

**Yukon Legislative Assembly**  
**Whitehorse, Yukon**  
**Thursday, March 26, 2009 — 1:00 p.m.**

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

*Prayers*

## DAILY ROUTINE

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

Tributes.

## TRIBUTES

### In recognition of Learning Disabilities Awareness Month

**Mr. Cardiff:** I rise on behalf of the Assembly today to pay tribute to March as Learning Disabilities Awareness Month.

It is very important that we focus on learning disabilities because they are not well understood by the general public. The official definition of “learning disabilities” is a number of disorders that may affect the acquisition, organization, retention, understanding or use of verbal or non-verbal information. These disorders affect learning and are displayed in a wide range of severity. Learning disabilities may affect one or more of oral language, reading, written language and mathematics.

Learning is a complex process. Brain functions are not completely understood despite progress in this area of research.

Learning disabilities are lifelong dysfunctions of the central nervous system. They affect many more people than we might realize, and they do not mean that learning-disabled people are of lower intelligence. The processing of information is impaired in many persons with average or above intelligence. With stimulation and support, learning-disabled persons can make wonderful progress and can reach their full potential in academics and in their personal lives.

We commend all the professional and volunteer organizations for the work that they do with learning disabilities. The Learning Disabilities Association of Yukon was one of the first organizations dealing with exceptional conditions to establish itself in the Yukon. Support services such as Challenge and the Child Development Centre have sprouted from this early beginning. LDAY assists with assessments, tutoring, education for the public, parents and professionals, and advocacy on behalf of the learning-disabled. It has been active for well over 30 years, and we congratulate them on the good work that they do and the other individuals who work in this area.

For success, individuals with learning disabilities require early identification of their condition, timely assessments, and interventions. We are grateful for the commitment of professionals and Yukon NGOs who assist learning-disabled adults and children to be accommodated in our society for educating us about this condition.

**Speaker:** Thank you. Are there any further tributes?

Introduction of visitors.

## INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

**Mr. Fairclough:** I would like all members in this Assembly to join me in welcoming to the gallery some of my constituents from the community of Keno: Bob Wagner; Tracy and her two children; Tracy’s dad, Ken and Blaine Walden.

*Applause*

**Speaker:** Are there any further introductions of visitors?

Are there any reports or documents for tabling?

Are there any reports of committees?

Are there any petitions?

Are there any bills to be introduced?

Are there any notices of motion?

## NOTICES OF MOTION

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to reconsider its recent rejection of the funding application regarding the Haines Junction greenhouse project, given the unfortunate collapse of the roof on the existing structure and the importance of its continued operation to the community.

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

THAT this House urges the Yukon government to release the operation and maintenance estimates for the new Whitehorse correctional facility.

I give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Yukon government to release the total amount of all money spent on renovating, expanding and repairing the existing Whitehorse Correctional Centre, from November 2002 to March 2009.

I give notice of the following motion for the production of papers:

THAT this House do issue an order for the return of the plans for the construction of the new Whitehorse correctional facility.

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

THAT this House congratulates the Minister of Education on changing his mind regarding the setting of graduation targets; and

THAT this House urges the Yukon government to release these targets to the Legislature before the end of the 2009 Spring Sitting of the First Session of the 32<sup>nd</sup> Legislative Assembly.

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

THAT this House urges the Yukon government to provide stable, predictable, long-term funding for non-government organizations as they collectively and individually provide a broad range of important programs and services to the Yukon public.

I give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Yukon government to immediately recognize the vital nurturing role of Yukon grandparents and extended families who are actively parenting children in their own homes without compensation and who are financially unable to seek custody or access to their kin by

- (1) developing a policy for financial compensation for grandparents and extended families parenting their kin; and
- (2) passing legislation that defines a distinct process for grandparents applying to the court for access or custody of their kin.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Yukon government to follow the Yukon substance abuse action plan that is now four years old, in particular to take immediate action on

- (1) establishing the community harm reduction fund;
- (2) increasing support for high risk young women;
- (3) mounting a public education campaign targeted at youth;
- (4) improving alcohol and drug education in public schools;
- (5) establishing community planning, development and funding for plans;
- (6) increasing counselling for children;
- (7) expanding the training on addiction issues offered to communities;
- (8) increasing the availability of counsellors for students;
- (9) expanding the outreach of Alcohol and Drug Services to the communities;
- (10) implementing a communications campaign for citizens to assist the RCMP;
- (11) reducing bootlegging;
- (12) replacing the current driver's licence with identity cards with security features; and
- (13) increasing the inspection of licensed operations; and in addition to
  - (1) thoroughly evaluating current treatment programs for incarcerated individuals and the public with a view to expanding programs; and
  - (2) immediately beginning the establishment of community land-based treatment facilities.

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

Hearing none, is there a statement by a minister?

This then brings us to Question Period.

## QUESTION PERIOD

### Question re: YESAA process, Keno City mine development

**Mr. Fairclough:** Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources about some concerns residents of Keno City have with this government.

As the minister is aware, there is a proposal to open a new mine in Keno. The residents support the mining, and they want

this company to succeed. They do, however, have some concerns about the proposal that they would like to see addressed.

Now, residents of Keno organized a community meeting for March 10, at the request of YTG. Several government departments were contacted about the meeting, yet no one ended up attending. Canada was there, the residents were there, the company was there, and I was there. Several questions were raised that government could have answered. Why did no one from Government of Yukon attend this meeting?

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** What the Member for Mayo-Tatchun is failing to reflect is that there have been a number of occasions when staff from not only the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources, but also other government departments, have met with or spoken with residents of Keno City. Certainly we have been actively involved in working with them in understanding their concerns. What the member is failing to reflect accurately in his comments is that concerns with regard to any application process, including this one, should be directed to the *Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Act* process. That is what this process is mandated to do. It is established to consider socio-economic and environmental concerns.

I would remind the member that this process was negotiated as a result of the *Umbrella Final Agreement*. It was laid out. The Yukon government will, of course, monitor the process and, at the end, when we receive the recommendation from YESAA, we will give full and fair consideration to all of the recommendations contained in that report.

**Mr. Fairclough:** This minister is making excuses. The residents of Keno had a public meeting to discuss concerns they have about new mining development and the impact on quality of life, as was suggested by the Yukon government. They wanted information from the government and this government could not be bothered to attend. Residents want to work with the company; they want this company to succeed. The government also has an obligation to keep residents informed and to ensure that developers keep residents in the loop about what is happening. Unfortunately the government has not kept residents informed, and the residents are frustrated.

Why has the minister not kept residents informed about the developments in their community and the possible impact on quality of life? That is his job; why isn't he doing it?

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** In fact what is happening here is the Member for Mayo-Tatchun is wrong. The member is not accurately reflecting the process; the member is not accurately reflecting the good work that department officials, including Energy, Mines and Resources, have done. I feel the member is being disrespectful to those employees for the good work they've done.

The Yukon government will fulfill our obligations in the process, and we will give full and fair consideration to the recommendations of the Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Board and the ultimate recommendations through there.

I would again encourage the residents of Keno City who have concerns regarding the process — recognizing that they have met with the mining company and recognizing they have met with government officials and addressed some issues that

might have been concerns prior to Alexco even submitting its application — if they have any outstanding concerns, I would encourage them to use the YESAA process as it is intended to be, to be sure to submit their concerns, their perspectives, their recommendations to that process. We will allow that process to do its legally mandated work. We will, at the end, when we receive the recommendation, give full and fair consideration to that recommendation, whatever it entails.

And, again, the Member for Mayo-Tatchun is wrong, and he is certainly being unfair to officials who have met with residents of Keno and who have communicated with them, as is their obligation.

**Mr. Fairclough:** Well, it's the minister's job to take care of the residents of the Yukon. He needs to at least meet with them. Can't he do that? Or, can't the department do it, after calling for a meeting?

Now, the same residents who have concerns about this project have recently written letters of support to other mining projects around the community. They are strong supporters of this industry. They do have concerns about this particular project that they wanted addressed.

One of the concerns the residents have is the location of the mill of the proposed project. It is within 700 metres of some residents' homes. The mill will run 24/7 for the entire life of the mine. So I ask the minister this question: does he support the company's plans to put the mill so close to the community? And why has he not discussed this proposal with the residents?

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** Mr. Speaker, again the Member for Mayo-Tatchun is making statements in this House that do not properly and accurately reflect the process.

The member either does not understand the process or he is choosing to make statements that would tend to give the public an inaccurate understanding of the process.

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

### Speaker's statement

**Speaker:** Minister, you know full well not to make those types of comments. It is implying that the Member for Mayo-Tatchun is attempting to mislead the House. Please do not do that.

You have the floor.

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Then I will simply say that the Member for Mayo-Tatchun — I can only assume that he does not understand the process because his comments do not accurately reflect the process.

The member knows the Yukon environmental and socio-economic assessment process is established, is legally mandated and is the result of the *Umbrella Final Agreement* and negotiations under that to set up this process to conduct socio-economic and environmental assessments. That includes public input. That includes considerations of things including proposed locations of mills. That will all be addressed by the process, as it should be.

The government will do as we should do and give full and fair consideration to the recommendation made by YESAB at the end of that. Again, I reiterate to the member that officials from the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources have met

with the residents of Keno and have recently attended two advisory board meetings, the most recent being February 12, 2009. They have also attended prior to that and will continue to be open to discussing issues with those residents and all Yukon citizens who contact the department.

### Question re: YESAA process, Keno City mine development

**Mr. Fairclough:** My question is for the same minister, Mr. Speaker.

I do understand the process and I do understand what the responsibilities of that minister should be. On March 10, I attended a public meeting in Keno to talk to residents about a proposed mining development. No one from this government bothered to attend, despite being invited. In fact, it was the government that suggested the meeting be held and then they didn't show up.

I met with more residents yesterday. They had several concerns about the proposal. They were very disappointed that the minister and the entire government have done nothing to ensure that residents are consulted about what is happening in their community. Residents are frustrated with the lack of information from this government and have taken out a full-page ad in the paper urging people around the territory to contact the government. Why has the government failed to address these residents' concerns?

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** I can only reiterate once again that the statements that are being made by the Member for Mayo-Tatchun do not accurately reflect the process. I would encourage the member to do his work to understand the process, rather than making statements that tend to create an inaccurate impression on the public, were they to be so mistaken as to take the member's statements at face value.

The member again is not reflecting the process as it exists. For me to do what the Member for Mayo-Tatchun is asking me to do would be interfering in this legally mandated process and the member knows it. It would be inappropriate for me to do so. I will do the appropriate thing, as will officials from my department and indeed from all government departments. We will allow the legally mandated process to consider the socio-economic impacts and environmental impacts, to make recommendations, and we will give full and fair consideration to those recommendations. Those include dealing with any concerns that the residents of Keno City have regarding the proposal made by the mine.

YESAB will consider that and we will review that recommendation and take the appropriate action at the end of the day.

**Mr. Fairclough:** It won't hurt for this minister to sit down and listen to what Yukoners have to say. Maybe he could make that improvement, as the minister.

Several of the concerns raised with me by the residents are technical in nature; others are quite straightforward. They're concerned about the increased traffic in the community, the increased noise and potential impact on their tourism industry.

Keno is quite small. I think what has happened here is that the minister decided it wasn't important to talk to the residents. He thought: just a few people are there, it doesn't matter what they think.

Well, it does matter to me, Mr. Speaker. They are my constituents. They are long-time Yukon residents and they deserve to be heard.

Will the minister commit today that he will take these concerns seriously and ensure residents' concerns are addressed?

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** Again, if the public were to take the Member for Mayo-Tatchun's statements at face value, they would be led astray by his mistakes in the comments he has made. His statements do not accurately reflect the facts.

And I would point out to the Member for Mayo-Tatchun that I have met with the residents of Keno. I was there in the fall for at least two hours meeting with residents, as part of the community tour. This government has taken steps to meet with residents of Keno, including on the community tour, where several ministers went and attended and talked to the residents about any of their concerns they wished to bring up, including discussion of potential increased traffic in the area and potentially increased noise.

We will continue to take their concerns and listen to them. We will continue to take the appropriate action. We will, though, continue to respect the YESAA process. We will allow the board to do its work, and we will allow the recommendation to come, rather than interfering in it, as the member is urging.

We will not take the action that he urges, which would be, for the government, very inappropriate to pre-empt the good work of this legally mandated body that was set up as the result of federal legislation flowing from the *Umbrella Final Agreement*.

Again, I would encourage all who have concerns, suggestions, or recommendations: please participate in the public process of YESAA.

**Mr. Fairclough:** This minister's answer is so weak, it's embarrassing. It is embarrassing. There is nothing wrong with meeting with the public.

I'd like to address my final supplementary question to the Minister of Tourism.

The community of Keno has worked very hard over the last number of years in building a reputation as a tourist destination. When the minister is promoting the territory, I'm sure that she often refers to Keno City. A mill at the edge of town will certainly have an impact on the marketing efforts of the community. Surely the minister recognizes that, and as the Minister of Tourism, it is her job at the Cabinet table to look out for the tourism industry and the people who make their living from it.

Unfortunately, the minister has been silent. Residents have not heard from her on this issue, and they are very concerned that she has not taken their concerns seriously. Why has the minister failed to meet with the residents to hear their concerns first-hand? That is, the Minister of Tourism.

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** Mr. Speaker, for the Member for Mayo-Tatchun to suggest that the Minister of Tourism has not worked with the community of Keno is laughable, and it is not fair for him to suggest that.

I would also point out the member earlier made a statement I'll give him the opportunity to retract. He indicated that

the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources had requested a meeting, that government had requested the meeting that he attended and then didn't attend.

The member is failing to recognize, in fact, the mining company set up that meeting. We have attended the meetings that we organized. We have also encouraged the company and the residents of Keno to work together to engage in dialogue aside from the work directly engaged with government and talk among themselves as to whether they can agree — as good neighbours — together on solutions that address the concerns of both parties. They have done that. It is unfortunate that the Member for Mayo-Tatchun is not reflecting that fact. It is unfortunate the Member for Mayo-Tatchun does not respect the YESAA process as this government does. It is unfortunate that this member does not want to allow the YESAA process to do its legally mandated work. He should respect that process. This government will.

#### **Question re: YESAA process, Keno City mine development**

**Mr. Cardiff:** Well, I would like to weigh in on this issue myself. I do understand the YESAA process. If you look at the YESAA process, Mr. Speaker, government departments do weigh in on applications. This is an application, and the government has an obligation and a responsibility where it has an interest.

So, for starters, in the interest of public health and safety, could the Minister of Health and Social Services tell us whether or not they will be making a submission to YESAB regarding the impact of this potential development on the public health and safety of the community and the residents of Keno?

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** Again, the Member for Mount Lorne is a little closer in his reflection on the process, and I appreciate he has done a little better job in doing his homework than the Member for Mayo-Tatchun. I would point out that the technical staff at the departmental level provide their input from any departments that have concerns or believe there need to be issues raised in the YESAA process. That's done at the technical level within departments; it is not dealt with at the ministerial level. We allow that technical expertise to go into the YESAA process, as it is supposed to, as the process is laid out.

With regard to that, I would encourage the Member for Mount Lorne to simply be patient. We will review the results provided by any and all departments and technical experts into the YESAA process. I should say we will review that as it is encompassed within the final report and recommendation of the YESAB. At the end of the day, as decision-makers — regulators — the Yukon government will give the appropriate full and fair consideration to the recommendations made by YESAB.

**Mr. Cardiff:** I thank the minister for his answer, although we don't know whether or not the Department of Health and Social Services will make a submission. The minister should be aware of whether or not his officials will do that.

My next question is whether or not the officials from the Department of Environment — because the environment is at risk here too. There are issues about the use of a freshwater

lake. There are issues around the creation and settling of dust in the environment, which not only affects the health of the residents of Keno, but also affects the wildlife, which the Minister of Environment is responsible for.

Can the Minister of Environment tell us if the officials in her department will be making a submission through the YESAA process on this project?

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** Again, I have to point out to the Member for Mount Lorne that I appreciate his concern. I will again remind him that if there are technical concerns in any departments, including the departments of Environment and Health and Social Services — since those are the departments he mentioned — those officials will participate in keeping with their mandate and their obligations in their job descriptions within those departments. They will provide that technical expertise to the YESAA process. We do not politically interfere with those officials doing their job on behalf of Yukon citizens. They are supposed to provide the technical expertise. That is exactly what they will do, if they feel it is necessary. We will leave that determination for them to make. If they provide any or have issues, comments, concerns or indicate that there are no concerns, it will be something we will allow them to do, free of any political interference, based on technical merits, technical issues.

The Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Board will give its consideration to the process, as it is set up to do, as it is mandated to do under the act, the federal legislation, and as a result of the *Umbrella Final Agreement*. We will, at the end of the day, receive the recommendation from the process, and give full and fair consideration to that recommendation, including public concerns and technical concerns around the environment, health and safety, et cetera.

**Mr. Cardiff:** Well, that's two questions that this minister has failed to answer, not including the ones that he failed to answer earlier.

