

**Whitehorse, Yukon****Tuesday, November 28, 2006 — 1:00 p.m.**

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

*Prayers***DAILY ROUTINE**

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

Tributes.

**TRIBUTES****In recognition of Women Abuse Prevention Month**

**Hon. Ms. Taylor:** Mr. Speaker, on behalf of all Members of the Yukon Legislative Assembly, I rise today to pay tribute to all the people who work throughout the year to eradicate violence against women. Just as important, I commend those people who are also supporting those women whose lives are troubled by violence. The rates of violence against women in Yukon are four times that of the rest of Canada. Aboriginal women experience spousal violence more than three times that of non-aboriginal women in Canada.

During Women Abuse Prevention Month each November, we focus on what can be done to alleviate the suffering and ultimately eradicate the violence.

The question is often raised: what can we as individuals do for a woman who is living in violence? Believe her; acknowledge her strength; listen to her; protect her privacy; offer your help; know your own limits. Each and every one of us can make a difference.

What can we as a community do? We can work together to build community strength and work together to encourage personal responsibility. We can embrace the notion that the key to violence prevention is the empowerment of men to become allies to eliminate violence against women and children. Together we can make a difference.

The Government of Yukon supports and funds projects, programs and initiatives throughout the year to educate, inform and motivate — initiatives such as aboriginal women and violence prevention, which has supported more than a dozen unique projects in Yukon communities in the last few years. The long-term public education campaign on violence against women and children, now in its second year, is focusing on the prevention of sexualized violence against young women.

The recent announcement of increased funding to the Outreach van will allow services to expand to six nights a week and will specifically provide increased services to young women at risk. The continued work of the family violence prevention unit through the Department of Justice and other lead departments provide front-line services day in and day out to victims of abuse. We are all working to make a difference.

The Victoria Faulkner Women's Centre and Les EssentiElles have organized events and education activities throughout the month of November addressing the prevention of violence against women. One of those events is taking place today

and tomorrow at Kwanlin Dun First Nation. A gathering of people from across the territory is talking about what can be done to stop violence in each of our communities, ensuring best practices. Let's each do what we can do to help as individuals and as communities.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** Are there any further tributes?

Introduction of visitors.

Are there returns or documents for tabling?

Are there reports of committees?

Are there any petitions?

**PETITIONS****Petition No. 1**

**Mr. Cardiff:** I have for tabling the following petition:

"This petition of the undersigned shows that existing legislation intended to protect animals is contained in several pieces of legislation and is long overdue to be updated. Therefore, the undersigned ask the Yukon Legislative Assembly to review all relevant existing animal protection legislation in consultation with interested Yukon citizens and create a modern animal protection act that provides for appropriate protection of animals, the means for real enforcement and meaningful penalties for those who mistreat animals."

I believe there are a little over 2,500 signatures.

**Speaker:** Are there any bills to be introduced?

Are there any notices of motion?

**NOTICES OF MOTION**

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to provide new incentives to increase the labour pool for entry-level jobs in the service and retail industries in the short term:

(1) for seniors who might wish to take on part-time or full-time work but are discouraged by the higher rates of income tax they would then pay;

(2) for stay-at-home parents who are unable to take on work due to the cost of childcare;

(3) for those on social assistance who would like to supplement their income to help meet their needs; and

(4) for students where the cost of introducing these new entrants to the job market may be prohibitive to employers.

I give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to continue to implement a multi-departmental approach and actions focusing on zero tolerance of violence against the family through the development of a long-term public education awareness campaign responding to and preventing family violence.

**Mr. Mitchell:** Mr. Speaker, I give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to commence construction of the Hamilton Boulevard extension

during the 2007 construction season in order to provide a second access to alleviate traffic congestion and to help ensure that emergency medical and other services will be available to the residents of McIntyre, Granger, Arkell, Logan and Copper Ridge.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to construct a new elementary school in Copper Ridge as soon as possible to ensure there is sufficient school capacity to allow students to attend a school near where they live and not have to be bused to more distant neighbourhoods.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to develop a comprehensive climate change action plan containing the following elements:

(1) targeted assistance for Yukoners to improve the energy efficiency of their homes;

(2) improved efficiency and sustainability for Yukon government buildings and operations;

(3) encouraging community energy management in Yukon communities to maximize efficient energy use, local employment and conservation;

(4) developing biomass community heating systems through community partnerships;

(5) reducing the waste associated with the use of diesel generators or replacing them with renewable options;

(6) integration of energy conservation and renewable energy options into Yukon Energy's long-term plans; and

(7) establishing targets for greenhouse gas emissions in collaboration with industry, governments and the public.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to develop a comprehensive energy policy in consultation with stakeholders that

(1) ensures affordable energy is available for all Yukon residents and businesses;

(2) identifies the effectiveness and long-term practicality of existing subsidies within and outside the current electricity rate structure — i.e. the rate stabilization fund;

(3) ensures that energy development and management decisions support the high quality of the natural environment and biodiversity of ecosystems, recognizing the absolute importance of the long-term protection of these natural systems to economic, social and cultural well-being of Yukon residents;

(4) identifies new policies — for example, net metering — and related implementation plans;

(5) promotes uses of renewable energy that contribute to a lasting legacy of affordable and sustainable energy for the benefit of all Yukoners;

(6) promotes and assists community management initiatives through local partnerships;

(7) encourages First Nation equity positions in energy development projects and works in partnership with all stake-

holders toward sustainable energy solutions for the benefit of all Yukoners;

(8) updates the non-utility generator policy to allow for private investors to participate in the expansion of the territory's electrical system;

(9) incorporates all issues related to oil and gas development; and

(10) provides for the discussion of any other issue important to the stakeholders or the public.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to demonstrate its unequivocal support for the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, which is the calving grounds of the Porcupine caribou herd, and immediately make representations to the appropriate American representatives, and to lobby on behalf of the Yukon for the protection of this most valuable resource area.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT it is the opinion of this House that

(1) the Government of Yukon has once again committed to the protection of the Porcupine caribou herd;

(2) the Vuntut Gwitchin people and all Yukoners recognize the importance of preserving this resource; and

(3) the Vuntut Gwitchin people are very concerned about the overall health and size of the herd, hunting along the Dempster Highway, and a lack of a harvest management strategy.

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

THAT this House urges the Yukon Party government to introduce a teacher school supply tax credit in recognition of the fact that teachers purchase materials and services to enhance the learning in the classroom.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Yukon government to give priority to the completion of the *Children's Act* and to bring it before the Yukon Legislative Assembly without any further delay.

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

THAT this House urges the Yukon government to conduct public consultations on the outdated *Liquor Act* and bring forward amendments in the spring 2007 sitting that remove the barriers for entrepreneurs wanting to build, own and operate cocktail lounges or neighbourhood pubs and to ensure that legislation can be enforced by the Yukon Liquor Board by

(1) ensuring the *Liquor Act* is more consistent with other liquor jurisdictions in Canada;

(2) eliminating the bedroom requirement currently associated with neighbourhood pubs and cocktail lounges;

(3) updating licence categories to address emerging business opportunities;

(4) addressing the service gaps in small Yukon communities and rural areas that have no liquor store; and

(5) protecting the licensees and servers who refuse service when it is reasonably believed that such service and the resulting consumption of alcohol may result in serious harm to the consumer or to others.

I give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to publicly state the amount of its financial commitment to the proposed cold-climate research centre and to demonstrate private sector interest for this project before proceeding with it.

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

THAT this House urges the Yukon Party government to immediately release the completed issue papers of the education reform process so that all Yukoners can consider and discuss the ramifications of proposed education governance, administration, and the language and cultural implications, so that the mandatory review of the *Education Act*, which should have been completed years ago, can finally be concluded with appropriate amendments to make Yukon's public education system work to the benefit of all Yukon people.

I give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Yukon Party government to develop and implement, as an urgent priority, an effective territory-wide, anti-poverty action plan that will identify and correct the root causes of poverty in the Yukon and will make the need for food banks and soup kitchens, in one of the most privileged societies in the world, a shameful relic of the past.

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

THAT this House urges the Yukon government to immediately release for public consideration the review of Yukon mental health services commissioned by the Department of Health and Social Services and presented to the government in March 2006, and take decisive action on the report's findings that the Yukon needs supported housing, in-patient facilities and services, an additional psychiatrist, crisis and after-hours services and better mental health services in rural communities.

I give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Yukon government to immediately allocate the appropriate financial and human resources to implement an interim strategy to provide safe shelter and support services for Yukon youth who are homeless, especially during the winter months, until such time as a permanent youth shelter has been established.

**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: Diabetes programs

**Mr. Mitchell:** Mr. Speaker, I have some questions for the Minister of Health and Social Services. The Yukon Medical Association held its annual general meeting this past weekend, and one of the issues flagged by the doctors for the minister's attention is the growing problem of diabetes. The head of the YMA said diabetes in the Yukon is much worse than in other parts of the country. Currently there are about 870 people being treated for the disease in the territory, but as many as 8,000 more may be sick and not know it. The YMA president says it's a situation that can't be ignored. What new programs is the minister developing to deal with this emerging health problem?

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** I appreciate the question from the leader of the official opposition. Certainly we recognize that diabetes is a very serious issue within Yukon, and I would point out to the member opposite that actually, nationally, there are programs that are available, particularly in the cost of some of the drugs that are required — insulin and the equipment associated with it. We actually provide one of the highest levels of coverage within the country and have been commended by national groups for our investment in that area.

However, we want to focus on going forward, particularly working on public education campaigns and direct action in the communities. In fact, I think that perhaps it wasn't the leader of the official opposition and me, but another member of the House and I engaged in a debate in the spring session on the fact that under our expenditure plan of the territorial health access fund, we've allocated millions of dollars toward nutrition, and one of the major focuses of that is education related to diabetes.

**Mr. Mitchell:** I thank the minister for the response and for bringing us up to date on what has been ongoing.

Mr. Speaker, national statistics show that the spread of type 2 diabetes has reached alarming proportions. The head of the Yukon Medical Association says diabetes is a situation that's largely hidden in that, "Our problem is much higher than what you would see down south in terms of inactivity, in terms of poor diet, in terms of alcohol and drug problems. But our diabetes is much worse than in the south." So this is a call to action for the government. What new initiatives is the minister working on to address this increasing problem?

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** As I identified previously to the leader of the official opposition, we've identified a significant amount of money for the development of increased community level supports for diabetes and increased role within public health of providing information to people on nutritional alternatives. We will be making some of the announcements of what those are in the not too distant future, but we have identified the money for that over the next several years and we're fully committed to acting in this area, recognizing that this is a very significant health issue, and we look forward to making an announcement of the new details of how those funds are going to be allocated and discussing them with the members opposite in future days.

**Mr. Mitchell:** We look forward to hearing those announcements, but time is of the essence.

Aboriginal Canadians with diabetes may benefit from a pilot project to establish a wait-times guarantee for diabetes care that was announced today by the federal Minister of Health and Social Services. The rate of diabetes among First Nation people is three to five times that of the general Canadian population. Health Canada is developing a pilot project for up to 10 First Nation communities that will last about two years. The federal department has not yet chosen the communities that will participate in the pilot projects. Will the minister speak to his federal colleague and ensure that one of the 10 communities selected is in the Yukon?

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** I would point out to the member opposite that we have very little ability to actually ensure anything that is a matter of federal jurisdiction. The proposal the member makes, suggesting we attempt to achieve increased federal investment here in terms of diabetes and in addressing the problem, is a worthy one and we are already dealing with that. The announcement from the federal government just came out, and we're engaging with them on that. We have raised in the past, and we will continue to raise in the future, at health ministers meetings — and in some cases, at premiers meetings — the issues relating to health within the Yukon and the aboriginal health component. Yukon First Nations in particular have a higher rate of diabetes, as the member noted. We recognize this is a problem for many people of all backgrounds within Yukon. We're fully committed to acting on this.

As I noted, we have identified a significant amount of money for proceeding with actions. We will announce the details of that in future and will work with the federal government whenever possible to take advantage of any programs they have, as well as to urge them to make further investments in dealing with this serious problem.

#### **Question re: Bonnet Plume Outfitters**

**Mr. Fairclough:** I have a question for the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources. The media recently reported that Bonnet Plume Outfitters built a new lodge and new cabins on the banks of the Bonnet Plume River. The report suggested the Alberta-based outfitter had unilaterally proceeded with this project without legal right.

Does the minister acknowledge that this project went ahead without any approval and is, in fact, an illegal act?

**Hon. Mr. Fentie:** First let me respond to the latter part of the member's question. We're not going to preclude anything the justice system may find. As I understand it, this particular situation is in legal action — civil, to be exact — but it's also apparent that, on the land base, there are issues that relate to the possible inappropriate use of said land base, which brings us back to a position the official opposition has taken recently with respect to policy. Ensuring that government, First Nations and others will have clarity on the land base is critical. I think this is an example of why policy is necessary.

**Mr. Fairclough:** A senior official within the minister's department is reported in the *Whitehorse Star* as saying that there was no legal tender to the actions of the outfitter. In light of what appears to be a blatant disregard for the laws of the Yukon, will the minister assure members of this House that he will demand an immediate removal of these buildings?

**Hon. Mr. Fentie:** I think it's fair to say, Mr. Speaker, that that is a work in process, as we speak, but there is also, as I said, some legal action involved in this matter. We're not going to preclude what the justice system will do. However, there has to be a determination made on what has transpired here and whether in fact there is any sort of valid standing of this particular construction and footprint on the land base, and our department officials, the minister's department officials, will certainly come to that conclusion as quickly as possible. But I want to reiterate and emphasize why we need a policy out there regarding the land base that helps to bring clarity and puts parameters around what can transpire across the Yukon with respect to matters such as these.

