

Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Monday, March 29, 2010 — 1:00 p.m.

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

Prayers

DAILY ROUTINE

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

Are there any tributes?

Are there any introductions of visitors?

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Speaker: Under tabling returns and documents, the Chair has for tabling a report of the Auditor General of Canada, entitled *Yukon Housing Corporation*. This report was released to the members of the Assembly, the media and the public on February 9, 2010.

The Chair also has for tabling a letter from the Speaker to the manager of Murdoch's Gem Shop regarding the Assembly's Mace.

Are there any further returns or documents for tabling?

Hon. Mr. Rouble: I have for tabling the joint letter of understanding on the Peel watershed regional land use planning process and project timelines, signed by representatives of the First Nation of Na Cho Nyäk Dun, Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in Han First Nation, Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation, Gwich'in Tribal Council and the Government of Yukon.

Speaker: Are there any further documents for tabling?
 Any reports of committees?
 Any petitions?
 Introduction of bills.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 81: Introduction and First Reading

Hon. Ms. Horne: I move that Bill No. 81, entitled *Victims of Crime Act*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Minister of Justice that Bill No. 81, entitled *Victims of Crime Act*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Motion for introduction and first reading of Bill No. 81 agreed to

Bill No. 82: Introduction and First Reading

Hon. Ms. Horne: I move that Bill No. 82, entitled *Civil Forfeiture Act*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Minister of Justice that Bill No. 82, entitled *Civil Forfeiture Act*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Motion for introduction and first reading of Bill No. 82 agreed to

Bill No. 83: Introduction and First Reading

Hon. Ms. Horne: I move that Bill No. 83, entitled *Act to Repeal an Amendment to the Human Rights Act*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Minister of Justice that Bill No. 83, entitled *Act to Repeal an Amendment to the Human Rights Act*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Motion for introduction and first reading of Bill No. 83 agreed to

Bill No. 84: Introduction and First Reading

Hon. Mr. Lang: I move that Bill No. 84, entitled *Labour Mobility Amendments Act*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Minister of Community Services that Bill No. 84, entitled *Labour Mobility Amendments Act*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Motion for introduction and first reading of Bill No. 84 agreed to

Bill No. 85: Introduction and First Reading

Hon. Mr. Lang: I move that Bill No. 85, entitled *Act to Amend the Motor Vehicles Act, 2010*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Minister of Community Services that Bill No. 85, entitled *Act to Amend the Motor Vehicles Act, 2010*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Motion for introduction and first reading of Bill No. 85 agreed to

Speaker: Are there further bills for introduction?
 Are there any notices of motion?

NOTICES OF MOTION

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to be fiscally responsible and continue to lay a solid foundation for Yukon growth in all sectors by:

(a) making strategic investments now in economics, education, health and social capital infrastructure such as schools, hospitals, energy facilities and transportation, and in the communication infrastructure;

(b) obtaining maximum benefits from federal funds under Canada's economic action plan that expires on March 31, 2011;

(c) proceeding with capital projects identified in the multi-year capital plan, which provides strategic direction for the next three years, in order to provide the necessary certainty that will allow the private sector to plan and grow their companies; and

(d) scheduling major infrastructure projects in the Yukon that will match the capacity of local contractors.

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

THAT this House urges the Yukon government to support food security with the objective of promoting the availability of nutritious, affordable and culturally appropriate food for all people in Yukon, utilizing just and healthy systems by:

(1) assessing the connections among health authorities, farms, ecosystems, food banks, schools, parks, water and waste systems, grocery stores, restaurants and tourism businesses to determine their interdependence;

(2) researching local, national and international systems of food security to determine the most appropriate response for the Yukon;

(3) educating the public and schoolchildren about peak oil and climate change and the dependence of much of the world's agriculture on fossil fuels;

(4) educating the public with buy-local initiatives and agri-tourism projects;

(5) supporting local farmers and their markets to assist them in making local food production and marketing a sustainable economy;

(6) supporting community and school gardens, community kitchens and composting programs;

(7) supporting the food bank while seeking policy reform that will make it obsolete; and

(8) regulating land use and zoning and taxation mechanisms to assist farm and food businesses.

I give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Yukon government to work with governments, including First Nations, and non-profit and private housing providers to develop a housing strategy and policy framework that is:

- (1) comprehensive;
- (2) integrated;
- (3) innovative;
- (4) practical; and
- (5) achievable;

and includes performance and risk-management measures in order to improve the affordability, availability, safety, stability and the range of housing choices in Yukon.

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

THAT this House urges the Yukon government to cease the current practice of holding budget lock-ups for media and opposition parties if it plans to continue to ignore parliamentary tradition and protocol around budget secrecy and budget embargo by releasing the budget to special interest groups before first tabling it in the Legislative Assembly.

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

THAT this House urges the Yukon government to improve safety at the intersection of the Alaska Highway and the north Klondike Highway by ensuring that planned improvements to turning lanes are completed during the 2010 construction season.

Speaker: Are there any further notices of motion?

Is there a statement by a minister?

This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Fiscal management

Mr. Mitchell: Mr. Speaker, we are only two days into this new sitting, but it is obvious already that the Premier is a little sensitive about the budget he tabled last week and he has every reason to be. His financial blueprint is a go-for-broke budget that mortgages our financial future.

When the Premier read his budget speech to the Chamber of Commerce he left a lot of information out. He didn't mention the \$23-million deficit for the year just ending. He didn't mention the \$167 million in borrowing that is now underway. He didn't mention that the government has spent the savings account down from \$135 million to just over \$40 million. Finally, he forgot to mention that more than half of that savings account is made up of the Premier's bad investments in asset-backed commercial paper. When you take that amount out, our rainy-day fund is only \$14 million. There's a price to pay when you engage in this type of reckless spending.

Why is the Premier tying the hands of future governments by going for broke in this way?

Hon. Mr. Fentie: Well, it is quite interesting how the Leader of the Official Opposition comes up with the Yukon being broke. We were broke. In fact, we were broke years past under the fiscal management leadership of a Liberal government. We had no cash, Mr. Speaker, in the bank. We were paying debt-servicing charges just to pay our employees their wages. I will keep emphasizing that on this side of the House, because that's truly broke. Today's Yukon is no such thing. We do have a healthy net financial resource position. The member knows about the booking of last year's estimates; they were in budget lock-up and the officials gave them the detail around that. But at year-end of 2009-10, we have a net financial resource position of some \$69 million. Going forward into this year, we are in surplus.

Furthermore, we have well in excess of \$100 million cash in the bank. Now, if the member can come to a conclusion of that as being broke, I'll leave that up to the member to explain how he comes to that conclusion.

Mr. Mitchell: Last summer the federal Finance minister increased the Yukon government's borrowing limit and this government has been very quick to go down that borrowing road. The Premier has decided to run up the government credit card to the tune of \$167 million. He has also chosen to move that borrowing off the main books, out of the main estimates.

Last year the Premier ran a deficit, whether he wants to admit it or not — \$23 million, according to Finance officials and the budget tabled. That was confirmed by the books in front of us and by the officials. He spent more than he took in. This year he will do the same thing and the announced \$167 million in borrowing isn't even included in the budget.

This scale of borrowing has never before been seen in the Yukon. No government of any political stripe has mortgaged the future in such an irresponsible way.

Why did the Premier and his followers decide to move this borrowing off the main government books and into the Crown corporations?

Hon. Mr. Fentic: I think the member opposite should stand up then and explain to Yukoners why they would not invest in hospitals. I think the member opposite should stand up then and explain to Yukoners why he would encumber Yukon ratepayers, when it comes to their electrical bills, with \$20 million of further charges for diesel use for the same electricity we can provide much cheaper. The member should explain all that.

Furthermore, the member's assertions about moving things off the books is inconsistent with what we must do in terms of our public accounts; the member knows that full well. And furthermore, these corporations are conducting business like corporations — with this government's support. Good for them.

Mr. Mitchell: Mr. Speaker, whether he likes to admit it or not, this Premier is going for broke. The surplus is almost gone; the bank account is almost empty and the government is borrowing money — off the main books, outside of the main estimates — to pay for infrastructure projects. It is not responsible; it is reckless. It is not prudent; it's mortgaging the future. The trajectory of spending, a term that the Premier is familiar with, can't go on like this; it is not sustainable. The Premier has no mandate from the public to take on this type of long-term debt. It certainly wasn't something he campaigned on. He didn't tell people, "Vote for me and I'll spend all the money and, on top of that, I'll max out the credit card." This government is focused solely on the upcoming election and will spend whatever it takes. This is not sound financial management. Yukoners deserve better.

Why has the Premier put the short-term fortunes of his party ahead of the long-term financial health of this territory?

Hon. Mr. Fentic: Well, actually, we committed to the Yukon public some seven years ago to fix the problem of being broke in this territory, and that's certainly what we've done.

Now, the member has stated, once again, "reckless spending". I want the member to explain to Yukoners why the member believes that \$235-plus million in health care for Yukoners is reckless spending. The member should explain that and, further, should explain to Yukoners what he would cut out of health care to meet his definition of "reckless spending". The member should explain to Yukoners why they have to drive, in the member's opinion, on insufficient highways and roads and bridges that are not maintained — by explaining to Yukoners how over \$180 million of investment in Yukon infrastructure is reckless spending.

Mr. Speaker, I could go further, but I think the member opposite is really, really in a situation where accountability is a must. The member must be accountable to Yukoners — explain what he would do, explain how he defines "reckless spending".

Question re: Fiscal management

Mr. Mitchell: Well, I have another question for the Finance minister and by the debate today, I think I'll enjoy it. When government runs out of money, it starts to make cutbacks, and these cutbacks have impacts on real people.

The new budget has cut support for families with autistic children. A former Minister of Health and Social Services, a former Member for Klondike, instituted a new and flexible approach of family support for parents of autistic children,

whereby the parents and specialists together designed custom programming for each child, based on his or her needs and particular place on the spectrum. He should be commended for it. This approach has been very successful and much appreciated by Autism Yukon and their client families. No two children on the spectrum of autism are alike and no two families require the identical support. Outside experts have been engaged to design the programming, which is individualized for each child and family. Support is often provided in the client's own home.

Now the current minister, in a poor attempt to reduce health care spending, has pulled the rug out from under these families. Why are families of autistic children paying for this government's inability to watch the big financial picture? Why is this support being cut?

Hon. Mr. Hart: I thank the member opposite for bringing the question forward as it provides an opportunity to clarify the statements that have been made over the last several days with regard to the services and support for families of children with autism.

Quite contrary to what has been identified, we have not cut the funding and/or services or support to these families. In fact, since 2003, we've increased the funding to that process that the member opposite had just indicated.

That funding for the support to children with disabilities has increased from \$139,000 to well over half a million dollars already, and it still hasn't been calibrated for this year. So, no, we have not made any cuts as the member opposite has indicated. We are continuing to support those families, and the government remains committed to providing a choice to those families.

Mr. Mitchell: Now the minister is chastising the families for speaking out. Last year the government spent \$248 million on health care. That number in this year's budget is \$230 million. That is a reduction of \$18 million. The government is trying to find some of that savings by reducing the funding available to parents with autistic children. This is how the executive director of Autism Yukon described the situation last week: "Parents are beyond mad, beyond disgusted," she said. "We are exhausted, afraid and desperate. We need help and are calling on the Premier to reaffirm his government's support for children in need."

Will the minister restore the funding to support these proven, successful programs? Is the minister telling us all those programs will continue to be funded?

Hon. Mr. Hart: Again, I will reiterate for the member opposite in case he wasn't listening. We are not cutting any funding to the program, nor for the services and/or support for the autism family. In fact, we are continuing to provide support to all members involved in the support for children with disabilities unit.

I might add for the member opposite that 26 percent of the caseload under this particular unit is diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder or approximately 22 children, Mr. Speaker. These families receive 39 percent of the budget provided under that particular unit. We are continuing to provide the support to them. As I also indicated before, individual situations are reassessed on an ongoing basis. So if there is an increased need

during the year, the program is flexible enough to try to respond to those increased needs as they arise.

Mr. Mitchell: There is another item missing from this health care budget and that is funding to complete the latest repairs to the Thomson Centre. The government announced in December 2009, with much fanfare, that it was going to use this facility as a residence for Yukoners requiring long-term care — a budget of \$1.5 million was floated. When you look through the health care budget, there is no money actually allocated to fund this project. The government has announced the project yet has not bothered to put any money in place to actually complete it. Now we know the government is trying to save money on health care, but this project has already been announced. Has this project been turned over to the Hospital Corporation in an effort to reduce the department's budget, or did the minister simply forget to put the money in the budget?

Hon. Mr. Fentie: Well, Mr. Speaker, on the one hand, the Leader of the Official Opposition accuses government of going for broke and investing in health care facilities.

Now the member is suggesting we're saving money in investing in health care. I think the fundamental underpinning of the member's position is that the government is spending more than it takes in. Well, the government side doesn't do its financial management by one estimate in a massive budget document; we use the public accounts.

If you refer to the public accounts of this government since our first budget in 2004, you will find clearly, as audited, that the government spent in excess of \$150 million less than it has taken in. I call that very prudent fiscal management. It's allowing to invest in what Yukoners need today and long into the future.

Question re: Fiscal management

Mr. Hardy: On Thursday, the Premier had this to say: "Not only have we tabled successive budgets ..." — I hope they have tabled successive budgets, of course — "... this is our eighth one — but in every one of them we have not been in deficit." Well, let's look at the facts. Page S-2 of *Supplementary Estimates No. 2* for 2009-10 shows a deficit of \$23 million. I don't believe that the Premier would willfully mislead the House, I just think that he has got it wrong. I'd like to give him a chance to correct the record again and be on the side of the facts that are being presented before the public, before the Legislative Assembly.

Will he confirm, or will he continue to deny that his government ran up a \$23-million deficit in the 2009-10 fiscal year?

Hon. Mr. Fentie: The member opposite surely recognizes that budgets are more than one estimate in the budget document itself. Let me refer the member to the actual budget document. The member will see, if all calculations are done, that the year ending 2009-10 shows a more than \$60-million net financial resource position — in the black, to the positive. But all of these are estimates, and we will allow the public accounts to be concluded and audited by the Auditor General and, once again, we will present those public accounts to this House.

Now, if the member wants to continue on with this particular approach in questioning, the government side will just start relaying the balances in the public accounts, all in surplus.

Mr. Hardy: That's fine, Mr. Speaker. Now, Wikipedia says: "A budget deficit occurs when an entity spends more money than it takes in. The opposite of a budget deficit is a budget surplus. An accumulated governmental deficit over several years (or decades) is referred to as the government debt." And it was a real shocker to see, as clear as day, in the books, the \$23-million deficit this government ran for 2009-10. It was a shock because the government's plan was to run a budget surplus of \$19 million, which means it would take in \$19 million more than it spent for the year.

When you include the \$23-million deficit in this budget, that's a \$42-million turnaround. After seven years of budgets there has obviously been a change in how this government handles taxpayers' money. Why the change after seven years?

Hon. Mr. Fentie: Actually, no change at all, Mr. Speaker. If the member was in budget lock-up, the details around certain estimates within the budget were provided. We'll let the estimates now go forward for the public accounts before the Auditor General to be reviewed and finalized. But the member is now referring to an accumulated deficit and/or surplus. Surely the member recognizes that the accumulated surplus of the Yukon today is in excess of a half-billion dollars.

Mr. Hardy: Change in accounting — that's what it is, Mr. Speaker. We had excesses before with other governments. Now the Premier is well and truly in denial around this. When he first came to power, he had this to say as he slammed others: "We are a strong territory with strong individuals who are proud of paying our way."

When you run a deficit, you're not paying your way, at least for that year in question. This year's budget puts us right on course with another deficit. There are no dollars in this budget for the promised beds in the Thomson Centre as my colleague mentioned earlier. Some of us are looking forward to palliative care in that building — long-term care for our families.

There are no dollars in this budget for new collective agreements with teachers and public servants, and cuts definitely are coming in the health sector. Without a plan — because we don't see a plan here — how does the Premier expect to balance the books at the end of the fiscal year?

Hon. Mr. Fentie: Once again, the member opposite is referring to matters that during the course of the fiscal year always are addressed. One of the facts is that Yukon is paying its way. The Yukon has ample net financial resources in reserve to pay its way, to pay for programs and services and build infrastructure today for use long into the future. Furthermore, the Yukon government has, as I said, well in excess of \$100 million in cash. That is a marked improvement from where we were seven years ago. Further to that, the government of the day, after the last seven years, has taken in some \$150 million more than it has expended. Yes, we surely are paying and will continue to pay our way.

Question re: Fiscal management

Mr. Hardy: There is no question that there has been a change in how this government operates and I'd like to know why. Not only is this government running up a deficit, it is also

taking us into debt. This is something that this Premier strongly opposed when he was in opposition.

The Yukon Energy Corporation is borrowing \$100 million. How are they going to pay for it? The Yukon Hospital Corporation is borrowing \$67 million. I haven't found out how the Hospital Corporation is going to generate enough money to pay for that debt. That money has to be paid back, and with interest, over the next 15 to 30 years. To borrow a phrase becoming popular in the United States, this Premier is committing "generational theft" to sustain his spend-big/borrow-big government. So why is the Premier prepared to mortgage the future of Yukoners by running up a debt?

Hon. Mr. Fentie: You know, Mr. Speaker, the member refers to the Yukon's Energy Corporation and indeed the Yukon Development Corporation. I would encourage him to look at the consolidated balance sheet of said corporation. Furthermore, Mr. Speaker, if the Leader of the Third Party does not believe in providing health care facilities for Yukoners, he should say so. If the member does believe in providing health care facilities like hospitals for Yukoners, he should explain to Yukoners how the member, if in government, would do so. This government is meeting the needs of Yukoners. This government will continue to invest today in what is required not only today but long into the future. Mr. Speaker, this is all about building Yukon's future instead of mortgaging it.

Mr. Hardy: Well, this member believes in spending wisely for the future; this government is not doing that. This government is following a policy of "build now, pay later". This Premier's unsustainable spending habits are saddling future generations of Yukoners with significant and needless debt. We have seen Liberal and Conservative governments all across Canada take us down this road in the past. They run up the debt and then they sell off public assets to pay off the debt, just as he tried to do with Yukon Energy Corporation earlier. This is a backdoor method in doing that. This happened in British Columbia and Ontario. New Brunswick has tried it as well.

Why is this Premier so willing to let Yukon fall into the same debt trap that is forcing other jurisdictions to cut programs and services and sell off public debt?