So, we don't know whether the Department of Environment is going to weigh in. We'd like to know whether or not officials from the Department of Environment are going to weigh in and participate in the YESAA process. We'd like to know whether or not officials from the Department of Health and Social Services are going to weigh in on important issues like public health and safety in the community of Keno. As the Member for Mayo-Tatchun pointed out, we'd like to know whether or not the Department of Tourism, and officials from the Department of Tourism, are going to make a submission through the YESAA process on this project.

The Department of Tourism boasts about how much money it has spent promoting Keno as a tourism destination, and it's a beautiful spot, but is the department going to stand up for that investment of the taxpayers' money?

**Hon. Mr. Fentie:** You know, Mr. Speaker, in listening to the questions here, we have now developed a situation in this House where there are health care issues, the demise of tourism in the area and all other kinds of conjecture.

Mr. Speaker, what do the members opposite think the YESAA process is all about?

Every question they have asked is addressed through that process. The most effective way to deal with concerns in the communities, First Nation treaty impacts and matters of the environment, matters of health and other social and economic impacts is to address them through the YESAA process. Why? Because it is the law. It is not a bunch of conjecture here on the floor of the Legislature.

Second, this area is a type 2 mine site. The proponent, who has put forward their application, received the assets of this type 2 site through a court process — a legal process. The proponent has a right to develop in exchange for cleaning up the past environmental mess.

I would urge the members opposite to recognize the validity of the issue and why YESAB must be addressing the issue.

#### **Question re: YESAA process, Keno City mine development**

**Mr. Hardy:** Well, it's interesting to listen to this debate today, because it does raise some serious concerns about the government's role and relationship with YESAA. There's no question about it that this government has taken liberties in overruling or changing the rulings or the outcome of the YESAA process. And you can understand why when you listen to the Premier talk and try to explain the process to everybody and how it works.

My concern in this debate, and what I've heard today already, is MLAs representing their constituents and, the government on that side — the members on the other side almost indicating that they do not have that right to be a voice, that the process will take care of those people. The reason the MLAs are asking these questions is that they do not have trust and what has happened in the past regarding YESAA and the final decision this government has.

So can this government assure us that they will abide by the rulings of YESAB or not?

**Hon. Mr. Fentie:** I'm going to take a kinder, gentler approach with the Leader of the Third Party, who has just suggested that the government has taken liberties with a federal government statute.

The government has interfered with the YESAA process. The government has changed rulings. YESAB does not make rulings. What we are discussing here today is a sham. The process is a legal process. There is every avenue available to those concerned to present their opinions, concerns and views. That is what YESAB is to address.

To suggest that the government is not a voice is absolutely ridiculous. There have been many engagements with the people of Keno, with other communities across this territory on issues of concern, and those engagements are ongoing all the time. For the Member for Mayo-Tatchun to stand here and represent constituents in this manner — I must say to the House that the last time I was in his riding, I was informed by his constituents that they had seen me more than him.

**Mr. Hardy:** Mr. Speaker, I don't often stand up and defend the members of the Liberal Party. At times I have been accused of being a little harsh on them. But I do take offence at the last statement that the Premier made. I don't think that is appropriate, nor is it called for if we are to conduct business in

this Legislative Assembly that respects the rights of the MLAs in here to represent their constituents and also respect the rights of having different opinions and discussing them.

You know what I think around YESAA? I think what should happen after the recommendation comes forward from YESAB is that it should come back into the Legislative Assembly and we have that debate. Would the Premier allow that debate to happen before he makes a decision on his own?

**Hon. Mr. Fentie:** On the one hand, the Leader of the Third Party suggests statements are inappropriate; yet, the member is suggesting the government takes liberties, the government interferes, the government changes rulings. I would submit that's more than inappropriate.

Furthermore, YESAA is not a Yukon government legislative bill. It is not law that was made in Yukon; it's law developed with Yukon, in conjunction with First Nation governments. It's a federal statute and it replaces the *Canadian Environmental Assessment Act*. It goes much further than the former act. It is to deal with all these matters.

The discussion we're having today with respect to the citizens of Keno City — or any other community that has concerns — is indeed inappropriate because there are suggestions being made here that the government is doing things that it does not do. So let me just try and be clear. The government will not and has never interfered in a legal process. The government does not change YESAB rulings. YESAB doesn't make rulings.

The people of Keno City have many avenues — to the government, to their other legislative members — to address their concerns and over and above all of it, the YESAA process.

**Mr. Hardy:** You know, Mr. Speaker, this again begs a bigger question of exactly what the government actually does. We know YESAB makes recommendations, not rulings — we understand that — but it is what the government does with those recommendations that raises our concerns. We know when the First Nations have a disagreement with this government on many issues. The Premier has indicated on many occasions: go to court — take us to court, we'll deal with it there — instead of sitting down and dealing with the people and dealing with the First Nation.

Just as the Member for Mayo-Tatchun has indicated: will this government go and talk to the people of Keno now? Will they go and do it now?

We also know that if this government doesn't like a ruling or if it doesn't like a board that has existed for a long time — like the Yukon Council on the Economy and the Environment — they just never allow them to exist.

Will this government change its course and talk to the people of Keno right now?

**Hon. Mr. Fentie:** Mr. Speaker, the government is not going to change its course. The government is duty bound, legally, to allow these processes to proceed to their conclusion.

The member opposite has now brought into the discussion First Nations and court. This government has never suggested that any First Nation or anyone in the territory should take the government to court. We've always stated that due process allows First Nation governments or any other entity in the

Yukon that avenue. It's called democracy, Mr. Speaker, and I'm not sure what part of this the Leader of the Third Party does not understand. It's part of the democratic process.

I will close by saying the Yukon government actually was given court rulings consistent with all that we have said. In other words, the Yukon government is living up to its obligations, living up to its duty under the law, and we will continue to do exactly that.

#### Question re: Power reliability

**Mr. McRobb:** I have a different question. This one's for the minister responsible for the Yukon Energy Corporation.

This Saturday, the world will be marking an event called Vote Earth. People around the world will be switching off their lights for one hour. Switching off your lights is a symbolic vote for Earth. Yukoners deserve a badge of honour because they've been experiencing their own Vote Earth campaign all too frequently in the past two years, and sometimes it goes out for well over an hour. With the possible exception of this annual event, Yukoners just want the lights to stay on.

They want to work on their computers, work in their shops, shop in their stores and not have the lights go off every week or two. Can the minister responsible for the corporation tell us why the Yukon Party decided to not invest in renewing our electrical infrastructure throughout its term in office to prevent these all too frequent outages?

**Hon. Mr. Kenyon:** It's disappointing, of course, that the Member for Kluane doesn't see the sense in celebrating such an important event this weekend. He seems to be encouraging everyone basically to ignore it. I will deal with the other parts of the question. We certainly take responsibility to provide reliable power and we are concerned about the number of outages we have experienced lately. We can't prevent all outages; Mother Nature does have a hand in many of them. I think possibly the Member for Kluane could possibly recognize that.

We have reviewed our capital plan and put all projects aimed at improving reliability and decreasing outages at the top of our priority list. In 2009, approximately two-thirds of our core capital budget is earmarked for projects relating to reliability. We have started working through this list and expect that, as a result, we will see significant improvements in the outage numbers.

**Mr. McRobb:** The minister is responsible for keeping the lights on. The buck stops at his desk. Yukoners have been subject to some 37 power outages in the past 52 weeks. This is simply unacceptable.

Allow me to quote the president of the Energy Corporation from an interview a few weeks back, regarding the investments in fixing the system: we probably should have started five or six years ago, not three or four years ago. The Yukon Party failed to ensure the existing power grid was properly maintained. The result has been an ever-increasing number of blackouts. These frequent blackouts are expensive, inconvenient and completely avoidable, had the government been doing its job.

What will the minister responsible do to ensure the Yukon Energy Corporation has the funds necessary to keep the lights on?

**Hon. Mr. Kenyon:** Yes, it is our responsibility to keep the lights on. I do recognize that, on that side, the lights have been out for some time and we do apologize for that. If we do —

### Speaker's statement

**Speaker:** Order. Order please. I'll exercise the same caution to the honourable member that I did to the Leader of the Official Opposition a couple of days ago. Humour on one side is considered not so humorous on the other side. I would ask the honourable member to keep that in mind, please.

You have the floor.

**Hon. Mr. Kenyon:** A comparison of our power outages, in conjunction with elsewhere in Canada, shows that while we have had some more blackouts, they are much shorter in duration than the national average. One of the reasons we have more outages is that, since we are a small company, we don't have the redundancy built in, like the large southern utilities. And the redundancies, of course, would help. Those redundancies will become much better, of course, as we begin our process of putting together the Whitehorse-Aishihik-Faro grid, or the southern grid, with the Mayo-Dawson grid.

Of course, for the member opposite, more money could have been put into this, but it seems to me that a \$17-million running of the lines from Mayo to Dawson became a \$42-million mess under the Liberals. That money could have gone elsewhere.

**Mr. McRobb:** Blame everybody else, it's the same old game. And shorter outages — tell that to the people in Burwash Landing, who experienced an eight-hour outage about three weeks ago.

Now, it's the minister's job to keep the lights on. He has the authority to give direction to the Crown-owned utility, and he is its voice at the Cabinet table. Yukoners want a reliable power supply. But under this government that's a hit and miss proposition — 37 outages in the past 52 weeks.

The Yukon Party refused to invest in system renewal and the result was predictable — an unstable power grid. Now the minister won't give his assurance that the funds required will be available for the corporation to invest in renewing the system.

Can the minister tell us how much money is in the billion-dollar budget to invest in renewing our existing infrastructure to help keep the lights on?

**Hon. Mr. Kenyon:** As the member opposite knows full well, the Yukon Energy Corporation and Development Corporation aren't necessarily reflected in the budget that is on the table but the amount, I can assure him, is substantial.

But again, Mr. Speaker, what we are doing is making sure the rest of the project — as phase 1, running from Carmacks up to Pelly Crossing — came in within a very small percentage of being on budget and on time. Under the Liberal government we went from \$17 million to \$42 million. I don't think that even includes the amount that it cost us to get out of court with it.

What we are doing is good fiscal management with good responsible construction. The projects will be done on time and money will be available for other aspects of energy generation

in the Yukon — unlike the last time, where we had to pay it all into legal bills and courts.

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

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

### GOVERNMENT BILLS

#### Bill No. 15: Second Reading — *adjourned debate*

**Clerk:** Second reading, Bill No. 15, standing in the name of the Hon. Mr. Fentie; adjourned debate, Mr. McRobb.

**Mr. McRobb:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well, I just want to summate what I said in my opening comments on Tuesday, that under seven years of Yukon Party governments, the Kluane riding has been given the short shrift at budget time. Other than the U.S.-funded Shakwak highway project, and the Paul Martin Liberal government budget that paid for the new seniors complex in Haines Junction, there have been no big-ticket items funded by the Yukon Party government's budget — at no time, and this is the seventh budget now, Mr. Speaker. To add insult to injury, the Yukon Party has announced, and re-announced, a new elders facility in Burwash Landing in each of the past three years, yet construction has still not begun. Shame.

I'd like to continue on where I left off recounting what has happened to our power bills under this Yukon Party government. We just heard some discussion in Question Period about that as well.

This is a matter of serious concern to many Yukoners. The upshot is the Yukon Party, through its own actions, is directly responsible for the frequent power outages and bill hikes. Allow me to explain: the Crown-owned utility, Yukon Energy Corporation, relies on funding for capital projects from its parent, the Yukon Development Corporation. Yukon Development Corporation could not afford to fund the power company's infrastructure renewal program because the Yukon Party government forced it to pay the full cost of the rate stabilization fund shortly after it formed government in 2002.

As a consequence, the power company was unable to replace components at risk to the electrical system because the funds were not available. These funds were not available because the Yukon Party government refused to continue paying for the rate stabilization fund out of consolidated revenues or from the Yukon government budget.

The previous two governments — the McDonald NDP government and the Duncan Liberal government — both funded the rate stabilization fund from the Yukon budget or consolidated revenue. So it's no wonder why the people at the Yukon Energy Corporation and Yukon Development Corporation did not like this program and wanted to see it end.

Of course, the Yukon Party made the ultimate decision to do just that. Having to pay for the rate stabilization fund interfered with the corporation's ability to keep the lights on. Then the Yukon Party made matters worse by removing the conservation clawback component of the rate stabilization fund,

which increased the cost of the program about another \$1 million per year. This clawback was in place to discourage customers from using high amounts of electricity. It was what is termed a price signal.

But the Yukon Party wasn't concerned about the environment and it didn't seem to mind the escalating costs of the rate stabilization program, despite the consequences regarding power outages, probably because it didn't have to pay for the rate stabilization fund.

Just to refresh everybody's memory, the rate stabilization fund lowered electric bills for the average customer up to about \$40 per month. The Yukon Party cut the program by half and it plans to cut it entirely this summer. So Yukon ratepayers will be forced to pay higher power bills because of the actions of this Yukon Party government.

This amounts to up to \$450 per year more than they would otherwise be paying — that's for each and every electrical customer in the Yukon Territory.

This is a significant matter that impacts the pocketbooks of every Yukon citizen, business and municipality. The higher cost will be reflected in everything from a loaf of bread at the store to their power bills, and it comes at a bad time, given the current concerns about the state of our economy. This matter is so significant that many people are waking up to the fact that the Yukon Party made no mention — no mention at all — of cancelling this program during the election in 2002 or the election in 2006.

The Yukon Party also chose to not consult Yukoners before making its decision to cancel the rate stabilization program. It didn't even bring this matter forward for debate in this Assembly. Had it done so, all elected members would have had the opportunity to express the views of constituents and other Yukoners about this action. So much for the Premier's frequent claim that his government is fully open, transparent and accountable.

If that were true, then the Yukon Party would have campaigned on terminating or abolishing the rate stabilization program. The Yukon Party would have been up front to Yukon voters and let them know their actions would cost up to \$450 a year for each electrical consumer in the territory. Now in addition to all of this — and there has been a lot of confusion about these matters and I'm hoping these words today will cut through the smoke and mirrors. There has been a lot of confusion about the whole issue of cost to consumers. About two years ago in this House, after several questions were put to the minister responsible for the Yukon Energy Corporation at the time — the Member for Porter Creek Centre — he finally said that, when the smoke clears from the Yukon Utilities Board hearings and the rate stabilization fund, bills won't be higher.

Well, Mr. Speaker, bills have been higher for the past year and half. Bills have been considerably higher for the past year and half. Every power bill in Yukon has been about 20 percent higher for the past year and a half, and that's only because the first half of the rate stabilization program was cut. When the second half is cut, there will be another 15-percent increase to everybody's power bill. This comes at a bad time when a lot of families are trying to make ends meet; a lot of people have lost

money on investments; a lot of people are trying to hang on. Yet the Yukon Party government, floating in cash with a billion-dollar budget and more in reserve, won't spare anything to continue this program, which was honoured by two previous governments of different stripes. I say, Mr. Speaker, this action speaks loud and clear for the priorities of the Yukon Party — loud and clear.

We've heard lots of statements about how rates are going down 25 and 30 percent. Well, that has not materialized. We know bills will be going up 30 percent and more.

When the Yukon Party talks about rates, as I mentioned Tuesday, that is only part of the power bill. There are riders, surcharges, customer charges — all these are significant components of a power bill. When we talk about costs to Yukon customers in the Assembly, it is about the power bill, not just one component of the bill. There is a lot of confusion about that. I have mentioned whom this bill increase is affecting. We know that it's affecting every resident in the territory, whether they are connected to the main hydro grid or to the Mayo-Dawson grid or live in isolated diesel communities, including Old Crow. Everyone is impacted by this.

As well, every business is impacted by this. Their bottom line and operating costs have increased as a consequence of the Yukon Party's actions. Will these costs be passed on to the customers in their stores and customers of their services? Well, I would suggest, Mr. Speaker, that in most cases, they will be.

What about municipalities?

Mr. Speaker, many municipalities are also having difficulty making ends meet. They've had to do away with popular programming at the local level to avoid tax increases. We know the City of Whitehorse is proposing a tax increase in the coming year. Well, part of that is to compensate for the loss of the rate stabilization fund.

All of these impairments relate back to this unilateral action of the Yukon Party. There was no indication at election time so the voters could fairly assess their options; it was kept secret. There was no public consultation with Yukoners, so they could have a voice on the decision. Again, that was a decision made by the Yukon Party members. It wasn't brought to the Assembly so all elected members could have a voice on the matter. We were just told by the minister of the day that a decision had been made to terminate the program. Now, I mentioned part of the confusion or smoke and mirrors surrounding all of this. I've heard Yukon Party ministers, as well as even officials from the corporation discredit the rate stabilization fund by saying it was set up as a temporary program. It was a quick-fix solution to a problem related to the closure of the Anvil Range mine, back in 1998.

Well, that is completely false. The program, as it was announced, was fully intended to be a long-term program to finally bring rate stability to Yukoners. The issue of rate stability was a hot one for several years. Power rates had gone up; they had gone down, and they had gone up. It was very difficult to budget and, at times, very difficult to afford.

There was a call for rate stability and the NDP-McDonald government of the day responded to that concern by introducing a long-term program. So when we hear it called a short-



term stop-gap measure by some people, Mr. Speaker, that is no way reflective of the facts. I know because I was there when the program was announced. I still have about two filing cabinets full — including the original press releases if anybody should care to want them.