**Mr. Fairclough:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I wonder why the minister responsible for this is unable to answer questions in this House.

Mr. Speaker, when a Yukoner builds a camp, cottage or any structure, for that matter, on land belonging to the Crown, that person can expect to have it unceremoniously burnt to the ground. It is therefore unfair if an outfitter can build structures in disregard for the law and expect less than what any other Yukoner would expect. So will the minister answer this question and make clear exactly what the intent of his department is on this matter?

**Hon. Mr. Fentie:** Mr. Speaker, just so we understand why I am answering, the members opposite know full well that this side of the House makes every effort — to the fullest extent possible — to ensure there is absolutely no conflict of any nature when we as a government conduct the public's business. That is why I am answering.

The department will follow all of its required policies, regulations and laws with respect to this matter and any other matter on the land base. Any inappropriate action, any illegal action, anything done on the land base that does not conform with existing law, policy and regulations must be dealt with. It is not just outfitters; it is anyone conducting some activity on the land base, whatever that activity may be. If it is not done in accordance with the law, regulation and policy, then government and its department officials must act.

#### **Question re: Thomson Centre, future use**

**Mr. Edzerza:** My question is for the Minister of Health and Social Services. The use of the Thomson Centre seems to be as puzzling to the current Minister of Health and Social Services as it was to his predecessor. First it was used for palliative care — until four years ago when the minister of the day wanted to move residents from Macaulay Lodge to the Thomson Centre. After loud protests, that ill-conceived plan was soon scrapped. Then the same minister announced that the Thomson Centre would be used for a medical detox centre and a mental health unit.

Does the minister agree that his latest plan for the Thomson Centre doesn't respond to the needs of the acutely ill mental patients and addicted persons who want to kick their habits?

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** First of all, I need to point out to the member opposite that we don't act unilaterally on this side of the House. We work as a collective. Ministers work with caucus and with Cabinet in making decisions. At the time —

over the past few years — when decisions were made related to the Thomson Centre, the member opposite was a member of Cabinet and that collective and was aware of that decision-making.

As far as the issue of confusion, I would point out that it's the member opposite who seems to be confused. The Thomson Centre was used for continuing care, not palliative care. There were structural issues that came up, those issues are being addressed and it is being returned to the purpose of serving continuing care. As well, this time we will create a palliative care unit within Thomson Centre.

**Mr. Edzerza:** I might remind the member opposite that I may be on this side of the House but, one day, so was this Premier.

This minister wants to go back to square one. He says — and these are the minister's own words — that the long-term best fit for this building is the same as our most pressing need: long-term continuing care beds.

It appears that mentally ill patients and addicted people needing detoxification are not a pressing concern for this minister. This is in spite of the fact that Yukon's suicide rate is much higher than the Canadian average and double the rate in B.C.

What information did the minister use to support his flip-flop on how the Thomson Centre should be used?

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** It's very difficult to answer the Member for McIntyre-Takhini, seeing as his reflection of history is so grossly contrary to the facts of the matter. The facts of the situation are that at one time there was consideration, under my predecessor's tenure as Health and Social Services minister, of the possibility of other uses for the Thomson Centre. Those will not be exercised. We've had a review done by an outside firm with significant expertise in health-related matters, a company by the name of Options Consulting. The advice they provided is that, both in terms of our projected continuing care bed needs over the next five years and the functionality of the Thomson Centre, the best fit is to reopen the Thomson Centre for continuing care, as well as the creation of a palliative care unit.

I have indicated before in the House, and I will indicate again to the member opposite, that we're committed to addressing other needs, such as mental health and medical detox and physiotherapy that had been proposed as possible uses for the Thomson Centre. Any of those uses would require significant renovations, and the Thomson Centre was architecturally well-designed for continuing care, although it was not built well. So we're going to avoid additional cost in redesigning the building for a purpose that doesn't fit, and we will address those other needs through other measures.

### Speaker's statement

**Speaker:** Before the honourable member asks his final supplementary, I just want to emphasize to members on both sides of the Legislative Assembly to please not personalize debate. We're here debating the people's business, and personal issues do not have any involvement in this discussion.

You have the floor, Member for McIntyre-Takhini.

**Mr. Edzerza:** Mr. Speaker, with no medical detox or in-patient psychiatric facility, this government is open to many legal problems. Yukon taxpayers are paying over \$1,000 a day to treat each mental health patient Outside, if we can ever find beds for them. A review of Yukon mental health services dated March 23 of this year called the need for an in-patient psychiatric unit a high priority. The minister promised caretakers of mentally ill patients that there would be a psychiatric unit. The Whitehorse General Hospital apparently agreed with the report that using six beds in the Thomson Centre would be an excellent opportunity. Why is the minister ignoring this report his own department commissioned, and what does he intend to do about the dozens of vulnerable mental and detox patients now being left out in the cold?

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** I reiterate to the member opposite that we recognize the needs in terms of medical detox, physiotherapy and mental health, which had been proposed as possible uses for the Thomson Centre. They are not the best fit. Our need in continuing care — right now we have wait-lists for continuing care beds at Macaulay Lodge, which we are not prepared to accept. We will be reopening the Thomson Centre to address the needs in continuing care as well as to create the long-awaited palliative care unit. We will be doing this; this will require all of the space within Thomson Centre.

We are working right now with the hospital regarding some of the other issues related to short-term mental health beds. As well, as I have mentioned before in the House, we've allocated \$50,000 in this fiscal year toward planning to address needs related to mental health, particularly in terms of residential supports for individuals who have mental health challenges. We are moving forward to address those issues and we will be dealing with other issues such as medical detox as well. I would be happy to provide the member opposite with a copy of the Yukon Party's election platform, which laid out a very clear blueprint of how we intend to move forward, how we will move forward, in addressing these issues and how we will provide the assistance in terms of treatment that people need.

### Question re: Literacy programs

**Mr. Cardiff:** One of the many backward-looking cuts that this government's Tory friends in Ottawa made recently was to adult literacy. But according to the recent territorial election campaign, literacy is a high priority item in the Yukon Party's vision for a better quality of life. Perhaps the new Minister of Education can demonstrate that vision by answering a straightforward question. What is the minister's specific plan for supporting literacy as a priority in the territory?

**Hon. Mr. Rouble:** It is my honour and pleasure to rise today as Minister of Education to address the very important issue of literacy here in the Yukon. We were very clear in our election campaign and in our platform about our commitment to education and specifically to literacy. Literacy is an important issue in the territory and one that we have pledged to address.

Since taking office I've had many conversations regarding literacy with various different organizations. I've spoken specifically with the Yukon Literacy Coalition. We are talking about creating an action plan, taking steps to address the issue

of their funding immediately and to work with the federal government to restore the funding to them for the long term.

**Mr. Cardiff:** Well, the coalition and Yukon Learn have been very successful in raising the level of literacy in Yukon families, youth, First Nations and people in the workforce who may miss out on job opportunities for a lack of skills. It sounds like the minister recognizes the importance of adult literacy as a building block for a healthy economy. He probably knows the statistics, but the reality is that right now programs for adult literacy are in jeopardy.

Yesterday I introduced a motion asking the government and the minister to support these programs with interim funding. What is the minister prepared to do? Will he commit to adequate interim funding for Yukon adult literacy programs so they can get on with the job of educating adults and raising their literacy skills, and what level of funding would that commitment be?

**Hon. Mr. Rouble:** Mr. Speaker, page 1 of the Yukon Party platform — we made a commitment to continue to support literacy as a priority because it is a fundamental building block of education. We are working with our partners in this field.

In the last year the Yukon government has invested over \$1 million in a variety of literacy programs — with the Yukon Literacy Coalition, with Yukon Learn, with Yukon College, as well as with the involvement of our public school system. Our actions are speaking louder than these words could have. We are making the investment and we pledge to continue on. A letter is being drafted to go to the federal minister to bring her back to the table to address this important issue and, as we speak, departmental officials are working with the various literacy organizations to determine the exact level of funding that is needed. We made a commitment and we are going to live up to it.

**Mr. Cardiff:** The minister didn't answer the question, Mr. Speaker. What level of funding is the minister and the department prepared to provide to the Literacy Coalition and Yukon Learn to make up for the cuts the federal government recently made? It was a recent event; they made the cuts; there is a shortage of money. What level is the minister prepared to provide?

**Hon. Mr. Rouble:** I think all in this Assembly agree on the importance of literacy. We've discussed it back and forth; I know it's an issue near and dear to the member opposite's heart. As I've said before, we've made a commitment and we're going to live up to it. We're going to sit down with the various organizations and determine the level of funding that's appropriate.

Obviously we can't take the place of the federal government. When the federal government starts a boutique program and then pulls the plug on it, we can't always go in and bail it out 100 percent.

We made a commitment to work with them, to get their bridge funding in place, to work with the federal government to see if they would come back to the table, and that's what we're going to do. We're going to sit down and work out the number,

get the cheque cut and ensure the literacy needs in the Yukon are being met.

We made a commitment; we're going to live up to it.

#### **Question re: Climate Change Research Centre**

**Mr. Inverarity:** I have some questions for the Minister of Economic Development on the government plan to come up with a cold climate research centre at Yukon College. I think the government should make it clear to the public that this project has absolutely nothing to do with climate change and will do nothing to counter the looming problem of climate change. If successful, it will put the Yukon on the map as a cold-climate technology research centre and will provide limited space for related business incubation.

Clearly the government doesn't know the difference between environmental research and cold climate technology research. The throne speech locked the Government of Yukon into a cold climate technology centre; however there has been no public discussion of the feasibility of this project or the cost, for that matter.

What feasibility studies have taken place, for example, on a cold climate technology centre —

**Speaker:** Order please. Would the member ask the question?

**Mr. Inverarity:** Sure. Can the minister provide any information that proves this project will be a worthwhile and viable undertaking?

**Hon. Mr. Kenyon:** I certainly thank the member opposite for agreeing with us, that we desire to put the Yukon in the forefront in cold climate research and cold weather technology. The National Research Council federally has funded and helped in establishing a number of what is referred to as "research clusters". At this point in time, there are no clusters in the north. We propose to look at the cold climate technology. We have the consent of Nunavut and Northwest Territories to support our proposal to put this into the Whitehorse area. This has been looked at as a possible use for some of the new space and legacy space that we will have at the college.

We look at it in a variety of ways. We already have people on the ground working on this. We have consultants hired and things being looked at in that respect. But I think if the member opposite feels that cold climate research and cold climate technology has nothing to do with global warming and climate change, then he hasn't looked out the window lately and seen all the cars parked out here with engines running. That's one technology perhaps, to keep vehicles warm longer and to avoid spewing the greenhouse gases into the environment. So there are all sorts of ways that we can dovetail this in.

**Mr. Inverarity:** Mr. Speaker, in May of this year, the project manager for the cold climate technology centre made a presentation to the City of Whitehorse. She described the Yukon government's contribution of \$950,000 a year for 20 years. That is a total of \$19 million. Will the minister confirm this figure, how much will be spent, and when will we see it reflected in the government's budget?

**Hon. Mr. Kenyon:** We are certainly looking at the project and doing studies in terms of what research could be done and how to recruit the private sector to become a big part

of this. To my knowledge, the Government of Yukon has made no such announcements. So I'm pleased if other people are announcing and committing that kind of money to it. But so far, we'd like to know how it's going to be used, what we're going to do with it, what the economic feasibility is, and to make decisions with facts and figures, not to simply start throwing out dollar values.

**Question re: Highway lodges, assistance for**

**Mr. McRobb:** It is a sad time for our territory when owners of highway lodges and other small businesses are forced into financial hardship by their own government's regulations, especially when it is the same government that has so far refused to throw them a lifeline. Quite simply, the owners cannot afford the up front capital costs required to upgrade or replace their water or septic systems. Times are not great for them right now. Highway traffic is down and so are revenues. Meanwhile, costs are up and it is difficult for rural businesses to borrow money from banks. About their one and only chance is hoping for help from this government. Is the Minister of Community Services prepared to help these business owners?

**Hon. Mr. Kenyon:** Having had the privilege of working with a number of races throughout Alaska, particularly the Copper Basin, which runs from highway lodge to highway lodge through Chistochina and Glennallen and other communities there, I certainly agree with the member opposite regarding some difficulties with the highway lodges. The disappearance of some of the highway lodges does cause difficulties. The other thing that people have to understand is that, within this whole set-up, the usage of lodges by travellers has decreased in recent years. Major improvements to highway infrastructure, coupled with faster and more fuel-efficient vehicles, have resulted in shorter transit times.

The Department of Economic Development does have a number of programs that could be utilized by the highway lodge owners, and to date no one has applied for any of this funding or assistance, which we would be pleased to discuss. I would invite the member opposite, who obviously has a keen interest in this, to get in touch with me or with the department and look at the wide variety of programs that we have to give relief to the highway lodge owners.

**Mr. McRobb:** It's the minister's job to reach out to these people who need help, not my responsibility. These highway lodge owners have served on the front line of the Yukon's tourism industry for years and, in some cases, up to 40 years. They deserve a medal for how they've bent over backward helping travellers on the highways who were often in need of food, shelter or emergency aid. In my riding alone, the Kluane Village at Mile 1118 closed its doors in September after incurring tens of thousands of dollars in cost last year to upgrade its septic system. The Bear Creek Lodge at Mile 1022 closed its doors last week in the face of a \$20,000 septic upgrade cost, and the Koidern River Lodge at Mile 1164 is in a similar predicament.

Does the Minister of Community Services not agree these small businesses deserve better treatment and the Yukon government has a role to play in both helping them and in looking out for the safety and needs of our highway travellers?