Hon. Mr. Fentie: Actually, that's exactly what we're doing to avoid such a situation. We're doing things today that actually should have been done a long, long time ago in this territory. The territory's future was mortgaged by ignoring the needs in health care, by ignoring the needs in energy.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we all know that the choice made years ago, when it comes to energy, was subsidizing rates. There was no focus on the needs of the day and into the future. The future was mortgaged. Today we are paying for that, and we are ensuring that, in the future, the citizens of this territory don't have to mortgage their immediate needs in this territory, whatever the cause may be. This is prudent fiscal management. The member opposite has a view. He should state his view to the Yukon public. What would he do about hospitals? What would he do about ensuring affordable energy for Yukoners? If he does not agree with this, he must have his own view and plan.

Mr. Hardy: Well, I agree totally with the Premier on one point: we should all stand and say what we would do. I

have no problem doing that any time. Collaborative care is a far more sane direction that we should be going in and not this insane borrowing that this government is going on. Responsible governments live within their means. They don't spend beyond their means. Responsible governments don't run a deficit. Responsible governments do not run up debt. They don't increase debt, yet that is exactly what this government is doing. So my question: what would it take for the Premier to reconsider this irresponsible financial direction? Will he listen to other people in this territory, other than his own buddies?

Hon. Mr. Fentie: Well, I'll just ignore the "buddies" comment. The fact of the matter is that we have listened to Yukoners. These are needs. These are issues that must be addressed today for the future — future generations of Yukoners.

The member keeps referencing deficit. The member is referring to that in the context of spending more than we bring in. Let me remind the member once again: since this government took office, we have brought in excess of \$150 million more than we have expended. That's the fiscal management that allows us to do today what we need to do in building the future of tomorrow.

Question re: Peel watershed land use plan

Mr. Fairclough: Mr. Speaker, last week I had some questions for the Minister of Environment. His colleague, the EMR minister, kindly answered for him. We still want to know what the Minister of Environment thinks should be done with the Peel Watershed Planning Commission's recommended plan. The plan recommends significant ecological protection in the area. While we thank the EMR minister for his answers, it is still important to know what the position is of the Department of Environment. So what does the Minister of Environment think should be done with the Peel?

Hon. Mr. Rouble: Mr. Speaker, as we discussed last week, the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources has the responsibility for land use planning in the territory, and we consistently work with other departments, whether they be the Department of Environment, Community Services, the Executive Council — really all the departments throughout government. We have certainly undertaken some significant land use planning processes and have accomplished them in the territory.

Earlier today I tabled the joint letter of understanding on the *Peel Watershed Regional Land Use Plan* and the planning process with the timelines and schedule that has been established with the affected First Nations and signed off by the Government of Yukon. I have tabled the schedule, the plan — the guiding principles. If the member opposite would like to review those, then perhaps we can discuss those further.

Mr. Fairclough: The planning commission was very interested in what the Department of Environment felt should be done in the Peel. The commission asked for the department's expertise. As we know, the commission didn't get the Department of Environment's full submission when it asked for it. The Premier made an irate call to a senior official and the report was gutted by some 80 percent. When the commission found out about the Premier's interference, they said, and I quote, "We are dismayed and we really are deeply disappointed

that we haven't gotten these views and we would really appreciate receiving them." Now the planning commission felt that the Department of Environment's take on the Peel was important.

What position does the Minister of Environment have on the Peel?

Hon. Mr. Rouble: Mr. Speaker, the Peel region has significant cultural, heritage and economic values. The parties involved — the First Nations that have signed the planning process and the Government of Yukon and the multitude of government departments — are committed to continue to work collaboratively to enable the completion of a plan for this area. As we have done in the past and as I was reminded last Thursday by the Member of the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation and the Vuntut Gwitchin MLA, his First Nation played a very important role in the creation of the north Yukon plan. We will continue to work, as we are mandated to under the *Umbrella Final Agreement*, with our other affected orders of government in order to come up with the best plan that will meet the needs of Yukoners today and into the future.

Mr. Fairclough: Why is the Minister of Environment silent, Mr. Speaker? This minister last week enlightened us about how things have changed since he has crossed the floor again and rejoined the Yukon Party colleagues. When asked to update the House on his thoughts on protecting McIntyre Creek, he showed that the positions he took in opposition didn't travel with him when he got his surprise appointment to this new portfolio of Environment. Now the minister explained, "Quite frankly, when I raised those questions, I did it as an Independent member." It appears the minister believes that raising and championing issues only lies with the opposition members, and I thank him for his faith in our abilities. Having discarded his commitment to McIntyre Creek, does the minister intend to make any commitments to environmental protection on the Peel?

Hon. Mr. Rouble: As we discussed last week — and I will bring it up again today — there are certain responsibilities with certain different Cabinet positions on issues of policy. Within the Government of Yukon, the responsibility for land planning falls in the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources. As such, I am the minister responsible for debating and discussing these issues of policy on the floor of the Assembly. If there is another question regarding a policy issue around this, I would be pleased to attempt to answer the member's question.

Question re: Peel watershed land use plan

Mr. Fairclough: It's going to be a long and repetitive spring sitting if the Minister of Environment refuses to answer even the most elementary of questions about his portfolio. The minister is supposed to be the voice of the environment within the government caucus. His message on the department's website — the minister declares that Environment Yukon works to protect and enhance the quality and health and integrity of the Yukon's environment.

Well, the only thing the minister has done so far in the department is allow his department to be cut back. The Yukon Liberals believe in significant protection in the Peel based on

the principles and the values of the recommended plan, and we also think it's time for the minister to show some leadership on the biggest environmental issue of the day.

What does the Minister of Environment feel ought to be done on the Peel watershed?

Hon. Mr. Rouble: Once again, the responsibility of the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources is to responsibly manage Yukon's natural resources and ensure integrated resources and land use. Part of that responsibility is working with other organizations, other groups, with other planning commissions on issues such as the Peel land use plan. That certainly falls within the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources' area of responsibility. It isn't to say that we do this in isolation, Mr. Speaker. No, in fact, earlier today I tabled the joint letter of understanding on the Peel regional land use plan that was signed by other representatives of the Government of Yukon and as well as the affected First Nations. We all will continue to work through our plan. I've tabled the timeline and the planning processes for the member opposite.

We'll continue to work with various Government of Yukon branches such as the self-government implementation secretariat, the DAP branch, Environment, Community Services, and the other affected areas of government.

Mr. Fairclough: Well, the Minister of Environment's silence, Mr. Speaker, is deafening. When we asked the minister last week about his position on the Peel, it seemed like no one would answer at all. The minister had no intention of standing up for his department like he is today, and that left the Premier casting about for an understudy. Luckily the Minister of EMR stood up and answered the question. When the EMR minister answered for the Department of Environment minister, he told the House that the land use planning resides in EMR, like he did today. He also said EMR works with other government branches on land use planning, including the Executive Council Office, Environment and Community Services. Well, we still want to hear from those partners, Mr. Speaker, in Energy, Mines and Resources's land use planning.

What input is the Department of Environment currently providing to land use planning in the Peel?

Hon. Mr. Rouble: Mr. Speaker, the member started off his questions today by saying that it would be a long afternoon of repetitive questions, and he was right.

It is unfortunate that we have already seen this Assembly regress into personal attacks and the usual rhetoric. It is unfortunate. We are here to answer questions about policy and about important issues that we have a responsibility to the Yukon to discuss. As I have stated for the member opposite, Government of Yukon, in cooperation with affected First Nations, has established a joint letter of understanding on the Peel regional land use planning process, has established a timeline for the process, and we are continuing to work through that. A document has been received from the planning commission and it is being reviewed by the various orders of government, and we will continue our work as we bring this matter to an appropriate conclusion, just as we did with the land use plan for north Yukon.

Mr. Fairclough: The Minister of Environment isn't answering at all. The last Minister of Environment didn't mind having someone else make the hard decisions in her department. She didn't mind when someone else was calling the shots, but at least when she was the minister it was the Premier who overruled her. Last week when we asked the Minister of Environment questions about the vast area of the Yukon currently recommended for significant environmental protection, the Energy, Mines and Resources minister answered for him instead. It only takes another Cabinet minister to overrule this Environment minister.

When will the Environment minister find his voice and say something of substance about the Peel?

Hon. Mr. Rouble: I will once again answer the question because I have the responsibility to do so. The Government of Yukon works collaboratively. I know we certainly work collegially among all the members of Cabinet and we certainly have a responsibility on this issue to work with the affected First Nations. We will continue to do so.

I would encourage the member opposite to review the joint letter of understanding that was tabled earlier today, to review the process and the timelines. If there are other constructive suggestions rather than personal attacks, I would warmly receive them. We are looking for solutions in this area and any recommendations and positive bits of support from the opposition are always encouraged. Let's hear some of those rather than the old, tired political rhetoric.

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. 20: Second Reading — *adjourned debate*

Clerk: Second reading, Bill No. 20, standing in the name of the Hon. Mr. Fentie; adjourned debate, Mr. Mitchell.

Mr. Mitchell: Merci, Monsieur le Président; thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to reply today to the budget tabled by the Finance minister last Thursday. Before we get to the matter of the budget itself, there are a few words I would like to address to this House on behalf of my constituents.

D'abord, je voudrais encore remercier les personnes de Copperbelt de l'honneur et du privilège qu'elles m'ont donné pour les représenter dans cette Chambre. Tous les nous, Monsieur le Président, sont très chanceux pour avoir l'occasion de se reposer dans cette Assemblée et d'avancer des issues au nom de notre Yukoners semblable. Nous devons toujours nous rappeler que nous servons au plaisir de nos constituants, et les issues que nous apportons pas voici en avant les titres de la partie ou de la personne, mais ceux de nos voisins que nous avons le privilège de représenter.

First, I would like to thank the people of Copperbelt for the honour and privilege they have given me to represent them in this House. All of us are very fortunate to have the opportunity to sit in this Assembly and bring forward issues on behalf of our fellow Yukoners. We must always remember that we serve

at the pleasure of our constituents and the issues we bring forward here are not the issues of party or person, but those of our neighbours we have the privilege to represent.

In my case, Mr. Speaker, I am fortunate indeed to represent the most populated riding in the Yukon. There are some 2,000 voters plus their families who live in the great riding of Copperbelt. As I've said before, it is a very diverse riding that includes far more than the subdivision of Copper Ridge, where I live and which some people confuse with being synonymous with Copperbelt.

My riding includes portions of the Fish Lake Road, a large area along the Alaska Highway, the Granger, Hillcrest, Lobird, Canyon Crescent, Mount Sima and Whitehorse Copper subdivisions, the McCrae and Pineridge subdivisions, along with, of course, a large area within Copper Ridge.

There is a school, the Elijah Smith Elementary School, and another school, l'École Émilie Tremblay, is just a stone's throw away. There is the Whitehorse International Airport; there are two hotels, several apartment buildings, condos, ranches, mobile homes and many, many single-family and duplex homes. There are restaurants and businesses, and a population as diverse as the terrain the residents live in.

I appreciate the phone calls, the e-mails and the office visits from my constituents and I enjoy bringing their issues forward in this Assembly. I would also like to thank the ministers opposite for their efforts on behalf of my constituents, and in particular for their efforts to deal with individual constituent issues that I raise in meetings and by letter on behalf of my constituents. Because these issues are generally personal and confidential, they are not identified in this House, but I will thank the members opposite collectively for addressing many of these issues privately.

Before moving into the budget itself, I would also like to congratulate all the Yukoners who represented us by taking part in the arts and cultural delegations to the Olympic Games last month in Vancouver, and all those Canadians who competed in the Olympics, representing all of Canada. I would also like to congratulate all the athletes who competed so well in the Paralympics, earlier this month. Well done. Your territory and your country is proud of you all. I would also like to congratulate the hundreds of young people who competed earlier this March in the Arctic Winter Games in Grand Prairie. I hope you enjoyed your competitions as much as we enjoyed cheering you on, whether we attended or followed your successes from home. We are very proud of each and every one of you.

Over the weekend, we had an Arctic winter games for older kids, with the 33rd annual Native Hockey Tournament being played at Takhini Arena and the Canada Games Centre. I attended some of the games and awards ceremonies, and my colleagues did as well. I congratulate all of the players — from the youth to the B and A teams, the coaches, the volunteers and the parents for putting on another great tournament weekend. Again, well done and a great example of Yukoners getting together and achieving something.

Last Thursday after the Premier read his budget speech, a number of members of this House and members of the public gathered at a business after-hours event at Yukon College. Be-

tween discussions about the Premier's decision to go for broke with this, perhaps his last budget, there was a presentation made to the Premier. He was given a picture of a ship, a ship that once sailed under the name of *HMCS Yukon*. The captain of *HMCS Whitehorse* presented the plaque to the Premier and used the term "the ship has been paid out". The ship, which had reached a point beyond being serviceable, had been sunk to the ocean bottom to become part of a permanent reef for divers. There were lots of laughs around the room, and the Premier looked a little sheepish as he received the gift. He might as well have been given a picture of his government, because it is going down as well.

Once again, we have a large budget in front of us, the largest main estimates in Yukon's history. Of course within any budget there will be many things which we in the Official Opposition support and others that we disagree with.

We are pleased to see increased funding for home care, youth groups and the Women's Directorate. We are also pleased to see that a new college campus in Pelly Crossing is in the works and that funding for tourism marketing, which was cut in last year's budget, has been restored. We can also support the new EMS station set to go up on the top of Two Mile Hill. Again, for my constituents and many others, this will mean quicker response times, and that is certainly good news. Our party — the Liberal Party — has spoken out in this House over the past years and asked the government to move forward with all these initiatives. We are pleased at how our efforts, along with those of many other Yukoners, have finally pushed the government to act on these and other issues.

Mr. Speaker, there will certainly be some areas where we are disappointed with the size of allocations and with some where we are disappointed to see no allocation at all. Since the government enjoys a majority in this Assembly, we have no illusions about there being any likelihood of our effecting any changes to this budget. This government has demonstrated year after year that it is unwilling to work with the Official Opposition when it comes to making changes to the annual spending blueprint. We are left to judge it as it is and our comments will reflect this.

There are a couple of procedural notes as well, and they both fall under the category of respect or lack of respect for this Assembly and the people we represent herein.

Once again this year, the Premier has bypassed this Chamber and gone directly to the Commissioner for spending authority. The Premier has described this as "convenient" — going for special warrants, again and again and again, when there is no emergency or special situation. These warrants are unnecessary, undemocratic and a fact of life under this arrogant government. A Liberal government would come before this House when it wanted to spend money.

Secondly, there is the Premier's recent habit of reading his budget speech first to the Chamber of Commerce and a few days later to elected members of this House and the rest of the Yukon. Again, the Premier shows a lack of respect for this Chamber and its history. It goes against years of parliamentary tradition and convention. The Premier's new Environment minister, the Member for McIntyre-Takhini, used to think the same

thing. Here's what he said: "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."

That is the Member for McIntyre-Takhini on March 26, 2009, in this Chamber. I am sure he remembers his words.

I am sure, though, that the member no longer thinks that, just as he no longer thinks protecting McIntyre Creek is important, because he now gets his opinions and direction from a higher authority. A Liberal government would deliver the budget speech here in the Legislative Assembly where it belongs.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

Speaker: On a point of order, Member for McIntyre-Takhini, please.

Mr. Edzerza: On a point of order, I cite Standing Order 19(g) on unavowed motives. The member stated inaccurate phrases about the Member for McIntyre-Takhini no longer being interested in the McIntyre area, which is not true.

Speaker: Member for Kluane, on the point of order.

Mr. McRobb: On the point of order, Mr. Speaker, there is no point of order. There was no motive identified. I think this is a simple matter.

Speaker's ruling

Speaker: I think "a simple matter" is a good explanation; however, the Chair does feel that there is a point of order in terms of the member. I can understand how the Member for McIntyre-Takhini can feel aggrieved. I am not going to make the honourable member retract his statement, but from the Chair's perspective, there is a point of order and I would just ask the honourable member to carry on.

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First of all, I have some comments to put on the record about the overall spending in this budget. Once again, we are looking at a budget that spends more money than it takes in. In fact, the budget calls for spending \$27 million more than it takes in. This is actually an improvement on last year, when the gap was more than \$100 million.

It is in fact the Finance minister's fourth consecutive budget that anticipates spending more money than we will take in as revenue. That includes all transfers from Canada and other parties as well as own-source revenue. We have to ask, Mr. Speaker: is this wise or sustainable? The answer we are hearing from many Yukoners is no, it is not. The pattern of overspending has finally caught up with the Premier and his colleagues.

This go-for-broke approach to budgeting, this reckless approach to spending, has consequences both long-term and short-term and consequences for both the public and this government. The first consequence, Mr. Speaker, is a deficit for the year ending March 31, 2010. For a number of years, we have

had the Premier chastise previous governments that tabled budgets with annual deficits. He said he would never do it; only Liberals and New Democrats tabled those types of budgets, he said. The good fiscal managers in charge of the Yukon Party government would never do it.

Well, Mr. Speaker, for the fiscal year 2009-10, the one that ends on Wednesday, this government is now forecasting a \$23-million deficit. The Premier's streak is over. The Premier's focus is now on the next election and any concern he had for the long-term finances of the Yukon have gone out the window. What is important now to the government is to spend as much as possible in the lead-up to the next election and leave the worrying about the consequences to someone else.

On this question, Mr. Speaker, the Premier is in denial. He spent a good deal of Question Period last Thursday and today denying it. Judging from the media coverage of his budget, he spent a good deal of time denying it to reporters. They didn't buy it. Yukoners won't buy it. The numbers tell the real story. A hard reality is a \$23-million deficit for the 2009-10 fiscal year and a phony \$2.9-million surplus projected for 2010-11.

The Premier, to respond to it, simply tries to cite different numbers every time he rises. When the Member for Whitehorse Centre points out the surplus deficit for the year — the year we're just finishing — is \$23 million, the Premier moved on to net financial resources for the year-end.

When we discuss what net financial resources will be at the year-end, the Premier talks about accumulated surplus at the end of the year, including all of the assets of government, the buildings that we own, including the one in which we are sitting today. It is simply moving things around to confuse people, because we are not going to sell this building, I hope — I hope it still has use. We are not going to sell the schools and there is no point in referring to that number. It is not the number that should matter to Yukoners. It is the deficit we are running this year and the deficit that we are going to run next year, after the Premier misses the mark again.

This is the same Premier who denied he had plans to sell off the assets of the Energy Corporation to ATCO. Yukoners didn't believe him then and they don't believe him now, and why should they? It's all about trust and that trust has been broken beyond repair. I am sure it is very disappointing to some long-term Conservatives to see the Premier abandoning this long-held position on deficit spending. It is probably disappointing to some of his own colleagues — not that they would mention it to him. As we learned from the YEC scandal, the Premier calls the shots and everyone else simply falls into line.

Even the newest member of the government is content to let the Premier issue the orders. We saw that in Question Period on Thursday. What a change from a few months ago.

Much like his federal colleagues, the Premier is now an enthusiastic proponent of large deficits. He's a big spender, Mr. Speaker, just like his mentor, Prime Minister Harper. Just like Mr. Harper, he has no plan to get us out of the deficit and the debt he is piling up. Anyone who manages a household knows that you can't spend more than you take in for too long before

the bill comes due. The bill has now come due. The first deficit year in budget of the Yukon Party regime has arrived.