We have seen a lot of smoke and mirrors. We've heard a lot of confusion about this whole matter. I started off this discussion on power bills by suggesting the upshot is the Yukon Party is responsible for the all-too-frequent outages as it is also responsible for the power bill increases.

Mr. Speaker, you have heard an explanation that clarifies the connections between the outages and the Yukon Party decision to not fund the program out of government revenues and, instead, to foist those costs on to the Yukon Development Corporation in direct competition with monies that were needed to renew components of our electrical system. That is why, for a period of years, the corporation could not afford to replace vital system components, which has led to a run-down grid we're still experiencing blackouts on.

We heard the minister talk about grid expansions. Mr. Speaker, that's a different subject entirely. We're talking renewing the grid, renewing the components that are working now to deliver electricity to Yukoners. That is the subject matter at hand.

**Mr. Nordick:** It gives me great pleasure to speak to and support this 2009-10 budget, but more important to me is the ability to represent the constituents of my riding, the Klondike. I wish all in my riding a productive and successful tourism, exploration and mining season.

I had the great opportunity to listen to the citizens of my riding. One of the things I heard about was the need to improve Front Street in Dawson City. I committed to improving and paving Front Street. I would like to thank the Minister of Highways and Public Works for allocating \$3.5 million for this project in this budget. This project will start in May of this year. Paving will start at Crocus Bluff and extend the ferry landing, including parking and aprons. We are planning on using a clear petroleum product, which will extend the life of the paving by mitigating the effects of permafrost. I look forward to the completion of this project.

Mr. Speaker, I also heard and agree with the citizens of my riding that we would like to see an increase of health services in my community. There is \$1 million allocated in this budget to start the construction of a regional health centre in Dawson City. The construction will start this summer. The second phase — the replacement of McDonald Lodge — will start upon completion of the Dawson City regional health centre.

I also heard about the need to replace or repair the Art and Margaret Fry arena. Options for the replacement or the repair of the current facility were considered. The City of Dawson chose to repair and upgrade the current facility. We listened and there is \$4 million allocated over five years for this.

Mr. Speaker, I look forward to seeing this facility used to its full potential, to promote physical activity among all citizens, but especially the youth in my community.

In education, there is a process to implement New Horizons, flowing from the education reform project. This new process is designed to build community capacity, and to develop a collaborative, local response to educational issues and holistic, lifelong learning.

Another education initiative is the \$150,000 early years transitional learning program, targeting prekindergarten to grade 3 students to help reduce performance gaps in both First Nation and other Yukon children. In this budget we are also implementing a curriculum and special program training initiative to provide training for counsellors, learning assistants, and education assistants in dealing with the social and emotional well-being of vulnerable students.

In this budget the target initiative for older workers program has been extended for three years to help older workers between the ages of 55 and 64. Funding of \$286,000 is being made available under this program for projects to improve the employability of older workers by assisting them through activities such as prior learning assessment, skills upgrading and experience in new fields of work.

One of our government's most important training initiatives is the community training fund. Funding of \$1.5 million is distributed annually based on proposals to partners with non-governmental organizations, First Nations, economic sectors, Yukon College and community-based organizations in providing employment training.

Mr. Speaker, the Department of Health and Social Services plays a key role in contributing a better quality of life for all Yukoners. The Department of Health and Social Services has undertaken a number of new initiatives in partnership with the Whitehorse General Hospital. Community nursing is in the process of replacing the existing manual processing of X-rays with the digital X-ray processing in all rural health care facilities. The Whitehorse General Hospital is coordinating this project in conjunction with the improvements to their digital imaging program. This new process is expected to go live in 2010. What this means for Yukoners is that basic X-ray views can be processed in all rural communities and be forwarded electronically to radiologists in Edmonton for interpretation and a report returned within a very short period of time.

Another joint venture with the Whitehorse General Hospital is the centralized lab services for communicable disease control. The Department of Health and Social Services is implementing a number of different initiatives under the territorial health access fund. One of those successful initiatives is 811, the Yukon HealthLine. This toll-free health service was launched in 2008 to provide access to health care advice, symptom relief and information on a 24/7 basis anywhere in the Yukon.

From mid-June 2008 until the end of January 2009, a total of 5,218 calls were answered by nurses at HealthLink BC, reducing unnecessary visits to emergency rooms and nursing stations.

Mr. Speaker, \$200,000 will be allocated for this service, which will also be enhanced this year with a dietician feature. Other territorial health access fund initiatives include \$50,000 for the development of a nutritional framework and strategy,

\$41,000 for the Drop the Pop awareness campaign, \$275,000 for an injury prevention initiative and \$262,000 for a rural community dental health initiative.

Our government is providing a \$612,000 increase for the Yukon seniors income supplement. The increase and indexing of a \$200-per-month supplement will result in an ongoing annual increase and provide the benefit to an additional 320 Yukon seniors living on low income.

In this budget, \$2.8 million is being allocated to cover the increase, including the recent raise in the food benefit that increases the food allowance by 15 percent for singles, 10 percent for couples, and five percent for three-person families.

The FireSmart program is important to my riding. In the Yukon, FireSmart activities are directed at reducing the threat of wildland fires in communities by minimizing flammable material in high-risk areas. In 2008, the FireSmart program created 28 projects, and 39,000 hours of employment for Yukoners. It is anticipated that more than 16,000 additional hours of work will be created in 2009, as a result of the increased funding from \$1 million to \$1.5 million.

Mr. Speaker, Wildland Fire Management is investing \$150,000 to replace operational equipment, including pumps, hoses, chainsaws, sprinkler kits, radios, and protective clothing to assist firefighters in safely protecting people and infrastructure in communities from wildland fires.

Protective Services is investing \$750,000 in emergency response vehicles to enhance emergency response throughout the Yukon. Also, in my riding, Mr. Speaker, the Emergency Measures Organization will receive \$40,000 to purchase a new river rescue boat, to be used by the Dawson search and rescue association. This is the second year of the Yukon government's five-year commitment to increase the comprehensive municipal grant funding. This little-over-\$14-million increase will enhance the financial capacities of municipalities and the well-being of Yukon communities. Under the comprehensive municipal grant, Dawson City will receive \$1.4 million.

Mr. Speaker, we made a commitment to make land available to Yukoners for community, residential, recreational, agricultural and industrial purposes. This year there will be \$10.45 million in this budget. Out of that will be \$1 million for Dawson City industrial development and another \$1 million for Dawson City country residential.

Mr. Speaker, the 2010 Winter Olympics and Paralympic Games represent a great opportunity for the Yukon. The games represent a tremendous opportunity to showcase Yukon as a wonderful place to live and to work in. Just as the 2007 Canada Winter Games acted as a catalyst for promoting tourism and business investment in the territory, so too will the 2010 Winter Olympic Games.

Protecting and preserving our environment and wildlife is very important to me and this government. The climate change action plan builds upon goals of the climate change strategy and identifies 33 priority actions to be implemented. The goals of the climate change strategy are to enhance knowledge and the understanding of climate change. The 2009-10 budget includes an allocation of \$450,000 to establish a cold climate change secretariat.

Mr. Speaker, we need to understand, adapt and mitigate the effects of climate change. In the area of adaptation, for example, work is being undertaken to test different road surfaces in order to determine strategies for a reduction of permafrost degradation on our highways. One example is the Front Street project in Dawson. As I explained earlier, we are going to be using a clear petroleum product to help mitigate the effects of the permafrost.

The Yukon Housing Corporation offers a range of programs and funding options, all designed to enhance home energy efficiency, increasing affordability over the long term and reducing negative environmental impacts. Three popular programs include the energy efficient items in the home repair and home repair enhancement programs and the rental rehabilitation program.

The Energy Solutions Centre within the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources is allocating \$150,000, through the good energy program, to help Yukoners lower their energy costs and is supporting the move to energy-efficient products by providing \$100 to \$500 cash rebates on a wide range of energy-efficient products. Our government has been working to lower the Yukon's carbon footprint by increasing our capacity for hydroelectric generation.

Mr. Speaker, there is \$3 million in this budget being made available for the selection and construction of an appropriate option for the treatment of Dawson's sewage. Either a mechanical treatment or an aerated lagoon will soon be chosen. I am committed to supporting the City of Dawson to ensure that all of our citizens in Dawson are not unfairly burdened by this project.

Mr. Speaker, mining and tourism remain the mainstay of the Yukon's economy and my riding. The Department of Energy, Mines and Resources is playing its part in promoting mining and exploration development in the territory. We are increasing the Yukon mining incentive program by \$1.1 million, for a total of \$1.8 million in 2009-10.

The Yukon mining incentive program is designed to promote and enhance mineral prospecting and exploration activities in the Yukon. The program's function is to provide a portion of the risk capital required to locate, explore and develop mineral projects to an advanced exploration stage.

We acted to modernize and increase the competitiveness of the legislative framework for hard rock mining in the Yukon by making changes to the section of the claims administration in the *Quartz Mining Act*. The changes included permitting a new claim post size, streamlining the time to record mineral claims, reducing the required number of copies of applications, making claim tags available prior to actual staking in the field, and also allowing for bigger claim groupings for applications of assessment work within a year.

The resource access road program managed by the Department of Highways and Public Works will provide up to \$500,000 per year for the next four years to address the increased demand for upgrading and improving resource roads.

Mr. Speaker, our government is investing an additional \$500,000 toward overseas tourism marketing in order to in-

crease awareness of Yukon as a destination of choice and promoting unique tourism experiences.

Mr. Speaker, the Yukon at the 2010 Olympic Games will be one of largest marketing initiatives of the decade. Our government and VANOC announced a partnership on September 12, 2008. This will generate international unpaid media coverage, showcase the Yukon and Canada's north as a premier visitors destination. It will also promote Yukon as a place to invest and do business. Mr. Speaker, the list goes on and on.

In support of Canada's games, our government will be investing \$75,000 to participate in the torch relay that will visit Old Crow, my community of Dawson City, and Whitehorse in community celebrations.

Altogether our government is investing \$3.1 million to participate in the 2010 Vancouver Olympic and Paralympic Games.

Mr. Speaker, overall our government will be investing \$22.8 million to improve the safety and integrity of the Yukon's highways and bridges.

In my riding, there will be \$319,000 spent on operation and maintenance of the Klondike Highway, which is an increase from previous years. There is also over \$5 million being spent on O&M on the Dempster Highway, which is also an increase from last year.

There is \$3.3 million provided for the very popular community development fund. CDF continues to assist community groups to undertake projects that help build Yukon's social and economic capacity, as well as improving community health and well-being by creating jobs and improving infrastructure. There is a wide range of projects that were funded by the community development fund. Out of the wide range of projects in my riding, there were over 29 recently funded projects. Out of those 29, at least seven of those projects were for the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in First Nation government. Some examples are that the City of Dawson had a seasonal work needs analysis. Also there was the Dawson City Chamber of Commerce strategic planning process. The Klondike Visitors Association had a project funded for structural repairs. The Dawson City Sled Dawgs had a project funded for a Dawson City trail expansion.

Mr. Speaker, I could spend a significant part of my time today speaking about all the projects that CDF has funded, but I know there are a lot of other people that would like to speak to this budget, so I will keep my comments short.

Before my closing statement, I should mention that we commissioned a report, the *Yukon Health Care Review*, that examined the current and long-term sustainability of our health care system over the next 10 years. I believe the Health Care Review Steering Committee will be in Dawson City on March 30, 2009, from 7:00 to 9:00 p.m. at the Pioneer Hall. I encourage all the citizens of my community to attend and give their input on this *Yukon Health Care Review* report.

Also, from June 17 to 19, 2009, our government will have the privilege of hosting the western premiers conference in Dawson City. This government is allocating over \$270,000 for this conference. I look forward to welcoming all the premiers to my community.

Mr. Speaker, I commend this budget to all the members of this House, and I believe that this budget will stimulate the Yukon's private sector economy with its investment in economic, social and public infrastructure.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Edzerza:** Mr. Speaker, to start, I would like to thank all my constituents in McIntyre-Takhini for their support in the last election. My commitment in the election campaign was that I would do the best I could, and I will continue to do that.

I'm somewhat compelled to respond to some of the comments made by the Premier on March 24, mainly because the government side always has the last word and the opposition never really gets to respond to some of the comments that are made.

On March 24, in the Blues, the Premier said: I must remind this House that the member opposite, who now sits as an independent member, was once the minister responsible, who was given direction to develop a treatment centre. He did not deliver; he quit. Mr. Speaker, those words are not actually true and I want to put on record —

#### **Speaker's statement**

**Speaker:** Order please. The member is putting the Chair in a delicate position. When you say "those words were not actually true," the implication, of course, is that the Premier was lying. I'm sure that's not the honourable member's intention, because he knows full well that is against the rules and proceedings of this House, please keep that in mind.

You have the floor, sir.

**Mr. Edzerza:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There was no intention of saying that it wasn't true; however, I think it's appropriate to maybe explain and put on record that it was at the eleventh hour, and the Premier was already well aware of the fact that I was leaving the Yukon Party, when this offer was extended to me.

I believe that to say that I didn't deliver and I quit — I don't believe that I didn't deliver, and I didn't quit. I believe that, given the time that I had to even approach this topic, I had no opportunity to really start to get involved in the process. Mind you, I would certainly have loved to have had that same opportunity directed to me in the first year of my mandate.

Having said that, I know it was probably a responsibility of the Health and Social Services minister; however, I would gladly have taken that on, and I could guarantee you today there would have been something in place — guaranteed.

I believe that part of the problem we're having here is a lack of appreciation. I want to put on record today that I do thoroughly appreciate the Premier giving me the opportunity to take on the responsibilities of a minister. I certainly hope that the Premier would appreciate what I did for the government as a minister.

I'd like to just maybe remind the Premier of a few of the things that I did do as a minister. For example, the Individual Learning Centre is being praised here to this day. Three years after it was put in place under my direction, it is still getting a

lot of positive comments today. We talk about a diversified office within government and putting an office in place for people with disabilities. I was told that had been on the books for many, many years; no minister ever put it in place. Under my direction as the minister responsible for the Public Service Commission, we got that in place.

When I speak about equality — it was under my watch that the YNTEP program became available to every citizen in the territory. Mr. Deputy Speaker, there are numerous examples that I can put on the record of the accomplishments that I made when I was a minister. I don't want to be accused of blowing my own horn but I will say that I do believe I worked very hard for the government and I did my best when I was in government. It is just unfortunate that things turned out the way they did. I don't really appreciate the finger being only pointed at me as an MLA. I think there are two sides to every story and no one on the floor of this Legislature — whether it is the Premier or any other MLA — is going to earn credibility by naming, shaming and bullying. You just won't get credibility.

A good example of that happened today on the floor of this Legislature when one member — the Member for Mayo-Tatchun — was shamed and embarrassed. It was said on the floor of this Legislature that he doesn't do anything in his community or in his riding. I think that was hitting below the belt. It was very unprofessional and disrespectful.

When things like that happen from the top leader in this Legislative Assembly, I would have to say that you are really setting an example and taking the decorum right down as low as it will ever get. It is an embarrassment. I felt embarrassed today, sitting here and hearing that. I felt embarrassed for the Member for Mayo-Tatchun, and it wasn't even directed at me. Obviously, everyone watching and listening to it must have felt something. Even to have comments coming from the Member for Porter Creek South about members on this side of the House having the lights out — I mean, that is disrespectful and embarrassing.

So I think all of us in this House probably have some issues that we need to deal with. There's a traditional saying that I have the utmost respect for, and it goes like: The Creator gave you two eyes, two ears and one mouth, and that's so you look at everything twice, you listen twice, you speak once. Because the moment it comes out of your mouth, it becomes history. And it is a problem. Sometimes you may say things that you can't take back, and I believe probably that was the basis of my leaving the Yukon Party. Some things were said that couldn't be taken back.

But I still do have the utmost respect for all MLAs on the floor of this Legislature, whether they're Yukon Party, NDP or Liberal, and I think that, as a member of this Legislature, I would certainly appreciate it if all members would start looking at the shaming of other members in this Legislature, because it does create hard feelings. In my opinion, it's somewhat a mental and emotional abuse, and some people — all people are different. Some people can take it with a grain of salt; others, it'll have such a negative effect on them that you don't know where it will go with them.

I wanted to sort of get that on record and straighten it out. I certainly hope that — I must correct the record, Mr. Speaker. I said the Member for Porter Creek South and it was actually the Member for Porter Creek North who made the comments that the lights were out on members over here. I apologize for that mistake.

I know this in itself can probably be the whole basis of a response to the budget, because it is in my opinion very important how we respect each other as MLAs. I think we can have differences, but we don't have to personalize things. We can have good debate without shaming people.

I just thought I would put that on the record.

Now I would like to go into some of the things for the constituents in my riding. I know we have to say thanks to the government for the \$2.5 million they put into Takhini North's infrastructure replacement, because it is a good thing when the government gets involved with big expenditures like that. I don't think it solved all of the problems for all of the residents because there is still — the last I heard there is still \$10,000-plus that they have to contribute toward the water hookup.