**Hon. Mr. Kenyon:** Government programs are heavily advertised through the media through a wide range of outlets, from radio to rolling ads in some communities, to print media, to very heavily used Web sites, et cetera. Normally, to my mind, we have met the obligation of getting the information out there.

If an individual MLA has a problem within his or her riding, then I would suggest they should certainly bring that to the attention of the relevant departments and bring to the attention of the lodge owners, or any business owner, the existence of these programs — the venture loan guarantee program, the microloan program, business and trade enterprise funds. There is a wide range of ways for businesses such as this to seek assistance and we're happy to work with them, but we have to know where the problems are. If the MLA in the area does not communicate that to us, then the best we can do is get the information on the programs out there and hope someone lets us know if there's a problem.

**Mr. McRobb:** That information has already been communicated. It's this government that doesn't listen and obviously doesn't care. The government is already in the loan business for people who want a water well or electricity or telephone service connected to their property. This Minister of Community Services' department has two such programs identified yesterday in my final motion that capitalize costs over 15 years and are repaid with taxes annually. Those programs are revenue neutral, thus saving taxpayers from all cost. The message given to me from the lodge owners was clear. They want a helping hand, not a handout. We in the official opposition will agree to quick passage of a bill, if necessary, or whatever it takes to expedite relief. Is the minister prepared to act quickly in order to minimize the damage currently being done to these poor people?

**Hon. Mr. Hart:** The two programs he refers to are for residential properties. Okay?

As the Minister of Economic Development indicated, there are several programs there that are available to businesses through his department to get the work done because the issue is that there are lots of businesses throughout the Yukon that require some help somewhere along the line, and we couldn't possibly have a program for everyone. But we are doing our best to deal with the issues of water and electricity for our residential clients throughout the Yukon, and that's why there are two programs that are very successful and have been well-utilized by the rural residents.

**Speaker:** The time for Question Period has now elapsed.

**Notice of opposition private members' business**

**Mr. McRobb:** Pursuant to Standing Order 14.2(3), I would like to identify the following motion standing in the name of the official opposition to be called on Wednesday, November 29, 2006: Motion No. 3, standing in the name of the Member for Kluane.

**Mr. Cardiff:** The third party has no motions to call for tomorrow.

**Speaker:** We will now proceed with Orders of the Day.

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

### CONSIDERATION OF SPEECH FROM THE THRONE

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** I wish to inform the House that, pursuant to Standing Order 26(2), consideration of a motion for an Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne, if not concluded today, shall take place on Wednesday, November 29, 2006.

### ADDRESS IN REPLY TO THE SPEECH FROM THE THRONE — *adjourned debate*

**Clerk:** Motion for an Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne moved by Mr. Nordick; adjourned debate, Mr. McRobb.

**Mr. McRobb:** Before I continue from yesterday, I would just like to note on behalf of all members that today is an anniversary, of sorts. It is the one-year anniversary of when the leader of the official opposition first appeared in this House after his by-election win in the riding of Copperbelt last fall. I would ask all members to join with me in giving him a warm welcome.

*Applause*

**Mr. McRobb:** Mr. Speaker, it is also one year today — it was a rather eventful day in this Legislature — when the Member for Klondike demonstrated his surprise floor crossing in this Assembly and sat in the back row behind the third party. Of course there were a number of events leading from that. So today is the anniversary of both of those events, and I just wanted to note that.

Yesterday I elaborated at length on what I believe is a new mood of cooperation among members, and I pointed out that there is general recognition that the atmosphere has been somewhat politically discharged following the election. There is acceptance that the next election is likely years away. Further, there is genuine desire to put aside our own political agendas and dispense with much of the political vitriol that is all too frequent in this House, as I am sure you can appreciate, and to be professional and treat each other with a basic level of dignity and roll up our sleeves and work cooperatively for the benefit of all Yukoners whom we represent.

There are positive indications already that this is materializing, Mr. Speaker. We've had the government concede its majority on the SCREP, which I alluded to yesterday. This was something important to me, and by the government acting on this matter, it's a sign that it, too, is willing to contribute to the continuance of this new era of cooperation. After all, isn't it the people who elect us here to represent them?

Mr. Speaker, usually I have some advice to new members in here, and it also reminds the incumbents about something important, as well. From time to time, we might be expected to say or do things in this House by our colleagues or staff members. Sometimes we use our own discretion and moderate the actions expected of us. I would remind all members that they

are the ones who appear in this Legislature and speak on behalf of their parties on various issues. It is their performance that counts at the end of the day. It is up to each and every one of us to ensure that information given to us to present meets the test that I'm speaking about today — of cordiality and improved decorum in the Assembly and a spirit of cooperation. So sometimes that is a challenge, as we know that it's not just the members in this House. The staff members who assist the members, as well, have to adopt a different way of doing things.

So everybody assumes there is a new era of cooperation. I would like to just caution against assuming any delusions of grandeur, that it completely exists already. I notice some of the members smiling. They know what I'm talking about. Obviously, we in this official opposition can't control the behaviour or actions of members from the other parties. We can only control our own actions, so I would call upon the other parties to also rise to the occasion and raise the bar.

Some of the actions so far from the government aren't too severe in terms of rank on the priorities, but they do cause some concern about this new era of cooperation. One of them is today we were informed that we were refused briefings on the supplementary budget for our new members, the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin and the Member for Porter Creek South. These briefings would have been extremely helpful to these new members in connecting them with department personnel and getting to know the departments better for which it is their responsibility to hold the government accountable.

This is not new, in terms of precedent. Previous governments had allowed briefings on supplementary budgets. That was refused. I'm a little concerned about that.

Furthermore, we did ask the government to identify the starting date of the spring sitting, which will follow the Canada Winter Games in 2007, on the final day of this fall sitting, scheduled for December 13. We felt this was reasonable. We were prepared to even be flexible and accommodate a week's variation in that date — just something to give us an idea to help schedule our time and the hirings and everything required for the spring sitting, rather than just the standard two-week notice. That was also declined.

The government side has been slow in responding to our requests about whether corporations will appear in this sitting, specifically the officials from Yukon Energy Corporation and Yukon Development Corporation. We still don't know if they'll be here and, if they are here, it will require — I'm the critic for the official opposition — several hours of preparation and I need to schedule that time in somewhere, so it would be helpful if we knew.

Also, there was a request yesterday, I believe, from the Human Rights Commission to appear before this Legislature. We have a witness table and two chairs over there. That's where witnesses appear. If I can just mention it, the third party, I believe, supported this. We suggested that we totally support the appearance of the commission this Thursday afternoon for an hour and a half. However, that was declined by the government side.

Part of my argument, Mr. Speaker, I'll repeat here. Essentially, time in the Legislature should be at the discretion of the

opposition parties because, really, the Legislature is for the purpose of testing the government's case. If we in opposition feel that our time is better spent by allowing an hour and a half for the Human Rights Commission to appear, then so be it. However, that was not provided for by the government, and therefore it's apparently not a possibility now.

Mr. Chair, this is a case of the government trying to dictate the agenda and how the time is spent. It's not leaving that discretion to the opposition parties. Now, there are a lot of examples of areas that need to be improved. On previous occasions in this House, I've cited several examples about just House business, where cooperation and improved information flow are desperately needed to make this a more functional place.

I won't go through that long list today, Mr. Speaker, because I'll give the benefit of the doubt to the government side that those problems existed in the past. They have not yet recurred with this new government, even though this government is comprised of many of the same players who were in the previous rendition of the Yukon Party government. But let's give them the benefit of the doubt at this stage. We are early in the new session. Let's give the government some slack to revisit its approach on how it treats the opposition side in this Legislature.

Maybe things will turn out for the better — at least, some of us can hope so.

Yesterday I mentioned I wanted to get to a list of some items to critique and I focused mainly on some positive aspects yesterday, but before my time runs out, Mr. Speaker, I feel compelled to identify some of the issues that I'm concerned about and which concern Yukoners.

There are a number of items the previous government — and so far, this government — did not accomplish or fully satisfy, and I want to recite a list to get it on the record: climate change strategy; childcare funding; land-based treatment facilities; devolution improvements; funds for firefighting; food bank; new jail; land use policy; land availability; a forestry industry; continued care facilities in Dawson City, Watson Lake and Haines Junction. On that latter location, I'll just add that the facility that's currently underway in Haines Junction is totally paid for by the federal government and is not what the community asked for. I understand the government made some pledges that it will be built in phases to eventually reach the project requested. I'll be looking forward to future announcements on that matter.

There are also: social assistance rates, which was raised in yesterday's Question Period; Hamilton Boulevard extension, which was raised in a motion today; energy policy, which was again raised through another notice of motion today; economic diversification; community-based economic development; new Copper Ridge elementary school, which was again raised in a motion today; the Dawson City bridge, which is a fine example of something promised that didn't come to fruition.

Of course, we on this side did not support the Dawson City bridge, but it was an example of something promised that didn't materialize.

On the legislative agenda, there are several items still outstanding, and our main role in this House is to hold the gov-

ernment accountable and apply some pressure in matters where the government is dragging its heels or has refused to act. This legislation includes a new *Workers' Compensation Act*, the new *Children's Act*, the *Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act*, the *Animal Protection Act* — again, the subject of emotion and question yesterday and a petition tabled by the third party today. There is also the *Education Act*, *Liquor Act* — again raised today — and whistle-blower legislation. What are the timelines for all these bills and when will they be introduced? There is also another category I would call raising expectations and, as already put on the record in this House, some of them include the Premier's pledge for no drug dealers or bootlegging in the territory. Another one is to have the downtown drug problem resolved. Another one is to have doctors for everyone. Another one is to have safe water across the territory, and finally, improved relations with Yukon First Nations.

So there are a number of undertakings that we'll be monitoring from the official opposition benches and, if necessary, we'll remind the government about these matters and other issues that are important to the Yukon public. If necessary, Mr. Speaker, we'll re-raise these matters. If there still isn't any apparent action on the government's behalf, then perhaps it's time to turn up the heat and bring some flame to the toes of the ministers responsible. Maybe we can finally get some results on the stovetop if we did that.

So there are a number of issues we will be looking for — a number of projects in the years ahead. If we had to identify all the matters at this time that we will be monitoring, I would probably be here for several hours because it's an exhaustive list. There are several matters. The ones I identified can probably be classified as the higher priority items.

Another aspect I wanted to raise before my time is out is pointing out how this government has had the luxury of a lot of funds at its disposal in formulating budgets and dealing with issues. This is a luxury that previous governments have had to do without. I recall the first term I served in this Legislature in the Piers McDonald government from 1996 to 2000 and how it was faced with federal cutbacks in the area of health care — I believe it was \$20 million out of the Yukon's portion of that budget, all in the name of the federal scheme to rein in the budget deficit. Well, Mr. Speaker, the finance minister of the day, who was the former prime minister, did succeed in reining in that deficit, and currently the federal government is reaping in the rewards. The federal budget excess is at record levels. Consequent to that, the Yukon Territory is enjoying record-high transfer payments from Ottawa, and in the area of health care there has been bonus money paid to the territory. That has helped this government create new programs such as the health human resources strategy that has enabled the Minister of Health and Social Services to stand up and announce a number of good programs and initiatives, although we are still waiting for some to be announced such as the one raised by our leader today about helping Yukoners with diabetes and the issue yesterday about the social assistance rates and the childcare funding.

There's still work to do in those areas. The point is the Health and Social Services minister, as an example, has been

able to benefit from the federal largesse. I know that's a term I was ridiculed for before, but what else do you call it, Mr. Speaker, when the territory is getting tens of millions of dollars more from the federal government through transfers?

The minister's job is always easier when there's a lot of money. I guess it's comparable to Santa Claus' job being easier when his sack is full of goodies but, when it's getting down to the empty part and there are still lots of children to dish out presents to and there isn't quite one for everyone, then the job is a little more difficult. That equates to the situation now with this government enjoying a large amount of cash to deal with.

Not all of it is transfer payments. I think it was misconstrued a bit yesterday. A lot of the money from Ottawa is coming to the Yukon under the label of Canada Winter Games or some other program or initiative. Combined, all these federal funds have benefited the Yukon economy and have benefited the Yukon government, making it more affordable to include a lot of projects in the budgets to increase the core funding for just about every group or association out there in the Yukon and come up with some new programs, such as the increased medical allowances that are provided for Yukon outpatients.

We in the official opposition recognize that this government has the increased ability to provide extra funds, because we know where the money is coming from and it represents a significant amount.

Mr. Speaker, it is up to us to test whether the government's expenditure of those funds is really in Yukon's best interests and if it satisfies all of the needs — or most of the needs — out there.

The question I raised earlier today in Question Period about the Yukon highway lodges is one example where the government side shows little in the way of compassion or reaching out to these people in need. Instead we see there is possibly some programs under the Department of Economic Development that might assist these people, but we know that if you get down and start reading the constraints and program guidelines, a lot of those people would be quickly ruled out for whatever reasons that are in the programs. There is not much available to help these people, and the Minister of Community Services acknowledged holes in the programming, virtually saying that programs don't exist for these people.

Well, the whole gist of my question was basically testing the compassion of this government to recognize the wrong that is being done, and that point was missed and that is too bad. I could talk a long time about the service these highway lodge owners and other highway businesses have given to the Yukon travelling public, and they deserve a whole lot better than what they are getting.

There are other issues related to this such as the safety of travelling Yukon highways, especially in the winter. From what I understand, currently there is no place to purchase gas between Destruction Bay and Beaver Creek. That can be a long drive, and in previous years there would be three or four stops along the way that could provide assistance for people. Now it appears there isn't any place, so that is a long drive. What is going to happen if somebody breaks down and freezes up on that road?