With regard to the bottom line for the upcoming fiscal year, the Premier officially pegs it at \$2.9 million. Even if we accept this number at face value — which we don't — it leaves a very small margin for error. Imagine that, a billion-dollar-plus budget with a projected surplus of less than \$3 million — less than three-tenths of the percent of the total. That's the cushion. The reality is that by the time the upcoming fiscal year ends, the Government of Yukon will have recorded a second consecutive budget deficit.

One has to look no further than the budget for the Department of Health and Social Services for proof that the numbers don't add up. Its expenditures are budgeted to be \$18 million less than what has been forecast to have been spent last year. This will simply not happen. In fact, we would not be surprised if health care costs rose by another \$15 million to \$20 million over what was spent last year. Last year, Health and Social Services spent \$248 million. This year, the projection is down to \$230 million.

The budget estimates that the Premier and the Health and Social Services minister are presenting are not realistic and cannot be trusted. The budget that was presented makes no provision for wage increases that are coming to public servants and teachers. These increases alone will increase the amount that the government will spend by several million dollars this year.

There are also the unfunded upgrades to the Thomson Centre to consider. The government has already announced this \$1.5-million project. It just didn't get around to actually putting the money in the budget. This amount would cut the surplus in half. It's laughable to think the Premier and his followers will keep this year's budget in black ink, but Yukoners are not laughing. They are concerned and they are angry.

Moving away from the annual deficit, let's move to the net financial position of the government.

Again, as we head ever closer to an election, the Premier has drawn this number down to a dangerously low level. At the end of the 2008-09 fiscal year, our bank account stood at \$135 million. That was our net financial resources. At budget time last year that number had been whittled away to \$122 million. The latest projections show just \$40 million projected to be our net financial resources by the end of the 2010-11 fiscal year. This represents a rapid depletion in our savings — one caused by the Premier's embracing his inner "big spender". Of that \$40 million, \$24 million is made up of what the government expects to get back on its ABCP fiasco. We believe that amount is closer to zero. That leaves the actual amount at a mere \$16 million. This is probably enough money to operate the government for about two weeks. It is again this go-for-broke approach that will leave us — or has left us — in this position.

Since the last time the Legislature met, Yukoners have learned the government plans to borrow \$167 million through its Crown corporations — \$67 million through the Hospital Corporation and a whopping \$100 million through the Yukon Development Corporation.

A child born this week at Whitehorse General Hospital will still be paying off some of these loans when they hit their 30th birthday. It's bad enough the main books no longer balance, but the Premier has also resorted to moving expenditures like these off the main books to make the situation appear better than it is. If these amounts were included, the picture would not be very pretty, and that is why the Premier and his team have made the political decision to move them off the main books.

Mr. Speaker, Yukoners should not be fooled by the government's sleight of hand. We are now faced with borrowing our entire contribution to the Mayo B project, because the government doesn't have the money to pay for it. Everyone on that side of the House, and probably this side as well, will be long gone, but Yukoners will be paying the bills for this extraordinary spending spree for the next 30 years.

This scale of borrowing has never been seen before in the Yukon. No government of any political stripe, including the Yukon Party, has mortgaged the future in such an irresponsible way. The interest on this debt would continue to be paid for decades to come.

Past governments have, for many years, acted responsibly with the public's money. They've recognized that you can't do everything at once, because it's irresponsible to pile up more and more debt and expect future generations to pay the bill, but that's the path this government is taking. The impacts of the borrowing decisions of this government will be millions of dollars paid in interest over the next 30 years. This is, of course, the same Premier who invested \$36 million in ABCP investments. It has been two and a half years since that bad decision was made, and we still don't have all of our money returned to us. We doubt we ever will. Of course, the Premier told us in this House, "We didn't need that money. It was just an extension of term from a month to nine years." We had plenty of money. That money would have come in handy now, because it would have cut the amount we needed to borrow considerably. In fact, it would have represented 50 percent of Yukon's required contribution to the Mayo B project. This government only has its eye on the next election and it's turning a blind eye to the long-term costs of this borrowing. It's all about trust, and nobody's trusting this tired government. It's spending more than it's taking in and the only reason the main budget shows a surplus is because the Premier has moved \$167 million in debt off of the main books. He shuffled the cost of Mayo B and all the new hospitals off the main ledgers. It's easy to make the numbers work when you simply take the bad stuff and pretend it doesn't exist.

Last year when the Premier began to spend down the bank account, he quietly began cutting back on dollars he transfers to other levels of government and groups such as the Hospital Corporation and Yukon College. Instead of giving them their annual transfer payments all in a lump sum, he cut it back to quarterly installments. They used to get their block funding at the start of the year and were able to collect interest on the money over the course of the following 12 months. This year they will do without because the government has turned off the taps. The Mayor of Haines Junction said it would cost his com-

munity \$70,000 in long interest if this was done at the municipal level. He said that because a few weeks ago all municipalities received a letter saying this cutback would be in place again this year. When municipal leaders, and we in the Official Opposition, confronted the Premier he backed down; however, he is still going to follow through with NGOs and others such as the college. These groups should not have to pay the price for the Premier's decision to spend down the bank account to almost nothing. They deserve their full transfer on April 1, as they have received for many years.

Will the Premier ensure that happens? Will the Minister of Community Services make it happen? What about the new Cabinet commissioner for Community Services? Will he side with NGOs and the municipal government in Dawson, or will he side with the Premier on this one? We're sure he'll make the right decision. We're sure that when the Association of Yukon Communities gathers in his Klondike riding in April, he'll be on their side. A Liberal government would ensure these groups get their money on day one. We don't support this new policy direction of the Yukon Party government.

It was interesting, Mr. Speaker, to hear the Premier tell the Chamber of Commerce that for the first time ever in Yukon history, the government was presenting a three-year capital plan. It outlines projects that the Yukon Party would work on through to 2013-14, should it get re-elected. Now, we hate to burst the Premier's bubble, but both the McDonald government and the Duncan government presented these types of plans to this Legislature and to the Yukon public on an annual basis. It was, in fact, one of the first things cut by the Yukon Party when it came to office. We share the Premier's support for this type of forecast.

We agree with the explanation that it provides the private sector with the good idea of what is coming down the line in the next few years. Why it took the Premier eight years to figure out that this is something worth doing, however, is indeed a mystery.

One thing that jumps out at one in the three-year capital plan is the fact that every year going forward the government is projecting to spend less than it is this year. That is the case for example, when it comes to our highways. From a high of around \$38 million this year the figure dips to just \$23 million by 2013. When you compare the entire transportation budget for this year to last, the news is not good either. The O&M budget is essentially flat and, on the capital side, spending is down \$7 million from last year's main estimates. This will obviously be a concern to our road builders and to drivers. One of the main reasons for the drop is the substantial cut in Shakwak funding we receive from the United States. This year that funding will be around \$10 million, down from \$25 million last year and almost \$30 million the year before.

The Premier led off his speech last week trying to portray his government as one of action — major studies followed by implementation of plans. He even tried to include education reform on that list. The reality is, this government has been talking about educational reform and talking and talking and talking without actually introducing any reforms. The speech promised we're finally ready to act. Well, after seven years of

waiting, we're skeptical as is the Yukon public. But we do look forward to the actions. In two weeks' time, the Minister of Education will open a conference where the main topic of discussion is yet another draft — a strategic plan — New Horizons.

This government is fond of strategic plans, but woefully short on acting on them. The education reform plan was dead on arrival. The Premier told the Minister of Education not to support the central recommendation of the report, which was a more collaborative approach to education. The Premier wanted to continue a top-down approach and the minister was happy to oblige. The order came from the top and the minister fell in line. We've seen this before, Mr. Speaker.

The port access study, the railroad study — remember those? The government never mentions them any more.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Mr. Mitchell: We don't know — missing in action — MIAs. The Dawson bridge study, whistle-blower legislation — all put into the dustbin of history.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Mr. Mitchell: "Collecting dust" says the Member for Kluane. Never to be seen again by this government. The government's record of acting on major studies is spotty, to put it charitably.

With regard to education, there is another idea out there. It's one the government hasn't even bothered to study. I'm referring to the idea and the value of moving toward a university of the north, or an Arctic university. It's one that has been gaining momentum, in spite of this government's lack of attention to it. The Governor General of Canada has proclaimed her concern that Canada is the only northern country without an Arctic university. The Walter and Duncan Gordon Foundation has recently paid for a study of university activism in the north, and has given the Dechinta in the Northwest Territories \$100,000 in seed money to look into this. There have been articles about this in northern newspapers, in magazines, in *Up Here Business*, and in many others. There will likely be only one bricks-and-mortar campus when an Arctic university, a northern university, is established, with the other territories participating with distance education technology. Our government should be advocating for it to be in the Yukon. We most recently saw the Yukon lose out on the new national Arctic Research Station, and we should not let it happen again.

We have the best Internet penetration of any jurisdiction in Canada, and a 100 percent fibre-optic connection to the south. We have an international airport with daily jet service to Vancouver and frequent jet service to Alberta — and Frankfurt, Germany in the summer, says the Member from Kluane. We are the closest territory to the Pacific Rim, where many potential foreign students, who could study here, live. We have better road connections between our own communities and to the rest of Canada than do our sister territories. Our Yukon College is already providing more degree-granting programs than are the other northern colleges. We have the Yukon Climate Change Research Centre of Excellence already partnering with universities Outside. We should work with the existing college and other partners to make a northern university — a university

in Yukon — a reality. This should be a centre for higher education where our own Yukon students would be excited to study and where other Canadians and foreign students would be eager to attend. This university should be an addition to the many important programs that should continue to be provided through Yukon College, not instead of it. This would be a priority of a new Liberal government, Mr. Speaker, to work toward achieving this goal.

Let's turn to the environment. This is an area that has always been low on the priority list of this government. We've watched as it has failed to produce state of the environment reports in a timely manner as required by law.

We have watched as Yukon became the last jurisdiction in Canada to develop a climate change action plan. We watched the previous Minister of Environment attend major climate change conferences and focus on meeting celebrities instead of informing the world about the challenges we face. A look at this year's budget shows both the capital and O&M budget for Environment down from last year. We have already seen the new minister back away from commitments he made on protecting McIntyre Creek, and when we asked questions about the Peel watershed he was directed not to answer by the Premier. The previous minister ignored advice from the Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board about the proper levels of sheep hunting. She ignored a recommendation to close the current landfill in Old Crow, and the list goes on.

Last week we tabled a motion regarding the Peel watershed that said that this House urges the Government of Yukon to work with the four affected First Nation governments and all stakeholders to develop a land use plan for the Peel watershed prior to the next territorial election that respects the principles set out by the Peel Watershed Planning Commission in its recommended plan.

The word "Peel" does not appear in the budget speech delivered last Thursday. It is one word that was noticeably absent. It was the ever-quotable Winston Churchill who said, "Destiny is not a matter of chance, it is a matter of choice; it is not a thing to be waited for, it is a thing to be achieved." That statement certainly applies in this circumstance. The Government of Yukon has a choice to make here. It can be bold and lead, or it can keep its head down, refuse to take a position, and try to get through to the next election by saying, "We're looking at it." It was obvious from the minister's response on Thursday and today that the government has chosen the latter.

We've heard from many Yukoners on this issue, and we've taken what we heard into account, and we're telling Yukoners about it well in advance of the next election. I would encourage the Premier and the Minister of Environment to do the same, instead of stalling on this major issue. Let Yukoners know what position the government will take into discussions with other governments. It's a choice that should be made, not ignored.

The final draft of the *Peel Watershed Regional Land Use Plan* was produced by the Peel Watershed Planning Commission as part of the implementation of chapter 11 of the *Umbrella Final Agreement*, the final agreements for Na Cho Nyäk

Dun, Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in and Vuntut Gwitchin First Nations, and the *Gwich'in Comprehensive Land Claim Agreement*.

We would like to thank the members of the commission for their work and Yukoners for participating in the process. This has been a long road and we finally have a recommended plan in front of us. Many, many Yukoners have invested a lot of time and energy into this process and we have confirmation that people have a strong interest in what happens in this part of the Yukon.

Yukoners know the Premier worked hard behind the scenes to try and shape the contents of this report in a certain way. We know he interfered politically in the middle of the drafting process and tried to steer the commission in a certain direction. We also know the then Minister of Environment, the Deputy Premier, sat back silently and let it happen. We have talked to hundreds of Yukoners over the last few years about the Peel watershed. We have met with interest groups, with stakeholders, with First Nation governments, with constituents, with non-governmental organizations and many individual Yukoners. We have listened to their input on what the land use plan should look like.

As a caucus we discussed the draft plan and the new final plan released in January of this year. We received a full briefing on the plan itself from the commission earlier this year.

Some members of the caucus flew over and visited part of the watershed last summer, and as long-time Yukoners each of us has spent some time in the area in question. After all this, we have concluded that much of the area should be protected from development for the foreseeable future. We support in principle the findings of the commission. They have recommended large parts of the area be preserved and we support their finding in principle. It's not for us to draw the lines and vary the borders.

We now encourage the parties — the Yukon government and the four First Nation governments — to reach agreement on a final plan that is consistent with the principles stated in the final draft plan from the commission.

Now there have been concerns raised by some that the decision on how to proceed with the Peel will have an impact on future land use plans across the territory. We don't share that concern. As the Peel Watershed Planning Commission clearly stated, this should not be viewed as a template for future plans, particularly with regard to the amount of land set aside for preservation. As the Yukon Land Use Planning Council continues its work, they will find — and in fact, are already aware — that each planning region is unique and will require a distinct and frequently a different approach.

What is next? The commission has now met formally with the Government of Yukon and the affected First Nation governments and informed them of the contents of the plan. First Nations have already made their views known publicly on the plan. They support it. The reaction from the government on the other hand has been fairly muted. They have announced a one-year interim withdrawal from mineral staking of all Crown land — category B settlement lands — and fee simple lands in the Peel watershed region. The Premier and the Minister of Environment have merely said they're reviewing the plan. We are

concerned that this response is a stalling tactic that the government plans to rely on until after the next election.

The government should take a position on this issue. They need to let the public know whether they support the plan or not. I'm urging the Minister of Environment to let Yukoners know what the government's position is on this issue. Let's not let them drag this out until after Yukoners have gone to the polls. That is an easy way out, but it's certainly not leadership.

There were two important conferences held in Whitehorse last week: the Yukon First Nations Resource Opportunities Conference and the Partnering for Success Economic Summit. The Liberal caucus was well-represented for significant portions of both conferences. One theme that was shared within both conferences was the strong interest and desire of First Nations and First Nation development corporations to work with the Yukon government and with the private sector in a much greater way, both in the resource sector and in the business sector. There has been much talk of P3s in recent years — meaning public/private partnerships. Unlike the NDP, the Liberal Party is willing to look at P3s, where they do not displace existing public sector jobs.

We believe that there is a different kind of P3 opportunity that we have sadly been ignoring: public/public partnerships. Unlike private companies that may decide some day in a distant corporate office to shut down or downsize or relocate their Yukon operations, First Nations and their development corporations are not going anywhere. They have lived here for thousands of years and this is their home.

A Liberal government would access the opportunities to partner with First Nations and would encourage First Nation investment in Yukon infrastructure. For example, instead of secret negotiations with ATCO in search of investment in Yukon's publicly owned energy corporation like the Premier conducted, we should be talking to First Nations development corporations, to First Nation governments, to the Yukon Indian Development Corporation to invest in our publicly owned energy infrastructure.

The end result would still be owned by the Yukon public, both First Nation and non-First Nation. Our goals are common goals. It's not about profit; it's about partnerships, and we are leaving a lot of partnership opportunities with Yukon First Nations sitting on the sidelines.

The next priority for a Liberal government would be the grid intertie with our neighbours in British Columbia. Within 10 years, it could be a reality. It will take a lot of work, a lot of money, and a lot of cooperation with neighbouring jurisdictions and with First Nations, but it's something worth pursuing if we want to grow our economy.

As an aside, we do support the work the government is doing with regard to net metering and independent power producers, or IPPs. We are pleased to see the government has changed its mind on the net metering debate. It was only a couple of years ago that the former minister responsible for Energy, Mines and Resources told this House it was a waste of time and should not be pursued. This was a policy initiative we proposed. It was an initiative that the Member for Kluane tried to

move forward and we are glad the government has changed its tune and is implementing our ideas.

With regard to IPPs, unlike the New Democrats, we believe this is a policy worth pursuing as both a long-term and short-term solution to our power needs, particularly for industrial customers.

The Premier talks about working with our northern partners, meaning our sister territories, but ends up in court with our own First Nation governments instead of in business. A Liberal government would do this differently.

I see the Premier is enjoying hearing these new ideas, so we will have more of them for him.

While the Yukon Party government has made a habit of going to court with First Nations, this is not the only other level of government that it cannot cooperate with. On the municipal level, community leaders have been asking the government to intervene in the long-standing problem of mineral staking within municipal boundaries. The government approach on this issue is to simply ignore it and hope it goes away. It should be working with municipalities to find a better solution to the land use challenges and conflicts between residential housing and some mining claims.

There are currently situations in both Dawson and Whitehorse where a policy vacuum has left residents, miners and regulators with nowhere to turn. The problems on the Dome Road in Dawson, around the Whitehorse municipal landfill and the ski trails could have been avoided. Instead, we have gridlock. The Yukon Party government has been unwilling or unable to resolve this issue. We would not shy away from it. Everyone involved, Mr. Speaker, deserves better than they are getting from this government.

Another municipal issue, particularly here in the capital city, is transportation and busing. Some time ago, we proposed implementing a free busing plan in partnership with the City of Whitehorse. The current territorial government poured cold water on that idea and said, "Not interested." Well, we remain interested, Mr. Speaker, in this concept and we would work with the city to improve bus service, starting with a period of free service to gain ridership. This would be a positive step forward for our environment. It's a priority for the city and for us. Last year, the Association of Yukon Communities held its annual meeting in Watson Lake. The Premier was in town for the entire weekend, but he didn't bother to attend the meeting. With an attitude like this, it's no wonder municipal issues remain unresolved.

Mr. Speaker, during the last election campaign, our party committed to developing a knowledge worker strategy, identifying where the Yukon can differentiate itself from other jurisdictions. An example to consider will be building on the success of Yukon lawyers in serving Outside clients. This is a relatively new sector of our economy and one that is more deserving of attention from the Government of Yukon. For the possible savings with regard to health care alone, this is worth pursuing, Mr. Speaker. For whatever reason, the government has virtually ignored this potential economic generator, and we would not.