Again, there was a lot of what I see as confusion around the houses that were bought in Takhini. The residents there didn't expect to be responsible for financing new water lines and sewer lines and whatnot. In the same breath, I want to say to the citizens of Takhini North: the MLA, if you're not in government, can make recommendations and can make requests and they aren't always necessarily honoured. That is part of our job as MLAs, I guess, to try to reason with the government, MLAs and the ministers to see if we can't encourage them to support some of the issues that are in our ridings.

I also want to thank the government for their support on the waterfront infrastructure and the Kwanlin Dun cultural centre. In the budget, there was no actual dollar figure about the financial support to the cultural centre, but just having them involved with different things that I know about, as a Kwanlin Dun member, I do appreciate the government assisting financially and wherever they can with regard to building the cultural centre.

There are many other projects that are within the Kwanlin Dun traditional territory, and in the land claims agreement — the *Kwanlin Dun First Nation Final Agreement* — there is, in chapter 13, a section called the Yukon asset construction agreement. Now, this is a document that was negotiated and signed by the Yukon government, the federal government and the Kwanlin Dun.

They have had some difficulty trying to get that section of the agreement honoured. In fact, it was just recently that Kwanlin Dun had to actually challenge the building of the extension to the airport terminal building. They did win a judgement in court that the government in fact was responsible and did have to respect that section of the agreement. I know that there was an out-of-court settlement. I was pleased to hear that it didn't have to go right through the whole court process to come to a remedy in that area. I certainly would encourage the government to try to avoid, as much as possible, any kind of court challenge. These things are in the agreements. We all

know that they are there. It's just more or less a matter of honouring what you agreed to do.

I know that the cultural centre has been a project that has been on the books for many years here, and my most recent discussions with members from Kwanlin Dun is that they're getting very close to this becoming a reality, which will be good for Whitehorse and will be good for working relationships between the government and our First Nation government.

I know that there have been some differences of opinions that probably created a few waves in this area, but I'm of the opinion that where there's a will, there's a way. If there's a will to work together, it'll happen. But it has to come from both sides; I realize that. It's not a one-way street here. I know that the Kwanlin Dun government also has to come to the plate and be responsible when it comes to making any kind of a negotiated deal, whether it's with the Yukon territorial government or the municipal government or other First Nation governments.

Again, it all goes back to respect for each other and to realize that not everyone is the same and not all people think the same. Definitely, when you have a Cabinet of eight or nine ministers and you have eight or nine chief and council members from another First Nation, then already you have 15 people who have got different ideas. Sometimes it is very difficult to get everybody on the same page and be able to respect each other and realize that everybody has an opinion.

I would also like to talk a little bit about the correctional facility. I know that is another humungous project that is going to be developed within Kwanlin Dun's traditional territory. To the best of my knowledge there is some kind of a memorandum of understanding that might be in place. I know that I am also a member of the elders council in Kwanlin Dun and I do know that a lot of the elders don't really appreciate the correctional facility being called a healing centre. There are some mixed emotions around that.

They also don't believe — and I think I'm onside with it myself, as an elder — that we mix inmates from the correctional facility with the general public in any kind of a healing process.

Also, I don't know if "healing" is the right word because I don't know if one ever heals. I know you can do repairs, but you never truly heal from sexual abuse, physical abuse, mental abuse. Those usually stay with you forever.

So I hope the Minister of Justice really takes a close look at this and maybe reconsiders, if this is the case. I was asked to go and be interviewed — my family was interviewed — with regard to the correctional facility, and we stated very clearly that we did not support a traditional cultural based treatment centre in the correctional facility.

I think that once you're in corrections, you're there for a reason. Why do you go to jail? It could be for murder, it could be because they are a violent offender of some sort. They might be beating up on people or knifing people. There are several reasons why people might end up in a correctional facility. Unfortunately, one of the main ones that we have within Whitehorse is drug dealing. There is a lot of drug dealing. A lot of those individuals are in jail. I have known of several times

where even mothers were caught transporting drugs into the correctional facility for their children.

If we take all the people from the correctional facility and the general public and start mixing them, what do you think is going to happen? I have visions of all kinds of problems escalating out of that kind of arrangement. When we talk about repairing the spirit or healing the spirit, we are talking about big trust issues. Trust is the number one thing that one has to gain, especially from the client.

So if you've never been involved with the law, and you're forced to sit in with a bunch of people who are in jail for maybe theft or whatever, how is one going to feel? How are you going to be able to open up and deal with issues when all of these other people are from the prison? A lot of people are afraid to be in the presence of people who are in prison, mainly because you really don't know what they're there for. I know some people who are very, very violent. There's a place and a time when the public at large has to be able to say, "Look, no government should be able to force the general public to go and sit down with a bunch of inmates to discuss the healing process." There's no way that should ever happen. In fact, it shouldn't even be an issue, but it sounds like it is really becoming an issue here, because the direction coming from the government side and the minister is not totally clear here.

I've listened to debates here for the last couple of days, and it's like there are mixed messages coming from the government side on this correctional facility and really what it is. I certainly hope that they have enough common sense to respect the fact that when you go into the healing process it is not a joking matter. It is a very serious issue. As a matter of fact I know some people who were forced to go into it and ended up committing suicide rather than deal with it. This is playing with a very tough issue here. It has to be handled with the utmost of respect.

I have to say that when I was in charge of Justice, we developed a thing that was called the "option court". Now, that options court, I believe, that everything in this area is not really being developed in the proper process that the options court really was intended to do. The intention at the time was that the Minister of Health and Social Services would, in fact, get something in place for treatment to be able to handle the workload that might come from the options court. As the minister, I often said that if you're going to give an option for someone to choose treatment over court, then you have to be able to provide the treatment facility.

Now, we all know what the Sarah Steele Building is. What are you going to do with that place if 40 people decide they want treatment? It can't handle them. That was the importance of the *Working Without Boundaries* document that was implemented when I was in government. *Working Without Boundaries* was a document to allow Justice, Health and Social Services and Education to all work together in collaboration. It's critical that the Justice and Health and Social Services departments work together, because they have the same clients basically.

Treatment is one way to address this constant appearance of people in jail. In fact, I think the only remedy is treatment.

People have to have that opportunity to seek understanding of who they are and why they're doing the things they do.

I get very offended when I hear people say, "Get over it." I read some letter in the newspaper last night from some fellow who wrote in and basically said, "Quit crying over historical wrongs and get over it." Well, that's so easy to say. They are just words. You have to actually be that person. You be on the other end of the stick; you be on the receiving end of all the abuse — sexual, physical and otherwise — and go through your whole life without any intervention. Then you tell me how you would like it if I came to you and said, "Get over it. Why are you crying about this? So what if this happened to you?" This is a very serious issue. I am a firm believer that one of the solutions to being able to work in this area — and I hope government can see this and that they are listening to what I'm saying today — we as a society have to get serious about land-based treatment centres. I say that there is already one in Mayo at Kathleen Lake. There is one at Tatmain Lake out of Pelly. There is one at Aishihik Lake in Kluane. There is one in Teslin. There is one at Kwanlin Dun and now the Ta'an has bought the Baha'i Centre.

There are all of those facilities that are not being utilized, and I think the government could really earn some kudos here by going to these people and saying, "Let's get serious about working in partnership and deal with this issue." I'm a firm believer that, in order for anyone to advance in education, in the trades, in a professional career, you have to be mentally, physically, spiritually and emotionally healthy. You have to.

I could share some of my own experiences today, and I can tell you why I never went to university. All of those barriers of abuse stopped me from being who I could have been. It took many years of my life. The prime years of my life were spent wasted through alcohol, when I could have been doing a lot of other things. But you know what? I've said it before; I'll say it again: I didn't even know I was a victim of abuse until I was 32 years old. Thirty-two years old. Went all through the teenage years, through my adolescent years — drunk, trying to drown all of the pain that was encountered through the abuses.

So I know what I'm talking about. I'm not just talking for the sake of talking. I'm talking today because I want the government to listen. I want them to listen to this and get serious.

\$1.3 billion spent and not even a treatment centre mentioned in there. That's absurd — in my mind it is absurd. It just tells me that we're running after the god-almighty dollar and not really caring about the people. I have some issues when the chamber of commerce knows about the budget before the MLAs do. Why? Why doesn't the government sit down with the opposition members?

We all represent a constituency. There are eight in opposition over here. The government should have been talking to us and asking us what things are most wanted in our ridings.

I like the idea that the Leader of the Third Party had when he was campaigning in the last election. He made the commitment that he would sit down with all of the leaders, if he were the Premier, and discuss the budget — what do we need in the territory?

But I also understand politics a little bit, and it's all about not letting the other one get too powerful or too much recognition, which is sad in a way. I think that there are a lot of good MLAs in all parties here, and if we were able to sit down in the same room and talk to each other, I think we'd be able to do wonders. Get away from all of this spending \$60 million in one riding and none in the other, or \$60 million in one riding and \$5 million in the other. It really does create the perception that the government is putting more into some of their ridings than others. But that's just politics.

I know that Kwanlin Dun has had probably some very mixed feelings around this correctional facility. I don't really know how much consultation was involved with it. I know there was a good process happening when I left that position, and I hope that it has continued — I don't know for sure.

I do know as a human being that, in order for something to succeed, people need to buy into it. You need to buy into it.

I toured a correctional facility in the Northwest Territories that was built not that long ago and it cost them \$40 million. I felt they had a very adequate program in there to deal with healing the spirit. They actually had a fairly good cultural program running there.

There was another thing with the Northwest Territories: I believe they were able to take inmates up to approximately five years — I think — which is different from the Yukon. I would encourage the Justice minister to review that option also — instead of a two-year term here in Yukon. Some — and I do know a few — had to be sent out to the penitentiary because they received over two years.

Part of working with people who have issues with the law is to have the connection to their family. I know that a lot of people have made comments around this issue about the family being dysfunctional. Believe it or not, even the chronic alcoholic loves their children. They have feelings for their family. With addictions, people really need to start trying to seek an understanding of addictions and how powerful they really are. I know addicts right here in town who chose death over dealing with their addiction. That's how powerful it is. When you have that choice and a possible chance at life and the addiction is too strong for you to be able to accept that, it is a pretty good demonstration of how powerful the issue is that you're dealing with.

When we talk about inmates getting treatment, I certainly hope that the government doesn't drop the ball on that one, because it's pretty important.

I would also like to talk just a little bit about the Friends of McIntyre Creek. Now, I wholeheartedly support protecting the corridors of McIntyre Creek. I'm a very strong believer that we've already alienated too much land that is taken away from the animals, birds and other life that live in the bush and on the water.

I think I mentioned before how much trouble I had to see all the little ducks, down where Wal-Mart is built now, eventually be squeezed right out, until they were swimming in a pool that was four feet in diameter. But they lost all of that natural habitat, where they used to nest every year. And I do have the utmost respect for all animals and living creatures.

One of the things I would like to suggest to the Minister of Environment is to develop a special management area with Kwanlin Dun. There are provisions in chapter 10 of Kwanlin Dun's final agreement that speak to how you develop a special management area.

You can have special wildlife or fish management areas, migratory bird sanctuaries or wildlife sanctuaries, designated heritage sites. I attended an elders council meeting in Kwanlin Dun and we had a unanimous resolution passed there that direction be given to the Chief and Council of Kwanlin Dun to immediately start the process of developing an SMA along the corridors of McIntyre Creek.

I know there are some people who would say, well, you know, we are protecting the area, because there is special environmental protection because of the waterfowl there. But I have to say, people lose trust when you see documents not honoured. There was a 30-metre or 60-metre corridor along that creek, but when they built Raven's Ridge, and they built the road, the dirt went right into that pond where the ducks nest. So that corridor wasn't honoured on that project, so we have very grave doubts that it'll be honoured all the way up McIntyre Creek.

We have a very strong belief that the animals need a place to live, as well as humans do. In that corridor — I know, because I live up the Fish Lake Road and I drive through that corridor and I have seen moose, bear, wolves, wolverine, fox, coyote — eagles are nesting all along that area — and there is a bird watchers location up on that creek. It is something worth protecting. In the final agreement it says, at the request of either party, the government or the First Nation, they must negotiate an agreement. I think the Environment minister could really do a good thing for the people in this city by contacting Kwanlin Dun and talking about a special management area on the corridors on McIntyre Creek.

It also states in this chapter that the government shall make best efforts to complete the management plan within five years. I am aware that there has been a real interest to develop all the land between the college and Porter Creek. I am quite concerned about that happening. I would encourage the Environment minister to jump on this one right away. It's of the utmost importance to the Kwanlin Dun people and to all the Friends of McIntyre Creek, whom I want to thank for doing the extensive amount of work they did to bring this to the attention of all the citizens in the Yukon. This special management area would benefit not only the First Nation but all citizens within the Whitehorse area.

I think it's probably one of the prestigious issues for Whitehorse — to have a great big greenbelt like that right in the middle of the city. Thank you.

**Hon. Mr. Rouble:** Mr. Speaker, it is an honour and pleasure today to rise today as MLA for the beautiful Southern Lakes, as Minister of Education and also of the Public Service Commission.

I would just like to begin by taking a minute to discuss the beautiful Southern Lakes, which many people would consider to be a model of the Yukon.

When people from Outside think of the Yukon, many of the images they think of are indeed reflected in the beautiful Southern Lakes, with images of mountains, of clean rivers and lakes, of beautiful scenery, of wildlife, and the history in the community, with its gold rush history in Carcross and Tagish. Indeed, I'm often reminded that when gold rush people first ran to the Yukon, they paddled past my front door.

Additionally, it has been the home of the Carcross and Tagish people for as long as people can remember and that plays a very important role in the makeup of the community in the beautiful Southern Lakes.

It's a riding that is built up of — well, the communities of Carcross, Tagish, Marsh Lake and the places in-between — places like the Atlin Road, the Lewes River Road, the M'Clintock Valley Road and some of the other hidden away spots in the community.

It's a riding built on diverse people with diverse backgrounds. It's always interesting to attend a community function and see the diversity of people there and the different exuberance and different positions they bring to the table.

Mr. Speaker, it is a community that has fully embraced its past and its culture and looks forward to its responsibilities in the future. It is a community where people can appreciate the beauty of going for a walk in unspoiled surroundings and then return home and surf the Internet through their wireless Internet connection and make contact with people around the planet.

While it might be a bedroom community of Whitehorse for some people who are employed here in the major centre of the territory, it is also home to a strong and vibrant tourism industry — especially looking at the White Pass & Yukon Route, which has made a very strong return to Yukon and the beautiful Southern Lakes.

As well, Mr. Speaker, it is home to mining operations, forestry operations and many home-based businesses. Mr. Speaker, I am constantly amazed when I talk to people throughout the communities of Carcross, Tagish and Marsh Lake about what kind of business they might run from their home — whether they are an international photographer or an international market research company or someone who does design and architectural work and provides that information to people, really, from around the planet.

Mr. Speaker, it's also home to agricultural operations and farms that produce many of the fruits, vegetables and — sorry, I shouldn't say fruits, but many of the foods for our table, and also — actually, when I think of it, Mr. Speaker, if we can consider the tomato as a fruit, yes indeed, we do produce fruits. I think I'm reminded, though, of the folks in the cafeteria who said that knowledge is knowing that a tomato is a fruit, and wisdom is knowing not to put it in a fruit salad.

Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the diversity of the opinions in the community, and that's one of its significant strengths. I'd also like to thank the constituents in my riding for their input, not only to me, but also to my Cabinet and caucus colleagues during our numerous community tour meetings and our visits to local advisory council meetings, our visits to other public functions, and visits to the Carcross-Tagish First Nation government, where we had significant meetings with them to re-

ceive their input and to help craft the budget that we have before us.

I would also like to thank the officials, not only in the Department of Finance for their fine work, but also the finance officials in my own Department of Education, and the Public Service Commission for the tremendous amount of work that they put into crafting a budget designed to meet the needs of Yukoners. The officials in these departments do a tremendous amount of work and I would like to express my strong thanks and gratitude for their constant diligence and constant hard work.

Also, Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the stakeholders and shareholders and partners we work with in the Department of Education and the Public Service Commission. In Education this includes working with students, teachers and parents, with school councils, with advisory boards, educational professionals, with other orders of government, with First Nations and really all Yukoners who have a role in education. I appreciate the input that they have provided. Their thoughts, their wishes and their opinions have been considered and are incorporated in the budget that we have before us.

In the Public Service Commission, we appreciate the input of staff, employees, the unions, the professionals we work with in that department and with our outside committees. Mr. Speaker, by working with all of these other people and other contributors, we do build a stronger and better budget.

Mr. Speaker, as the Premier articulated in his budget speech, the Yukon finds itself in a strong financial position. This is due to the revenue that the territory has generated, to the strong financial management of this government and also to the Government of Canada recognizing its federal responsibilities and its responsibilities to territories in the north. We find ourselves in a very good financial position, with yet again another forecasted surplus budget. This is due in large part to the strong financial leadership of the government and the hard work that we do.

This will allow us to provide a level of service that is comparable to that of other jurisdictions in Canada. Even though I've heard members opposite talk about how we receive too much from the federal government and that, if they were in power, they would simply stamp the cheque "return to sender" and mail it back, I appreciate that we are, in the words of the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin, closing the gaps in opportunities. As he recognizes that we are closing the gaps in opportunities between Whitehorse and other areas of the Yukon, including Old Crow, so too is Canada responding to its need to close the gap in opportunities between what we have here in the territory and what is considered commonplace in other jurisdictions.