Doesn't the government understand that it has a responsibility in this area to make our highways safe, to ensure the operation of these facilities that provide that service to the travellers? So I think that was the main point, Mr. Speaker.

I know my time is almost up. I want to end on a positive note, saying that I congratulate all incumbents for getting re-elected. Yesterday, I mentioned some of the new members. I'd like to express my congratulations to the Member for Klondike, the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin, and the new Member for Porter Creek South, and I wish you all the best in this Assembly. I seriously do look forward to a continued atmosphere of cooperation.

Thank you.

**Hon. Mr. Lang:** Mr. Speaker, I stand today to discuss the throne speech, as given last Thursday.

Mr. Speaker, I think what we have to do when we discuss the future of the Yukon and talk in the House today is we have to be very aware of the past. This government was elected, with its last mandate, on an economic platform to get the Yukon economy back up and in a forward process. The process would be good governance, getting the economic house in order. And to remind the members opposite, when the last Liberal government was in place and we were successful at the polls, we discovered that the government was running on a line of credit. The resources weren't here. Also, we had a few financial hurdles to overcome that were created by that government. The Mayo-Dawson power line was in disarray. Of course, Dawson City's credit had been extended over its limit by that government. Of course, with that Yukon Development Corporation, we had the Energy Solutions Centre issue, which, again, was creating a cash problem for the Crown corporation and the government.

Of course, the government then had to go to work, first creating some wealth so we weren't dealing with the line of credit and getting the resources in place to do the things we're doing today. The members opposite talk about our resources. They were created by our Finance minister; they were created by the Minister of Finance, our Premier, going to Ottawa, working with the other provinces and territories — Northwest Territories and Nunavut — and they're the ones who, in unison, walked out on the prime minister of the day to get away from the concept of per capita funding on all levels of government funding.

Our Minister of Finance was very aware that, unless we got our house in order economically, we couldn't possibly run a government that would have the foresight and cash to move ahead with a lot of the programs we as a government had envisioned.

The Dawson City issue was an ongoing issue that went on for four years. It was a massive issue; we had a forensic audit; the Minister of Community Services dissolved the elected council there and took control of the issue.

I have to remind members of this House of history. Dawson City and its elected members would not have been in the situation they were in if the Liberal government of the day had not funded that mismanagement. The money flowed from this

territorial government to the City of Dawson. All the government of the day had to do was to say no, but that didn't happen.

This government went to work with the people of Dawson over that three-year period, and today they have a government in place. We committed to working with the City of Dawson on the sewer issue. The sewer issue in Dawson is an issue that has been ongoing for many years, and it's an issue for all Yukoners to be concerned about. The Mayo-Dawson power line — again that is a project that was initiated by the Liberal government of the day and one that we have continually been working on to resolve.

We still have not resolved the decisions that were made by that government after four years of hard work by the corporation. We as a government took the positive attitude that the Energy Solutions Centre was a very viable, important component for Yukoners, and so we took it and moved it back into Energy, Mines and Resources. Today it is under the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources and is an active part of this government and is doing the job it was assigned to do. We have done the hard work. Our Minister of Finance has gone to Ottawa. Our Minister of Finance has created the wealth we have today. The members opposite talk about the resources as if they just sort of arrived, that Ottawa all of a sudden, from some angle, decided that they had to unload some money on this community or this jurisdiction and it had nothing to do with the management or expertise of the Minister of Finance.

North of 60 is important to Canada. North of 60 is two-thirds of Canada. We are quite a land mass when you think of the land mass north of 60. I understand that the population north of 60 is not what it is in Toronto, but the idea that the money that flows from Ottawa is somehow a gift and that we somehow should be more humble because we get our fair share of the resources is not right. We are Canadian; we are part of a sovereign nation; we are a jurisdiction — we are a very important part of that jurisdiction and we deserve the same services as any constituency in Canada. So when the members opposite talk about the resources as ill-gotten in some fashion — our Minister of Finance went to work, did the hard work and created the wealth we have today. He did it through good management, and after four long years of putting the financial capabilities of this government in place, the people of the Yukon re-elected that government.

Now, the Yukon Party platform — and the members opposite have been talking about our go-forward plan — will involve all Yukoners, and we do have the resources to do what we said we were going to do. In the last four years, we did what we said we were going to do, and that was reflected at the polls, because the people understood that when this group of individuals stood up and said they were going to go to work and get the economic house in order, we did just that. We took over a situation from the previous Liberal government where we were running on a line of credit and now this government has money in the bank.

This government has a responsibility. Sometimes, too much money can be worse than not enough money, because if you have resources, there is more and more pressure on those resources to move forward. This government has made some

commitments to the Yukon people. Certainly it is up to opposition to hold our feet to the fire, but it's up to us to deliver. If our track record over the last four years has said anything, we are a group of individuals that does deliver, and we will deliver. We are not prepared to write things down and promise people things that we have no intention of delivering. So, Mr. Speaker, when we look at the Yukon Party platform, and look at the individuals here who are going to do the hard work of government and manage the finances of this great territory, at the end of four years our job will be to turn over to another government a stronger treasury than it is today. That is what we are going to work toward in the next four years. Now, there's a lot of work to be done in the next —

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

**Hon. Mr. Lang:** — thank you, member opposite, it is five years — five years that we have and we have a responsibility so that today, if we've got X amount of dollars in the bank, we are going to work toward having more money at the bank at the end of the day. Yukon will be in a stronger financial place than it is today.

So, when we look at the resources we have at hand and we look at the pressures we have on education, we look at the pressure on health, we look at the pressure on justice, we look at creating a private enterprise segment of our population, we look at — Energy, Mines and Resources and the Chamber of Mines have been hosting the Geoscience Forum for the last week. There have been 350 guests and they have come from as far away as Beijing, China, sitting there in minus 45 degree weather. We were in the coldest spot in the world yesterday. Mayo woke up yesterday — the coldest place in the world, on earth, and then they got through that all right. And then Ross River, at noon, was the coldest place on earth and, last night, Pelly had the honour of being the coldest place on earth. But this area — this jurisdiction in the mining community, the geoscience community — attracted 350 excited people to come to this territory and to invest in our territory. That is a very interesting scenario when you look at four years ago.

Four years ago in the last year of the Liberal government, the demand for lots in this city was under 40 in a 12-month period.

This year, in the mining community, there were 70 projects — 70 projects that spent over \$150,000 each. They did enough drilling that you could lay it back to back from here to Carmacks. We've got exciting news to come out of all that work. Minto mines is going to be in production — Sherwood Copper Corporation. We've got Carmacks Copper project. We've got Yukon Zinc Corporation. It goes on and on and on.

The mining community is back in the Yukon. It's back here because of the price of product, which is very important. We have made a climate of investment here that is competitive in Canada. As the Minister of Economic Development stands up and says — and I agree with him 100 percent — this isn't the only jurisdiction with zinc. There's copper all over the place, but this government, over the last four years, has made a business climate so these individuals and investors can come from all over the world and take a look at this great territory.

With the hard work of our Finance department — and there are excellent people in our Finance department, and all our departments are healthy and are resourced. With the new Minister of Justice moving forward on the safer communities legislation to make our communities safer for our children and ourselves — and the new Minister of Education is moving forward with the *Education Act* to make sure we have every individual and child in our community going to school and, at the end of the day, coming out with a solid education. There's the vocational aspect of Yukon College.

This government put \$1 million more into the pockets of Yukon College so we could jump-start our vocational concepts in the college. In the last four years, the first thing this government did was send the Minister of Education with a million dollars to our schools to see what kind of shortfalls they had. Our minister of the day went from school to school and worked with the principals and teachers to see how this money could be spent and how they could cover some of the shortfalls. We did that.

We did that, Mr. Speaker. This government's strengths in the next four years will be working for a better quality of life. That's important, and that covers a large gamut for Yukon. We have seniors. We have elders. We have education. We have health. We have all of the pressures on a government that jurisdictions have. The environment is a very important thing, and its importance is growing. The environment in our communities is an issue. People want the Yukon to be a pristine, clean place to live. How can you argue against that? You can't argue against that. We as a jurisdiction, as a community, are in great shape, Mr. Speaker. Our communities are small, and so the human footprint in Yukon is fairly small, when you think of the size of this territory.

The economy — what are we going to do about the economy? Well, when you drive around Whitehorse, you see that the economy is booming. The housing market is exploding. The land issue — we have to get land out there, and we're committed to doing that. We're going to be making an announcement in the next couple of days that is going to tell the Yukon people how we're going to do that. And we are going to work to get land in the hands of people who want it. This government is committed to doing that. This is part of our platform. This part of the commitment — not promises. These are not promises; these are commitments this group of individuals made to move forward with the Yukon. This is the commitment that Yukoners took a look at, and they decided that our commitments were what they wanted to see for the Yukon over the next five years. We have five years to meet these commitments.

Practising good government — that's important. We can stand up here and talk all we want back and forth about who did what and who said what and whatever but, at the end of the day, Yukoners want us to have a more inclusive government. We are committed to working with First Nation governments; we are committed to working with the municipalities; we are committed to working with the communities outside of Whitehorse to make sure they don't feel minimized by their location.

I lived in a small community in Yukon for 30 years. I understand what Whitehorse can do — how overwhelming it can

be to the communities if in fact we don't open up to those communities. We are committed to doing that. Anybody who has lived in any of the smaller communities in Yukon will understand the dynamics of somewhere like Whitehorse. Whitehorse is where the government is; Whitehorse is where bad news comes from; Whitehorse is where they cut out the snow plows — Whitehorse, Whitehorse, Whitehorse. In turn, we tend to think everything happens in circles around Whitehorse because in fact this is where the majority of the population live. This group of people will make a commitment that we are not going to marginalize the outlying areas. We are going to work with them and we are going to make them stronger. It is important that we work with these outlying communities to make them stronger so they can eventually stand on their own feet — that we create wealth around them, that there is an economic base for why they are there.

When you look at Pelly Crossing now, the Selkirk First Nation, you are looking at a First Nation now that is working with Sherwood Copper creating some wealth. There are individuals going to work. When the dust settles, Sherwood Copper is going to employ, I think, approximately 150 people there — over 100 people. A big part will come from, hopefully, the Selkirk First Nation and that area. That is going to add some wealth and, Mr. Speaker, some success, and that is very important — that we have some success stories out there. Sherwood Copper is going to supply that through working in conjunction with First Nations and their people and with us as government.

Look at the other opportunities out there. There's the ever-famous Alaska Highway pipeline, which we have been talking about for 35 years. At this point there is a new governor, a new lieutenant-governor and a new House in Juneau, Alaska. The new governor has made a commitment to review all options. Hopefully in the latter part of January, we will have some communication with that government to see what the future plans are for the Alaska Highway pipeline.

Again, the Alaska Highway pipeline has been a debate we've had. In our jurisdiction, we facilitate a pipeline, we don't create a pipeline. The pipeline will go through our jurisdiction from Alaska to northern B.C., so we're not in the decision-making seat, and we will never be. It will be decided by industry and by the Alaskan government and, in a big way, by the American government.

We're working away with the Aboriginal Pipeline Coalition; we're working internally on it. Hopefully we will get a feeling for what way this new government will approach this project, but it is something we're monitoring.

On the Mackenzie Valley pipeline, National Energy Board hearings are going on. We insisted they have hearings here. One of the hearings was held here recently. The Mackenzie Valley pipeline will impact us. It will certainly impact us if we don't get access to that pipeline for north Yukon resources, which would leave our gas stranded. It will also be an impact on the labour force. We're committed to making sure our workforce has access to that pipeline, that our contractors have access to that pipeline — in other words, that northerners are not

shut out from northern projects and opportunities, and we're very adamant about that.

As far as going forward on the Mackenzie Valley pipeline, it's in the environmental review stage. They have internal issues that they have to resolve. But we are very vocal about our wish list, or our demands, and we are being heard at very high levels. Our jurisdiction has to be part and parcel of the decisions, workforce-wise and in contracting and other aspects of a pipeline if and when it goes forward, and also so that we don't get in a situation where we blink one day and our gas is stranded in north Yukon. That's another natural resource that is very important to Yukoners, as modern technology improves — our geoscience, all the technology. They've upgraded our resources to almost triple what there were considered to be 20 years ago. We have Northern Cross, which is an oil situation in north Yukon that is working very positively to move forward into production. Certainly, we're working with Northern Cross and their executives to see what we can do as government to facilitate those decisions. They're working with the First Nations in the area, and hopefully that will create the jobs that are needed to move some of these smaller communities forward to give them the financial capabilities of keeping and maintaining a population.

So a lot of the questions that the members opposite have addressed are all issues that have been extracted from the commitments we made during the election. We've only been back taking over the reins of government since the election, which would have been six weeks ago. One thing we do have on our side is that we are an incumbent government, so we are comfortable. Most of us will return to our portfolios, and that is a positive thing because we don't have the transition issues. Certainly, I'm very pleased to see the quality of people we attracted to be on our team from, of course, Teslin and Nisutlin and Dawson City. It's good to see Klondike back on this side and participating in the Yukon and moving forward in our master plan and what we visualize the Yukon is going to be like in five years.

Certainly there is a place in every government for opposition. I don't think a government works well without opposition and the stronger the opposition is the better it is. Certainly it doesn't hurt to have the checks and balances of opposition in place, and they do have a place.

I look forward to working with all elected members in the House because we all have a commitment to the Yukon. We all represent our ridings, our jurisdiction, but all 18 of us represent 100 percent of the Yukon, and 10 of us happen to be on this side of the House, but that is just what happened during the election.