Mr. Speaker, another area the government has refused to engage on is electoral reform. We all remember a report produced by a good friend of the government at great expense to the taxpayer that concluded electoral reform wasn't on Yukoners' minds. We don't believe this to be true, Mr. Speaker. With that in mind, a Liberal government would strike an independent commission to examine how Yukoners should elect their territorial government representatives. This is not a new issue. Changing the way we elect our political representatives becomes a hot topic from time to time, and proponents of electoral reform suggest that voter apathy is increasing because our electoral system is flawed. Well, we are not certain, but we do believe we need to look at options for reforming our system, Mr. Speaker, because apathy among young voters is cause for concern, but voter apathy is not exclusive to young people. In the 2008 federal election, less than 60 percent of eligible Canadian voters made the effort to cast their ballots. Voters have many reasons for avoiding the polls on voting day. Some people don't vote because they don't believe it makes a difference. Others stay home because they are fed up with the bickering that they see and hear from their politicians. We want to know if there is an appetite for change among Yukoners and a representative citizens' commission on electoral reform is the best vehicle to accomplish that.

Several jurisdictions in Canada and around the world have debated the merits of electoral reform with varying outcomes. Elsewhere in the world there have been changes; here in Canada, less so. British Columbia spent months on public consultations to find out where changes in the provincial voting system were needed or wanted, and ultimately voters in British Columbia rejected the idea of electoral reform. Similar exercises have been conducted in Prince Edward Island, Ontario and New Brunswick in recent years with the same result. Now we in opposition may not be happy about our current government, Mr. Speaker, but that doesn't mean that the electoral system should automatically be changed. Nevertheless, we will consult with Yukoners and get their views on this issue, because it is for them to say and not for 18 members in this House. This commitment will be included in the Liberal election platform for the next election, as it was in the last.

The second issue that is much debated is legislative reform for fixing how this Chamber works and should work. The government has finally — after seven years of refusing to touch it — agreed to engage on this issue. Our Legislature has a committee that could resolve many of the concerns that have been raised. It's called SCREP. Under previous governments, both Liberal and NDP, it met regularly. Under the current government it has not met for over two years. Instead of having this committee do its job, the government has now set up yet another committee as a result of a motion; however, any proposals from the public will not be implemented until after the next election. This government will have succeeded in serving out two full terms without making any improvements in the area of legislative reform. What a dubious honour, Mr. Speaker.

I have already mentioned the unrealistic budget projections for the Department of Health and Social Services and there are a few other health-related issues that warrant mention. The first

is the recent decision by the government to cut back services for parents of autistic children. When a former MLA for Klondike was minister, he put in place the funding for parents to design individualized programs for their autistic children, which has been very successful. The current minister, according to those parents and the non-profit society, Autism Yukon, which represents them, has informed them that he's cutting the funding, and instead will put together an internal team and force parents to use them. This is obvious cost cutting. The government announced this new funding with much fanfare during the 2006 election campaign, and now it's back-peddalling on its support. So, we would encourage the minister to reinstate the program and stick with what is working.

He sounded like he was trying to give that commitment today in Question Period. We're going to hold him to it. At a meeting held on February 17, 2010, the Minister of Health requested the health oversight steering committee members to identify their views on important components of the wellness strategy as we move toward a sustainable health care system. Over the past month, I've met with many health care providers, including members of the Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition, which acts as an umbrella organization for several NGOs that deal with poverty, wellness, social inclusion and health on behalf of Yukoners. The Liberal caucus submission I sent to the minister reflects input received from many people.

Since we have not yet had another meeting and announced any further decisions, I'm going to go over some of it here — areas that we feel the committee should focus on toward a wellness strategy including a comprehensive strategy to improve the availability in Yukon of affordable and healthy housing. It has been established and demonstrated by many social agencies and non-governmental organizations, including the member organizations of the Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition, that affordable and healthy and safe housing is a primary social determinant of health, as well as of poverty, with the lack thereof. While the government has worked to address this issue through a number of new initiatives in Whitehorse and in some rural communities, there is still a demonstrated need for additional affordable housing units.

A strategy to improve the daily food diet and exercise regime of Yukon families — diet and exercise can contribute to a better standard of health for Yukoners. Several diseases, such as type 2 diabetes, are largely a function of poor dietary choices and lack of exercise leading to moderate or severe obesity in many people. First Nation children and First Nation individuals are statistically at greater risk of developing type 2 diabetes during their lifetime.

The rapid increase of diabetes in our population over the past 25 years can largely be attributed to poor diet and lack of exercise. There is also evidence that some children do not arrive at school prepared to learn because they have not had a nutritious breakfast. In some cases, they haven't had a nutritious dinner the night before either. Improved funding to the local Yukon Food For Learning organization that provides an in-school breakfast program at several Yukon schools would help to address this issue. Funding to allow Whitehorse residents who are economically challenged to access the Canada

Games Centre, and indeed any Yukoners who may be visiting Whitehorse, which could be provided directly to the City of Whitehorse or provided to NGOs through the Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition, would lead to improved wellness in this demographic.

Increased options for in-home care and visits by health professionals for seniors — Yukon's population has an increasingly older demographic. In 2002, there were 1,616 residents who were 65 and older. In 2009, there were 2,006 residents who were 65 and older. This is an increase of 60 percent in seven years.

By 2030, it is projected that this demographic will double from today's numbers to 5,200 residents. Even with better health care and lifestyle choices, seniors make greater use of the health care system. It will save money and improve the lives of seniors if we assist them in living in their own homes longer, instead of moving them into an extended-care facility.

Increased efforts at implementing an alcohol, drug and tobacco-reduction strategy — alcohol and substance abuse — illegal and prescription drugs — and the use of tobacco products put increased pressure on our health care system by leading to disease and deteriorating health in Yukoners. Effective alcohol and substance abuse reduction programs, including education, improved and reinstated residential treatment program options and harm-reduction strategies can reduce the financial and human costs of these activities and reduce dollars spent on treating negative health outcomes that result from substance abuse.

Similarly, tobacco use leads to increased rates of pulmonary and heart disease and cancer as well as emphysema and other preventable diseases. Money spent educating and assisting Yukoners to quit smoking will save many dollars downstream in our health care system.

These are four areas that we believe can make a big difference to the lives of Yukoners and their overall health and wellness. We look forward to working with the Minister of Health and Social Services as he moves ahead on the wellness strategy, and we have sent these ideas by letter a week ago to the Health minister.

While this is an area where we are working with the government, there continues to be disagreements with the overall direction of health care. For example, on page 5 of the budget speech the Premier said that Yukoners want to see some carefully planned private user fee health care services. We don't believe this is true, but if the Premier thinks Yukoners support private health care and higher fees, we'll leave him to that. We do not support private health care and we will oppose any move in that direction made by this government. There will be plenty of questions on this statement over the course of the spring sitting and probably right through the next campaign.

The Premier also said Yukoners wanted to see more collaborative health care options. Well, so do we. We promised to make this possible in our platform in the last election. The Yukon Party promised the same. Unfortunately, there has been no visible progress on this commitment.

Another commitment we have been quite clear about is the need for a permanent youth shelter. A Liberal government would work to make sure this happens.

This is an idea that the current government has gone back and forth on. Various candidates promised it in the last election, but it has never made it to the top of this government's priority list. There was also a promise from the two Riverdale Yukon Party MLAs to move ahead with a youth centre in Riverdale but that hasn't gotten off the ground yet either.

We have covered a lot of ground here today and we have provided the government with a number of suggestions on how this budget could be improved — something we have done every year. The Premier has talked about cooperating with the opposition and we will get another indication on how serious he is about it by how he treats the proposals that we have put forward.

We do have serious reservations about the go-for-broke approach the Yukon Party government has adopted as its mandate winds down. We do not support the Premier's plan to mortgage the future in this irresponsible way. This is probably the last budget this government will table, and that is a good thing because the long-term financial health of the Yukon could not stand another one like it.

Yukoners no longer trust this government, and with good reason. Last summer's plan to privatize our energy future has poisoned the waters for many voters who are eager to go to the polls and vote for a government they can trust. I have laid out several areas that need improvement and several areas where a Liberal government would use a different approach.

How government treats the least fortunate in our society is one area where we definitely have different views than the current administration. We have been raising the issue of poverty and the need to fight it for years. The upcoming social inclusion strategy conference is a good place to start. It could be the basis for change and for putting money into making new inroads against poverty in affordable housing and additional support for the working poor and additional mental health resources and substance abuse treatment to deal with issues that add to the burden on many of society's least fortunate. By addressing hunger, all of these are part of that long list.

How we look after our environment is another. We believe in a balanced approach, one that creates jobs while protecting our wilderness. That is sadly lacking in today's Yukon. A while ago, Mr. Speaker, I had the opportunity to visit with our regional chief to the Assembly of First Nations, Chief Eric Morris. We were talking about how we have to deal with issues like the Peel. Chief Morris said to me that the saying of his people is that we are the stewards of the land for our grandchildren. We don't own it; we're the stewards for those who come later. We need to keep that in mind. The Premier, if he's paying attention, needs to keep that in mind.

In closing, I want to thank officials across the government for their work in preparing the documents that we're discussing today. It's one of the largest tasks of the year and we appreciate their hard work in every department, and particularly those in the Department of Finance. I'm sure it's not an easy task, and the government puts such pressure on officials to come up with

a document that ends with the numbers that the government would like to see, although clearly they didn't want to see that deficit in the current year that is finishing.

We look forward to debating this budget in detail in the coming weeks.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Merci, Monsieur le Président. Günilshish.

Hon. Ms. Taylor: It is really indeed my honour and privilege again to be here in the Assembly and to be able to provide my remarks to the second reading of the Budget Address that was tabled here in the Legislature just a few short days ago by our Minister of Finance.

First off, as I have done in the past, in previous years, I'd like to at first offer my thanks and gratitude to my constituents of Whitehorse West for their support, for their input and their perspectives that they have forwarded and shared with me — whether it was at the doorstep, by phone call, e-mail or written submission.

I have been very honored to represent this riding. It's a riding in which we have seen robust growth in the past number of years. My husband, my son and I — we've actually lived on the same street in the middle of the riding for going on 12 years. Although we've talked about moving and perhaps obtaining something with a bit more storage space, we have refrained, because it is indeed a wonderful area in which to live. It has been very family-friendly and we have some wonderful neighbours, to say the least.

Whitehorse West is comprised of neighbourhoods that include Arkel, Logan, a good portion of Copper Ridge, as well as the new area to become known as Ingram, which will also soon become part of that area as well as we speak.

It is comprised of two very important institutions, as I would coin them — and I have in the past — including Copper Ridge Place, our continuing care facility, as well as l'École Émilie Tremblay. I have again enjoyed getting to know and becoming more informed and acquainted with these two facilities. I would first like to especially recognize the staff of Copper Ridge Place for their continued hard work and efforts in providing a full range of specialized care for seniors, elders, adults and children.

Copper Ridge Place — for anyone who has had the opportunity to visit residents within Copper Ridge Place — really is what I've coined as a "special community within the community" itself. It too has grown over the years. It provides a home to well over 90 individuals.

Earlier this year we were very pleased to be able to open an additional 12 units or 12 beds within Copper Ridge Place, recognizing the very importance of this particular facility to the their lives and to the lives of family and friends within the territory and elsewhere.

Copper Ridge Place staff in particular are to be commended for their hard work and efforts in making Copper Ridge Place the home that it has become to many residents and for making a number of improvements to the place over the last number of years. One of which I think I may have referenced last fall, but it was the recent unveiling of "under the sea". It

was kind of a make-over of the children's unit. Again, it was one small but very symbolic improvement to Copper Ridge Place in terms of the extent that they have gone and continue to go in making and ensuring that those residents feel comfortable, that it is a welcoming environment and a nurturing environment for those who call the place their home.

I'd also like to recognize and thank École Émilie Tremblay for the quality education that they bring to our student population. Again, the strong sense of community and commitment to French culture is always evident in their work with the student population, but there is also the community spirit that they continue to exemplify through events and through recognition of their programs and services. I have huge admiration for the expansion of the programs that they have been able to bring to their respective school.

I'd also again would like to acknowledge and thank the residents themselves, as well as the Copper Ridge Community Association for its ongoing work. Since its inception a number of initiatives have been undertaken, including fire abatement work — thanks to FireSmart funding and the good work and due diligence provided by those residents. They have provided a tremendous amount of fire abatement work surrounding Copper Ridge neighbourhood. The Copper Ridge Community Association has also participated in a number of planning initiatives including the official community plan that the City of Whitehorse is undertaking, and it will be completed here in a short time. Again, I've really enjoyed the opportunity to work with many of them and very much enjoyed the opportunity to support a number of their initiatives.

Of course, again, I would just like to thank them for their work as well in the extension of Hamilton Boulevard and the very importance that this extension has provided to the community. In particular, I wish to pay thanks again to the three governments for funding this initiative: Yukon government again for putting forward the lion's share of the funding, the City of Whitehorse, and the Government of Canada as well. But, in particular, thanks to those residents of Whitehorse West and the residents of Copper Ridge for bringing it and for ensuring that this issue remained a priority until its fruition, which, of course, we were able to open earlier last summer.

Again, as I mentioned in my remarks, I believe, last fall, I just wanted to again thank everyone for their patience and the hardship that some residents most unfortunately endured during the construction phase and again congratulate the community for ensuring that it did come to fruition. It has been a long time in coming, but it marks yet another milestone in the evolution of our community.

I wanted to also thank my riding constituents for coming out to my constituency meeting that I hosted earlier this year in January — again, just sharing with me their views and perspectives, having the opportunity to address questions. Perhaps the best part of my job as a public representative is actually being able to hear directly from individuals at the door throughout the mandate of our government and, of course, during meetings and at public events, such as our annual summer barbeque that we're able to host.

Today we're here to speak to the budget, and a lot has been said by the Leader of the Official Opposition. There's a lot of information that was put forward by the leader — in fact, perhaps, a bit too much to address, because unfortunately I do not have unlimited time, unlike the Leader of the Official Opposition. So I am somewhat restricted in my remarks, but I did want to take the opportunity to correct the record on a few counts, of which there are many counts on which to correct the record, I might add.

First, Mr. Speaker, I do want to thank the Minister of Finance for tabling the budget the other day. I think that it is really important to reflect upon where we were as a territory several years ago, where we're at today and what the future holds for the territory. You know, it was only some seven years ago when we were first elected to office. I recall at that time that the Yukon was a much different place. The Yukon has always been my home. I'm a lifelong Yukoner and very proud of it. I'm proud to raise my family here. But we have seen the good times and we've also seen the less-than-good times. I can say without hesitation that seven and a half years ago during the 2002 election, it wasn't such a great time. In fact, Yukon saw double-digit unemployment; we saw an exodus of population; we saw especially a lot of individuals — young families — leaving the territory.

Businesses were struggling. We had a number of challenges on the docket, to say the least. I am not going to dwell too much, but it is important to note that things have evolved significantly since that time. We have been able to help set the tone in collaboration with our partners — the Government of Canada, self-governing First Nations, stakeholders of non-government organizations and residents themselves, to be able to identify and target specific capital initiatives that would create immediate stimulus in terms of providing employment and also in terms of providing long-term investment on the social side of the ledger, which we now are seeing come to fruition as a result of years of hard work and, yes, meetings and planning sessions and strategies and plans being put forward. I can say that we are very pleased to be able to act on those recommendations as set out in many of those plans. I will get into that in a little bit here as well.

Today our budget has grown as well and it is as a result of a whole host of reasons. Today's budget reflects the largest ever in Yukon's history. Again, there will be well over a billion dollars' worth of various expenditures. It comprises yet another year-end surplus; it comprises a balance of fostering and developing the quality of life with protecting and preserving our environment, with providing a stable environment for doing business. It continues to make strategic investments, which provide a number of spinoff benefits for retailers, suppliers in the Yukon and support Yukon's plan to grow and to prosper and to continue its plan of diversification of the Yukon economy.

The budget that we are speaking to today includes investments in infrastructure such as highways, bridges, airports — airports such as the Whitehorse International Airport. We will soon see its completion come to fruition, which will result in providing continued stability in terms of receiving international

status of which we have been very blessed to be able to benefit from. Twice weekly during the summer season there are direct charters from Frankfurt, Germany, to Whitehorse, Yukon. The expansion, of course, will help facilitate some of the growth we have seen. One case in point is we have seen yet another record set by those people in planing and deplaning at the Whitehorse International Airport. That traffic continues to grow, and I attribute that to the good, hard work of partners such as Air North and the investments that they have been making in our gateway cities of Edmonton, Calgary and Vancouver, and we have been very pleased to be able to assist Air North with investments in domestic marketing campaigns and through funding mechanisms such as Yukon's tourism marketing partnership fund as well — so very much so there are great opportunities that lie ahead in terms of air travel for the north, and we are very pleased and are very excited about being able to open the expansion of the new Whitehorse International Airport.

We are also pleased to be able to provide, in this budget, green energy. There has been much said about expansion of hydro capacity in the territory. We all know how the growth of the territory, in terms of its population, is resulting in more demand for energy. Now, Yukon could very much take the easy road and continue to purchase additional diesel, generating thousands of tonnes of CO₂ into the atmosphere, but instead this government continues to make added investments in hydro capacity — that which is providing green — less of a carbon footprint. It is also taking communities such as Pelly Crossing off diesel, and that is also contributing to stabilized rates for energy ratepayers in the territory. We're very pleased to continue on with the phase 2 of the transmission line and, thereafter, the Mayo B initiative, which the Premier has coined as being one of the largest capital initiatives ever to be undertaken in the Yukon.

We are very pleased to be able to provide investments in information technology. It was only a few short years ago that, again, prior to taking office, investments in this area were somewhat sporadic. Over recent years, we have provided stabilized funding, and that has grown over the years. I don't have the number in front of me, but I believe it is well over \$6 million or \$7 million to this day, which is provided at a capacity in our IT sector here in the Yukon. It has also provided great services to Yukon businesses as they continue to grow their businesses electronically. It makes this more of an attractive place to live, to do business and, of course, to travel to as well.

The budget also provides dollars in terms of schools, planning, design for F.H. Collins Secondary School. Again, there is planning and design for hospitals situated in Watson Lake, Dawson City. I know there has been a tremendous amount of debate and opposition posed by the opposition in regard to these facilities.

It is truly unfortunate because, having been born and raised in one of those rural communities, I very much appreciate the health care needs of all Yukon citizens and that, with the growth in our population, there are added demands and pressures on our respective facilities to do what they will in terms of meeting our needs.

We know that services in continuing care, for example, and services in specialized children's care needs — there are needs that continue to grow all across the health care spectrum. That is why, in fact, we are making the investments through the respective corporations to do their good work. We support their good work in terms of looking to expand, integrate and make more efficient the delivery of health care in our communities and provide regional centres of health care.

It will add to the health care capacity and, again, will in turn also benefit the City of Whitehorse by reducing pressures at our own hospital here that Whitehorse General Hospital has experienced and continues to experience. But again, it will also enhance our ability to attract specialists, which we have been able to grow in great numbers over the recent years.