Mr. Speaker, this budget is based on the themes of promoting a strong, diversified private sector economy, protecting and preserving our environment and wildlife, and providing good government, and I'm proud to be part of the government that is providing this budget. Indeed, we're seeing a growing private sector in virtually all aspects of the economy. As we discussed yesterday, we've seen a resurgence in the mining industry, in tourism, and in cultural industries. I was reminded not too long ago that we have over 50 professional musicians who've pro-

duced a professional CD in the last couple of years. It's great to see that kind of diversification. It's great to see those kinds of opportunities for Yukoners here in our territory.

Now, the Premier has discussed many of the initiatives brought forward in the budget, and the ministers responsible have debated many of their key initiatives. I'd like to take this opportunity as the MLA for the beautiful Southern Lakes to highlight many of the initiatives going on in the riding of the Southern Lakes, as I'm very pleased to see that many of the issues and concerns of my constituents are being met.

Broad territorial issues, such as investments in clean energy, enhanced health and social services, additional educational opportunities, support for tourism and economic development, enhancements in justice and correctional facilities, upgrades to roads and community infrastructure, and the other initiatives that have been discussed will have a significant benefit to all Yukoners, including the Yukoners in the beautiful Southern Lakes.

In the beautiful Southern Lakes, we're seeing road and bridge upgrades, such as the \$4.2-million upgrade to the M'Clintock River bridge.

I know that that has been a long-standing concern, not only of the residents of the community, but the people south of there who drive over that bridge on a regular basis. And while I appreciate that there will be some inconveniences this summer during construction, I think we'll all appreciate, in the long run, that it will be an important enhancement to the driving safety of Yukon's highways.

Also in this budget we're seeing a \$2.9-million investment for reconstruction of the Atlin Road. This will go a long way in improving this link between Yukon and British Columbia and the community of Atlin and will also serve the many residents along the Atlin Road.

Additional investments in communities, such as the joint Yukon and federal government investment of \$735,000 to complete the public dock, boat launch, signage and roadwork in Carcross, will also significantly enhance that community. Mr. Speaker, we have seen recent improvements in Carcross in facilities such as the new walk bridge, the community decking and renewed private sector investment in the community. Not only is the White Pass & Yukon Route company investing there, but we are also seeing significant investments by others in refurbishing and renovating the Caribou Hotel and some of the other great tourism attractions there, such as the Caribou Crossing, which is one of the Yukon's busiest tourism destinations. We will continue to polish the jewel that is Carcross. I am sure that it will not only be appreciated by visitors from other places, but also by many Yukoners and residents of the community of Carcross alike.

Additional funds have been allocated to address potable water infrastructure in the communities of Carcross and Marsh Lake. An allocation of one-quarter of a million dollars for improvements to the Carcross sewage treatment system is also in this budget. These initiatives will have benefits throughout the entire riding and even the entire region.



As we discussed yesterday, the commitment to address the 20 solid-waste facilities in Yukon, including facilities in Carcross, Tagish and Marsh Lake, is also soon to be released.

This budget also includes enhancement for recycling programs, which I know are of significant concern to residents in the beautiful Southern Lakes. I am looking forward to the Minister of Environment discussing this more and talking about how we can look at reducing the amount of material that we have going into our solid-waste management facilities, in reusing what we can and then ultimately recycling what we can't.

Also, I am very glad to see that this budget continues to support the community development fund, which is available to support many of the fine community-specific projects that are brought forward by the recreation associations in the communities of Carcross, Tagish and Marsh Lake. This is a great fund that can provide assistance to programs at a grassroots level and ensure that community needs are being met.

Also, Mr. Speaker, this budget continues to fund FireSmart, which not only provides economic stimulus in the community but also reduces the risk of wildfire to our community, thus creating it as a safer place to live.

As Minister of Education, I am very pleased to see the \$128 million in the budget. While I will go over that in much greater detail in my Committee of the Whole speech on this, and in debate in Committee of the Whole when we go through this line by line, I would like to remind members of this significant investment. As I said, there's over \$128 million invested in education, which is a clear demonstration of this government's commitment to not only the public school education, but also the lifelong learning education opportunities of all Yukoners.

In addition to supporting Yukon College and all of our schools, Mr. Speaker, this budget will continue to implement New Horizons, which is the go-forward stage of the education reform project. I discussed many of the initiatives being launched yesterday during motion debate.

Also, this budget will support the Department of Education's plans to replace the student information system, which has been used for the last 18 years, with the British Columbia enterprise student information system. This information system will provide current, accurate and historical student information and allow for better decision-making, because we'll have increased information across all curriculum areas of Yukon education.

One of the initiatives in the Department of Education that I'm very pleased to see included in this year's budget is the new leaders in education innovation fund. This is an amount of \$75,000, which will provide financial support to innovative educators by investing in projects led by teachers, school councils and others, which can then be shared with other schools.

I know, Mr. Speaker, in the two and a half years that I have been the Minister of Education, we have had the opportunity to support many good initiatives that have come forward as ideas from school councils, by our administrators and by our teachers. This will be a formal way of being able to examine the idea of having a peer review committee to make sure that we've not only got an idea but that it is a good idea and that we

can then support that with adequate financial resources to find out if it indeed is going to have the intended outcomes, see it implemented in the schools, and then share those great successes with other schools so that we can go from a good idea to commonplace practice as quickly as we can.

Mr. Speaker, we will also see enhancements of the school growth planning process. We have discussed this process several times in this Assembly, and if members opposite would like me to go into it in greater detail with them and provide additional information about the school growth planning process and how it really is an incredible tool for incorporating the thoughts and opinions of the community into the vision, plan and practice of the school, I would be more than happy to do so.

The budget includes \$150,000 for early year transition learning programs. We recognize that one of the best places to make an intervention in student learning is when they are very young. It is very important to work with parents, the student and teachers to identify problems, issues or concerns as early as possible so that they can be addressed, again, as early as possible. In past budgets, we have seen supports enhanced for such programs as Reading Recovery. This is just one more tool that we will use, in conjunction with the Child Development Centre, to ensure that our early learning students — the ones in pre-kindergarten and up to grade 3 — are receiving the support and assessments that they need.

There is also \$150,000 being invested in curriculum and special programs training. There is \$140,000 designated for assistive technology software. These programs will have significant impacts on students across the board and also for special needs students. Another initiative that has been recently launched is a student advisory committee.

I recognize that I've had the opportunity, as Minister of Education, to meet with our school councils, with our teachers, with our school administrators on a regular and formal basis. But, really, what was missing was an opportunity to talk to the students. And while I'd had the opportunity to talk to them in the classroom, or talk to them in the hallways, it was often of an ad hoc kind of nature.

What I have proposed is that we put forward a student advisory committee, and I've invited students in grades 10, 11 and 12 from across the territory to submit a submission to indicate that they would like to be part of this. We've asked students who would like to sit on the student advisory committee to answer the question: if I were the Minister of Education, I would — and to fill in that blank.

We've asked them to provide either a written submission or a PowerPoint presentation or a videotape of their speech — really, however they want to answer that question, it's up to them. But I encourage all students who are interested in participating on that student advisory council to submit their submission to the Department of Education before April 3.

We intend to sit down either face to face or through video conferencing with students a couple of times a year — perhaps three times a year once the program is fully launched — in order to discuss the issues that are important to the students

themselves. With that additional input, like I've said before, Mr. Speaker, we'll have a better decision made in the end.

Mr. Speaker, one of the key highlights in this budget is the funds that have been set aside to commence planning on the program and design needs of a high school to replace F.H. Collins Secondary School. As we have discussed many times, F.H. Collins is a tremendous school with significant opportunities for students; however, it has reached the end of its economic life. It will still require some investments because we will still continue to have students there until the construction is complete. We will still need to keep investing in it, Mr. Speaker. We do recognize that it does need to be replaced and there is a significant amount of resources to work with the school building committee to establish the plan and the design of the new high school so we continue to go forward on replacing it.

Also, Mr. Deputy Speaker, Advanced Education will continue to work very closely with our education partners in helping prepare Yukoners for Yukon opportunities.

Advanced Education not only provides funding for — well, right now, it's over 1,000 students to attend post-secondary education institutions in about 115 other schools throughout Canada, but will also continue to fund Yukon College. I believe we're close to the \$20-million mark now in our total allocations, including the core funding and program-specific funding for Yukon College. That's a far cry from the less-than-\$14 million that was invested only a couple of years ago. We're very pleased to see the investment of, as I said, about \$20 million in Yukon College to help prepare Yukoners for Yukon opportunities.

We've tabled legislation earlier this week that will also increase Yukon College's role and responsibility in the community, as we value and recognize its tremendous responsibility for Yukon. We look forward to working with Yukon College and with the board of governors to address the education needs of our students and the employment needs that our employers have. It's very important that we link the opportunities that we have here in the Yukon with the training that we provide here in the Yukon.

As I have said numerous times, Mr. Speaker, we really need to prepare Yukoners for Yukon opportunities.

In addition to providing funds for post-secondary education in Yukon College, we will continue to support local educational opportunities through community training funds. These community training funds, which are available on a community basis or on an industry basis, are a very valuable tool in helping to prepare Yukoners for the opportunities that are at hand. We have some significant successes in this program. We've also seen the creation of the Yukon Mine Training Association. This is a formal relationship between Yukon First Nations and Yukon mining companies. They have accessed some federal dollars and are doing a very good job of providing training and development for Yukoners to prepare them for industrial opportunities.

Also, Mr. Speaker, we will see other programs for older workers, for women in non-traditional industries, for people with disabilities and other initiatives.

We will continue to work with all the tools that we have before us to prepare Yukoners to recognize the opportunities they have before them. As the federal government has also announced a knowledge infrastructure program, we as a territory have put in an application to that. The federal government has established a fund to provide assistance to post-secondary institutions across Canada, and Yukon College, with the support of the Government of Yukon, has made application to it. There is a \$2-billion fund available, and we look forward to accessing these federal dollars in order to enhance Yukon College's infrastructure here in the territory.

I know members opposite have an aversion to receiving funds from the federal government; however, I believe this is wise use of territorial dollars. If we can make a partnership with the federal government and fund half of it — that is a better use of our funds than funding all of it out of our own pocket. We will continue to work with our partner, the federal government, to access funds from the knowledge infrastructure program in order to enhance the capacity and capabilities of Yukon College here in the territory.

Also, under my responsibility as minister responsible for the Public Service Commission, there is a \$36-million budget. Indeed, in Committee of the Whole, I will provide significant details of this expenditure. Some of the highlights for this include a commitment of \$113,000 over two years for the implementation of a new corporate health and safety initiative to create a health and safety leadership system government wide.

Additionally, we will invest \$341,000 annually for three years for program support for employees addressing substance-abuse issues.

I will be pleased to detail other expenditures in the Public Service Commission and the investments in further budget debate.

Mr. Speaker, as we've had an opportunity to discuss, this is a very responsible budget. While the figure of \$1 billion is often a daunting one, I have strong confidence in the leadership of this government and confidence in what has been put forward in the decisions in this budget. When we look at the investments that are being made, we will see that these will not only have a short-term stimulus and will be important to portions of our economy, but will also have a long-term lasting legacy in our community. We are making investments in education, in corrections, in roads, in water infrastructure and in the real fabric of the community. These will continue to have long-term benefits for Yukoners for generations to come.

This is a budget that recognizes and responds to the needs of the territory and builds on our strengths. It recognizes what we have to offer, and it highlights those things. Also, where we have some weaknesses, it additionally supports them and allows us to build our strengths even more. I would commend this budget to the Legislative Assembly, and ask that all members take a good solid look at it, and not just criticize it for the sake of criticism.

If they do have a valid criticism to make, make it, and if they have another alternative or a suggestion, we're more than willing to hear those too. The government has a long history of working with others, working with our constituents, working

with our communities throughout the territory, and visiting them with the community tours and finding out the key areas that are important to Yukoners and addressing them in our budget.

As legislators, Mr. Speaker, we've demonstrated that there's a strong willingness to work with members of the opposition. Just yesterday, again, we saw two motions unanimously supported by all members of this Assembly. It's great to see initiatives like that. We also have a history of working with the opposition, especially with the New Democratic Party, who've put forward some constructive pieces of legislation that we have been able to support. We've worked with the opposition on initiatives such as the Human Rights Commission that travelled the territory and created significant recommendations that have resulted in the legislation that we'll see before us. We've seen the anti-smoking committee, made up of members of all parties of this Assembly, that consulted with Yukoners, and we've come back and made strong legislation.

We have certainly demonstrated the willingness to work with others to address the issues that are important to the Yukon.

If members opposite have creative, constructive, good ideas that they would like to share, I would like to listen. And where it is applicable and possible to implement their recommendations, we'd like to do so.

I'd like to thank members of this Assembly. I'd also like to take this opportunity to thank my family for their support. This is not always an easy position, being an elected official in our community, and I certainly appreciate the support of my spouse and my family in helping to do the important tasks we have ahead of us.

So I would ask all members of the Assembly to support this budget, to see the value in it and to stand up and unanimously support the budget, so that we can go forward to build a better Yukon now and into the future.

**Mr. Hardy:** I would just like to pick up on the last comments that the Member for Southern Lakes made and that is in regard to his job and the support that he has received from his spouse and family. Just before I came in to the Legislature a few minutes ago to respond to this budget I was interviewed by the media and the question was, what impact does this job have on families and relationships?

So listening to the member opposite, I thought: are they connected here? This is a very interesting sequence of events.

When the person from the media asked me this question, of course, I had to reflect upon the impact that it has had on my family, especially since my wife and I are in a unique position in which my wife was a Member of Parliament at the same time as I was an MLA in government. It can put a lot of strain on a relationship and the challenges that it brings are generally not seen in other jobs.

But even with that extreme situation, just being an MLA, being in the public eye, often being criticized through the media and judged by the public for our conduct — whether in government or opposition — does fall upon the ears of our spouse, partner or children. It is a huge challenge for them.

Unfortunately, there are many relationships that do not survive that challenge. We have a fairly high separation and divorce rate among elected members, not just in the Yukon, but also across Canada and especially in the federal government.

In saying that, there is a great deal of reward in being an elected member. I would never discourage anyone from seeking that opportunity to serve the people of this territory as best as they can, articulating their values and beliefs, and often standing up for the principles and values that their party represents, as well.

That's a huge challenge because you often have to balance out some of your own particular viewpoints and temper them or even support decisions and directions being made that you may not totally agree with, but that's all about compromise. That is an indication of how you work together, and that is an indication of how you would actually be as a government if you are able to do that. It's a challenge.

Of course, if you are an independent, you have the challenge of ensuring that you do represent the broader voice without the support of a party, and that is a challenge in itself, though independent members, in our past and present, have done a very good job of doing that, and we have to recognize that, as well. So there are many challenges on a personal level in being a politician.

Every member stands up and talks about their riding, and I'm no exception. I have been very privileged to represent Whitehorse Centre.

It's a riding that the NDP has represented for over 20 years, with a break of two and a half years, it has been a riding that has had extremely good representation from Roger Kimmery, Joyce Hayden — whom we spoke about this week — Margaret Commodore and me, all through the NDP. It has been a riding that we have all been very proud to be a part of. As everybody will say, it is a unique riding. We all think our ridings are unique and we all think they have characteristics that are different from others. Often it is the similarities that bring us together, not the differences that bring us together. In saying that, there are unique issues in every riding.

Whitehorse Centre is an urban riding. That is, in itself, unique. There is no other riding in Yukon that would be considered real urban, as they are Outside. It has all the challenges of very much an urban riding.

It has density issues. It has alcohol and drug issues. It has crime issues. It has environmental issues. When I say they're very unique, they're also very similar to many of the other ridings but on a different scale. Whitehorse Centre is the hotbed of many of those challenges that we face. One of the ways in which it really does separate itself, is that the biggest pool of businesses in this territory is in my downtown riding, mixed with residential; it has the biggest pool of societies in the Yukon, all in a very small riding; it has the biggest pool of government offices, and all mixed with the residents, and it's the residents who vote, and they're the ones who put me into office, but I also have to represent the ones who do not vote for me but vote in their own home ridings. They are the NGOs; they are the businesses; they are the government offices and government workers who come downtown every day to work. I

have to ensure that their voice is heard in this Legislative Assembly.

This budget, which is what we are talking about, does address many concerns. There is a lot of good in it and I will say right now that there are many things that I would quite happily support. But there are also many areas that I think the government could have gone in a certain direction. In crafting a budget, I can assure you that a budget that I would have crafted would have been different. It's that difference that makes it a challenge to debate the budget.

We see a budget's role maybe slightly differently from the governing party at this present time. We wanted to see different areas of expenditure, direction and vision that are not expressed in this budget. In saying that, I have concerns about how the whole consultation has happened.