The people of the Yukon decided that our platform and the individuals who ran for this side of the House were the ones they wanted to see in government. That is the nature of our system.

The opposition has a job to play and certainly we appreciate it on this side of the House, reminding the opposition that we were elected on the back of our platform and we are committed, as this group of individuals here in the House, to do just that — move forward with that platform.

Managing government is handling issues that arise. There are issues that arise on a daily, weekly, monthly, yearly basis that call for decisions and they might not be part of our platform, but it is the nature of government — the unknown. We have had lots of those issues over the last four years and that is the nature of being in government. That is why people elected us in the House here to make those decisions for them, and hopefully the decisions we make are the right decisions.

The nature of the decisions or the different things that arise — some of them more serious than others, but the nature of government creates all sorts of questions on decision-making. As policy, as individuals, as a party and as a group of individuals with our platform, we'll work toward getting our platform done over the next five years.

I'm happy to see the finances of this territory are in good shape and that the majority of people in the Yukon during the last election understood that the finances the Auditor General put out there were the facts and that whatever was said out there during the campaign about the economics of the Yukon, or whether we did or didn't have money in the bank, was wrong. We did the job we said we were going to do, and the most important job we did in the last four years was to get the economic house in order so we could move forward and work toward the master plan here, which is the next five years, and what we are going to do to make our communities a better place to live, how we're going to improve on our medical facilities, what we're going to do for seniors and elders. Are we going to build the extended care units in Watson Lake and Dawson City and Haines Junction? Yes, we're going to build them. They're all part and parcel of the business plan we put forward.

Will we look at Teslin to see what we can do for the elders and seniors there? Yes, we're going to do that. We're going to look at our communities because, at the end of the day, it pays to keep our individuals, our elders and seniors in the communities they have lived their lives in. It's unfair to think we would pack somebody up from Watson Lake and move them to the McDonald Lodge in Dawson City to live the last two or three years of their life. That's not acceptable. To be fair to the department, that was the only option they had, but to Watson Lake that wasn't fair and, with this extended care unit in Watson Lake, hopefully that won't happen.

Those kinds of issues will be behind us. With the economic strength of our community, we can take a look at these extended-care units and see how we can improve on them. We can take a look at infrastructure in Dawson City and work with the city and the mayor and council to make sure that they are not saddled with a sewer or water system that is not only impractical but financially unfeasible for the community to maintain. Those are issues. We have to work with the community of Dawson on their community complex to make sure that they have a community complex that's workable for the community and viable — again — economically for the taxpayers of Dawson. We are committed to do that.

We have to look at the Campbell Highway; we have to make that a safe highway that Yukoners can use and we are committed to doing that. We have done a lot of work on the

Campbell Highway and I would say that we are probably the first government in many, many years that has taken the Campbell Highway seriously.

We have highway equipment rental contracts that help the contractors in Watson Lake — small jobs that they can do and create some jobs around the Watson Lake area. We are working with Carmacks on some HERC projects. Ross River — we want to look at the North Canol and clear out the visibility problems that it has and we are committed to doing that. We want to make these roads safe and better.

Now, with the Shakwak project on the Alaska Highway coming to an end, most of the resources there now are directed toward bridges and infrastructure, in that sense. It's going to be very important to us to put a business plan together and see what we are going to do to replace that and where we should prioritize our road building money to get maximum results. We are committed to taking a look at the infrastructure we have, specifically the Campbell Highway, and see what we can do over a five- or six- or seven-year program to bring that highway up to the standard of all the highways in the Yukon.

When you look at the thousands of kilometres of road that we maintain in Yukon, one of the biggest assets we have is the highway system. That infrastructure is so important. Compared to our neighbours, Nunavut and Northwest Territories, Mr. Speaker, we are in clover, considering our infrastructure that has been built over the years to tie our communities together. We can go to the Arctic Ocean. We can go to the Pacific Ocean. We can go into B.C. We can go to Haines, Alaska. We have access to these jurisdictions. They don't have that flexibility in the other jurisdictions. So because of that infrastructure, our economic engine is that much easier to maintain. The mining communities, forestry — all this economic potential — are that much more viable when we have that infrastructure. We've got to look at some sort of upgrade to the Dempster Highway. If the Mackenzie Valley pipeline goes forward, what are we going to do as a government to make sure that the Dempster Highway will stand up to the pressure that that pipeline will put on it? It's a natural access to the Mackenzie Valley or the Delta. What other access do they have? They talk about barges. They have a barge system on the Mackenzie River, which is fabulous, but it has a season to it. The Dempster Highway is open year-round.

We will have to put a business plan together in conjunction with the federal government. The taxpayers of the Yukon have been maintaining that highway for many, many years. Now, if it is going to be utilized for the building of a pipeline, which I would say is a no-brainer — we've got to go to work and see how we can partner with the federal government and the Government of the Northwest Territories to bring some kind of upgrade and maintenance plan together that makes sense for all our jurisdictions and gets the material to the Mackenzie Delta.

Those are all things that this government is working on now. We are already working on a lot of the issues the opposition brings up. Education is working on the education reform. The new Minister of Justice is busy working on her portfolio. We certainly are not asleep at the switch. The announcements

that are going to come out are very positive. We are looking at reviewing how we do business and how we can improve on doing business. In the departments of Energy, Mines and Resources and of Highways we certainly are moving forward and the results are — last night we had 350 people out for dinner from all over the world who came to the Yukon to look at what we had to offer. I think it bodes well for the future when you get interest like that in the middle of a very cold snap in Yukon. I think the future of the Yukon looks very bright. We had 350 people out, but there were two airplanes that were cancelled. We would have had at least another 100 people come to the forum.

I was touring it today and it was full of people. I really recommend that we go over and look at it — the science, the technology. The work that the geoscience division of this government does is fabulous. It is mind-boggling what those people do in that department. Every year that I go there as minister I am more and more amazed at the product that is being turned out and the go-ahead plans they have for the rest of the Yukon.

As far as the economic future of the Yukon, it looks very good. We have money in the bank. We have a social agenda that is work in progress and we certainly appreciate the opposition standing up and policing us on whether or not we are doing our job in a timely fashion. I think some of the insinuations that we are not doing enough — we have to understand timelines and we have to understand governments. We understand that we don't make economic decisions in a spur-of-the-moment, knee-jerk action. There is a process; there is Management Board; there are all sorts of checks and balances in place to make sure we make the right decision in spending taxpayers' money in the Yukon.

We are certainly looking forward to the next five years in government to see, at the end of the day, if we delivered on our platform. Did this group of individuals come up to the mark? Did we leave money in the bank? Is the Yukon a better place to live today? Is it richer when we leave here? I say on both counts that this will be a better place to live in five years and we will have money in the bank.

**Mr. Edzerza:** I would like to start out by congratulating all the MLAs who were re-elected and the new ones who were elected. I would also like to sincerely thank all the candidates who put their names forward and took the risk of seeking public office in government. I sincerely thank the citizens of McIntyre-Takhini for their support in the election. I will not let them down; I will do the best possible job I can to ensure they are well represented in the Legislative Assembly.

I would also like to thank the volunteers who spent countless hours working on my campaign, and a special thank you to my best friend, who travelled all the way from Red Deer, Alberta, to support me in the election. His help was greatly appreciated. I am honoured to have such loyal and dedicated friends, and I thank each and every one of them from my heart.

I feel somewhat obligated to respond to the comments the Premier made about me to the press on October 28, 2006 at the swearing-in ceremony. It was unfortunate he chose to be negative at such a positive event. However, I would like to take this

opportunity to ensure those in need, my previous colleagues, and the citizens of the Yukon Territory that I did not quit them, as stated by the Premier.

My previous colleagues and many of my constituents knew why I chose to make a change, and my being here today is testimony that my constituents approved of my actions.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, through the eyes of the Creator everyone is equal, everyone belongs, and everyone is important. No one person is higher than the other. That is the Creator's law. That is why some of the comments made at the Yukon Party's victory party were very inappropriate. To make public comments like some of the candidates "didn't even make good filler" had a very negative impact on those in question, who took a risk and in good faith put their names forward to serve the general public. It is important to acknowledge those individuals in a positive light. It is not important who made these comments, but it is important to recognize the negative impact they had on those in question to whom the comments were directed.

I heard several times on the floor of this House how we need more women in politics. Well, some of those candidates were women, and they felt very offended but chose not to make any public comments about this issue. Maybe they witnessed or read about what the female reporter had to tolerate and feared any kind of repercussion. This House recently paid tribute to prevention of violence against women, and we must respect the fact that violence can be demonstrated in more ways than one. It's not always physical abuse that creates violence. Mental and verbal abuse are examples of how one can create violence against women, and we must remember that.

Let's talk about the throne speech. The first thing that caught my attention and kept biting at my derrière was the repeated phrase, "Imagine tomorrow." From a political point of view, I would put this in the same category as maybe writing a letter to Santa Claus. Imagine what? That's the real question.

Maybe it's imagine whether or not this government will honour the commitments they made in the throne speech or during the campaign. Some of my constituents in McIntyre could not imagine how nice it would be if the government would put a traffic light at the intersection of McIntyre Drive and Hamilton Boulevard. They could only imagine how nice it would be if they did not have to sit for long periods of time, waiting for a break in the traffic so they could proceed downtown.

My constituents in McIntyre believe this should be considered when and if more work and improvements are done on Hamilton Boulevard. They have a hard time understanding why their community has to ask for something that should have been done out of formality. That is a busy intersection and there should have been a traffic light there. No one should have to ask to have one put there. It's only a way of showing the respect due to the McIntyre residents.

The government asked Yukoners to imagine a tomorrow where our children are not faced with crack houses and drug dealers in their neighbourhoods. Imagine how this can be done with the safer communities legislation alone. Our party believes it will take much more than this. We do not believe safer

communities legislation will scare everyone out of town tomorrow. Some will stay. Don't get me wrong: this legislation is good, but we believe it won't solve the core issues.

I recently attended a conference in Edmonton, for example, that dealt with knowing your spirit. This conference is exactly what has to be implemented in the Yukon. Some of the things that were discussed at that conference included the mental health issue. A lot of people do suffer from mental illness. Mental illness does not mean that you need to be in a psychiatric ward. It can mean that you have some issues that are barriers in your life stopping you from moving forward in a good way and in a healthy way.

Our government believes that this kind of approach will assist the safer communities legislation and give it more of a chance to be successful. I did not see anything in the throne speech to support the commitment the Premier made to develop partnerships with First Nations to open up several treatment centres across the territory. This is a promise that would be very expensive and maybe that is why it was not mentioned, because to make a commitment to First Nations that, "Yes, we are going to work in partnership with you and we are going to financially support the First Nation initiatives," would be too much of a commitment. You may not be able to politic your way around that one. You might actually have to do it.

When it comes to saying that we will support your treatment facilities, I have a real question that I would love to have answered at some point in time. When? Would it be at the very end of this mandate, like it was in the last one? Yes, we will support First Nations and their treatment centres. Why? Because naturally there was no time to implement it. There was no time, so it became another election promise. That's a big one for this one. They have five years to do it now, and I certainly pray that they will be sincere about this, because First Nations in this territory have suffered far too long from being victims of a mission school, and it's time that there is going to be a sincere stab at correcting the core issues.

I have heard from citizens across the territory who support the idea of having a variety of choices to deal with healing the spirit. The people want to be able to obtain treatment here at home in the territory. To date they have always been sent to Alberta, British Columbia, Saskatchewan and where else? I don't know. But the fact remains that being shipped out of the territory has really minimized the possibility of their success. A lot of the individuals who have to be shipped out for treatment end up coming back before their time is up. That, I guess, has a lot to do with having to practically desert the family, and once again, that is sort of a repetition of the mission school approach to things. Ship them off.

It's not only First Nations that would like the treatment facilities in this territory, because alcohol and drug abuse knows no boundaries. It's not only First Nation people who need help in this area. Everyone would benefit. If this government has no intention to build a standard treatment centre in the territory then I strongly support them going to the First Nations who already have infrastructure in place and getting on with it — and I mean immediately, not two or three years down the road.

Supporting this kind of approach to deal with the severe drug and alcohol problems in the territory, as I mentioned earlier, would be very expensive, and it is questionable if the government has the political will to follow through with this kind of financial commitment.

I would have to see it to believe it.

Alcohol and drug abuse counselling is important but does not address one of the number one health issues affecting First Nation people in this territory. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am referring to the mental health issues caused by the mission schools. The government appears to be focusing on recruiting medical doctors but has no focus whatsoever on recruiting professionals who can deal with the mental health clientele in this territory. Again, Mr. Speaker, I cannot emphasize enough how important it is to be able to provide services for these individuals who have suffered severely and who are victims of the mission school and also offspring from those who went to mission schools, because the ripple effect has created chaos in families for many generations.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, if the Justice department were to do an assessment on the inmates, it is quite possible that the number one factor for incarceration would be the effects that the mission school had on First Nation people. I might add that it is no secret that the majority of inmates are First Nation. This is something that a lot of our people and I, being First Nation, are not proud of. However, how do you deal with a massive abuse of a race of people? We have to seek understanding of exactly what this means. In order to do that, we have to do historical research and go back to the 1800s when the mission schools were first implemented. Again, I want to mention that this may have been done in good faith. I believe it probably was. But there was no thought put into how devastating this would be to the First Nation race of people.

We have to ask ourselves — take away the colour of the person, even. What would happen if this was nation-wide, where everybody lost their children at a very young age, where all races of people in this country had no means of knowing how to bond, or what family ties meant? What do you think we would have in this country?