Our health care budget in the territory has risen, I believe, from 2002 to the tune of about \$140 million to over \$230 million, which is reflected in this year's budget. Again, this is substantive. Child care is but one area that has not been spoken of here today. But I know that to be sure, the investment in child care has been very well-received — \$5 million over five years in terms of child care subsidies, in terms of providing capital infrastructure for child care facilities, providing added emphasis on early learning and so forth. Again, it is growing capacity in our community, which also enables many parents such as me to come to work and to contribute my services to Yukon citizens as well.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there are dollars that are reflected in this year's budget to correctional facilities. There is an additional \$28 million in this year's budget for the continuation of the building of the Whitehorse Correctional Centre. This is a facility that has been in the works for some time. Again, it was one that we took the time to very much plan in collaboration with First Nation governments and many other stakeholders, to ensure that whatever we did design was effective, that it was integrated and that we would certainly reduce the recidivism rate that we have seen — the revolving door within the correctional system.

There is more added emphasis on community programming, added emphasis on initiatives that would assist with treatment of offenders. One only has to take a look at the community court, for example, and added enhancements to the domestic violence treatment option. It is initiatives such as those which are helping to reduce that revolving door and really assist offenders with conditions, to be able to receive the treatment that they require.

Now, are we there yet? Absolutely not. There's always a lot more work and resources to be found. But I believe that the corrections reform under the leadership of our Minister of Justice has done an exemplary job in providing the footprint, the foundation and the framework for effecting change from here on out, which includes and a correctional facility.

Another initiative within this budget is the planning design work for a new Whitehorse integrated emergency response facility, which will include an ambulance station in Whitehorse — a second ambulance station, I should say — which is already underway. Again, this is an item that we committed to during the last territorial election. It's an initiative that, with

over one-third of the population of the city living along Hamilton Boulevard — like the extension, it will add to providing more safe access to health care and response. It will very much reduce response times to medical emergencies and we're very pleased to be able to move ahead with this particular facility and work with the community.

I very much appreciate and commend those who work in emergency medical services for their hard work and that which they have to endure day in and day out. It is not an easy task and thanks to them we are very proud to have a system that is responsive, that is complete. But again, this additional station that will complement the one in Riverdale will again add additional capacity to our being able to respond in a better fashion.

There has been a lot stated with respect to the environment. You know, Mr. Speaker, I have to take issue with some of the inflammatory comments coming forward from across the way. One thing that I have always taught my son, who happens to have just turned five years of age, which is also predicated on his learning environment, is to respect others. I have always held myself to treat others with respect and in good faith, and it is truly unfortunate to hear some of the statements coming across the way.

I will not say too much more other than it is truly unfortunate that we do not respect each other in this Legislature. If in fact we did respect each other in a better fashion, perhaps we would have a more attractive environment for attracting more individuals to run for office. Legislative renewal and electoral reform is all well and good, but at the end of the day, if we cannot treat each other with respect and use respectful language in the Legislature, it is all for naught.

When it comes to the environment, I am very proud of the government's investments in the Department of Environment. Some of those infrastructure initiatives include investments in the climate change action plan. The climate change action plan was recently launched, just over a year ago, and it builds upon four key tenets of enhancing our ability to understand and enhance our knowledge of climate change, improving our ability to adapt to climate change, reducing greenhouse gas emissions and establishing the north as a leader when it comes to innovation and research, all of which this budget builds upon.

We spoke just recently of the investment in green energy such as hydro capacity, but it also builds on institutions such as the Yukon Climate Change Research Centre of Excellence, the Yukon Cold Climate Innovation Centre, Northern Research Institute and many, many other partners.

It includes investments in sewage, waste-water treatment, green energy initiatives as I mentioned, solid-waste management and recycling, to name but a few. It wasn't that long ago that we were debating on the floor of the Legislature the need for investments in solid-waste facilities. Again, through the good work of the Department of Community Services and the Department of Environment, I'm very pleased to have seen and taken part in the launch of the solid-waste action plan, which places emphasis on the three Rs and getting rid of the burning of garbage that we have seen in Yukon landfills in Yukon's history.

Mr. Speaker, I have to say that through investments in the Southern Lakes loop, for example, which places emphasis on transfer stations situated in places like Carcross, Mount Lorne, Tagish, Deep Creek and so forth — because of those investments, we will be able to stop burning. As a result, it will provide many more economic opportunities and opportunities to enhance the environment in the territory.

Again, this budget makes reference to initiatives or investments when it comes to reducing our waste in our landfill and enhancing our ability to recycle. I am very pleased to be part of a government who saw the right thing to do and invests in community recycling depots. Again, this budget reflects just that.

Also, something relatively new is, for the first time ever, a contract for transportation of refundables and non-refundables. It also places emphasis on others, such as capital investments associated with our landfills and recycling depots.

We are very pleased also to see continued investments in tourism. I have been very privileged to be able to have served as perhaps one of the longest serving — if not the longest serving — ministers in the country. Tourism, of course, as we all know, is a key economic generator for the territory. Almost every Yukoner is touched in some way by tourism, whether it is working directly in industry or involved when visitors are in the territory. One thing that I have said and will continue to state on the floor of the Legislature is that the Department of Tourism remains very much committed to ensuring that all Yukon marketing programs are delivered in such a way that they are industry led, research based and market driven. Again, our partnership with the Tourism Industry Association of the Yukon and the Senior Marketing Committee in this regard has and will continue to play a very integral role in all our development and evaluation of each of our tourism marketing programs. I just wanted to thank each and every one of them personally for their ongoing contributions that we have been able to enjoy over the last several years.

One of the strategic priorities identified by the tourism sector, of course, is to increase consumer awareness as a travel destination. When we look to Canada, we actually saw about a 13 percent increase in Canadian visitors last year alone. So we were very pleased to be able to build upon previous marketing campaigns, including gateway cities, our national marketing campaign, and recently, the 2010 marketing initiatives during the Olympic and Paralympic Games. We were very pleased to commit additional monies to the domestic marketing campaign, Destination: Yukon. Again, as a means of creating awareness in our gateway cities of Edmonton, Calgary and Vancouver, we were also pleased to be able to build on that investment with additional dollars toward the tourism cooperative marketing fund. Again, that is another investment that was identified by industry, and to which we were pleased to contribute.

The thing about this particular fund — and again the fund was first implemented in 2004, which is now up to the tune of \$207,000 — is that every dollar invested by the private sector is matched through the Government of Yukon. Through this fund we have been able to leverage a tremendous reach into some of our key markets, not only in Canada but internation-

ally. It has worked very effectively and has, again, helped to grow tourism in our markets and has also helped to grow business in the territory.

We know that, since 2004, more than 500 applications have received support through the fund, which includes not only marketing our products, but also includes supporting our participation at trade and consumer shows.

I'd be very remiss if I didn't say that I, too, would like to add my humble and grateful thanks to the many Yukoners — and I believe there are hundreds of them — who contributed to the success of the 2010 Winter Olympics. It was a tremendous celebration. It was a tremendous, unprecedented opportunity to be able to take pride in all that the Yukon has to offer as a travel destination, but also as a great place to invest and as a wonderful place — in fact, I would say the best place on earth — to live.

It has been said the Yukon celebration was in fact 2010 reasons why we can bask in the golden glow provided by the Olympics. I, too, wanted to just add my thanks to the many volunteers, to the many department staff — particularly in the Department of Tourism and Culture — for all of their contributions in helping lead Yukon's participation. It was an amazing success — Canada's Northern House, our participation through our youth ambassadors, the Yukon First Nation 2010 initiative, as well as all the marketing/media relations that were undertaken during the Olympics to the tune of many, many others — through the artists, through the cultural performances that took place in some 15 key venues throughout the Lower Mainland. A tremendous momentum was created, and we are doing everything that we can to ensure that we are able to leverage that lift provided by the Olympics and continue to work with the Canadian Tourism Commission, the provinces and our two northern territories to see what we can do to ensure that we have the maximum reach into our markets.

I also want to thank Air North for their participation during the games, for providing the air charter that transported many Yukoners there for Yukon Day. It was a tremendous celebration, which I believe instilled great pride and a great sense of renewed confidence in our abilities, and as a place to live and visit and do business. So thank you to Air North and thank you, again, to all those who helped make Yukon's presence at the games the best ever. Again, to all those who covered a multitude of job duties throughout the government and for those who immersed themselves in the 2010 file, I just wish to thank you, as well.

Mr. Speaker, there is so much more to mention within this year's budget. The one thing I did want to add, though, before I have to wrap up my comments are the investments in the Women's Directorate. Again, I think our government's emphasis on enhancing women's equality when it comes to legal, political, social and economic equality is a much-needed investment and I was very pleased to be able to participate in a government that supports violence against aboriginal women — funding of prevention programs to that end. We have been able to double that to \$200,000. We have also been able to increase money for women's equality-seeking organizations to the tune of \$300,000.

Before we took office, I think there was less than \$75,000 being spent in this regard. Now I'm very pleased to see that we are spending well over a half a million dollars in direct support toward women's organizations. These organizations do a stellar job in raising issues of importance to women. I commend all the volunteers and those institutions for their work — Help and Hope for Families women's shelter, the women's shelter in Dawson City and to Kaushee's women's transition home in Whitehorse. Again, we have been very pleased to enhance funding available to these places. It is unfortunate that they are here, but it is very important to provide the support to women and children who are in need, who are seeking refuge from violence.

Again, we're very pleased to be able to provide affordable housing through the Yukon Housing Corporation and the Government of Canada. Well over \$60 million in investments are being made available, which includes the single lone-parent family complex that is going up here in the City of Whitehorse. That will help alleviate some of the pressures that many lone-parent families have to contend with these days. Enhanced housing initiatives for seniors, for children in care — all of these are making a difference in the quality of life for Yukoners.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and again I would commend this budget to others and look forward to the support of others.

Hon. Mr. Rouble: There doesn't appear to be anyone on the opposition benches eager to enter into debate today, but I do see —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

Speaker: The Hon. Member for Mayo-Tatchun, on a point of order.

Mr. Fairclough: I think this is in violation of the Standing Orders and would ask you to ask the Minister of Education to retract that statement, because we are all here to respond to the budget speech.

Speaker: The Minister of Education, on the point of order.

Hon. Mr. Rouble: Mr. Speaker, neither of the two members on the opposition benches got up when the time was called, so I see that as an indication that they weren't eager to enter into the debate.

Speaker's ruling

Speaker: From the Chair's perspective, the Chair did see some toing and froing. There is no point of order. It's simply a disagreement among members.

The Minister of Education has the floor.

Hon. Mr. Rouble: Budget time is always one of the most optimistic times of the year, and with this budget that we have before us, Yukoners can feel very optimistic about their future and the future of the territory. This budget continues to build on our vision for the future, which is a clear vision and one that builds on our strengths and takes action where it's

necessary to make adjustments to our community, to our infrastructure and to our programming.

This budget builds upon our commitment to achieve a better quality of life by building healthy and safe communities with skilled and adaptable people. It's focused on protecting Yukon's pristine environment, preserving our wildlife and studying and mitigating the impacts of climate change. It continues to promote a strong, diversified, private sector economy by developing Yukon's vast natural resources, wilderness tourism potential, agriculture, arts and culture, information technology, the Film and Sound Commission, as well as the traditional industries of outfitting and trapping. This budget continues to demonstrate practising good governance with strong fiscal management and a climate of cooperation, collaboration and partnership, including relationships with our First Nation governments, our two sister territories, our provincial counterparts and the federal government. Mr. Speaker, this is a strong budget that provides for many of the needs in the territory, recognizes our responsibilities and makes significant initiatives for plans into the future.

Mr. Speaker, this budget was built on consultations with Yukoners that we've undertaken for many years now — in the fall with the community tours where we have gone out and spoken with Yukoners from across the territory to identify their issues, their concerns, their thoughts for the future and the areas where they would like to see programming adjusting. We received all this information and worked with our departments. I know every minister has worked very closely with his or her departments and the deputy ministers have worked tirelessly with their staff in order to come up with this balanced approach of financing and funding the operations of the territory.

I would like to thank all the officials who put in so many hours of hard work and dedication and commitment to come up with these budgets and for their creativity in identifying ways that the needs of Yukoners can be met.

I'm very pleased to see that the ongoing work in the beautiful Southern Lakes continues with this budget. In it, we see significant contributions for water treatment in Carcross, for arsenic treatment and upgrades for the Carcross-Tagish First Nation, for solid-waste transfer stations in Carcross and Tagish. This is one of the issues that we heard loud and clear from constituents in my riding — that there was a significant concern in the programming that had been done in the past, that the past practice of simply burning waste needed to be changed and we needed to re-shift how we thought about the solid waste that homes that produce. We were told to reuse articles wherever we can, to recycle them, and then, when they are disposed of, to do so in the safest manner possible. This has meant putting in recycling facilities and waste-transfer stations in Carcross and Tagish. This will complement the activities already underway in Mount Lorne and Marsh Lake.

I would particularly like to thank all of the volunteers who have worked tirelessly over the years on many of these initiatives, whether they be part of the Marsh Lake Solid Waste Management Society, the Mount Lorne recycling group, or the up-and-coming groups that have been established in Carcross and Tagish.

Additionally, Mr. Speaker, we see this budget includes upgrades to recreation facilities in Carcross, significant roadwork upgrades on the Atlin Road and the Annie Lake Road, and continued investments in community planning, emergency services and programs such as FireSmart.

Indeed, as a representative of the beautiful Southern Lakes, I'm proud to see the work we've been building upon in the last number of years, whether it is bridge upgrades, road upgrades or facility upgrades, and this is just one step further in adding necessary infrastructure to serve the needs of the community.

Also, in the community of Carcross, we're continuing on the Carcross waterfront project, which will see other significant enhancements and changes in that community. As the Minister of Tourism and Culture was just talking about, Carcross is a jewel that is receiving the necessary polish from this government.

In my two departments — the Department of Education and the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources — I'll be able to go into much more detail about the specific initiatives in those areas once we get into Committee debate when we have an opportunity to go through the budget line by line. I'm very pleased to see the commitment that this government is demonstrating to others by the increased allocation of resources for both Education and Energy, Mines and Resources.

One of Education's key roles is preparing Yukoners for Yukon opportunities. We're seeing an expansion of those abilities. On the other hand, Mr. Speaker, the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources is tasked with preparing Yukon opportunities for Yukoners. It's very important as we go forward into the future to ensure that we have a broad mix of opportunities and that we also have the people with the training and the skills to be able to take advantage of those opportunities before them.

Some of the highlights in Education, though, that I would just like to point out for members opposite include the new campuses for Pelly and Dawson for the Yukon College, as well as the ongoing work on F.H. Collins. This budget includes significant resources for the architectural work, to build upon the plans and the ideas that have been put forward by the F.H. Collins school committee that has been tasked with helping to drive this project. This is a very exciting project, not only for residents of Whitehorse, but indeed the whole territory, as F.H. Collins does serve the need of many students coming from rural Yukon.

In the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources, we are pleased to expand on our existing programs — programs that have been very fruitful. We have seen significant increases in expenditures in these industries. We only have to look a couple of years ago to some of the actions that resulted from a previous government that saw exploration expenditures in the territory drop to an all-time low of about \$6 million. Under a balanced approach to this area and with some appropriate policy planning, legislative changes, and a lot of very strong work with people in the private sector as well as the public sector, we have seen this industry significantly rebound, with expenditures of well over \$100 million a year in recent years on exploration and on mine development.

I am glad to see that this will continue to be a strong pillar of Yukon's economy, one that will employ people, one that will contribute to the wealth of the territory and will continue to provide Yukoners and the government with the resources they need in order to lead the high quality of life that we have become accustomed to.

As I said, I can go over the specifics of the initiatives in Energy, Mines and Resources and Education as we enter into Committee of the Whole debate. Many of these have been touched on briefly by the Premier in the budget speech.

I do have to say, though, that I've been listening intently to the comments from the opposition in the last two days of our sitting and also today, with the response to the budget from the Leader of the Official Opposition. I must say I was a bit disappointed with the Leader of the Official Opposition and his personal characterizations when he gave his campaign speech. What I was really disappointed with was his lack of constructive criticism. Over the last couple of days, we've heard a lot of political rhetoric, but all of the criticisms have had a disingenuous tone to them.

We've heard a lot about the additional projects that the Liberal Party would add, and we heard a lot of comments about their characterizations about the budget and the financial state. They chastised this government and used some very strong language but they didn't provide any backup. They didn't provide any response to that.

In addition to the criticism, what we really need to hear is what they would do differently. Now, the Leader of the Liberal Party didn't give any indication of the projects that he would stop. Mr. Speaker, would a Liberal Party cancel the Mayo B project?

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Hon. Mr. Rouble: Sorry, the Member for Mayo-Tatchun is making some comments. I would look forward to hearing his comments perhaps when the members opposite choose to enter into budget debate, which I hope will be sooner rather than later. He can put some constructive criticisms on the floor and we will hear from the Member for Mayo-Tatchun and whether he would cancel Mayo B or not or if they would continue to operate.

Mr. Speaker, we've heard according to Yukon Energy officials that the increased demand for energy, if it wasn't met by green energy-producing techniques such as hydro, could result in costs up to \$20 million a year in additional diesel production.

I can only be left to assume that the Liberal Party would prefer to see \$20 million a year burned.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Hon. Mr. Rouble: I know there is some chatter coming from the opposition side.

\$20 million a year was the estimate of the amount of additional diesel to be burned in order to meet the emerging energy needs. We have an option, I guess. They could just say, "No, that's all the energy you have," and put a stop to that. That could be one of the approaches the Liberal Party could take. If so, I would encourage them to have the strength, integrity and honesty to stand up and say, "That's what we're going to do."

If their other approach is to burn diesel, have the strength, honesty and integrity to stand up and say, "No, we're going to burn diesel because that's what we think is the right thing to do for the Liberal Party — to burn \$20 million a year in diesel and to put \$20 million a year more of hydrocarbons into the atmosphere."

The Leader of the Liberal Party earlier today used the phrase, "turned a blind eye to long-term costs". I would suggest that that's the appropriate comment that would apply to that type of strategy. But we'll find out if that's what they're going to cancel. Or are they going to cancel hospitals?

This budget demonstrates the commitment from the Yukon Party to rural Yukon, to hospital care, to renewing and ensuring we have appropriate hospital facilities in our communities in Watson Lake and Dawson City. Which one does the Liberal Party want to cancel? Maybe they don't want to cancel both, but which winner would they like to pick? Would they have the honesty, integrity and the fortitude to stand up and say, "We're going to cut the hospital in Dawson," or "We're going to cut the hospital in Watson Lake"? Which one? Make the tough choice.