When the Premier was drafting this budget, he indicated that he had talked to many economic stakeholders in the territory. I have asked in this Legislative Assembly over the last week for him to tell me who the stakeholders are, and he refuses to do that. I've asked him to tell me who they aren't, and he refuses to do that. That's not the way a budget should be crafted. If you're going to get advice or direction or recommendations from so-called stakeholders, from my perspective, you should be quite happy to tell who those people are, what organizations they are and who is advising you. And, for some reason, the Premier does not want to do that. It's a theme that I have pursued, because I feel an open and accountable government would be quite happy to do it.

But what I will have to say — and I stand to be corrected by the Premier, and happily corrected — is that I don't think one of the biggest economic engines in the territory was consulted in any meaningful way, and that is societies, NGOs and non-profits.

Now, there are, I think, 628 societies — 628 societies. This might be a question I will ask, and anybody listening over on the other side might want to try to figure this out. If you take the figure of 628 societies, and say they employ only two people each — and that would be an average; it could be three, it could be four, but it's definitely not one — then they are employing 1,256 people who have families. That in itself is a significant economic body that needs to be listened to.

From my perspective, they're employing a substantial number more than that; I would say easily over 2,000 or 3,000 people are employed through these societies. I could start listing some of them, and you would realize there are four or five people working in each. Yesterday I was just at the open house of Blood Ties. I met four people who are working there. They are all contributing to this territory; they're contributing in ways that the government doesn't necessarily want to be engaged in; they're doing a lot of that public work.

They are also contributing economically through the wages they are paid, the benefits, their activity in the community. They are contributing on a social and health level and at an engagement level that is so necessary for the development of a good healthy community. So you just take that as an example from yesterday and think about the other organizations out there. I don't believe that they were consulted for this budget.

If they were consulted and listened to and their concerns were reflected in this budget, you wouldn't see the cuts or the freezing of the transfer payments to them to do the work that they do.

You wouldn't see that. But what you see — if you look at Health and Social Services — is no increase whatsoever for many of these NGOs and you see cuts for some of them — substantial cuts. If you look at Education, you see the exact same thing. There are cuts or there is a freezing not reflecting the cost of operation for this year — so they are actually losing.

You can see that at Education. You look at the Yukon Housing Corporation and you see substantial cuts in some of the programs that are offered there. Look in some of the other departments and you'll see the same thing. Obviously they couldn't have been consulted, or if they were consulted, they definitely were not listened to, because it costs more to operate this year than it did last year or the year before, and yet there's no increase to recognize that. They're trying to do more with less money.

From my perspective, they were not part of that economic stakeholders group. I really want to know who has the ear of the government, because obviously they don't, and they are significant players on the economic scale and employment.

Another interesting factor is that they generally employ far more women than men, and this goes back to the gender-balance view of a budget. So we are obviously putting more money into roads, buildings, bridges, but we're putting less money into the human resources side.

That's my background. That's where I came from and that was my life. I am a journeyman carpenter. I worked in the mines as a young man and got a trade. I made my living and raised my family in that area, so I support that kind of investment, but I do not support taking or freezing one significant area that is basically employing women, and putting a lot more money into an area that basically employs men. I would like to see a better balance. I do not see that in this budget. It's one of the fundamental problems I have with the budget and one of the reasons I will be asking a substantial amount of questions around this area. We have to look at the spending priorities of this government and why they went in this direction.

The other area of this budget is diversification. I do not see any real great initiative to try to diversify the economy. The NDP has said time and time again every year that this government is making us more reliant on Ottawa than upon itself.

The investments it is making are not increasing the amount of diversification. Every year we put this out, and this year again it's another topic. I see that the Leader of the Liberal Party has also picked up on this — pointed out that this year, I think it's 71 percent of revenues that we have come from Ottawa. That's a substantial amount. That's more than when I was last in government, which was from 1996 to 2000, when I think it was in the 60s and dropping, with us.

So this government has been blessed with a substantial increase in transfer payments and monies being sent from Ottawa, but I don't think it has been used in a manner that increases diversification. If anything, it increases dependency, and that is definitely not where we want to see a government

take us because, at some point, that tap might get turned off, and we're not prepared for it.

That points to the fact that there is not a great deal of visionary projection in this budget at all. So my question around that kind of debate is: how sustainable is this budget? Can we keep the spending going, if the turnaround doesn't happen and we don't recover right away?

There is not a single person in here or anywhere who can predict when that turnaround is going to happen. I shouldn't say that they can't predict it, but they won't be right in most cases.

We could be entering a long depression or recession or we might not. In two years everything might bounce back but you can't plan only one or two years in advance — or you shouldn't plan. You need to take into consideration that we might not bounce back and so where are we going to be?

Is this a budget that is only crafted to take us up to the next election to get re-elected — enough money to get re-elected based on that, but after that there is no vision of where you are going? No idea of what kind of savings you may have? No idea of what kind of transfers you may get, especially if the federal government continues to drive itself deeper and deeper into debt?

At some point, something has to break. At some point, if you don't make your mortgage payments they come collect your house.

I don't see this budget as helping us to diversify or make us stronger in Yukon. It is just one to try to ride through the next couple of years and hope things turn around. It is a hope-and-prayer kind of budget and I don't have a great deal of faith in that.

You think about some of the signs that have been happening in the last year. We've lost 500 jobs. Now, if we were in the provinces, that would be nothing, but here, 500 jobs are substantial — 30,000 some people.

Personal bankruptcies are up 200 percent in December; I don't know what they are for January, February and March yet, but 200 percent in the Yukon — second highest in Canada. Only P.E.I. had a higher increase in bankruptcies. So what's happening out there? Obviously, serious impacts are finally washing up on the shores of the Yukon from the downturn that's hit the world, because it's not just North American, but it's a world recession that we've gone into, and country after country has declared themselves to be in a recession.

What has the Yukon really done to diversify the economy? Well, building another bridge, doing roads, all keep some of the industries going, but they don't necessarily diversify the economy. I don't see a lot of new ideas out there; I don't see a lot of visionary work happening.

I don't see growth in many industries. I know that tourism is going to be down; we have heard that already. There are some very significant challenges in many of the other sectors. I go downtown now in my lovely riding and two years ago, there used to be signs up everywhere for employment for people. Now I don't often see those signs any more. I am afraid that many of the people who will be laid off are those who are already not earning a great income and have very little savings to

absorb a job loss, until they find another one. I suspect that there is going to be a fair amount of hardship and that leads to poverty.

In the budget I keep hoping that, at some point, this government will really listen to the Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition. They give them \$15,000 a year and yet this is a coalition that is doing a tremendous amount of work. I also believe that they are getting some other funding for special projects and so on.

The Anti-Poverty Coalition really does try to address a serious problem in our society of how we live and how we want to live, I would hope, so that each and every person has an opportunity to live to the best of their means. The Anti-Poverty Coalition deals with a lot of problems. I know because I was a member of it many, many, many years ago. Now, interestingly enough, they are working very closely with other organizations, and I believe a little bit with the government, on putting in and establishing a food bank.

That is a great thing that the Anti-Poverty Coalition has done, but it's a sad statement of our society that we have to have it. Food, shelter, a sense of purpose in life — three very important things.

Adequate food can affect how a child will grow, how they will learn. It can affect how a person behaves. If they're always struggling to get enough food, they have no potential to grow. If a child comes to school hungry, they struggle to learn. That is the case that happens in many places in this territory.

If they don't get nutritional food, they become malnourished. That affects their growth, their ability to participate, to think, to learn.

Shelter has the same impact. If they are living in healthy conditions — and it is not just mould but many other aspects of a home, like air quality, heat, cleanliness — if it is unhealthy, it affects their ability to learn, grow and to contribute — at all levels, whether it is a child or a senior or a person in their middle life.

A sense of purpose and meaning in their lives — if they are always struggling for those first two, then it is very difficult for them to ever have time to feel part of a community and belong and be respected.

The NDP brought in many programs over the years when they were in government. One of them was the kids recreation fund. That was to help families that do not have the money to allow their children to participate in activities that other families take for granted that their kids will participate in. I'm very pleased to see that money has continued to be put into this program — actually, more money — and it just recognizes the need that's out there. We have a serious problem.

The community development fund, of course, allows communities and organizations to put in place recreation centres and trails to enhance their lives. These are all good programs and I'm glad to see that the Yukon government has continued to support those programs. But there is a need to come up with some other solutions to the problems that we face, because those aren't good enough across the board.

One area that we've been talking about a lot lately is substance abuse and how do we address that. Land-based treatment centres: why, after all these years — almost seven years with

this government, six and a half years — do we still not have some kind of agreement to have a land-based treatment centre? All these years. Why? There has been the money. Many times I've heard the MLAs across the way stand up and talk about how important these things are. I've heard the Premier, just this week, on numerous occasions talk about having land-based treatment centres. But, six and a half years later, those words get kind of hollow unless they are actually going to do something.

We need that. But it's not the only thing — it's not just about land-based treatment centres. It's about programs, shelters and food. It's about allowing people to have a meaningful life; not giving them a handout, but a hand up — assist them. We are not all born with supportive parents. We are not all born with money. Every child does not start out equal. That's not how it works in this world. A good government tries to equalize that. It tries to care for those who are in a situation that is not good for their own growth.

I think that's why we pay taxes. It's not just for roads and buildings, but also for the human enterprises that we need to put in place to help and assist all people. At least that's why I pay my taxes. I never, ever complain about paying taxes.

What about the environment?

This budget falls short of doing anything significant around the environment.

Let's look at power. Now, I'm not going to repeat the Member for Klucane's long talk about power. I have slightly different viewpoints on it. But I really do believe this government had a great opportunity, in this budget especially, to bring forward some projects around alternative power that can be tied into the grid, but also alternative power that can be put in place into the communities that will probably never connect to the grid because the feasibility of it is just not there.

I use Old Crow as an example, as the farthest northern community that uses diesel. Using Old Crow as an example, how could we get Old Crow off diesel? Wouldn't that be a great challenge? Wouldn't that be a fabulous project that this government could take on? How to get Old Crow off diesel — if not for 12 months of the year, maybe for eight months of the year. What an impact that would have on a community if the diesels were shut down.

If people have been to Old Crow, they know that those diesels are running steady, and there is a sound to it and there is pollution to it and there is the cost of the fuel transportation and maintenance of those diesels that, I believe, given Old Crow's location and potential, could be addressed. It could be addressed using microhydro. It could be addressed using wind. It could be addressed using solar. It could be addressed using geothermal. It could be addressed having a combination of those contributing to the power needs of that community.

Wouldn't that be a wonderful example of what can be done in regard to power? We could do it. We honestly could do it — not a problem. We have the money; we just don't have the will right now or we don't have the vision to do it.

Old Crow is just one example. You could name Ross River; you could talk about Beaver Creek or many of the communities around the Yukon. Those would be environmentally

sound sources of power and they would have a very positive impact upon long-term cost and upon the health of the community.

But we didn't do it. We still haven't done it. It seems like the only answer is to hook up another grid line and expand the Mayo dam. I have no problem with those initiatives but I don't think all the money should go to them. I think we need some visionary planning around alternative power — ultimately, that is what we are going to have to do. So why delay when we have the opportunity now to put a lot of people to work and to try new technology in these communities and assist them in that and employ people there. Why not? That is what we're trying to do here.

Water quality — we need more testing. We need better standards. We need the federal government to take water quality far more seriously as well.

Waste management, for instance — yesterday it was wonderful to see everybody come together to support a waste management motion that was brought forward by the NDP. That is good and that is what we should do in here and I'm very proud of when this Legislative Assembly is able to come together when we see something that is actually a good direction to go in.

I applaud the government on their decision to support that motion. I applaud the Official Opposition, as well, for supporting it.

I have already talked about housing and the essential need that we have out there. I remember reading a report a few years ago that we had the worst housing stock in Canada — the Yukon did. That surprised me because I didn't think we did. It was a national study that concluded that we had the worst housing stock. So there is a lot of work to do in that area. We all know how much work that can create for people. I am hoping to see some really strong movement to benefit the housing stock.

As for education, we have had so much debate on education over the last week. I listened to this debate and I can't get — how do I put this? I agree with both sides. I agree with some of the comments made by the Education minister. I also agree with many of the comments made by the Official Opposition. But what I don't agree with is the wall that exists between the two. I really have to wonder if either side is listening to each other.

A lot of good ideas, a lot of good responses, a lot of good initiatives, a lot of concern expressed about the graduation rates, why, what's being done. A lot of concern about measurements.

We've brought forward a couple of motions talking about some of the programs that we feel have been very successful that we think need to be enhanced and broadened and put into our schools. We need to enable children to be successful, but we also — I agree with the statement that you just don't hand out diplomas. Every person is part of the success of each child, including the children themselves. But when there are roadblocks in place for that child to succeed, then you have to look at ways to address those roadblocks. And there are many, many roadblocks at many different levels: from home, from health,

from shelter, from the type of teaching to the type of programs. Connecting it all and bringing it all together, it is not just about the school.

It is about the whole society, the community, the parents, the students, the teachers, the educators, and those programs we offer and what we're trying to offer, and getting everybody involved and on the same page — to work together. Because if we compartmentalize just education to be, "Oh, it's only this fault," or "It's only that fault," and "If we just did that, it would happen." — then we are just doing what we've always done, and we're always going to get the same results that we've always got. We need to bring it all together and not shy away from saying it.

The old saying, of course: "It takes a community to raise a child." I heard a minister say that the other day. I haven't heard that comment for awhile. It's a comment that is very true. Sometimes we have to look outside ourselves and what's successful, not just within the Yukon — we do have some very successful programs and schools. And some schools are extremely successful. We should look at those schools and see why they are more successful than others. What are they doing?

But we also have to look out more broadly — look around the world and what's happening out there and what kind of changes have been made to address the problems that we face here, that are very similar to out there, and maybe take the best of those programs that have already been tried and proven to be successful and bring them back into the Yukon and try them here.

In a broad context, I believe that we have to work together for education and not apart. That is the whole community but it is also all of us in the Legislative Assembly. We need to listen to each other more.

Now, we have a 17-percent increase in unemployment and a 200-percent increase in bankruptcy. We have mine shutdowns. My daughter has worked on two mines in the last year and a half and both of them have shut down — big mines. Both of them are just across the border. Redcorp — one of them — has now declared bankruptcy. My daughter did not get her pay and neither did many other workers out there. The other one was just outside of Atlin — Adanac. She also worked at that one. She watched a camp go from 150 down to 13 in the time that she was at that camp. That one is in serious problems as well.

So we have mine shutdowns and we're not having many mine start-ups at this moment. Hopefully there are some bright lights out there in this area, but these ones that were going to employ over 1,000 people are no longer an operation. We have to take that into consideration.

I know that I have run out of time. I just wanted to say that it has always been an honour to represent the people of Whitehorse Centre and often speak on behalf of the people of the Yukon. Yes, it's a real honour.

**Hon. Mr. Hart:** It's a pleasure to be back in the House representing my constituents from Riverdale South. My riding has changed substantially since I first came into it. The

demographics have changed quite a bit. We now have many families that are younger and it is their first home purchase in Riverdale. I am guessing that we have had a 25 to 30-percent overturn in the actual constituency.

We have five schools located in my riding — two high schools and three elementary schools. Of course, with those schools we have plenty of recreational facilities, such as soccer fields, the track, in addition to the skateboard park that's also located within my riding.

One of the other big issues that I think has been a very, shall we say, enhancing process to the riding has been the completion of the Millennium Trail. I think it has provided a wonderful walking trail for many residents to increase their activity to a healthier living style, because it does provide several points along the trail from which you can get on to the trail and get off of it — many points throughout the circle route of approximately five kilometres that enable all residents to get in, get on it, walk their dog, ride their bike. Whatever it is, it's exercise, and it enhances activity and gets people moving. That's something that, as the Minister of Health and Social Services, also previously the minister responsible for Community Services, it is important to get people active and to increase their activity out of the house so that we can get people more active.

I think it has been very good for many — as well as the local residents — to just take a brief summer walk down to the fish ladder or down to where the rafters go through. It has been very interesting to watch the rafters when they're going down, during the summertime. I must say it's not something I would like to undertake right now, but it's interesting to watch. It's a very busy activity during the summertime when the water is high.

Monsieur le Président, membres honorables, je suis très heureux d'être de retour à l'Assemblée législative pour représenter mes électeurs de Riverdale Sud.

With the dynamic people who are in Riverdale, there's always lots of activity and projects going on. Recently there was a meeting held to develop a plan for Riverdale, which will be submitted to the City of Whitehorse.

It's to address, basically, traffic as well as accommodation for what type of landscape was to be looked at. It was a very interesting meeting. It was very interesting to see the different dynamics of those people who were there. For example, one of the options brought forth by the consultant was not, shall we say, hardly received by many of those in attendance. I will say, though, there were lots of people in attendance at that meeting — lots of people — and varying points provided from all different angles. I think that from that meeting there will be another meeting, obviously, that is going to take place prior to the plan actually going to the city. I understand that an extension is being requested so that they can get better feedback from the community on what it likes to see go forth within that process. I think it did show specifically how diverse the community is and how other people were respectful of the opinions of those in attendance.

Another project I would like to highlight, in particular, is a project that I discussed in the House previously, and that is

movement on the Riverdale youth centre. I've been working on this project with the MLA for Riverdale North for some time now, and I'm pleased with the progress to date. We are at a stage, I believe, where we will be in a position to make a decision fairly soon. There is momentum on this project now that we haven't seen for some time. There is collaboration among the groups, across very different types of organizations. We now have three groups in town that are involved with this group, and we will get them to administer the actual centre when it gets opened.