When you look at a lot of our First Nation people, you could magnify that 100,000 times and that's what you would have. It's time, and I would really like to see the Yukon take a leadership role here and sincerely make attempts to address this serious issue. It's not going to go away; it's going to be in the face of every government from here on forward, as it has been for the last 100 years in this nation and for the last many years in the Yukon Territory.

We are not going to be able to sweep this under the rug any longer. Whether people like to believe it or not, this territory is getting into an epidemic with drugs and drug abuse. The ones who will be the choice victims are the young people.

This issue has to be taken very seriously. I don't think any political promises, for the sake of being elected, will do the trick. I think that when you're elected, you have the job to complete.

The throne speech also stated Yukoners were asked to imagine a tomorrow where our children were given access to higher education and then returned home to work here.

Well, one of my daughters would really take issue with this statement. That is exactly what she was told when she moved away for four years to obtain a degree as a registered nurse because this profession was not offered in the Yukon. She was led to believe she had a job when she finished the program but, to her disappointment, when she moved back to Whitehorse she was told there was an abundance of nurses and she had no job. There was no need for nurses here, yet the government continues to say that they will support and provide more nurses and health professionals in the Yukon.

I think the government has to take a closer look and confirm that they are supporting the right professions here. I would like to see the same emphasis put on psychiatrists and on mental health counsellors as they do on doctors. We need to look at what the real medical issue in the Yukon is. Is it mental health or is it the medical profession? Both are important and we cannot do without either one.

Needless to say, she rented a U-Haul to move here from Grande Prairie, Alberta, and within three weeks had to rent a U-Haul to move back south — where she was appreciated, I might add. She was even given a substantial amount of money as a bonus for accepting a nursing position in their hospital. So much for supporting our children who obtain a professional career and return home to practise. She is not an isolated case. There are others in different professions who have faced similar disappointments. Imagine a tomorrow where most, if not all, students face this dilemma upon their graduation.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will now move on. Let's imagine a revised *Children's Act* and how wonderful that would be. I know lots of people in my riding who would just be overjoyed and in tears if this were to happen. It has only been promised for about 20 years and still hasn't become a reality. When will the government of the day get on with the *Children's Act* review? I believe in four years it should have been completed. However, I believe it's probably not even half done, and that is giving lots of credit. Why is it that this keeps going sideways? Why is it? One could only make assumptions on this issue. Is it because no one wants to get serious and listen to the people out there?

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the ones who are affected the most by this act are the First Nation people once again. Why? Because a majority of the children in care are First Nation. So it's not hard to understand why First Nations are getting sick and tired of talk and no action. They want to see something done here that's positive and, I might add, with their input. I believe that maybe some of the barriers might be that it's hard to give up power and control. Power and control — that will stop some people from moving anywhere.

Some people have a lot of problem giving up power or sharing it. No one has to give up total power and control, but it would be nice if some of it were shared. I believe the First Nation people are only asking to have a voice — a voice that could be heard and could mean something. Far too often First Nations are promised the sun. They are promised all kinds of

glorious rhetoric that governments are handing to them. For what? To try to win some of their loyalty. First Nation people have always been easy to get along with and it appears that because of their gentleness and their willingness to cooperate, they get taken advantage of, which is unfair — really unfair — because the First Nations were victimized by the federal government to start with.

I say First Nations were victimized by the *Indian Act*. One has to ask how many other races of people on this earth are governed by an act? Why First Nations people? Is it because they owned the land first, so there has to be something put in place to make sure they don't get too powerful? There are lots of reasons, I guess, but I often thought this is one act that destroyed the First Nation race, because whether one likes to believe it or not, First Nations were capable of governing themselves — fully capable. We would have to ask how First Nations maintained order and control before the coming of the non-native people?

From what I've learned to date about traditional knowledge, values and beliefs, it appears that they had a system that was fool proof. They had a system that worked until people started to decide they had to revise what the First Nation people believed in. Slowly but surely, the First Nations began to lose all that valuable traditional knowledge and beliefs; however, it never became extinct. The First Nations still use it very aggressively in other parts of Canada, and I believe the government needs to get into partnership with the First Nations and start to bring it back to the Yukon Territory.

We have to firmly believe in our hearts that the *Children's Act* review is a priority and of the utmost importance. As a member of this Legislative Assembly who represents one of the largest First Nations in the territory, I can't stress enough how important it is to get on with revising this act. How long do the people have to suffer? I'm not only talking about children; I'm talking about the adults who have to go through apprehension of their children.

I have been an advocate and worked on the front line for over 20 years. Nothing has improved in the last 20 years. Twenty-two years ago I was supporting a family that was losing their children. There appeared to be a routine of how one gets in the door and how one takes charge. If you go into any courtroom when they're dealing with child apprehensions, you'll find there's an abundance of legal counsel for the government and the First Nation person is sitting there by themselves.

The playing field is so uneven that it is almost criminal. Where is the humanity in this kind of setting? You would have to look very hard to find any. The result of this is the parents walking away. There are so many hurdles, so many hoops to jump through, that they give up. Their spirit is eventually broken to the point they don't care, and the next best friend they have is alcohol or drugs.

I can speak about what alcohol does to a person because I suffered from it for many, many years. It is a sickness; it is not something you can turn off like a water tap. It is very, very difficult to overcome an alcohol addiction, so these individuals' — who are already suffering from all the trauma in their lives

— chances of ever being able to effectively deal with alcohol or drug abuse is going to be very minimal. It is not impossible; some people do overcome it. But in this territory, when you want treatment, you had better be prepared to stand in line.

Twenty-five years ago I went to the so-called drug and alcohol treatment centre in this territory asking for help. I was told to come back in three months' time when there was a vacancy. Needless to say, I didn't go back for more than two years. That is still happening.

I recently had parents — in fact, it was on the campaign trail for this election. I had some parents ask me, "Could you tell me where I can get help for my teenage daughter who is getting into drugs?" I said, "What kinds of drugs are you talking about?" She said, "Well, we suspect crystal meth." What do I say? Because I really don't know. I have had numerous parents say that they could not find treatment for their children.

We have to accept the fact that young people have issues, too. Peer pressure gets a lot of them drinking and experimenting with alcohol and drugs. It is a fact of life. It is a reality that others will try to convince you to join them, just like adults do. They're no different.

So I cannot stress enough how important it is to get on with it, get serious, and get the revisions to the *Children's Act* completed. I certainly hope that we will see it in this mandate.

First Nations would like to imagine tomorrow where their voices are heard and actions taken in support of their concerns. Imagine how good it would be for all citizens in the territory to finally get solutions and not judgement on how to keep their families intact. I would love to imagine a tomorrow where this was actually a reality, but I'm not going to hold my breath waiting, because this is a very big issue. It's time-consuming to get it in place, and the longer it is prolonged, the more victims, the more hardships are going to be put right squarely on the shoulders of the citizens of this territory.

Now, let's talk about the economy. Yukoners were asked to imagine a prosperous tomorrow. One can only accept reality and must imagine that the money from Ottawa might be a little less easy to get one day. Let's face it: I sometimes feel like a ward of the country. It's almost like we're on welfare because Ottawa pays so much toward our existence.

Sooner or later the bubble is bound to burst — then what? Imagine tomorrow when the cutbacks will come from Ottawa. And they will; they've already started. What will happen to all the programs promised by the government in their throne speech and on the campaign trail? When expectations are built up, they're hard to put out. Sure, a person can just say, "Well, I won't run in the next election." But that's an easy way out. We have to expect that, some day, the bubble will burst and we had better be prepared for the repercussions that will come from that.

Yukoners were asked to imagine a tomorrow where unity and respect will be given to all levels of government. I have one of the largest First Nations in my riding. A very large proportion of my constituents are First Nation. I believe First Nations would like to have more than imagination and dreams on this issue.

Imagination is not good enough. It does not cut the mustard. I have been imagining for many years when we will be respected in this country.

We heard talk about a promise to implement land claims. That has been going on for over 30 years, and every year the First Nations are promised that we are going to implement land claims if you elect us. Well, to implement land claims takes money, and that is the barrier that stops the implementation. The government wants to say that it is a federal responsibility. The federal government says, "Well, we give you money to look after your First Nations." But the real people are caught in the middle.

Streamlining land applications — it might be a good thing, but when you streamline land applications that conflict with First Nation agreements, are you supporting implementation or are you creating problems in that area?

I see my time is running out and I could go on for a lot longer on this topic. In summary, the government made a lot of promises with some very heavy price tags attached to them. For some of them, money will go out with no money coming back. I know this will create a problem for the Yukon Party. Will they be able to endure the pressures to come? Only time will tell. I do wish the government the best, because it will be positive if they succeed. But if they don't, it will spell chaos in this territory.

**Hon. Ms. Taylor:** It is indeed my honour and privilege to be able to rise as the MLA for Whitehorse West in this Legislature. It has been a real privilege to serve in this Assembly over the last four years. It has been a lot of hard work. It has been full of rewards and challenges, and it certainly has been a very large learning curve for many of us over the years. But that said, we were able to go to the polls recently, and we were able to garner another mandate. I am very proud of the record that the Yukon Party government in our first term was able to achieve. I am proud of my colleagues who ran for office, who put their names forward for a second term. For those members who have won and also those who have lost, I certainly extend my personal congratulations to each and every one of you. To all members of the Legislature, I also extend my congratulations to all of you. I think that, as has been elaborated on here today and over the last couple of days, it takes much courage. It certainly takes a lot of effort and time and personal commitment on all of our behalf to put our names forward and to run for office. To all of those who were not so successful in the last election, I also recognize and acknowledge their efforts.

I also wanted to extend a personal thanks to all the other individuals who have supported our government over the last four years — that includes members of the public service for all their commitment, hard work and efforts over the last four years. Having served as the minister over those years, I have really enjoyed my time working in a number of different departments and have especially appreciated their expertise and their experience in providing us with leadership and with the information needed to move the agenda forward.

As my colleagues have elaborated over the last couple of days, we do have an ambitious agenda for the next five years

and we have been able to garner much success over the last four years.

The election campaign was a very interesting one. It was my very first election campaign running as an incumbent. I must say it was much different from the first time round. For one, we had a record to run on and with that we were able to reflect upon our successes, but we also had to reflect upon our mandate and answer to the people and be held accountable at the end of the day.

That did take place on October 10 and I was very pleased with the support garnered in our riding of Whitehorse West and a number of other ridings throughout the Yukon.

I would like to just make reference to a couple of members who are no longer in this Legislature — that being the former Member for Vuntut Gwitchin and also the former Member for Porter Creek South. The reason why I make reference to these two particular individuals is that, for the last four years, there were three women legislators in the Legislature and these two members and I constituted what we formed as the women's caucus.

It was really a pleasure and a privilege to be able to work with those two individuals and I'm very proud of our efforts although we all recognize that it was a little late in the stage of our mandate to form the women's caucus, albeit better late than never. It was for those very purposes that we wished to come together for the very first time — to park politics at the door and to reflect upon the Legislature as a working place and how we could better make the Legislature as a more representative place for those that we represent.

We did come around with one change. We were able to garner consensus on a change, albeit relatively small, yet one step forward and that was to change the end of the sitting day from 6:00 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. I just say this because the MLA for Kluane made reference to a number of his thoughts yesterday afternoon and today, about the political will and the desire to work collectively and collaboratively with one another. I believe that will is here. I certainly believe that we will certainly extend our best efforts to do the best we can to work with one another for the net benefit of the Legislature and most importantly for those we represent.

It is for that reason that, although those two members, the former MLA for Vuntut Gwitchin as well as the Member for Porter Creek South, are no longer here, I am pleased to welcome the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin as well as all our colleagues in this Legislature. I look forward to working together with members to see how we can perhaps make this Legislature a bit friendlier place for more women to enter the field of politics and for more individuals to be interested in putting their names forward.

The election platform, *Building Yukon's Future Together: A Clear Vision for a Bright Future*, outlines a number of key initiatives that we are to accomplish over the next five years. As I mentioned, it is an ambitious agenda. It's a comprehensive agenda, and there are a lot of very worthy initiatives to be addressed over the next few years. Clearly, in my riding of Whitehorse West, there were a number of common themes raised on the doorsteps, not just during the election but over the

years. Among the top three priorities in the area I represent was for a safer, healthier community.

I think that our government has worked very diligently over the last number of years to address a number of fronts on the social side of the agenda, including safer communities legislation. I was very pleased with the announcement our Minister of Justice made yesterday with the opening of the safer communities office, the registrar and their respective team, to be up and running by the end of the month. This is really welcome news for many individuals in my riding. It was in my area — and the area that I represent comprises the majority of Copper Ridge as it stands today, as well as the communities of Arkell and Logan. Within that particular area, there were a number of homes that were detected as grow-ops.

It came as a rather large surprise for many of us, because for many years that particular area has been highly regarded as a very safe community full of young families and young professionals, and certainly there could never be any criminal behaviour taking place in that area. So when there were a number of homes opened up where grow-ops were detected, it was a reality check for many of the residents in the area.

Around the same time, there was a growing awareness that something needed to be done, something that was very effective and relatively quick to accomplish. At the same time, as members will recall — and there is a whole history, to which I don't need to refer — there was a lot of discussion about how it is that we, as members of the Legislature, can begin to address the problems related to substance abuse in our communities and all the Yukon. It was at that time there was a concerted effort among all legislators to host a forum to address substance abuse, from which there came about a number of recommendations that led to the substance abuse action plan.

Within the substance abuse action plan, there is also reference to the safer communities legislation as a possible forum and venue for combating substance abuse in our communities on the enforcement side. In addition, there were a number of other pillars, from education, prevention, treatment, aftercare, and harm reduction, in addition to enforcement.

From the substance abuse action plan, discussions unfolded about the safer communities legislation. A unanimous vote was taken in this Legislature and it was supported by all members of the House.