Or it could be that they're not fond of roads and ensuring that we have appropriate road infrastructure in the community. I'll make this one easy on the Liberal Party. Of the two roads being upgraded by the Yukon Party in Southern Lakes — the Atlin Road or the Annie Lake Road — which one are they going to pick? Which one are they going to pick? Which one are they not going to do? Which one are they going to cancel? The Annie Lake Road or the Atlin Road?

Okay, if they don't want to talk about highway infrastructure, let's talk about educational infrastructure. In addition to having this government work on building a school in Carmacks, building the Klondike Institute of Art and Culture and the expansion of programming at Yukon College in this budget, we, in partnership with the federal government, are providing the resources that Yukon College asked for so they could build the two new campuses in Pelly or Dawson.

Which one would they cut? Would the Liberal Party stand up and have the honesty and integrity to say which winner and loser they would pick there? Which cheque would they like to tear up from the federal government? The one for Pelly or the one for Dawson? Obviously from their criticisms earlier, we can't deal with this all. So why don't they stand up and make the hard choices and tell Yukoners what they would do? There has been no shortage of criticism so far, but what there has been a shortage of is constructive debate and constructive ideas.

Let's see — housing — on the housing front, Mr. Speaker, this budget includes: \$7 million for the replacement of the Korbo Apartments in Dawson; \$3.3 million for the construction of the Whitehorse affordable family housing complex; \$2.682 million to replace obsolete double-wide trailers in Carmacks, Ross River and Dawson City; \$2.2 million to six housing units in Whitehorse; \$3.7 million for upgrading the existing social housing units Yukon-wide; \$1.6 million to build Abbeyfield seniors housing; \$11.25 million to replace the 207 Alexander

Street seniors housing complex; and \$3.25 million for the seniors buildings in Faro, Teslin and Watson Lake.

Which one are they going to cut? Just one or all? They have criticized over and over and over and over again but they haven't given any constructive feedback. I would challenge them to be honest with Yukoners and tell them which programs they would discontinue should they take office. Where are we seeing the brakes put on?

The other one, on the environmental front, and again, one that is close to my heart in my riding: transfer stations. We've heard it loud and clear that people wanted to see a change in practice. We have invested the resources to provide transfer stations in Carcross and Tagish. Mr. Speaker, which transfer station would the Liberal Party cut — the one in Carcross or the one in Tagish? Criticism is easy. All you have to do is stand up and say, "I'm against that." Governing isn't. Governing —

Speaker's statement

Speaker: Honourable members, as you know full well, the Chair has no control over what goes on off the microphone; however, if you don't want it to come back at you when it is your turn to speak, I would suggest that honourable members respect each other while they speak.

You have the floor, Minister of Education.

Hon. Mr. Rouble: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll try to shift into a bit more of an optimistic tone.

The members opposite — the Member for Mayo-Tatchun continues to make off-microphone comments and kibitz. It is unfortunate that we don't have video cameras going in here all the time so that Yukoners can see the behaviour of some of the members that they elect. It's too bad that today we don't have some of our school kids in here so they can see some of the behaviours that go on in here. It's too bad that we need to resort to having select committees to look at our Standing Orders and our rules when really if members just reined in their behaviour and acted like reasonable, responsible adults in here the debate would be a lot more civil.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Hon. Mr. Rouble: "Yes, dad," is the comment coming from — well, nah nah nah nah nah — this is ridiculous.

Speaker's statement

Speaker: Order, order. Members, have some respect here, please — both sides.

You're up, Minister of Education.

Hon. Mr. Rouble: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Grade 7 was a long time ago, but I'm reminded of it on a daily basis.

When members get up in debate, I hope they don't cherry-pick some of the processes. Earlier today in our debate, we heard comments like, "If I were elected, I'd ignore this recommendation from the Auditor General." That's indeed what we heard. You know, we heard — well, a lot of other comments. There has been a lot of good work done recently, a lot of strong investments made, a lot of hard work by a lot of people. When we don't acknowledge it, it really disrespects the work that they've done.

Earlier in debate, we heard talk about a university of the Arctic and I'm sure we'll discuss this a lot more in this session, but I have to ask the members opposite: where were they when we debated the changes to the *Yukon College Act*? It was only a couple of months ago when we, the Yukon Party government amended the *Yukon College Act* to give them the authority and jurisdiction to become a degree-granting institution.

Members in this Assembly keep talking about building a university while we're busy doing that. When we look at Yukon College now, I'm proud of the diversity of programs that they have to offer. Members should be reminded that students can take the first two years of an arts or science degree there and that, in addition to the tremendous trades and skill programs and tremendous administrative programming, they also offer a bachelor of education, bachelor of social work, a Master of Education this year, and an MBA program in relationship with others.

People keep talking about building bricks and mortars; I want to talk about increasing post-secondary education opportunities for Yukoners and northerners too. I do agree with the member opposite that the logical place to put in additional expansion programs is here in Yukon. That would be the jurisdiction where it would make sense. I have to tell you, too, the other education ministers in other territories feel their jurisdictions would also be strong candidates for those types of infrastructure.

What we can all agree on — the three education ministers across the north — is that we need to expand post-secondary education opportunities for northerners. Yukon is certainly leading in that regard. The efforts we put into the student grant that encourages students to attend universities across North America are a tremendous benefit — to have the programs in place that we now to encourage those students to come back, to participate in life in Yukon and to live in their home. Those are some tremendous programs.

We have a diversity of programs now, too, with Yukon College, as I just mentioned a few of them. In addition to things like the home-heating maintainer program, the licensed practical nurse program, the sheet-metal and furnace technician work — the diversity of programming offered not only here at the Ayamdigut Campus but also throughout the other territory-wide campuses is amazing. We're also seeing growth with relationships with other post-secondary institutions, such as University of Alberta, UNBC — which is the accrediting body for the Master of Education program — with Royal Roads University, with University of Victoria, with the University of Alaska Fairbanks. Those partnerships are having tremendous opportunities for Yukoners.

Additionally, with the creation of the Research Centre of Excellence, we're now seeing people doing post-graduate research work here in Yukon, where Yukon students are coming home and working on master's theses and on doctoral theses. Those are the opportunities that are on the ground right now. We're not talking about creating plans to implement those in the future; that is what is really happening in today's Yukon. If members opposite would come to briefings or read their mail, they would find out about many of these opportunities. We can

go on and I expect we will go on when we discuss Education in much greater detail.

Mr. Speaker, this is a solid budget that builds upon the strengths of Yukon. It touches all aspects from Environment, land issues, community issues, Justice issues, Women's Directorate, Economic Development, Health and Social Services, Tourism and Culture, and of course, Education and Energy, Mines and Resources. I would encourage members to get beyond some of the rhetoric and to start digging a bit deeper — quite a bit deeper — into what this budget means for Yukoners today and into the future. I would encourage all members to support the budget as the deliberations continue.

Thank you.

Mr. Inverarity: Mr. Speaker, I think that the best place to start here is to just outline that it is now my turn to speak and that normally as we go through the course of the budgets, my understanding was that there was generally a protocol of speaking order that is to be done. I know there is some flexibility in that. I think that what it really comes down to — and the comments from the member opposite — is one of respect, and certainly the Deputy Premier brought up the issue of respect within this House. One thing about respect, Mr. Speaker, is that it should be earned. And so, occasionally we see this not happening. For example, last week the Premier stood up before the Whitehorse Chamber of Commerce and delivered parts of the budget speech that, quite frankly, could have given individuals an opportunity to perhaps even make money — I'm not sure — but certainly releasing it before it is released on the floor here, was clearly, from my perspective a sign of disrespect. Not for me, I mean, I'm a member, but it does have some bearing on the Legislative Assembly — but it is really not about this Assembly, it is about Yukoners in general. I find that when people break protocol — and protocol is one of those nebulous things — but when they do, it shows they don't care about the office of the Legislative Assembly; they don't care about how things progress.

I've said this a number of times over the last few months. I think that democracy is a fragile instrument. We have to make democracy work and it is dependent upon the people within this Legislative Assembly — and you, Mr. Speaker, have mentioned it yourself about how we are honourable people here and it is honour that only makes this a successful operation in terms of the government. They are our rule; we police ourselves. No one is going to come stomping in the door here and arrest us if we break a protocol, but the reality is that it is up to us to do that, and it is up to us to respect the protocol within this House and outside this House. That is the part that I find particularly upsetting when we get into even simple things like budget debate and who is going to go next or not go next.

When people know that we have an established protocol for following that, it's a simple process, we don't have to make a big deal out of it — and that's enough said from my perspective. I think that what we need to talk about, and we're going to get into the budget here — but first, before we do that, I'd like to, like most of us here, thank our constituents. In my case, it's the constituents of Porter Creek South who've elected me to

this particular position here. I hope, and when I pray at night, that I am earning their trust and their understanding. I know that when I have constituency meetings — and I've had a few over the last few months — the individuals come out and talk to me, they give me feedback. I'd like to thank them for doing that. That feedback is very, very important. In particular, I'd like to also thank the members of the Porter Creek Community Association. While this committee represents all of Porter Creek, the issues they bring forward to me affect my constituency and I'm pleased to deal with them when I can. Out of this particular association — and recently they've been incorporated — are the Friends of McIntyre Creek. It's nice to see a new association bud and grow and develop as they do. I know that this particular group is made up of really concerned citizens and they are working hard to ensure that McIntyre Creek is protected against urban development. Certainly, I'll do what I can to support them, whether I'm on this side of the House or the other.

I'd also like to thank my riding association, particularly those supporters who continue to support me and support the Liberal Party. They have been an integral part of my success here as an MLA, and I look forward to their continued support in the future. I'd also like to thank all those individuals who have come to me, both from within my constituency and from without, because I do get a lot of individuals who come and express concerns to me about social issues, for example, and public concerns they may have. I'm convinced that my role is to assist in representing them and their ideas. If they're not getting the support that they should be from their own MLAs, and they feel obligated to come to our caucus, then that's important that we do support them. And certainly, there are a number of them there.

My critic areas of responsibility are the Yukon Liquor Corporation, Highways and Public Works, and Tourism and Culture. Over the years, it has been great to look into the budget and see exactly what is in that budget. I don't think it is so much to criticize as to try to understand the budget. In a lot of cases, we don't even get an opportunity to debate the individual lines within the budget. I know in the past I've had difficulty in this area. Certainly it would be nice to be able to know for sure that, on such and such a date, the Department of Tourism or the Department of Highways and Public Works will be up and we can debate that over the course of the sitting. That is not always a given and so, in this particular forum that we have here, we'll reply to the budget speech. We are all given our 40 minutes and we sometimes have to slip in those things that we would otherwise do in line-by-line debate or within the budget so that they get heard and that people are aware. If that comes across as a negative — I don't think so. I think it is constructive criticism.

In some cases, and I will mention them today, perhaps there are some good things in the budget, but overall there is a trend that we have to be concerned with. I think it would be fair to say that Yukoners are somewhat angry with the government at the moment, and there is good reason. Over the past year or so, we've seen the Premier take over the Yukon Energy portfolio and then he began privatization talks, among other things.

There was some interfering that appeared with the Peel land use planning commission.irate phone calls were made and refusal basically by the government to accept responsibility for their actions within the government. The Premier only offers contradictions when we ask him about this. We saw it today during Question Period when we asked about one line item and he defers to another unrelated line item. Yukoners have been very vocal about the other individuals who make up the current government. They would like to see them stand up and voice their own opinions, rather than what we might consider someone else's. They feel let down, Mr. Speaker. Yukoners expect the government to be honest. They want straight answers from the government, and they're really not getting them. A good example of this might be — well, let's pick on the Whitehorse Correctional Centre. It's a good example of what voters had to endure from this government. The government stopped construction of what was going to be a brand new correctional facility in 2002 and then did nothing — virtually nothing for four or five years. And then, within this last mandate, they decide, "Okay, we'll build this correctional facility." Why? "Well, we need one."

We've needed one for probably 20 years, but what happened? The budget went from \$34 million to \$67 million for that wait, and that is another example of had they gone forward and proceeded we would have \$35 million or so in the bank that we are now not going to have.

This government has put forward a \$1-billion budget this year; however, the budget unfortunately still doesn't instill any confidence in me that this government is acting responsibly. The government plans to spend \$1 billion over the next 12 months, and what will our return on that investment be? According to them it will be \$2.9 million. I think it is important that we look at these numbers in some relativity. That is a very high amount. It is hardly even fathomable in some cases, let alone \$2.9 million. I think the minimum amount you can win in a lottery nowadays is \$4 million. Well, that amount is fairly small. I would certainly like to win \$1 million myself, Mr. Speaker, but let's break it down into something that Yukoners can really understand. Individuals are out there who are struggling every day to make their rent, to make their heat, make their light, and certainly to make their pensions.

Yukoners can really understand. I know that a lot of people come to me and say that an integral part of their pension plan is Yukon Lottery Corporation. They go out and they buy a ticket every month, or every week or every day for that matter, to try to achieve some sort of financial security. Well, let's put it into their perspective. If this budget was \$1,000 — now, \$1,000 — there's a lot of people who live on less than \$1,000. After the course of the year, what they would end up with at the end of that is \$3 in savings. Certainly \$1,000 is a little small. There are people who make \$30,000, \$40,000 or 50,000. If it were \$50,000, the amount that they would probably earn would be about a dollar and a half. For those people lucky enough to earn \$100,000 in the course of the year, the return on the amount of money that they have earned in the course of the year would be a mere \$300. The government is asking us to look at this and say, "We're going to have a billion and we're going to get

maybe \$3 million back — if we are lucky." They certainly didn't prove it last year, we know that. And they expect that we, on this side of the House, should accept that as a reasonable, responsible way to deal with a billion dollars of taxpayers' money wherever it may come from.

I find it hard to believe, Mr. Speaker, that the numbers that are being presented here are going to be the numbers that we end up with. Clearly, and it has been mentioned here by members on this side of the House that, you know, they went into last year expecting a \$19-million profit — \$19-million profit — and they ended up with a \$23-million loss — deficit — call it what you want. It ain't there. That's a concern, because if you look at that projection, a \$2.5-million surplus at the end of what will be the new fiscal year, it seems unachievable.

I mentioned that one of my critic areas was Highways and Public Works. Personally, I think the budget has flat-lined this year. Previous years showed an increase of about two to three percent. And while this is a reasonable increase due to maintain the existing services, there is no increase in this year's budget, and we must believe that there are going to be some severe cuts coming.

The capital budget has decreased this year by more than 25 percent. The government is quite clearly going in the wrong direction, if this is the way they're going to do it. This government apparently thinks that it is going to keep the road safe by cutting the budget by 25 percent. I'd like to know: are the roads going to be safe? Are the bridges going to be safe? Last Sunday, I drove up Braeburn way. I was coming down into Fox Creek and one of the ore trucks coming from up Minto way hit the bridge at exactly the same time that I hit the bridge. It's sort of like going around hairpin turns — you're always going to meet the biggest truck in the middle of a hairpin turn. As we know, Sunday's weather was miserable, and for most of the day it was raining and slushy and the truck came by and, sure enough, my windshield was covered in mud. That was fine. I can deal with that issue. But we hit the bridge at exactly the same time, and I hit the washboard on the northbound lane — now, you may recall from my last budget reply speech that I had complained about the washboard on the Fox Creek bridge. It's still there today, and I just about hit the ditch. I couldn't see from the slush coming from the oncoming semi, and the washboard on the northbound lane was dangerous. Were there any highway signs? No. I asked the minister responsible for Highways and Public Works if he would look into this six months ago. It's still not done. It's dangerous. Someone is going to die there.

We talked about the last budget reply speech — about the Silver Trail. Repairs and rehabilitation are needed. I think we need to look at doing this. There are going to be some mines opening up in the area. There still isn't enough money in the budget to get that road up to snuff, and it should be taken care of.

The future of Shakwak also remains up in the air. I think there is \$10 million in the budget. That's about one-third of what was there before. This is an important partnership with the U.S. government. We know that the area north of Burwash Landing has very, very bad permafrost and it's heaving. I'd like

to know, for example, if I don't get an opportunity in the budget — in the actual departmental debate — whether or not or how those negotiations are going. Will it continue? When will that agreement be reached and if it is, when will that happen, and what is going to happen in that area?

Information and communications technology is always an area that I am happy to deal with — happy to look at. My background is in this area. I see the O&M budget for ICT is up from \$11.1 million to \$12.8 million this year. That is really great. I would say that that is going in the right direction in terms of developing that industry if the money is going to the industry. However, when I look at the line item numbers, I see that service agreements have moved from \$1.4 million in the 2008-09 budget up to \$2.3 million in last year's and now it is going up to \$2.7 million. These service agreements are agreements that we may have with Outside companies. The money might not be staying here. It might be with Microsoft. I am not exactly sure, but it will be a question I will ask in the departmental debate.

For sure I'm going to be curious to see exactly what it's for. However, the capital budget, on the other hand, is down from \$20 million to \$4.8 million this year. I think that if you look at that, then — while I understand that there's some justification for it, because obviously we don't have the MRS system in the budget any more, which was \$12 million, that still doesn't quite explain going from \$20 million to \$4 million. In fact, if I look at it, I see that the MRS is only \$340,000 and I'm curious to find out when exactly that particular program is going to be finished. Why the big decrease? I'd also like to know about the MRS system — whether it is on time and on budget. I know that there's a lot going on out in the communities. I've been talking to some of my friends who are amateur radio operators — they've been doing some EMS training in this area and they're trying to help out. I think it's something that's long overdue. I know the old MDMRS system was put back into service around the turn of the century. It had a date problem with it — a Y2K issue. It was resolved, but it was still old at that point in time, so I'm happy to see that the MRS system's coming on line.

Another area that I think we got into some debate over last sitting was cellphone use while driving. I know there have been some accidents and deaths around that. There have been lots of studies that suggest that cellphone use while driving can be as dangerous as drinking and driving. Distracted drivers are a danger to not only themselves but everybody on the road. I received, I think, three emails this week alone asking about the cellphone laws. They see people driving around with them plugged into their ear. This is something that technology can actually solve. We see new vehicles coming on the road with voice-activated telephones built right into them. We should be putting in regulations that encourage, if not force, individuals to move to hands-free. It is just the way it is going to be. I mean, look at the countries around the world that have already adopted laws and regulations regarding distracted driving: Australia, Brazil, China, Egypt, France, China, Hungary, Italy, Japan, Kenya even, Mexico, Norway, the Philippines, Portugal, Russia, South Africa, Sweden, Turkey, the UK, and even lowly Zimbabwe — just to name a few of the countries that have

banned the use of phones in terms of distracted-driving regulations. Do we need a committee to go out and study it and ask it? I'm not sure. I don't think so. I think that the regulations are well defined and could well be put into place. So, that's another issue that needs to be brought up. I think it will be coming forward.

