that the Member for Kluane who talks about keeping an open mind has completely lost sight of that. Let me deal with the second item of his so-called important amendment. When he talks about resources for renewable resources councils or budgeting for them, does the member not understand that the nine-year review has been conducted, all-encompassing when it comes to the implementation of the agreements here in the territory, and that work addresses the implementation dollars that must flow to the Yukon in all matters of the treaties here in the Yukon Territory? Why in the world of common sense and human intelligence would we enshrine that in a forestry act? It is already an obligation of the federal government to provide the resources necessary.

That's why the nine-year review was established and conducted and thoroughly addressed and assessed all areas of implementation in this territory. We're awaiting the federal government to conclude the construction of their new mandate for implementation here in the Yukon.

Yes, this part of the Member for Kluane's amendment is useless because it has no place in the *Forest Resources Act*. There is a much higher order involved with renewable resources councils' budgeting.

Mr. Chair, as we shovel our way through this debate with the Official Opposition, the Member for Kluane has just stated in his presentation that the issues for First Nations are meaningless in the act. I'm going to challenge the member: how does the member explain, on page 8, that the act binds the Government of Yukon and goes on to say — right here in the *Forest Resources Act* — that this act is governed by an act approving the Yukon land claims final agreements?

In other words — and this is for the Member for Kluane's benefit — the final agreements prevail when it comes to this legislation.

When we talk about an open mind, could the Member for Kluane please absorb that fact?

Mr. Chair, the act goes on to also say that "a forest resources management plan" that would be structured under this act "must take into account the principles set out in paragraph 17.5.5 of chapter 17 of the final agreements and any matters prescribed by regulation."

Speaking of an "open mind," Mr. Chair, can the Member for Kluane absorb that fact? It's written into the legislation itself. It goes on to say and it has other focuses such as, "Prior to establishing a planning area, the Minister must..." — this is written into the act — "the Minister must consult with any First Nation whose traditional territory falls wholly or partially within the proposed planning area..."

"The Minister must." In the context of an open mind, could the Member for Kluane try and absorb that fact? It's enshrined in the act itself.

In process for planning, settlement land and public land, "...the minister and the first nation must establish a joint planning committee..." Well, Mr. Chair, these are substantive measures built into legislation that take us back to what the member said — the First Nations' issues and views and position are meaningless. How can the Member for Kluane justify that these types of measures are written into this legislation as substantive clauses? Mr. Chair, it is about keeping an open mind; however, one would have to have a mind to have an open mind. However, Mr. Chair —

Unparliamentary language

Chair: Order. Order please. The Hon. Premier knows those kinds of comments are not part of the debate in this Assembly. I'd request the member not to do that, please.

Hon. Mr. Fentie: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Keeping in the context of an open mind, these are things that the Member for Kluane should be well briefed on. I'm sure there was a technical briefing on this legislation. I'm sure the member has read this legislation, gone through it clause by clause, line by line, word by word, and yet the member can come up with this kind of amendment to this legislation and then try and justify it and explain to the Yukon public that it somehow strengthens this legislation. This is ridiculous, Mr. Chair. It does nothing of the sort. In fact, it doesn't strengthen the legislation; what it does is diminish the role of this Assembly because it is a useless amendment. When I say "useless", I would underline "useless" when it comes to this kind of amendment to a piece of legislation that covers all the issues that the member has been articulating on the floor of the Assembly.

Now, Mr. Chair, the issues that the members continue to bring forward from the Official Opposition are such that one would have to get into a line-by-line, clause-by-clause debate to truly do justice to the legislation and truly do justice to a democratic debate. I think the members opposite are afraid of that kind of debate. I think the members opposite don't want to engage in a constructive way because soon they will realize that they are incorrect in their opinion, their assertions and their approach and that they have no choice but to say the *Forest Resources Act* is timely, is needed and it is time that the Assembly got on with passing this act so we can start developing the regulations as they are needed.

Mr. Chair, I could go through this line by line and clause by clause, should the members want, but I think that the debate we are having is pointless and that the Member for Kluane is just somehow fixated on putting words into the pages of *Hansard*.

And the kibitzing from the Official Opposition — one only wonders what contribution they are actually making.

As I go through this act, and we're talking about First Nation issues — as I go through this act, all through the act it's written in, clause by clause, as I said, addressing First Nation issues but, more importantly, this act is binding and the final agreements prevail.

I think the problem here is the fact that the emptiness is something that the Official Opposition is now well aware of — that they are empty, void of substance, void of planning, void

of vision. And their contribution is being compromised because of that very fact.

So we can take the time to help the Official Opposition or we can just drag the Official Opposition along with us, as we should, in this Assembly. This institution is not about the Official Opposition or the Liberals in this House. It's about the public's business. And the Member for Kluane is not conducting the public business in a way that would reflect the station of this institution and the responsibilities and obligations that we all share when it comes to the Yukon public.

I think we have to regroup with the Official Opposition, start at the very front page, recognize that Bill No. 59, *Forest Resources Act*, is a thorough work. It is a piece of legislation that is very much needed in this territory. It has been a long time coming; it is our obligation, post-devolution. This act was developed with the successor legislation working group. This act had the contribution and input from many Yukoners. This act is the product of consultation with First Nation governments. This act is the product of consultation with renewable resources councils. This act is about the hard work and the dedication of department officials. This act is about the Department of Justice drafting the act in a way to ensure that none of the First Nations' issues, values or any government's obligations are being compromised.

That's why the act is written the way it is. The Official Opposition has lost its way. It isn't about an act; it isn't about the forest; it's about the desperate situation the Official Opposition finds themselves in today. They're under siege from within, under siege from without, have no place to go.

They might as well buy a Yukon Party membership card and do something constructive.

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

Speaker resumes the Chair

Speaker: I will now call the House to order.

May the House have a report from the Chair of Committee of the Whole?

Chair's report

Mr. Nordick: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 59, *Forest Resources Act*, and directed me to report progress on it.

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

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Speaker: I declare the report carried.

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

The House adjourned at 5:31 p.m.