It's really great to see that the office will be up and running very shortly. I think that this will make a tangible difference in our community. It is one tool among a number of different tools within the toolbox, so to speak.

In addition to the safer communities legislation, our government has also been able to announce a number of other initiatives, including the community court. The community court is an alternative, therapeutic court that makes provisions available to offenders who are suffering from mental illnesses, FASD, addictions — to ensure they receive the treatment they deserve and need.

The community court, thanks to funding made available through National Crime Prevention Canada as well as the Department of Justice, will soon be underway as I understand. Steps in collaboration are underway as we speak. This, again, is

another tool on the treatment side of the equation to address substance abuse in our communities.

The school council of Porter Creek Secondary School has made it known that they wish to proceed with the dogs for drug-free schools initiative, and they have taken it upon themselves to work with the Department of Education and other stakeholders to ensure that it does happen. Funding has been made available for that particular project and we are pleased to see the project proceed.

Another project that we are very pleased to be able to fund is the whole-child project and its expansion from Whitehorse Elementary School to the Elijah Smith Elementary School.

Again, it's to help fully develop our children, our students and schools, to provide them with the tools for full learning opportunities, and it provides some very healthy options for extracurricular learning activities. This project has been widely received by the community here, and we were really pleased to see it being expanded to Elijah Smith Elementary School. Again, we hope to see the program fully up and running, hopefully within the new year. That said, our election platform also outlines the willingness to take a look at other communities to see how we can perhaps expand that program to rural Yukon, as well.

In addition to the action plan, there are a number of other fronts that we have been working to address, including the corrections action plan. The corrections action plan, the *Children's Act* review and other reviews have been undertaken in partnership with First Nations. It is a new way of doing business, so to speak but, so far, I believe that we have been able to garner some great feedback. It is a process that, yes, we have felt some bumps along the way, but the main thing is that we have been able to roll up our sleeves, sit down at the table and work out those differences, when need be.

The corrections action plan was not just solely designed for the purpose of putting up a new facility. Its purpose was to address the root causes of crime and what leads to individuals having to go to the Whitehorse Correctional Centre, what are the causes of substance abuse, of crime, and that which leads individuals to that facility time and time again.

The process was to take a look at everything from prevention to education to treatment to within the facility and also to look at programming outside the facility. If one has taken time to review the corrections action plan, it is a very comprehensive, very complete document. The process, I believe, was superb. I believe that it has been very well-received among First Nation communities, in all communities, particularly those stakeholders who have had the opportunity to work on that process.

We are very pleased to be able to work on an implementation plan and we look forward to rolling it out over the next number of years, but it will include, among the very first of those priorities, the replacement of the Whitehorse Correctional Centre.

Caring for our citizens was another important plank in our platform and it is reiterated within the Speech from the Throne. In caring for our citizens, whether that is medical treatment — again this was a very consistent theme that was heard at the

door — and Yukoners' abilities to be able to access physicians within the community and their desire to see additional incentives to attract and retain health care professionals to our respective communities — whether that was also taking care of our elders and our seniors who are so very important to the fabric of our community.

Our commitment again is to reopen the Thomson Centre with 44 fully operational beds including the palliative unit to be opened with coordinated services to be provided, to continue to construct facilities in the communities of Watson Lake and Dawson City, to look at assisted-living services within the Village of Haines Junction and the area and so forth — it's so very critical that we continue with the planning to meet the future needs of our senior and elder population.

Failure to do so will only serve to reduce our ability to be an attractive place to retire, and we all know how very important the senior population is to our labour market, not to mention to the quality of life here in the Yukon. We are very much in need of new facilities, and what better way to serve our senior and elder population than to look to the communities where many reside and to provide the services to those individuals who have built their lives and communities thanks to their hard work over the years.

Another recurring theme that was heard at the doorstep was childcare. Certainly I know that without having to reiterate successes garnered over the last four years, there are a number of problems within our communities in being able to access affordable and accessible childcare. There is no question about it. I heard it clearly at the doorstep and certainly, speaking with family and friends, I am very much aware of the challenges. That said, I am very confident that we will be able to meet those challenges working collaboratively with the childcare community, working with parents, working with communities and First Nations to deliver quality, accessible and affordable childcare services.

Those services may come in a different variety of forms, but we have to be creative and we have to be open-minded and flexible in how we deliver those services.

Another recurring theme that I heard at the doorstep was the need for continuity and the need for some stability. I say that in a couple of different facets — one in the financial end of that. A lot of individuals are very pleased with the way that finances have been run in the Yukon over the last number of years. Clearly, one only has to look at the Auditor General of Canada and the recent report that was issued giving Yukon once again a clean financial bill of health — in fact, one of the cleanest in the country. And, yes, it is no secret. Yes, we have been able to garner additional federal dollars, courtesy of the Government of Canada. But I also must remind members opposite that Yukon is deserving of its fair share of finances — finances, dollars that were cut a number of years ago from the previous federal government. I just refer to the health care access dollars that were severely, significantly cut from all of our coffers, clear across the country, regardless of which territory or province one lives in. We are still trying catch up.

So regardless of the territorial health access fund — which, I might remind members opposite and all members, would not

have occurred if it were not for our Premier joining with the other two premiers from N.W.T. and Nunavut to join forces and to say that no, that's not enough, that's not going to fill the health care gap, and by walking out of the Prime Minister's office and standing up for Yukon and standing up for the north, saying we need to do better. And we did do better. We do have a way to go yet. There's no secret.

Our Premier is taking it upon himself to continue his good work as the Minister of Finance to look out for Yukon — to put Yukon's interests first — and to seek new dollars because we are a long way from filling those gaps that were enabled a number of years ago.

The economic picture of Yukon is very optimistic. Going door to door, a lot of individuals in my area are quite pleased with the economic picture. Many more individuals are working today than ever before. There are more opportunities. What is very key is to continue to diversify the economy — to look at ways that Yukon can capitalize on what it does best and how we do things best.

In the Department of Tourism and Culture, I've had the great privilege of being able to work with a number of individuals in that department over the last four years. I feel very privileged to be able to continue in my role as the Minister of Tourism and Culture.

There is no question that there are a number of significant challenges in tourism across the country and clear across the continent these days. There are changing travel trends, and there are changes in our labour market. We have significant labour shortages that have undoubtedly had a critical impact upon our labour market — in the service sector in particular.

There are, however, a lot of great things on the horizon, and one has only to look at the Canada Winter Games and the awareness that the Canada Winter Games will give to the Yukon and to the north. The very fact that we have been able to garner \$5 million between ourselves and our partners from the N.W.T. and Nunavut to provide a national marketing campaign — the first of its kind — to showcase the Yukon and the north coming of age as a great place to visit, a great place to invest, and a great place to reside.

We will be watching very closely to see how the marketing campaign unfolds and the resulting impact of that particular campaign upon some very key markets in our key areas in Canada.

I am very heartened by Condor's recent decision to enhance its availability of flights. They are extending their season next year to the end of October. This is really significant. It is great news. It is also a challenge, however, for each of our tour operators and industry at large to provide the product on the ground when individuals do arrive and stay in the Yukon.

I am also really thrilled to see the return of the White Pass train to the community of Carcross. It has been a few years since that happened, and the partnership garnered between White Pass and Holland America is great news — not just to that community, but to the Yukon as a whole. I certainly still remain confident that one day we will see the train come back to the City of Whitehorse as it once rode here. This is a great first step on the route to success.

There are a number of great markets within the tourism industry that are glowing these days, such as wilderness tourism. I had the opportunity to recently attend the annual general meeting of the Wilderness Tourism Association. By all accounts they have had a great year. Many of the tour operators' biggest challenge is not having enough guides to accommodate the growth associated with their particular industry.

Cultural industries hold a great degree of promise, whether that be film, sound recording, arts, culture. There are a whole host of opportunities available to expand those industries, and we as a government have been very pleased and privileged to assist those particular industries over the years in order to enable them to continue to flourish and to continue to expand their delivery.

One only has to take a look at the number of new programs that have been made available through the Department of Economic Development, through the Department of Tourism and Culture. There is significant promise for Yukon First Nation tourism, and through the First Nation Tourism Association, again there are tremendous opportunities to work with the respective First Nation governments to garner partnerships and in being able to attract visitors to their respective territories and to be able to work with First Nations to be able to build product and market that product.

Of course, one only has to take a look at the mining industry. The minister responsible for Energy, Mines and Resources has been very vocal in how successful the recent Geoscience Forum has been going so far. There has been no question that we have been able to garner much success in this key strategic industry over the years, and one only has to take a look at about four years ago when I believe exploration expenditures were sitting at about \$5 million. Today they are sitting at about \$75 million — a tremendous increase in the number of individuals employed within the service sector and an incredible number of individuals employed within the exploration development cycle of this industry as well.

I can certainly go on but I did want to leave a little bit of time for a number of other things, such as the reference in the Speech from the Throne to the environment and to the very importance of our environment. As I mentioned earlier, wilderness tourism has been able to excel as a strategic industry in this territory over the last number of years as a result of our ability to be able to showcase the pristine wilderness and the very importance of our environment to the rest of the world.

This speech, as well as our platform, clearly articulates the desire and the willingness to showcase our parks and their potential, whether they be territorial, special management areas, habitat protection areas or our national parks. We have a lot to be proud of, a lot to enjoy, and we look forward to working with the Department of Environment and other levels and orders of government to better showcase these parks as a means of showcasing what we do best and what makes us all very proud to live here in the Yukon.

Again, I could go on at great length about the opportunities available. A couple, though, do come to mind. The territorial Tombstone Park, a recently designated territorial park in the Yukon, has been a great case of success when it comes to tour-

ism-related opportunities. The partnership between the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in First Nation and Holland America is a case in point. It is great to see those partnerships occur.

I did want to just take a few moments, though, to elaborate again, getting back to the particular area that I represent, and that is the constituency of Whitehorse West. As I mentioned earlier, it has been a real privilege to represent the area. I have worked on a number of issues over the last number of years, many of which are local — municipal-related — including speeding-related concerns, debris dumping, and even the installation of pet waste receptacles, and water pressure. We're working with the Copper Ridge Community Association on the development of another children's park in the area.

On the territorial front, I know a lot of words have been raised about issues within the area, but it's no secret that roughly one-third of the population of the City of Whitehorse live up the hill, I would say — and that means up along Hamilton Boulevard. The proposed extension of the Hamilton Boulevard has been a key priority of mine as the MLA. I don't think one day has gone past without me raising this issue with my colleagues. We have been able to garner success on this front and complete the preliminary engineering and the preliminary environmental assessment work on this particular project.

We have also been able to garner an agreement, through a memorandum agreement with the City of Whitehorse, to complete the extension with the City of Whitehorse through the municipal rural infrastructure fund. We look forward to the announcement that will come forward on the actual construction of Hamilton Boulevard. This is a key priority in my area. There's no question that one only has to spend a few mornings up in that area to see there is a need for the extension — not just for accessibility purposes but for easing traffic and alleviating the imminent concerns about emergencies. Having lived in that area for the last 15 years, I'm well aware of the challenges and am excited about the development and construction of Hamilton Boulevard and its planned extension in the next couple of years.

The Copper Ridge school is another key plank in our platform, which I'm very pleased to rise again to address.

Under the leadership of the Minister of Education, there is a Whitehorse school planning initiative to be underway that will entail a number of key stakeholders or partners in education, comprising school councils, First Nations, administration and officials from the Department of Education, making recommendations as to what a school in the Copper Ridge area will actually look like, what it will entail. That process will be underway in due course and we look forward to the recommendations coming out of that and actually seeing a school up and built in the area.

It's a particular need in the area. We have seen tremendous growth. As I mentioned earlier, a third of the population lives up in that area. Currently, students have to be bused away from the Elijah Smith Elementary School for the second year in a row to other schools. I think that, while that's fine, there is a specific need that has been raised with members in the Legislature, and certainly it is a commitment and all members of the Legislature voted unanimously in favour of a motion that was

raised in the Legislature not long ago to complete the construction of a school in the Copper Ridge area. So I am very pleased to receive the support of all members of the Legislature in that regard. We look forward to seeing the ultimate success of this particular project.

Another initiative that we look forward to working on is working with the City of Whitehorse in a joint planning exercise on a new emergency services-related facility within the vicinity of the Canada Games Centre.

Mr. Speaker, there are a number of other things I would love to elaborate on, but once again my time is up and I thank you very much.

**Mr. Elias:** I'll begin by speaking to my people, my inaugural gesture to the Legislative Assembly.

Thak ts'o' drin gwiinzi,  
Shoozri Darius Elias vaazhii, Old Crow gwats'at ihthlii.  
Shitsuu Mary Kushi vitee chun Elias Gwatlati.  
Shkaiik'it zhat goovaanjit giheeyah gaanjit gwiintl'oo shoh ihthlii.

Noohwah unjoo yaanodai gwats'at,  
Googinjik guneenji eeh'that.  
Jii nunh geekuk nits'oo gwiindai,  
Nits'oo hunaagundai, googinjik niizii gunuldaii.  
Jii thuk nahwaynjit.  
Srii na gwa gwii'ahi.  
Aih(I) hah iindoo neehah tra hay dada.  
Muhsi cho shulukut.

Mr. Speaker, it is an honour and a privilege to address this Assembly as the Vuntut Gwitchin MLA and respond to the Speech from the Throne, as it outlines a significant direction and agenda for Yukoners to consider.

Firstly, I want to thank my wife and my children for standing by me during the election. I would like to begin by also welcoming the other new members of this Legislative Assembly. I wish them well in helping to make decisions that benefit all Yukoners.