While we're talking about vehicles and motor vehicles, I see the government has tabled some legislation today, the *Act to Amend the Motor Vehicles Act, 2010*. As they know, near and dear to my heart are drivers' licences. I have to tell you that there isn't probably a week that goes by that I don't get someone coming up and telling me a horror story about their driver's licence. I even have one myself. I was in a casino in Niagara Falls in January, visiting my in-laws, and I wanted to get one of those courtesy cards. I handed them my Yukon driver's licence, and the lady looked at it, flipped it over, threw it back at me and said, "What's this?" I said, "Well, it's a Yukon driver's licence, and I think if you check the book, you'll see that it's okay." Sure enough, she went and found the book, dug it out, and she just had a really good chuckle over the whole thing.

While that isn't significant, what we are seeing are significant issues of people using their driver's licence to rent vehicles and they're using it as identification. So if this is a step in that direction to get that implemented then great. I think that's super. My question would be: where is the money in the budget to actually implement the new driver's licence? I don't see it, unless it is buried in a line item somewhere. It would be nice to see.

Some other issues that are coming up — well, let's move on to tourism, I guess, for now. As I looked through the Tourism budget, I noticed that the minister spoke briefly on it here this afternoon. I was hoping that there would be more discussion from her this afternoon regarding the tourism budget. There are some issues that I have with it. I guess the first one — if I read 13-8 right — it appears there is a \$20-million line item for total allotments under the operation and maintenance side. That appears to be \$3 million less than last year. That is a concern. It is lower than what the estimate was last year. While it is slightly higher than the 2008 budget, I would say that it still causes me concern that if tourism is such a vital industry to the Yukon, its O&M budget would be going in the wrong direction.

I know that there has been quite a bit said about the \$700,000 that is going into the tourism cooperative marketing fund. I think that's great, okay? I think that focusing on some of the larger cities — Vancouver, Edmonton, Calgary, and I think Toronto was part of that if I'm not mistaken — is fine, but I guess I have to question when the budget is being reduced by \$3 million, where is it coming from? Sure enough, when I look over at activities for O&M expenditures, I see that there is a reduction of \$400,000 in research and approximately \$400,000 in overseas marketing. Again, there is another \$400,000 or \$500,000 reduction in North American marketing. So I'm trying to understand. On the one hand, they are going to increase some of the domestic cooperative marketing fund and I guess that's where it's matched dollar for dollar with the industry. I think that's good that they are paying their way, Mr.

Speaker, but the issue here becomes one of what are these other losses or reductions in their budget coming from? Last year I was standing up here at this time, and they had increased the overseas marketing by \$500,000 and I was complaining at that point that they were stealing it from the North American marketing fund. Well, now they're reducing them both again by \$400,000 and that causes me lots of concern. I'll be looking forward to departmental debate on that particular area just to see what's going on and getting some answers from the minister in that area.

I have to say that I noticed the Women's Directorate budget line has gone from \$2.7 million, as the forecast for last year, to \$474,000. I'm not sure if that's the money that's actually spent in the department from a staffing point of view. I know that the department staff does excellent work. Certainly in terms of budget preparation, they've gone out of their way and I know that when I've seen them around helping out, even at the Olympics that I attended, the Yukon Day down there, they were helpful to everybody above and beyond compare. So I'm a little concerned about the cut there in that particular area.

I'm not going to dwell a lot on this particular area, but I think that as we get into it, we need to acknowledge the role of domestic marketing, not only within those four core city groups, but throughout North America. If we've seen an increase in traffic from within North America to the Yukon, you would think that you would want to spread that money around — not just to the rest of Canada, but certainly all across the United States, and reducing the domestic marketing fund outside of those four core cities is something that I think needs to be looked at. The other point on the international one is, is this a change in direction that we're going to now? Are we saying that the high-end tourists from Europe are no longer our target market? It would be nice to know if they're going to be our target market or not. So, from that perspective, I think that we need to get some clarification in that area.

I think it is also important that we identify — and this is more of a technical nature — how we actually report tourism numbers needs to be a little bit more consistent. Last year we got numbers I think to the end of August, if I am not mistaken. I know in other years they produced numbers to the end of September. I am still — and perhaps the minister might acknowledge it — I haven't actually looked at the website — if all of last year's numbers are up on the website yet. I am not sure at this point, but I would like to find out so we can have some comparisons from year to year whether or not they are. To wrap up in terms of the Tourism budget, I think that the budget that has been presented here, with the \$3-million reduction over last year, seems improbable. I have concerns about cutting Tourism's O&M by almost 10 percent, as I have indicated. I'd like to see a return to the domestic marketing. I know people have come to me and said, "You know, we should be marketing, not just in those four or five cities, but this time of year a lot of the farmers on the Prairies have already planted their seeds and they have six to eight weeks in which they could go out in their RVs and come up north. It is just a matter of soliciting them to come here." Do they listen to the Calgary and Edmonton radio stations or television stations or wherever the

marketing is going to be? I'm not sure. It might be something to look at. Certainly getting our U.S. friends to come to the Yukon is always worthwhile.

I'd like to thank the officials who put that part of the budget — in fact, the whole budget — together, particularly Tourism and Highways and Public Works' officials. I think the work they have done is really fantastic. I wanted to make a comment actually at this point on the culture side of tourism. I have to say that one area that I think has been highly successful has been the development of our cultural industries. I look at the CDs. In fact, the other night at the Business After Hours, I saw a City of Whitehorse CD. I'm not sure if Tourism had anything to do with that one, but it was very well done. I see the arts programs. I see there is money going into the Guild Hall for renovations. I think that's great too. So there are some good things that are being done in this budget. As we always say, "Yes, there are good things and yes, there are things that we think need improvement." It's important for us to acknowledge that the cultural industries that we have here have been highly successful. I think that as we move forward we will become a leader in Canada in culture. I look at the music festivals that we have around, certainly the theatre shows that have been put on lately and those kinds of things have been excellent.

I think that where I'd like to wrap up is by going back to the original start that I had. I think that the people in Porter Creek South deserve a lot of credit for supporting me and for the work that they've been doing and supporting their community. I've tried to focus on the community as it is an important part of Whitehorse, certainly an important part of Yukon. We live in a community and the community is actually Yukon. It's not just the ridings that we represent. We are a small community; we're 34,000 people. There are suburbs in most major cities — most minor cities — that are larger than the total population of the Yukon and so we need to bind together as a community, whatever our background.

It's to that end that I say that I believe that community matters — whether it be at the riding level, at the constituency level, at the civic level or at the territorial level. We all matter, we all have to care, we all have to show respect for each other, we all have to meet the needs of this community because we're the ones who have to get it done. We have to realize that community matters and we must participate and give back to this community and to the shared goals that we have.

With that, Mr. Speaker, thank you.

Hon. Mr. Edzerza: It is an honour to rise today and speak as the Minister of Environment. In my short time as minister, I recognized the hard work of the staff and how much is really involved in managing this very important portfolio. I would like to start today by putting on public record a public apology to the Premier for not recognizing his hard work over the past seven years. It is always very easy to get caught up in the actions of the day.

The Yukon Party government under the leadership of the Premier, the Member for Watson Lake, has for two years in a row produced a budget over \$1 billion. That is phenomenal in the sense that it is for a population of only 34,000 people.

Where else in Canada have such accomplishments been made? The Yukon Party is fortunate to have him as their leader, along with the other dedicated MLAs who are also part of the team that made these humungous budgets possible. I am honoured to be part of this team.

I would like to go into talking about the protection of McIntyre Creek because this has been an issue that has been in the forefront for some time now. There were a lot of personal attacks, as I would classify comments made on the floor with respect to me as the MLA for McIntyre-Takhini — all to do with this very issue.

I would like to set the record straight today as best as I can. It's true that I did bring this issue forward in good faith, of course realizing that I am only one voice. It is important to maintain respect for the social structures in place to guide a process to develop and promote land use planning and development for an ever-growing population like the City of Whitehorse, which is in need of housing. After all, shelter is one of the necessities for the human being to survive.

What I can contemplate from hearing the comments from the Official Opposition is that they would probably stop all development within the city. However, we must respect the other levels of government that are involved. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, it is with respect for other governments such as the municipal government and the Kwanlin Dun First Nation — which is a self-governing First Nation — that this government will honour their hard work with regard to land use planning, being able to function as a governing body and produce product to the citizens who elected them.

Both of these governments have been actively working on a land use plan for several years now, so there has been ample opportunity for the affected citizens to have their voices heard with regard to the McIntyre Creek area.

Both opposition parties and even the Friends of McIntyre Creek organization have been lobbying for the protection of this area. However, to the best of my knowledge as of today, not one of these groups ever organized a meeting to discuss their concerns with the Kwanlin Dun First Nation. Even the Member for Porter Creek South never made any effort to meet with the Kwanlin Dun First Nation to lobby for protection of this area in question.

That is why I stated that I am one voice and the only MLA who contacted the Kwanlin Dun First Nation to initiate discussion on this issue. One would believe that if opposition MLAs were really sincere about protection of this area, they would have made a sincere effort to meet with one very, very important stakeholder who has land in the area, that being the Kwanlin Dun First Nation.

To date, Mr. Speaker, I have not had a response from Kwanlin Dun First Nation with regard to my letters; therefore, one might conclude that my requests were not a high priority on their busy agenda. I know there are several people interested in the McIntyre Creek area; however, I again will state for the record that I am the only MLA who went and talked to them.

Now I would like to talk a little bit about the Peel watershed and land use planning because I've heard several comments made on the floor of this Legislative Assembly about me

with regard to this issue. It was more from a personal perspective as opposed to a broader perspective where there are several stakeholders involved. This is not a decision of one person, the Minister of Environment. There are several processes that must be followed with regard to the *Umbrella Final Agreement*.

I know that the Yukon government honours the commitments made to First Nations under the final agreements and as such supports the work of the Peel Watershed Planning Commission. The Yukon government received a recommended plan from the Peel Watershed Planning Commission in December of 2009. The government will follow the review and intergovernmental consultation process set out under the First Nation final agreements and the letter of understanding signed by the parties.

Yukon government issued an interim sub-surface withdrawal from new mineral staking in the Peel region for one year in order to provide certainty during the review process. That's a significant thing that the citizens of this territory will appreciate and recognize, that it was a move that was necessary. The Yukon government is working in partnership with the other parties to review and respond to the commission's recommended plan. The response may approve, reject or propose modifications to the plan in accordance with chapter 11 of the *Umbrella Final Agreement*.

The Yukon government looks forward to a final recommended plan that reflects the variety of land use pressures and natural values within the Peel watershed and addresses the interest of the Yukon public, Gwich'in Tribal Council, First Nation of Na Cho Nyäk Dun, Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in, Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation and the Yukon government.

The objective of regional land use planning is to provide guidance for the integrated management of lands and resources in order to ensure sustainable development and sound environmental stewardship while minimizing land use conflicts. It is very important that there is some semblance of balance. I know that probably the Yukon Conservation Society and CPAWS would probably like to see 100 percent of the area become park; however, there were mineral claims staked in the area that have to be honoured also. No government, I believe, would or should just totally do away with all of the existing activities that were in the area, and that includes wilderness tourism and hunting concessions. There is a lot of interest in that area, and for good reason, because it is a pretty virgin territory.

On December 2, 2009, the Peel Watershed Planning Commission publicly released the recommended *Peel Watershed Regional Land Use Plan* to the parties for their review and response. The commission will be inactive while the parties respond to the recommended plan. In January 2010, the Yukon government, the First Nation of Na Cho Nyäk Dun, Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in, Gwich'in Tribal Council, and Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation signed that letter of understanding that I mentioned, outlining how the parties will work together to review and respond to the recommended plan. So there is a demonstration of a real joint effort here. It's not a one-sided deal. The government is honouring what is in the land claims agreement.

The Yukon government has formulated a process for internal review of the plan and is currently gathering input to inform the technical responses.

The recommended land use plan proposed a number of concepts that represent key issues for Yukon government, including a large percentage — 80.6 percent of the region is designated as a “special management area” for heritage — 2.1 percent, watershed — 27.7 percent, general protection — 31.2 percent, fish and wildlife — 19.6 percent, presenting the issue of conducting and finding funding for those additional planning processes. The remaining 19.4 percent is designated as “integrated management zones”, while a mere four percent of the region contains grandfathered mineral claims — only four percent. There is considerable public support for some form of protection to large wilderness areas of the region. The Yukon government supports the environmentally responsible development of Yukon natural resources.

Having said that, there are a number of other stakeholder groups who are interested in that area besides those lobbying for a park. You have — I mentioned earlier — wilderness tourism, hunting concessions, mining, maybe some gas and oil exploration. All these interests exist within that area.

I know the Official Opposition stated at the beginning of the sitting how complex this area is going to be to manage, and they're right; it is going to be very complex and somewhat controversial on several fronts maybe.

As an arm's-length body, the commission has the mandate to submit a proposed land use plan and land-management recommendations to the Yukon government and First Nations. The Yukon government and First Nations decide how to implement the land use plan on their respective lands. The parties involved consist of the Yukon government, Gwich'in Tribal Council, First Nation of Na Cho Nyäk Dun, and the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in and Vuntut Gwitchin First Nations.

Having said that, it's very simple to be able to determine that yes, this is going to be a process probably where there is going to have to be some give and take from the different stakeholders.

Definitely, from where I stand anyway, with all the different interest groups, we see that it can't go just one way for one party, especially when there are so many separate parties involved within this region. Again, environmentally friendly, sound development — that's important for people to understand that. I know that even the First Nations probably have not ruled out any kind of economic development activities that might be available to them in that region, because it's a massive amount of land.

Now I would like to go on into some of the highlights, some of the significant events of the past year, and outline some of the plans for this coming fiscal year. During this past year we have participated in the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen.

We formalized the *Tombstone Territorial Park Management Plan* with the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in and First Nation governments. We brought in major changes for hunters to harvest bison, elk and the Porcupine caribou herd. We have seen many stories this winter about declining caribou herds across the

north. The interim conservation measures brought in for the Porcupine caribou herd last fall reflected our concerns for this herd's declining population and our commitment to completion of the harvest management plan. Yukon government's significant efforts to protect the Porcupine caribou herd from further population declines sent an important message to everyone. The herd is important to the people of the north. The herd is a northern and international treasure. We have a responsibility to ensure this resource is secure for future generations. The protection of this valuable resource will be one of the largest single programs in this year's budget. We are now at the approval stage for the new harvest management plan worked out with all the parties in January.

This new agreement allows all governments — aboriginal, territorial and federal — to work together in managing the Porcupine caribou herd wisely for the future. We will revisit the interim conservation measures from last fall once everyone signs the new harvest management plan and it is ready for implementation.

All these measures are important because the survival of an ancient caribou herd could be at stake. It is our duty and responsibility to ensure the survival of this herd. Mr. Speaker, this includes First Nations. As aboriginals, we do have the aboriginal right to hunt but we also must honour the unwritten aboriginal laws for respect of the animal kingdom. The First Nation people had laws in place to sustain the animals. It was in place long before there was a territorial government. One of the exercises that as First Nation people — I can encourage everyone to start going back and looking at how it was possible that the First Nation people didn't shoot out a whole herd of animals.

How did that happen? It happened because we did have laws in place. Maybe we need to revisit those and start honouring those laws again. I strongly encourage all First Nations, not only in the Yukon, but right across Canada, to start looking and going back to reviewing and asking their elders, “What were those laws?” They were very effective. That's why we still have moose, caribou, sheep and all of these animals in the north. They're still in, I would say, a healthy state, but there is a possibility — a real possibility — of diminishing all of the moose within the Whitehorse area. That's possible. But through traditional laws and practices, they would have a better chance to survive.

I would like to also talk a little bit about climate change because we learned some valuable lessons from the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen last December.

Being a full member of the official Canadian delegation opened the doors to national and international meetings. It gave us the time to meet with, and pick up new information from, other countries and delegates that we can use in this government's efforts to adapt to climate change. It was also a door to tell our story to the rest of the world and show the impact that climate change is having on the north.

I have talked to some elders from communities far north of here, and I hear of stories where mountains have appeared where there was just a snow hill before or an ice pack. Some of

the elders were saying to me that now they have to sort of develop a new map in their mind of landmarks, for example. What used to be a glacier to them at one time is now becoming a stone mountain. So this is something that's really of concern to some of the elders in the far northern countries or parts of the Yukon, and the Northwest Territories.

The Yukon government's response to climate change is a shared responsibility. No single Yukon government agency or department can do it all. Over the past year we have seen climate change initiatives coming from the departments of Highways and Public Works, Energy, Mines and Resources, Education, Economic Development and the Yukon Energy Corporation. We are increasing our efforts to coordinate this government's response.

The recent opening of the climate change secretariat office downtown gives all Yukon government departments and agencies easier access to the secretariat services. We will be looking at how this government can cap its greenhouse gas emissions. We will also look to ways in which a Yukon-wide greenhouse gas emissions target can be established. We will be looking at greenhouse gas emissions that stem from our internal operations across the government and start work on our reduction plan to help us meet the target of a 20-percent reduction by 2015. We will be working with our partners in the Northwest Territories and Nunavut to develop a pan-northern adaptation plan.

Mr. Speaker, I'm not a scientist, and I don't pretend to be. However, I do know that if one puts their face to an exhaust pipe of an idling car, they will die. So, how many vehicles are running at one time throughout the world? All this exhaust is going someplace. It's going into the air — the air we breathe. I rest my case. Man must get serious about what he is allowing to go into the air. After all, we all know that we need good, clean air to be able to survive as human beings.

I would like to also talk a little bit about the recycling program. This year marks the 15th anniversary of the recycling club established by the department to encourage more people to get into the recycling habit. The success of this program has benefited thousands of people throughout this territory over the years and has, in part, made it possible for community-run recycling centres to offer a service to their citizens. We continue to respond to the needs of Yukon's community-run recycling centres, and provide them with the financial support they need to weather the uncertainty that occurred in the international commodities market.

Improvements are occurring across the board and everyone who recycles on a regular basis is benefiting from our work. We are continuing discussions with the Department of Community Services officials to complete the transfer of recycling programs to Community Services. We are continuing work started last year, to bring in changes to the beverage container regulations.

Mr. Speaker, when touring the Raven Recycling depot a couple of weeks ago, I learned that fleece is made from milk jugs. Who would ever believe that? But there is a use for all of these things. I might add that the trend for clothing today is fleece.

I will talk a little bit about what is happening with the parks. The management of Tombstone Territorial Park matured last summer. Thanks to the previous ministers who worked in Environment, such accomplishments have been made within these very important areas.

The Yukon and Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in governments formally adopted the management plan developed through wide public consultation. We established the Tombstone Park management committee required under the management plan. Committee members are from the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in government and the Yukon parks branch of Environment Yukon.

We opened the new visitor interpretive centre for residents and visitors to have a modern destination to learn about the Park's natural, cultural and recreational values. The building is an example of how we can adapt to the environment and deliver on our promise to respond to climate change by decreasing our greenhouse gas emissions.