The Youth of Today Society, the Boys and Girls Club and Bringing Youth Toward Equality, or BYTE, as some people know them, are working together on this project, along with a child and youth rights consultant based out of the University of Victoria. This comes together with various and varied groups, demonstrating just how this project is moving forward in a collaborative and cooperative fashion in a way that I am sure will meet with great success. We will be orchestrating a meeting of the group later next month to follow up on some of the ideas put forward by the three groups handling the facility. We will finalize that information and hopefully we will be able to put something together and get something rolling on this facility sometime early in the fall.

I would also like to add my thanks to the Minister of Education for providing funding in the budget for the replacement of F.H. Collins. As he indicated earlier in his speech, it is something that has been underway for some time. I realize that the money is just getting started, but we are at least there, and those involved at F.H. Collins now can see that we are going to move forward on the replacement of that facility.

Now, with regard to the actual budget, I would like to extend my thanks to the staff and all the branch and department staff who were involved in preparing the staff for the Department of Health and Social Services, in addition to the Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board, to ensure that all the aspects of the department were looked at and that funding is provided where needed to ensure that the health of all Yukoners is ensured. In the Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board, obviously, the health and safety of those in the workplace are also being addressed.

Now, the member opposite, in his address, was indicating not seeing any funding being provided for NGOs. Now I will provide the member opposite with a breakdown during my Committee of the Whole speech with regard to the department on NGO funding and specific funding that we did provide, and also the funding that we're providing on a multi-year basis to many of the major NGOs, which I personally delivered to all of those NGOs earlier this year and made that commitment to them to enable them to carry on and not worry about their funding on a year-to-year basis.

We have made several contribution agreements to these groups. We have increased the funding to almost all of the groups over that three-year period to help them maintain their staff and to help enable them to handle the increase in their services — the increase in the demand for their services — and that is being handled by us.

We have a very good relationship with our NGOs in terms of getting funding through, as well as providing the services that they do for the general public. I will get to the stage of providing it at a later date. We have done that with our NGOs throughout the Yukon — not just in Whitehorse, but in our rural areas, as well.

The capital and operation and maintenance budget for 2009-10 is the largest Government of Yukon budget ever, and breaks through the billion-dollar threshold at \$1.3 billion. In October 2006 we presented Yukoners with a vision of the territory in our election platform, entitled *Building Yukon's Future Together: A Clear Vision for a Bright Future*. With the budget we are able to continue to implement our vision for the Yukon. We are able to strengthen the four pillars of our platform to build a better life for Yukoners. We are making progress toward our vision. Our vision aims to improve the health, safety and socio-economic well-being of Yukoners and Yukon communities.

Since becoming the Minister of Health and Social Services in July of 2008, the Department of Health and Social Services and I have been able to complete a number of accomplishments. Before getting to these accomplishments, I would like to take a moment to acknowledge the hard work that the officials put in day after day in the areas of health and social services. There are many front-line workers, Mr. Speaker, who go to work and face the challenges every day with these clients they see — challenges that many of us are not aware of, and yet these front-line workers contribute to the overall community health on a daily basis. This is also the management and office staff who support our front-line workers by ensuring that the best practices and efficiencies are used wherever possible.

At this point I will move on to some items in the Health and Social Services area.

There was the signing of the four-year contract agreement with the doctors, which continues to ensure full doctor coverage in Yukon. The Yukon has an average of three doctors per 1,000 people; whereas the Canadian average is 2.2 doctors per 1,000 people. This provides some stability to our supply of doctors here within the territory. There is now a full complement of nurses. There are now nurses staffed in all nursing stations in all communities across the territory, except for one position in Watson Lake, which is being handled by an agency nurse.

We expect to have all the remaining positions filled soon. A full complement of nurses will be something that has not happened for many years in the Yukon.

We have moved the children of mixed gender from the former children's receiving home to gender-separated housing. This has resulted in improved behaviour of the children in care by using this best-practices structure. This model is resulting in improved behaviour, and smaller groups, which has enhanced the working environment for our staff, and especially for the youth in these facilities.

Mr. Speaker, after actually going and visiting these facilities, it became very apparent just by splitting out the gender, just what a difference it has made for our staff, in addition to what it made to the youth who we are assisting in our custody.



It was a very enlightening process to see them in their actual surroundings, while they're at work, as well as while they're there, and I have to say that I was impressed with the overall service provided there.

We have also consulted on a made-in-the-Yukon model for the child and youth advocate. There is an increase to the income supplement to seniors by 100 percent, the supplement is now indexed to the consumer price index, and there is now double the number of seniors who are eligible for the Yukon seniors income supplement that is being provided.

I would also like to point out that that is something the member opposite didn't bring up in his comments with regard to how we're assisting those outside of just the general process — making sure that the lower income people of the Yukon are being assisted. That's a very important improvement by this government for the lower income seniors.

There was a contribution of \$300,000 to the Carcross-Tagish First Nation for their daycare program. Social assistance amendments were undertaken. We recently raised the rates for single people, couples and families of three and indexed them to CPI to accurately reflect the current cost of food and shelter for housing categories. This is in addition to the substantial increase that was done in July of last year. We made this addition after discussions with the coalition that the member opposite talked about — the Anti-Poverty Coalition — and they made this aspect to us. We had our officials look at the food allowance and, after some investigation, we looked at it and provided an increase in that food allowance to that. I will provide a breakdown of that in my Committee of the Whole speech. I think that another very important aspect is indexing that increase to the CPI.

On top of the large increase to our social assistance rates, which were basically unchanged for almost 20 years, within six months we increased the food rates with regard to the single, couple and family of three. We did make some adjustments and, based on consultation with the Anti-Poverty Coalition, made good on that thing, and also made it effective the first of the year so that people could take advantage of that system early in the new year.

Another initiative is the launching of the Yukon health care review steering committee and consultation with the public to discuss health care issues. Mr. Speaker, this health care review was announced in the House last fall. It is underway now. The good doctor is out underway with this review with the general public and he's already been out meeting with stakeholders with regard to this review and we'll be receiving a copy of his results sometime in May.

We have also initiated the transfer process with regard to the Yukon Hospital Corporation for the Watson Lake hospital. We have provided long-term secure funding in the form of a three-year contribution agreement with a number of organizations, as I mentioned earlier. They include the Yukon Hospital Corporation, Kaushee's Place, Help and Hope women's shelter, Many Rivers Counselling Services.

And I will say, Mr. Speaker, to the latter, we provided an increase to all of those NGOs.

We have recruited a third psychiatrist for the territory to further enhance health services to Yukon. We expect to see her here in the territory in May of this year.

We are also investing an additional \$245,000 annually in the mammography program to protect the health of Yukon women. The funding will be used to supplement the hospital's existing program and hire additional trained staff, including a nurse trained in clinical breast examinations to detect breast cancer in its earliest stages. In addition to that, we anticipate that this machine and the additional service of the nurse will cut down the wait time substantially for those waiting to take that service up.

We have also launched a new healthier living campaign aimed at women in the rural Yukon. The campaign, called "Today for you I care for me," encourages women to adopt healthier lifestyles by providing them with messages and information on active living, healthy eating, and smoke-free living.

These messages support the programs run through the Recreation and Parks Association of Yukon, one of the four partners in the initiative. The other partners are Community Services' sport and recreation branch, the Department of Health and Social Services, the health promotion unit and the centre for health promotion, Public Health Agency of Canada.

The government is extending the youth homelessness pilot project program to enable the government to get a clear picture on what is happening in the Yukon with regard to youth homelessness. This is an important program and will enable the government to make sound decisions based on reliable data.

The government has increased funding provided to the youth childcare operators by 100 percent for staff wages. The increase took effect this past July and the 100-percent increase is a significant investment in childcare for Yukoners. Childcare operators and the childcare community identified low wages as barriers to recruiting and retaining staff. This government has listened and provided assistance.

In addition to last year's increase of 30 percent, this increase gave childcare operators another 40-percent increase in the wage portion of the direct operating grant. Wage increases vary depending on the level of training that the workers have. These changes build on a series of financial supports for childcare that have gone on for the past couple of years. In August of 2007, the rate pay for childcare operators for their staff wages increased 30 percent. In November 2007, the childcare subsidy rate for parents increased by 25 percent, resulting in increases from \$500 to \$625 per month for infant care and from \$450 to \$565 a month for toddler care.

I would also like to mention some highlights in the 2009-10 budget that demonstrate how this budget supports our vision that I mentioned early — and that is to meet the needs of Yukoners. This government has increased the Health and Social Services budget by approximately \$20 million — \$20 million. I have heard that some members cannot see where the money is being spent. I will take a few minutes here to highlight some of the areas where we are investing in Health and Social Services for Yukoners.

In the hospital, there is a teleradiology initiative, which is a three-year project that began in 2008-09. There is a project total cost of \$3.5 million in capital and \$934,000 in an O&M commitment over four years.

In community nursing, we'll replace the existing manual processing of X-rays with digital X-ray processing in all rural health care facilities. X-ray views can now be processed in all rural communities and forwarded electronically to the radiologist in Edmonton, Vancouver or anywhere in the world for interpretation. The radiologist then responds to the medical professionals in Yukon with the analysis of those X-rays.

Something else the government is partnering with Whitehorse General Hospital on is with the centralized lab services for communicable disease control. With this new partnership, all lab services for communicable diseases will now be managed by Whitehorse General Hospital. This will make lab results more readily available for health care providers and see some efficiencies in the processing of lab tests.

\$1.8 million is being provided for the replacement of the children's receiving home here in Whitehorse. The existing building will be replaced by a smaller home that will house up to six youth of the same gender, while up to six more youth will be located in another renovated building. This new approach is in line with today's best practices for housing and stabilizing youth in care.

There is an interdepartmental partnership for the Journey Far carver program. This is a joint initiative with the Justice department. The Health and Social Services component is aimed at youth at risk. The program has been shown to have a positive impact on the artistic growth, employability skills, business development and personal wellness of the participants. This initiative has a high level of support from the Council of Yukon First Nations, many First Nations, Skookum Jim Friendship Centre, Blue Feather Youth Centre, Many Rivers Counselling Services, CAIRS, and other NGOs.

Some of our young carvers from the Journey Far carver project travelled to Ottawa earlier with other Yukoners, to the Ottawa Winterlude Festival, and participated in Yukon Days. They were greatly appreciated for their wares and skills, and demonstrating their wood carving.

For anyone who hasn't been in that facility, it's a very encouraging place to be in, to see the creativity of these young artists at work in the facility. I took a couple of individuals from out of town into this facility, and they were just totally blown away by what was happening there, especially when we emphasized the fact that it was specified for youth at risk and how some of them had been able to advance along the lines of being almost self-sufficient through their carving.

In addition, I understand, from the Minister of Economic Development that there has been a demand for the carving on a continuous basis for this group and I can see great hope for enhancement for this group as well as adding new carvers to the facility as they go through their life and as we add and subtract members from the carvers.

Another partnership the Government of Yukon is engaged in is the Canada Health Infoway. One of the initiatives coming from this partnership is the Yukon home care and implement-

ing a new telehome care program that provides the tools for staff to better engage their clients. By using portable computers, staff can better plan care, collect important data to assist individual clinical care planning and provide better information for future services. With the new technology assessments, care planning will be completed at home with more input from the home care clients themselves.

This addresses one of our election platform commitments, which is to continue to ensure that seniors and elders are able to remain in their homes as long as possible by increasing home care and other services.

As part of the health care and human resources strategy, the Yukon is sending nurses to the Aurora College in Yellowknife to take the Introduction to Advanced Practice, or IAP, program. We are also expanding the nurse mentorship program to include licensed practical nurses. Both of these initiatives will contribute to improving the recruitment and retention of nurses here in the Yukon. And, as I mentioned earlier, we currently have only one vacant nurse position in Watson Lake that is outstanding — something that hasn't happened in the Yukon for a long time.

We also continue to provide a number of bursaries to Yukoners who will become health professionals. We have the health professional education bursary. The purpose of the bursary is to support Yukon students in attaining health professional education. Canadian studies have indicated that it is the people from rural and remote areas who are most likely to return to the practice in those areas. On the basis of these studies, it is anticipated that some people who receive the Yukon health professional education bursary support will return to provide health care services here in the Yukon.

There is also the Yukon nursing education bursary. This is intended to support people who live or have lived in the Yukon to attend nursing school. Applicants are selected by a bursary committee made up of representatives from the Yukon Registered Nurses Association, Council of Yukon First Nations, Whitehorse General Hospital, community nursing and continuing care. The Yukon medical education bursary is intended to support people who live or have lived in the Yukon in attending medical school. This supports students in medical school studying outside of the territory.

Family group conferencing is an initiative that comes under THAF. It is part of the *Child and Family Services Act* implementation. This initiative draws families together in order to make decisions and to collaborate on the plans for the care of a child when specific situations arise. The intent is to anticipate situations that might be high risk for children and to have safety plans in place and ready to implement if those situations arise. For example, having plans and arrangements to have relatives take care of children if parents are temporarily not able to care for them ensures the children's safety and may avert them from having to come into care.

Another interdepartmental partnership is the Community Wellness Court. This is part of our joint initiative with Justice that approves a full-time alcohol and drug services addictions counsellor position for the Community Wellness Court. There is also the transfer of the Watson Lake hospital to the Yukon

Hospital Corporation. The Department of Health and Social Services and the Yukon Hospital Corporation are continuing with the details on the implementation of the transfer of the Watson Lake hospital. A management agreement has been negotiated with the Yukon Hospital Corporation.

Another area of spending is the social assistance rate increase. The food increase was the benefit itself, as mentioned earlier. The social assistance rates for basic needs — food, clothing and shelter — increased by 25 percent in July of 2008. Again, as I mentioned, it was increased as of January 1 of this year. Rates had not been increased since 1992. The rate of increase for social assistance items of basic need will now be indexed each fall under the CPI. The annual indexing of the social assistance items basic needs will have a positive impact on all income support recipients. This should avoid the situation of not having an increase for almost 20 years, as indicated.

To ensure that persons on social assistance have the necessary resources and meet nutritional needs, social assistance food allowances were increased — as I mentioned — for single couples and three-person families.

For the Yukon Hospital Corporation, there were increases in the contribution for the wait-time trust fund. For cardiology, the increased contribution to the hospital will upgrade the sound equipment. There were changes to the specialist clinics. There will be enhanced visits from specialist services by increasing hours of operation and staff support. Costs are committed over the next four years and include funds for support staff and a nurse.

Electronic distribution of lab results will replace the paper process with electronic transmission of lab test results, increasing the speed with which health care providers have information readily available to them. This will decrease the time required to determine the appropriate course of treatment.

In the area of mammography, we will provide additional staffing, as indicated, to extend the service hours to weekends and evenings. This will result in increased accessibility of the service and reduce wait times to two important aspects of our health care system.

For knee replacement surgery, additional funds will double the total number of knee replacement surgeries that can be completed locally in a year from 12 to 24. Wait times will be reduced and more people will be able to access the procedure closer to home.

Food and water safety enhancements — an additional environmental health officer has been approved to support increased resources aimed at addressing both food and water safety issues.

Additional funds to operate the drinking water laboratory have also been approved. Water and food safety are cornerstones of public health monitoring, addressing food- and water-borne threats, illnesses and increasing conflicts due to more rigorous guidelines for drinking water quality and the global production and distribution of food. Full implementation of new drinking water regulations and a focused comprehensive approach to food safety and food recalls will help reduce this risk.

Over at the Child Development Centre, there is a funding increase to hire a psychologist, due to an increase in referrals and service requirements. This will support the CDC in providing psychological services to children with special needs. Again, this government reacted to the need identified by the NGO for the additional service. The member opposite had indicated that he didn't see anything in our budget; here we are reacting directly to a request from the Child Development Centre for a child psychologist and that is what is being put forth.

The patient wait-time pilot project — the Yukon government received \$1.4 million from Health Canada to support a pilot project to test the feasibility of providing Yukon patients with access and recourse, when warranted, to a wider range of choice in service providers for cancer care, cardiac care, orthopedic surgery and site restoration.

The main purpose of the pilot project is to provide Yukoners with timely medical service in and outside the territory. As part of this project, three new positions are being created to enhance access to medical services for Yukoners: a cancer care navigator, a total joint replacement rehabilitation navigator, and a travel recourse administrator. Full implementation of the project will occur early in 2009-10.

In the area of childcare support, the government continues to increase funding to support a variety of childcare service programs and initiatives made possible through the \$1 million annual allocation announced in May 2007. The childcare subsidy program which supports the affordability of childcare spaces has increased by \$176,000.

Other childcare initiatives include support for increasing childcare worker wages, support for children with special needs, training and to increase the quality of care children receive.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I can see that I am running way short of time.

In addition, I would say that I have many more items I'd like to discuss, which I'll put in my other speech. But I would say that I think we've demonstrated here that a substantial amount of money is going into the health care system, again, for the betterment and enhancement of health care for all Yukoners.

Thank you.