Tombstone is a significant attraction that continues to draw more visitors and outdoor enthusiasts every year. We are responding by making additional improvements to trails and access to campgrounds. We were successful in obtaining federal funding this year to complete the interpretive parking lot and landscaping.

We will also use those funds to build a barrier-free trail that will lead south from the interpretive centre to a wetland beaver pond complex. The goal is to make it possible for visitors, who have mobility challenges or use wheelchairs, to use the trail and to travel to the viewing site overlooking the beaver pond. Work on this project is set to start this summer and will provide local employment opportunities.

In the southern Yukon, we will be continuing work started with First Nations last year to prepare management plans for natural environment parks for Kusawa in the southwestern Yukon and Agay Mene on the Atlin Road. These are Yukon government land claims commitments and the respective First Nations are participating in the planning process for these parks.

We are reviewing the public's responses to a survey on what campground users thought about our network of campgrounds. The final report is not in yet, but so far we have found that campers believe they are getting good value for their fees. They appreciate the cleanliness of the campgrounds.

They feel secure in the campgrounds, the campgrounds are meeting their expectations, and they appreciate the preservation of the natural surroundings. The most popular activities for campers are not a surprise to campground users. The top five on last summer's list were relaxing, experiencing the outdoors, wildlife viewing, birdwatching and campfire activities.

I'd also like to talk a little bit on wildlife management, because this is also a very important part of the Environment portfolio. The health of our fish and wildlife population is important to everyone who relies on this sustainable and renewable resource. We pride ourselves on being prepared for population trends and diseases that could be a concern. Last year, we laid the foundation for a new animal health program, and this year we will have the program up and running with the recruitment of the territory's first chief veterinary officer.

This new animal health program will operate in partnership with the departments of Energy, Mines and Resources, Health and Social Services, and Community Services. We are also continuing our support of the work by the northern contaminants program.

We took an extra step this year and put the northern contaminants video on the Environment Yukon website. We did this to help hunters across the north learn how they can contribute to this important program. We worked with the Department of Health and Social Services and the chief medical officer of health on a new fact sheet on consumption levels for Yukon fresh water fish. Yukon fish are safe to eat and offer many health benefits as part of a balanced diet. The fact sheet gives consumption guidelines for children less than 12 years of age and women of child-bearing age.

We are continuing our elk management efforts this year to monitor and reduce the presence of winter ticks on these animals. These efforts include discussions with the First Nations, renewable resource councils and non-government organizations that also helped write the elk management plan. Officials were pleased with the success that occurred in reducing the presence of winter ticks on the Takhini herd, and we are continuing our work on the Braeburn herd this spring. We have expanded our monitoring to see if ticks are occurring on other animals, and we have had excellent cooperation from hunters who have been turning in hides as requested.

We will be working with the Dawson District Renewable Resources Council to determine the extent of ticks, if any, on moose in the Dawson area. Our work over the last two years, and discussions with experts from across North America, indicates that ticks have been here for awhile and will be with us for some time to come. We can only speculate on why they are here. They could have come in with horses; they could have been brought in with elk, or they could have come with the moose and deer that moved in. We continued with the elk management plan when we offered permits to hunters last year. The goal in the management plan is to have a small, stable elk population in a specific area so that we continue to have a healthy wild elk population in the territory. We know that providing new opportunities for hunters to reduce the herd population and range will contribute to a reduction in conflicts with farmers and collisions with vehicles on the highways. We brought in new bison management measures to slow the growth of the bison population in southwest Yukon.

We did this by making it easier for more people to harvest this resource to feed their families. We will continue to look for new solutions to reduce the growth of that herd and proactively manage this valuable asset. We worked with the people in Haines Junction to help learn how to reduce conflicts with their local bear population, and we reached out to people in Dawson City so they could take action to reduce the bear population around that community.

We also expanded our public education campaign to show individuals what they can do to reduce conflict between themselves and wildlife. The *Stay Safe in Bear Country* pamphlet has gone into its third printing, and this year we added a Ger-

man language version to go along with the French and English versions.

We are continuing the Southern Lakes bear study to learn more about the grizzly and black bear population in this region. We are working with the Southern Lakes Wildlife Coordinating Committee on its efforts to improve the moose population in the area. The committee members come from six First Nation governments as well as the governments of Yukon, British Columbia and Canada.

We plan to increase our support for Yukon trappers and the fur industry through the delivery of trapper training programs and working with local renewable resource councils on ways to help people obtain trapline concessions.

We will also work with the Yukon Trappers Association to help the organization resume its activities. This year will mark a new technological initiative for our conservation officers. We have been working with the department's information technology section to start using tablet computers that were literally provided to an officer in a backpack. They will be able to keep in touch with their office files, whether they are in their patrol vehicles, in a boat or out in the field. This will provide conservation officers with more time to carry out patrols in the fields and to file their reports from the field.

We will also be looking at staffing and resources for conservation officers to determine whether we can provide additional services to the public. Our work with Yukon's young people extends from the classroom to the popular Conservation Action Team and Yukon Youth Conservation Corps youth programs.

These two programs provide conservation-based learning opportunities for grades 5 and 6 students and employment for post-secondary students up to 24 years of age. We are developing a new education initiative for students in grade 5 to help them learn more and explore the natural world around them. Part of this effort will include conservation officers going into the classroom to teach students ethical and safe hunting practices. This is also the international year for biodiversity, and we are very pleased to be providing teachers with an updated version of *Backyard Biodiversity & Beyond*. This fact-filled manual helps students learn more about this territory's precious wildlife resources and habitat. We are also working with the Province of Quebec on the French translation of *Project Caribou*. *Project Caribou* was developed here as a teacher resource about caribou and is now used across the country. We have started a new initiative to create a network of community-based educators to directly assist classroom teachers so they can learn environmental education techniques, content and strategy.

Just recently, a couple of million dollars were designated to the wildlife game preserve on the Takhini Hot Springs Road, which was very much appreciated, and we sincerely thank the federal government for that hefty financial contribution that was greatly needed. You will recall that we were quite pleased last month when Indian Affairs did announce that they were going to be presenting us with this money. The preserve is managed and operated by the Yukon Wildlife Preserve Operating Society in an agreement with the Government of Yukon.

We worked with Indian and Northern Affairs Canada to obtain this funding on behalf of the operating society, which will be used to build a barn where animals can be worked on inside. I believe there will also be some offices available in there that will assist in some scientific studies with the animals.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Fairclough: It is with pleasure that I do respond to the budget speech and the budget that has been presented here today. Hopefully I won't take that long, but I would like to talk about my riding a bit. I would like to thank the officials who have given us the briefing on the overall budget. A lot of information was clarified and reaffirmed the way we have read the budget, so I would like to thank them for their work. We haven't gotten into the departmental briefings yet, but often they are useful in getting information straight before we come to debate on the departments.

Now, there are quite a few things that the members opposite have raised here. I have to say that, over the years, during budget response, and even in the fall sitting, we in the Official Opposition have provided direction to government in regard to government spending — where, perhaps, jobs could be created, and we have pressured government to go in one direction or the other. Sometimes that works and sometimes it doesn't. There are projects that have been on the books for quite some time now. We have heard government announce some of these budgets over and over again. An example of that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, would be the Carmacks sewage treatment facility. Hopefully we will see a completion of that, because it is a fairly high priority to the community.

When this government first got elected some seven years ago, they had, in their budget reply, that government spending was terribly out of control and that some action must be taken to reduce government spending. We have seen the opposite.

Throughout the budget speech, the Premier talked about their election platform and their commitments and so on. One of the things the Yukon Party government caucus wanted to do was make improvements to the devolution transfer agreement. The understanding of the general public was that this was simply not going to happen unless the changes were made, particularly with our offshore presence. Nothing has come of this over the time that the Yukon Party has been in government. They signed off the devolution transfer agreement with basically no change to it and discovered that it was a benefit to the Yukon. It's written right into the Premier's speech that he feels that Yukoners are masters in their own House now, simply because of devolution. So he has given that much praise, as it was signed off on April 1 of 2003. He went on about that, but what we didn't hear — and we've never heard it from any of the Yukon Party members — is that it has increased the funding to the Yukon substantially. A fairly large number of employees came over to the territory, which bumped the budget of the Yukon government up quite high. Although the public is aware of this, and each time this has been raised, they realize that yes, in fact, the devolution transfer agreement has added quite a number of employees to the Yukon government.

The other thing that I haven't heard anything about at all in the budget speech — and I thank the Minister of Environment for at least bringing it up which others haven't — is the whole issue of the Peel. Although the minister said very little on it, that issue will not go away. It is on the minds of the public right now, and of course it will be on their minds right into an election. I see by the tabling of the agreements that only then in December will government make its response to the commission's recommendations.

I just want to leave that alone for a moment, because we do have a new Minister of Environment — one who is supposedly an animal lover. We will ask many questions of this minister about his position with regard to the Peel — whether it's the other land use plans that take place. I hope that Yukon has a voice, unlike the past where the Premier would constantly overrule this minister, the Minister of Environment.

Mr. Speaker, I have raised a lot of issues in the past about some projects that could happen in the riding. I want to go back to some of them, because some have been acted upon and others have not. One of them is with regard to health issues, and safe drinking water is one issue that I've raised in the past. With the help of the federal government, we are now able to have some piped water systems in the community of Pelly Crossing, which was a bigger project, I believe, than we all expected, particularly the First Nation, because they are the ones who handled this, and it cost a little more than was expected. Now, they are struggling to find ways to pay for this project. I haven't heard the government address this issue of not seeing any of the operations of the First Nation disappear because of this.

The other was that this project in Pelly Crossing — the low-pressure water system — was jointly done with the Little Salmon-Carmacks First Nation, and that project went ahead in Pelly Crossing. Now, I do see \$1.133 million in the budget through the municipal rural infrastructure fund to support improvements to the Little Salmon-Carmacks First Nation water supply. And this is a good thing. There are good things in this budget, and I wanted to mention that. Part of this was that it is responding to increased or improved or new standards that the First Nation in all communities and municipalities have to abide by.

I believe this is going into — I could be wrong and the minister could correct me on this — a building to ensure the truck, the water supply and the cleaning of equipment are separate from one another, so everything is clean and proper when the water goes into the households.

The First Nation has worked long and hard on this project and would actually like to see more than what is in here because water is always going to be trucked to some of the houses in that First Nation. They would like to see a piped water system sometime down the road, and I guess as a pilot project that went into Pelly Crossing, that system will be evaluated to see how well it works.

When members opposite asked us to bring forward ideas and projects, this was one of them. It has been followed through and I thank the government for doing that. It is appreciated.

The other — the Education minister did raise this — is with the community campuses; two of them are budgeted for here in this fiscal year. I talked about this last year and stated the year before that there was a need for this. The residents of the community of Pelly Crossing have raised this with me year after year, and I know I have been bringing it forward to the members opposite, to government, to try and make improvements and we're seeing this. That is a good budgetary choice on their part. You can't go wrong when you do improvements to facilities like this or make replacements. What they are operating out of right now is just not good, so I thank the minister for his fight in ensuring that takes place.

Also, in the community of Carmacks, the sewage system, the partial mechanical plant that is going into this community, is almost done. The general public can see it as they drive by now. I see that there is again a line item for completion of this project. It did put some people to work. I thought perhaps projects like this in the communities could put a lot more people to work. When they do have projects like this, I encourage government to look at that a lot more carefully to ensure that we have more people working because the unemployment rate in the communities is a bit higher than it is here in Whitehorse. Projects like this sometimes don't come by all that often.

While I'm in this community, I would like also to bring forward again some projects that the government could work on with the community. I know that in the budget speech, the Premier mentioned how all the communities are looking at improved recreation facilities. Although there was money spent in the community of Carmacks on their recreation centre and complex, it was only a first phase to building this project. It needs to be finished because it's unsafe, particularly the skating rink and even the curling rink. Its roof and its foundation — all of that was done wrong in the beginning. Even the local people have mentioned that to the contractors but still it went ahead. It was built. It needs to be torn down. It needs to be replaced and some newer facilities need to be put in. Community people have been stressing to me again how much of a need this facility is to them.

So I bring it forward. Although it didn't get reflected in this budget, it is one of the priorities of the community. I hope that down the road if the government is working with the communities — even if it comes to planning and starting to work at putting a plan together for such a facility — that it could be reflected in the fall supplementary budget that could be presented to us in the Legislature.

There was another one that I think could have been fairly easy for the government to do. I've brought it up time and time again, and that is the highway grader station in downtown Carmacks and how a piece of land was identified and fenced off on the Campbell Highway that could be used for this highway grader station.

I think governments could do this. It involves some money, of course, and it also involves the cleanup of the grounds around there. I think perhaps this is an area that is of concern to the Yukon government, that that cleanup needs to take place. I wanted to bring that up again and to also note that some of the line items in this budget are very much useful to

the communities — the FireSmart, for example, and the community development fund.

The FireSmart program has been quite visible in every community and has become a practice of the public in owning their own lot and thinning out trees and so on, and being smart about possible wildfire, so I wanted to bring that up.

One of the biggest things that was brought up to me in every community from Stewart Crossing to Keno and Mayo, Pelly, Carmacks, and all across the territory actually, is the condition of our highways.

The big question is, why are we not making improvements to the surface of our highways? There are so many bumps and breakup of the surface that it is frustrating people. I bring up the Silver Trail every year. Some work goes into it but not enough. A lot more traffic is on those roads — particularly, the road between Minto and Whitehorse where a lot of the local people could really feel the traffic of the ore trucks. They come in groups.

I know that members opposite are going to talk about the Campbell Highway and the money that is going into the south end of it. It's not good enough for the public. There doesn't seem to be a strong plan or direction on the part of government to really go out and make these improvements. We have seen some highway clearing and I thank the government for going out and doing some improvements to the Casino Trail or the Freegold Road. Over the last year, I think some \$200,000 was put into that. It is long overdue and it is much appreciated.

The other thing that the community of Carmacks has mixed feelings about regarding the Casino Trail is the fact that it was maintained this winter. You know, the question would be: "Well, why be concerned about that?" Simply because a lot of the local people use it for snowmobile trails and it has all kinds of access off of it. So, it did get maintained. I believe the community realizes it was for different mining companies and the development that's taking place in and around the communities had all kinds of public meetings and open houses. I believe that the community does recognize that Casino mine, for example — the property through Western Copper — appreciated having that road maintained, so they could at least haul fuel out to the Casino properties and save all kinds of money by trucking it in, rather than flying it in, which they were doing last year.

The more we make improvements to some of these roads, the more we'll see people using them and not being so scared to drive them because they are narrow roads. There's a lot of growth on the sides of the roads now that hasn't been cleared or cut back for quite some time.

There's also money in the budget for bridge painting in Pelly Crossing, and I've brought this up before. What I was hoping government would do in their budget speech was to say that there was going to be some improvements on both sides of the bridge. The turning lanes put in, for example — I know the Member for Laberge talks a lot about making improvements to the roads in his riding. This is one that has been brought to my attention again. When you're coming down from the north into the community, it would make a lot improvement to put a turning lane into that one section of town before you hit the bridge

and vice versa, coming the other way, having a turning lane going to the other side of town, once you go north on the north side of the bridge. The same concern has been raised to me on the town side, the southern side of the bridge.

So the government can take that simple suggestion and perhaps when all of this has taken place this summer, this could go in too and probably be not a big deal. As I understand how painting goes on bridges, a lot of the time the traffic is stopped and there is no movement there. Perhaps this could be done and that would vastly improve the safety issues in regard to that bridge.

Also, there was the suggestion that I made to government in regard to mine training. I know a few people in Elsa and Keno who have taken this training program. They really liked it. They got work, as a result of this training. It was a good thing. It was a suggestion made by this side of the House.

The one suggestion I made is to work with the community of Carmacks, the municipality and the First Nation. There could be other training that is tied into this too, and that is developing the road to one of their community lands going north on the south side of the bridge on the right-hand side along the river.

I know there is some private land that goes right up to the water's edge, but I think this would vastly improve and expand that community, which I must say, Mr. Speaker, is a pretty busy community right now. As people know, a lot of the miners in the Minto mine are staying in the hotel in Carmacks. A lot of traffic is going through that community. There is a lot of exploration work taking place, and that seems to be a community that has a lot of potential to grow. There are people there asking for lots to buy so they can build homes, and there simply aren't any or people are hanging on to the empty ones and do not really want any development to take place. But definitely the First Nation has expanded. They are now building on one of their reserves, which is identified in that land claims agreement. By the way, they have three reserves in that First Nation. This one is close to the mouth of the Nordenskiöld. Some of the federal money that went into housing — those houses were built in that section of town, so there is an expansion of the town in that direction. If we went the other way, I think you would see a lot more people interested in purchasing lots and perhaps even building.

I've only got a couple minutes in the day here. The other thing that I wanted to do, which I haven't heard much about in the Premier's budget speech, is give thanks to the First Nations for their input in the growing economy, because they have done a lot. Even through the tough times and the bit of the downturn in the economy, it is the First Nations who have been building houses, roads, putting in power lines. When you talk to some of the businesses here in Whitehorse, they recognize that. Home Hardware, of course, recognizes that. Heating and plumbing companies all recognize that. During the downturn in the economy, a lot of times, it has been First Nations that have been building houses that have kept these businesses going and doing well. I wanted to mention that and perhaps we'll come upon that again another time. I know it is getting close to that time. I would like to hear from the government side about how they

see the First Nations inputting into this economy, because the mining sector is one of them. The fact that they have the ability to go out and talk with mining companies and put together deals and try to keep the monies in the communities and gather revenues and royalties from these projects is great. It's the best thing that we can do when we see local governments or small towns taking on these types of projects, because it does mean money circulating within the community. Okay, I'm running out of time, so I move that the debate be now adjourned.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Member for Mayo-Tatchun that debate on second reading of Bill No. 20 be now adjourned.

Motion to adjourn debate on second reading of Bill No. 20 agreed to

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

The House adjourned at 5:30 p.m.

The following Sessional Paper was tabled March 29, 2010:

10-1-150

Auditor General of Canada, Office of the: Yukon Housing Corporation (February 2010) (Speaker Staffen)

The following documents were filed March 29, 2010:

10-1-138

Mace of the Yukon Legislative Assembly, cleaning: letter of thanks (dated March 25, 2010) to Murdoch's Gem Shop, Whitehorse from Speaker Ted Staffen (Speaker Staffen)

10-1-139

Peel Watershed Regional Land Use Planning Process, Joint Letter of Understanding: signed on January 25, 2010 by Chief Simon Mervyn, First Nation of Na-cho Nyäk-Dun; Chief Ed Taylor, Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in Han First Nation; Chief Joe Linklater, Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation; President Richard Nerysoo, Gwich'in Tribal Council; Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources, Archie Lang; and Minister of Environment, Elaine Taylor (Rouble)