**Hon. Mr. Fentie:** I want to begin by thanking all members of the House for their response and comments to what is a significantly large investment in Yukon, meeting today's challenges and building Yukon's future.

Also, some thanks are in order, Mr. Speaker, to the Department of Finance and to all Yukon government departments for the tremendous effort they have put forward over the many months the work was being conducted in constructing this budget.

Part of why we have the fiscal capacity we do in today's Yukon is certainly due to the management of the Department of Finance and those employees within each department responsible for the spending authorities provided and how they've been managing the expenditures of government overall.

I think we have to all recognize that that does take a tremendous amount of effort on a daily basis.

To the Department of Finance for burning the midnight oil, so to speak, I want to extend, personally, from me the minister, how much I appreciate their efforts. I'm comforted to know that I have that kind of support in dealing with the Department of Finance and all the issues that go with it.

I think it's quite clear that my comments need not be overly extended. I can be brief. The budget pretty much speaks for itself. I could sum it up, obviously, by statements made in the speech delivered here when we tabled the budget, which is that this budget is designed to stimulate Yukon's private sector economy. That's not a new concept for the Yukon Party government; we've been doing that since coming into office, and I'll touch briefly on some of the statistics that bear out that statement.

It's also an investment in economic, social and public infrastructure that will keep Yukon's economy primed for the near term, while at the same time contributing to the territory's longer term economic prosperity. Indeed — and this is an accomplishment — this budget, as projected, shows that we are tabling our seventh year-end surplus.

Mr. Speaker, there have been comments that I have heard that relate to issues such as federal government dependence.

I have to say that is the same comment we heard in the very first budget we tabled in this House. I think the members opposite should do a little bit of soul searching on that comment and reflect on the fact that those who chose to live in the Yukon Territory, residents of this magnificent territory, have the right to comparable services that other Canadians have access to.

The fiscal arrangement with Canada has nothing to do with dependence and has everything to do with the rights for all Yukoners to be able access comparable services.

Further, our fiscal arrangement, as negotiated, has increased dramatically the fiscal capacity of Yukon to ensure that, to the extent possible, we can deliver those comparable services to all Yukoners, whether it be highways, bridges, sewer, water, waste management, education, health care, social services, post-secondary education — we assist there — or taking care of our seniors. All these areas of investment directly compare to other areas of the country where Canadians choose to live. In whatever region, whether it be Atlantic Canada, British Columbia, Alberta, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Quebec and so on, they all have access to services comparable to ours.

We still have a ways to go, but great improvements have been made since the time — and I have no hesitation repeating this — when the federal Liberal government said that they were going to deal with the Canadian deficit.

They have made many statements subsequent to that, that they — the federal Liberal government — were the government of this nation that dealt with the federal deficit. No, they did not, Mr. Speaker. They simply transferred the deficit to the provinces and the territories by cutting the fiscal transfers. What we've accomplished to date here in Yukon through our negotiations is the replacement of what was taken away.

So we have no problem whatsoever in presenting to the Yukon public the significant increase in Yukon's fiscal capacity, and that is part and parcel of why we have managed to, once again, table a record-sized budget.

Of course the members talk about diversification or the lack thereof. Again, the members have to do some soul searching — the opposition members — and reflect on what is happening in today's Yukon. Where once dependency was an issue — and that would be dependency on the mining industry, for example — we have changed course in this territory over the last six years with a strategic focus and investment in a number of economic sectors in Yukon.

All the members have to do is go back to our very first budget in 2003-04, carry forward to today and this budget, and they will find an extensive list of those strategic investments in those many economic sectors in today's Yukon.

Diversification is part of our economic structure these days in the territory. I have listed them, and other ministers have listed them many times. But we are much more diverse, much more outward-thinking, much more involved nationally, much more involved internationally — to the point where we're receiving international investment coming into the Yukon these days. All these things demonstrate the growth and diversification of Yukon and its economy.

But we haven't forgotten people. In this budget, once again, there is a significant investment in people, whether it be in the health care system, as the minister just pointed out — a significant \$20-million increase for health care and social programs, education, training, income supplement, tax breaks, and the list goes on. We have invested heavily in people.

Mr. Speaker, in general terms, not only is Yukon diversified but so too is our fiscal plan and this budget in the many areas that we are investing fiscal resources to ensure that not only are we meeting the challenges of today — and of course there are many given the global turbulence — but are continuing to build Yukon's future.

I have overheard a few comments about reductions, about sustainability of spending — these are valid points and I'm going to try to clear them up for the members opposite.

First on the issue of sustainable spending — one has to look, Mr. Speaker, not only at this budget and its projections, but each time we table a budget we table a five-year fiscal framework. I will take the members just briefly through the five-year fiscal framework.

Quite readily you will see that if we go to the surplus deficit for year-end, over the course of the five-year fiscal framework, we are projecting and have presented to the members of this House and to the Yukon public year-end surpluses for each of those five years.

Secondly, the members will notice that our net financial resource position at end of year continues to be in surplus. The point I will make, however, on that, is that as we go forward throughout the course of the fiscal framework over the next five years, one will see that we're spending down our net financial resource position. That's something that we as a government are very mindful of, but that's partly due to the fact that a number of sunsetted strategic investments with Canada

will be ending. So it's not an alarming situation; it is one that the Department of Finance, me as minister, and the government in general, are very much focused on. We place a great emphasis on that. But the real issue here is, in terms of the position being taken by some members across the way about sustainability — I think the budget itself, and the five-year fiscal framework, demonstrates the answer to that clearly, and it's documented.

On the issue of reductions, again, I'll attempt to clear things up.

The members opposite have to accept this fact: budgets are compared year to year. Each year through the course of the fiscal year, variances with take place, upwards or downwards, in terms of what has been booked and projected in the main estimates.

The fact of the matter is — and this is another reason why our fiscal position is as healthy as it is — that this government does not allow supplementary expenditures through the course of the year, unless it is a non-discretionary expenditure requirement — it does not allow those other expenditures to become part of the base spending authority for the next fiscal year. The supplementaries are not factored into the department's next-year budget. There is a reason for that, Mr. Speaker.

If the Government of Yukon were to book all supplementary expenses during the course of the fiscal year into the base spending authority of each department that had received a supplementary expense in the coming fiscal year, the Yukon would be broke in no time. This is called fiscal management as it should be.

That is why, to a great degree, we have a very healthy fiscal position: cash management. I think that the realities are very positive. They are demonstrated in this year's budget — the budget for 2009-10. It shows that our tax and general revenues — again, members have made comments about the economy and dependency — has a 12-percent growth factor between last year and the coming fiscal year as presented in our own-source revenues. Some of the impacts we will face in taxation, for example, will be due to external taxation issues outside of this territory. That probably will be in the area of corporate taxation. However, the good news is that we are showing a 12-percent growth in own-source revenues.

At the same time, if we go back to the very first budget, there are growth factors in our own-source revenue because of what we have been doing with budgeting. Because of the stimulation that we have created through strategic investments, there is a corresponding connection to an increase in own-source revenue.

That's a very strong indicator of economic growth and the lessening of dependence on the federal government. Further to that, Mr. Speaker, this government has already been giving back to Yukoners, putting more disposable income into Yukoners' pockets through reduction of taxes, as we've been experiencing this growth.

Further, the budget also shows on the O&M side that there will be a nine-percent overall budget increase for operations and maintenance. That means for program and service delivery

— that's social programs, that's education, that's health — in all areas, across the government, where O&M expenditures are required, there is a nine-percent increase.

To go back to the issue of stimulus, and in meeting today's challenges and structuring a budget for these times, we show a dramatic increase in capital of some 19 percent. Now, those capital investments are very important for this territory. They are the job creator, they create the cash flow, they put on the ground infrastructure that will contribute to future economic growth in this territory, and there are many, many other positive factors that will come from the extent of this type of capital investment here in the Yukon.

We know that the benefits will certainly be realized as we go forward through the fiscal year.

With that said, Mr. Speaker, I look forward to the debate this spring with this budget.

I know that the Official Opposition has made much about the economy. I am very keen to hear what they have to say about the economy as we debate the budget. There is a lot of debate that should take place with this budget. We, the government side, are quite eager to hear what the Official Opposition has to say and the same goes for the third party and the independent member. We will be very expeditious in moving the business forward day to day here in the House and do our level best to help expedite that debate and provide any information over and beyond the massive amount of information that is already present in the budget. There have already been many, many briefings taking place, including the budget lock-up.

Mr. Speaker, just to close off on second reading — I think we all are aware that there are some unknowns ahead.

Nobody in this world can tell you today — whether they be an economist, a president, a prime minister, whomever — can actually tell you today where we'll be three months from now. We can talk all we want about projections; however, the fundamental issue is that it's an unknown, and this budget is actually preparing for that very issue by ensuring that we have in reserve many more options to continue to deal with challenges going forward.

There are a number of positive signs starting to appear, but we're not there yet. So this government will continue to work through its deputy head committees engaged with the Yukon economic drivers, the stakeholders, Yukoners in general, First Nation governments, and municipal governments. We will continue that process.

We've also structured an internal deputy head committee that will be monitoring and managing the capital projects for government on a quarterly basis.

This is to ensure that we are advancing in our expenditures, progressing in our investments, and basically ensuring that we can continue to target areas where an issue might arise, given the global challenges that we face.

We will continue to commit to our coordinated responsibilities with our nation. We will continue to work with the national deputy committee on pensions, on regulatory issues and so on. This will all be part and parcel as we go forward during the coming fiscal year.

To all the ministers on the government side of the House, finally they too have a lot of credit due, because it's through their leadership and efforts that much of this gets done within their offices. We as a government are very proud of this budget. We recognize what it means to Yukon today and to Yukon's future, and we want to proceed as quickly as possible in making the investments, and indeed, preparing for the next fiscal year. Thank you.

**Speaker:** Thank you. Are you prepared for the question?

**Some Hon. Members:** Division.

#### Division

**Speaker:** Division has been called.

#### Bells

**Speaker:** Mr. Clerk, please poll the House.

**Hon. Mr. Fentie:** Agree.

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** Agree.

**Hon. Ms. Taylor:** Agree.

**Hon. Mr. Kenyon:** Agree.

**Hon. Mr. Rouble:** Agree.

**Hon. Mr. Lang:** Agree.

**Hon. Ms. Horne:** Agree.

**Hon. Mr. Hart:** Agree.

**Mr. Nordick:** Agree.

**Mr. Mitchell:** Disagree.

**Mr. McRobb:** Disagree.

**Mr. Elias:** Disagree.

**Mr. Fairclough:** Disagree.

**Mr. Inverarity:** Disagree.

**Mr. Hardy:** Agree.

**Mr. Cardiff:** Agree.

**Mr. Edzerza:** Disagree.

**Clerk:** Mr. Speaker, the results are 11 yeas, six nays.

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

*Motion for second reading of Bill No. 15 agreed to*

#### Bill No. 14: Second Reading

**Clerk:** Second reading, Bill No. 14, standing in the name of the Hon. Mr. Fentie.

**Hon. Mr. Fentie:** I move that Bill No. 14, entitled *Interim Supply Appropriation Act, 2009-10*, be now read a second time.

**Speaker:** It has been moved by the Hon. Premier that Bill No. 14, entitled *Interim Supply Appropriation Act, 2009-10*, be now read a second time.

**Hon. Mr. Fentie:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will be quick in my introductory remarks. I am, of course, very pleased to introduce this bill. It's a standard practice for interim supply to be brought forward. The act requests spending authority, which in total is not to exceed \$312,709,000. The purpose of this spending authority is to defray, as always, the various charges and expenses of the public services of Yukon for the

two-month period April 1, 2009 through to May 31, 2009. Of this total, \$232,413,000 has been previously authorized by a special warrant, as outlined in Schedule C of the legislation, just in case we would find ourselves in some sort of predicament where the Government of Yukon and the Yukon public would find themselves without spending authority come April 1 — just in case, Mr. Speaker.

The amounts for operation and maintenance are \$215,480,000, and the amounts for capital are \$97,229,000. The full details, of course, are within the main estimates themselves. I guess that's all I would have to say. The members opposite may want to provide some comments, but the government would certainly encourage the opposition members of the House to move interim supply through the House as quickly as possible.

**Mr. Mitchell:** I'll thank the Premier for his brief remarks and, in particular, for actually tabling an interim supply bill. The Premier has frequently resorted to special warrants, and we've said that we didn't see the need for special warrants when we were coming back into this Assembly, and that an interim supply bill would be fully sufficient to ensure that the government is able to continue working, that people can be paid, that NGOs can operate, and that all of the projects can move forward while we debate the main estimates.

We indicated in advance, and we've done it in previous years, that if the government would table an interim supply bill, that we would support that, and we expected that the third party would as well. We gave our word, and we will support it, and we'll be voting for this measure, as it's the proper way to conduct the House's business.

Thank you.

**Mr. Hardy:** We rise also to support the interim supply bill, of course, and it just makes me chuckle to remember why the Premier always gets a little nervous about interim supply bills, and why special warrants are used by the Premier.

He was in another government many years ago, and it was a Yukon Party initiative that made everybody nervous. So it's interesting, now he's the Yukon Party leader, and I guess maybe he doesn't trust himself either.

However — you know, history is really funny, and another thing — the Premier and I were talking last week, and it came up that whenever we come into the Legislative Assembly, the weather changes. It gets quite nice out.

Of course, exactly what happened was last week we came into the Chamber and, all of a sudden, the weather changed and it started getting warming out. I would just suggest that, for everybody's sake in the territory, if we come into the Chamber in February, we would have much nicer weather for the people and we wouldn't have to worry so much about interim supply bills.

**Hon. Mr. Fentie:** No further comment, Mr. Speaker

*Motion for second reading of Bill No. 14 agreed to*

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

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

*Motion agreed to*

*Speaker leaves the Chair*

## COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

**Chair (Mr. Nordick):** Order please. Committee of the Whole will now come to order. The matter before the Committee is Bill No. 14, *Interim Supply Appropriation Act, 2009-10*.

## INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

**Mr. Elias:** I would ask all members of the House to join me in recognizing Devyn Kassi and Shane Charlie Frost from my constituency in Old Crow. They have travelled down for the Yukon Native Hockey Tournament. I wish for all members to welcome them to the House.

*Applause*

### Bill No. 14 — *Interim Supply Appropriation Act, 2009-10*

**Hon. Mr. Fentie:** In Committee, on interim supply, the government side has very little for further comment. I think the second reading speech provided the information. I will leave it up to the members opposite, should they have any questions.

But overall, this interim funding, as I said, is standard practice, and in any debate that may be forthcoming, we will endeavour to expedite that debate.

**Mr. Mitchell:** As we said earlier, we look forward to debating the main estimates in the coming weeks, and we'll reserve all of our questions for the Premier and the ministers for that time.

**Chair:** Is there any further general debate?

Seeing none, we'll proceed clause by clause in Bill No. 14.

**Mr. Inverarity:** I would request the unanimous consent of the Committee to deem all clauses, schedules and the title of Bill No. 14, *Interim Supply Appropriation Act, 2009-10*, read and agreed to.

### Unanimous consent re deeming all clauses, schedules and title of Bill No. 14 read and agreed to

**Chair:** Mr. Inverarity has requested the unanimous consent of the Committee to deem all clauses, schedules and title of Bill No. 14, *Interim Supply Appropriation Act, 2009-10*, read and agreed to. Are you agreed?

**All Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**Chair:** Unanimous consent has been granted.

*Clauses 1 and 2, and Schedules A, B and C deemed to have been read and agreed to*

*On Title*

*Title agreed to*

**Hon. Mr. Fentie:** I move that Bill No. 14, *Interim Supply Appropriation Act, 2009-10*, be reported without amendment.

**Chair:** It has been moved by Mr. Fentie that Bill No. 14, *Interim Supply Appropriation Act, 2009-10*, be reported without amendment.

*Motion agreed to*

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

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

*Motion agreed to*

*Speaker resumes the Chair*

**Speaker:** I will now call the House to order.

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

### Chair's report

**Mr. Nordick:** Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 14, *Interim Supply Appropriation Act, 2009-10*, and directed me to report it without amendment.

**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.

### Unanimous consent re third reading of Bill No. 14

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, I request the unanimous consent of the House to proceed with third reading of Bill No. 14, *Interim Supply Appropriation Act, 2009-10*, at this time.

**Speaker:** The Government House Leader, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, has requested the unanimous consent of the House to proceed with third reading of Bill No. 14, *Interim Supply Appropriation Act, 2009-10*, at this time.

Is there unanimous consent?

**All Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**Speaker:** Unanimous consent has been granted. Government bills.

## GOVERNMENT BILLS

### Bill No. 14: Third Reading

**Clerk:** Third reading, Bill No. 14, standing in the name of the Hon. Mr. Fentie.

**Hon. Mr. Fentie:** Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 14, entitled *Interim Supply Appropriation Act, 2009-10*, be now read a third time and do pass.

**Speaker:** It has been moved by the Hon. Premier that the Bill No. 14, entitled *Interim Supply Appropriation Act, 2009-10*, be now read a third time and do pass.

*Motion for third reading of Bill No. 14 agreed to*

**Speaker:** I declare that Bill No. 14 has passed this House.

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

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

*Motion agreed to*

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

*The House adjourned at 5:25 p.m.*