It is important to mention that my community prays for Mr. Hardy and that he prevails in his battle with leukemia.

I'll begin in recognition of my mother's — Norma Kassi — maiden speech to this Legislative Assembly. I quote a section of her address in reply to the Speech from the Throne, as many aspects are still relevant today. Mr. Speaker, on October 2, 1985, my mother, Norma Kassi, said the following in this Legislature: "The people of Old Crow feel that we can accomplish self-sufficiency without throwing away the good things of modern society. The key to success is more control of these outside influences. Our people must have control over what happens in our community, and by accenting and working hard on the positive and strengthening aspects of our society in Old Crow we can become strong enough to withstand most pressures of the outside world. We can benefit a great many ways by working together to achieve the following: developing strength in our culture; economically viable and controlled tourism; more educational programs including higher grade levels in our school; increased basic adult education for those who need more skills, both basic and advanced; to ensure the

comfort of our elders; better recreation facilities to help combat our social problems; better wildlife management with more input by the Old Crow people, especially in dealing with the Porcupine caribou herd on which we rely so much as a source of food."

Mr. Speaker, 21 years later and many of these priorities still hold true today in my community and I will outline how they are viewed in my community at present.

Being here today and sitting with the Liberal caucus is testimony to my mom teaching me to have my own mind and to make my own decisions.

I also recognize the leadership of my riding's past MLAs — the late Grafton Njootli, Ms. Kathy Nukon, my mother, Norma Kassi, the late Johnny Abel, Mr. Esau Schafer, Mr. Robert Bruce Junior and Ms. Lorraine Peter. I think of them all and remember their achievements as I represent my constituents.

I also wish to congratulate you, Mr. Speaker, on your unanimous election as Speaker of this Assembly.

Our community is in the midst of finding committed partners who will work together with us to achieve a long-awaited and major priority, and that is to build a community and recreation complex in Old Crow that will withstand the test of time. There have recently been several near tragedies in my community — particularly involving youth swimming in the Porcupine River and the makeshift shelter covering the outdoor skating area collapsing. A secure building will drastically reduce the threat of loss of life.

Our community recognizes that an investment in a new community and recreation complex in Old Crow will substantially assist in developing successful young citizens, encourage community healthy living, and contribute to long-term solutions to the needs of the community in social and economic areas.

Many volunteers throughout the Yukon have stepped forward and worked to accomplish two Vuntut Gwitchin general assembly resolutions to make this facility a reality. It has been proven, Mr. Speaker, that having youth participate in sports and recreation has a positive effect on all areas of their lives, including their immediate family. Youth develop a mental, physical, emotional and spiritual well-being by participating in recreational activities because it builds on the feeling of accomplishment and being successful. Providing these opportunities for youth and all community members to participate in creates a springboard effect that leads to a balanced lifestyle and high achievement in all areas of life. A consistent long-term sports and recreation program also decreases the burden on the justice system and social problems like family violence. There is also a direct relation to student academic performance, and therefore graduation statistics rise in response.

Mr. Speaker, the nothing-to-do syndrome that the youth in my community have been struggling with for far too long will be virtually eliminated when this complex is built, and they can have a positive focus for their energy. I ask myself, in this time of plenty here in the Yukon, why the program and service gap is so large between my community of Old Crow and our capital city in terms of employment opportunity, education and ad-

vancement, and youth and recreation. Many other rural Yukon communities enjoy the benefits of having municipality status and therefore have access to funding that can build municipal recreation facilities. My community of Old Crow does not have access to funds available to municipalities and so the playing field is not level right from the start. However, our community's resolve is strong.

Mr. Speaker, millions of dollars have been provided in recent years for recreation facilities in the capital city and other rural Yukon communities, yet the most rural Yukon community has seen very little investment.

Our children are the crux for the reason why we, as parents, make the decisions we do. The lack of opportunities for our children is the primary reason why, in one year alone, six young families have chosen to relocate from Old Crow to Whitehorse.

My community cannot afford a population migration to the capital city. The capital city is draining my community's most valuable resource — our young families — because the gap in these services and opportunities for our children is too large and cannot be ignored by parents. In the words of an elder in my community, "If we do not do something now, Old Crow will be a ghost town within my time."

Is this the future we want for rural Yukon? I don't think so. In order to secure our children's future and guard them from the dangers of having nothing to do within my riding, we must commit to long-term infrastructure investments that will stand the test of time, with programs and services that are comparable to those provided in our capital city and other rural communities.

Mr. Speaker, a community recreation complex would inevitably support a healthy community and create confident, productive individuals. This is an investment in our most valuable resource, our children. It is very important to note that all community members of all ages will benefit from having a community recreation complex, not just the youth. A community recreation complex may be used to provide a place for elder programs, a daycare and activities for all people of Old Crow and a place for the community to make decisions for years and years to come. This would be a classic example of a long-term financial investment in our children that would result in a social return in our investment that would know no bounds.

My community recognizes the importance of youth and community members being exposed to consistent long-term sports and recreation programs and having a reliable venue in which to gather as a community. We simply wish to enjoy the benefits that many other jurisdictions do throughout the Yukon.

Mr. Speaker, my community views this issue as a financial investment that will pay social dividends for years to come, and together we will strive to convince this and other governments to become partners to achieve this long-awaited and much deserved priority that will produce confident, healthy and successful young citizens who will lead our community one day and be productive, well-rounded members of Yukon society.

There's a success story to address, and that's the Old Crow youth health and fitness program. This program is beginning to bear the fruit of much labour, yet the true dividends of this pro-

gram have yet to be realized. This program has contributed in a meaningful way to the health and fitness of the children of Old Crow. One-third of our nation's children are overweight and our Yukon rural communities are not immune to this fact. The rates of aboriginal children developing type 2 diabetes far exceed the national average. The attention to youth and a healthy community continues to be a priority, and it is my community's wish that the Government of Yukon will stay the course and continue their portion of funding for the health and fitness program, which proves to be very successful each and every day that program continues.

The issue of a full-time family and children support services professional based in Old Crow is a resource the community wishes to become a reality — a position that is flexible enough to provide care to the schoolchildren and community members. Statistics prove that our rural isolated communities are vulnerable to violence and abusive situations arising in families. Limited access to services and housing compounds this problem. The statistics with regard to spousal abuse, violent offences, homicide and sexual assaults, especially in rural Yukon, are simply not getting any better.

One idea to curb the statistics would be to provide a full-time family and children support services professional in communities such as Old Crow so the people in need can have immediate access to the services when required, and a face of prevention can exist full-time within the community. Women are essential to the family structure, and healthy women and families are one and the same as healthy and productive communities.

The same holds true when violence occurs in the community. It impacts the entire community. This must be addressed with programs and services that are designed to solve what is actually happening in the individual communities, if we are to succeed.

I realize this is a complex issue, yet I feel simple initiatives, like a full-time family and children's support services professional being resident in Old Crow with a long-term funding commitment, will quickly lower the incidence of violence, lessen the impact of substance abuse and addictions on the community and, in fact, prevent many violent incidents from occurring.

An important aspect of a social professional is communicating with individuals and communities to raise the awareness with regard to the devastation that domestic violence leaves behind. A long-term commitment would ensure the development of a network of people who are committed to breaking the cycle of violence, providing sanctuary and helping to teach our children to lead more peaceful, safer lives. A long-term commitment in funding will be viewed as an expression of this government's support for the women and children affected by domestic violence and drug and alcohol awareness and prevention programs for youth.

Our high school students who must leave the community require some cultural integration into their curriculum. More cultural recreation escapes can be offered to our children who must leave Old Crow and the guardianship of their parents and deal with the culture shock of the big city. More options devel-

oped in partnership must be implemented for the rural Yukon students to be successful in their education. This includes additional options that can be implemented when students who stay at the Gadzoosdaa residence succumb to the pressures of the capital city.

At present there are 32 children attending the Chief Zzeh Gittlit School in Old Crow. The low numbers are a result of many young families relocating to the capital city, as I mentioned earlier.

It is important to mention that all the teachers presently working in the school are desperately needed and should be maintained as our school does not enjoy the benefits of teachers' aides and tutors as many other Yukon schools do.

Land-based, experiential learning with a holistic view of education recognizes that not everyone fits into the educational system that exists today. Many of my constituents view land-based, experiential learning as a very viable program to increase our children's success. Providing the opportunity with the existing system to accommodate teachers being able to go out on the land and deliver an academic curriculum alongside the local community and First Nation cultural teachings is a priority. The idea here is to harness the cultural land-based skills like living out on the land and travelling out on the land, using traditional knowledge and western science, and delivering a program to the students showing how these two sets of knowledge, skills and cultural teachings complement each other and how they can be implemented together in a wage economy in the territory.

Mr. Speaker, a land-based experiential educational pilot project that is cognizant of the Vuntut Gwitchin culture would be an ideal first step toward meeting the needs of our students and addressing the educational difficulties many students are experiencing.

One out of every four people in the Yukon is of First Nation ancestry, and therefore an important part of Yukon identity. Achieving a healthy, robust and cooperative Yukon society can only be achieved through partnership. Many Yukon First Nations are willing to do the work; it's finding a committed partner that will be with them for the long haul and achieve a strong and vibrant First Nation culture, language and heritage that will pay dividends to all sectors of Yukon society.

Many Yukon First Nations are moving further and further away from the DIA-entrenched system and ways of doing things. They are re-establishing their way of governing themselves based on their culture and traditions. I believe a strong Yukon First Nation identity equals a strong Yukon.

A Yukon government implementing a capacity assistance program that opens the doors of the Yukon government to assist in the development of First Nation culture and traditional identities would be a good starting point in relationship building. The idea would be to have First Nations develop programs that have the ability to tell their story the way they want to and support a re-defining of their roles as aboriginal people and how they fit into Yukon society today. Yukon First Nations continue to lead and set an example for our country on how to be solution-oriented, yet there is much work to be done, and it is my belief that all levels of government have an important

role to play in investing now to ensure Yukon's future. I am encouraged when I see what can be achieved when we all come together as partners and pursue a common vision.

Mr. Speaker, I would be lax in attending to duty if I did not mention my elders in my inaugural address. Again, partners are necessary who will commit to our goal of keeping our elders at home. We need to explore the viable options that exist and act on them soon. Keeping our elders at home and caring for them in the twilight of their lives is a priority. The time is right to get into the details of discussing infrastructure, staffing levels, and the completion of a Yukon territorial government client assessment to determine the level of care required for elders in Old Crow.

Mr. Speaker, I have yet to witness any Yukon commitment that takes this territory where it needs to go, in terms of climate change. I believe we are facing the most serious threat to the well-being of our planet and that this threat is caused by humans. This is an important challenge we face as northerners, and we must set an example on how to lead this issue. Our young people, who will have to live with our decisions, or lack thereof, are at serious risk of catastrophic social problems within the next generation if we do not give this phenomenon the attention it deserves immediately.

If public governments worldwide continue not to act accordingly with the authority that the climate change issue deserves, then I am afraid a cloud of despair will reign over the next generation because, by then, the challenge will seem insurmountable and hope will wither away, costing Yukoners a substantial amount of economic and social hardship. Our Yukon territorial government must absolutely take the lead and set the example of how serious this phenomenon should be taken.

My community has been living and coping with the ramifications of climate change for over a decade now. Some of these traditional observations include the following. The seasonal weather used to be predictable; now, our people simply do not know what to expect. Case in point — last year, the Porcupine River was the lowest that it has ever been. I personally walked across it, in my rubber boots in front of our town, without getting wet. So, an effect of that was that hunting with a boat was virtually impossible. So, harvesting the charismatic megafauna on the river was out of the question.

This year, the elders cannot remember when the water in the Porcupine River was so high for such a long time and so late in the season. Spring, in Old Crow terms, comes three weeks early, and fall comes three weeks late. That's a fact.

The Old Crow Flats are permafrost-dependent, and many of my constituents feel that the Flats are becoming an imperilled ecosystem because the lakes are changing at a pace that has not been witnessed before.

This most productive wetland in the Yukon provides a sanctuary for hundreds of thousands of migratory water fowl to breed, moult and raise their young. Our people are worried that the climate is changing so fast that the animals will not adapt quickly enough to the warming climate and will perish. What makes us unique as Gwich'in is our connection to the land, water and wildlife. Without these necessities, our fate will simply be the same.

The Government of Canada has negotiated a trade agreement with the European Union to establish international humane trapping standards, called the Agreement on International Humane Trapping Standards. The Yukon has until October 1, 2007 to implement the new standards through trapping regulations. It is important for the Yukon to pass laws that adhere to the new standards because the European Union buys the majority of our fur, and if they notice that we are not in compliance with the international agreement, they may not buy our fur.

I am advocating that the Government of Yukon work with the Government of Canada to take some pre-emptive measures and eliminate any burden on the trappers by initiating a trap exchange that is administered in such a way that the trapper does not take a loss, because the new traps will cost more.

The demand for fur around the world, particularly in China, has increased significantly. I feel our public government has a responsibility to protect this valuable Yukon industry and way of life by making it easier for trappers to get out on the land and trap.

Another good-news story is that recently the Old Crow Flats special management area plan, which is named Vuntut K'atr'anahtii, or Looking After Crow Flats, was completed. This work represents decades of discussion and hard work, and I want to take this opportunity to recognize and applaud my Vuntut Gwitchin elders, who provided the vision and foundation for this place to occur, the technical working group that consulted with the public, and the governments of Yukon and the Vuntut Gwitchin and their staff who signed off on the plan and deserve credit for their contributions to finalizing this positive initiative.

This was the last major land planning initiative left to complete under the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation final agreement, yet it was the most significant.

Everyone involved in the completion of this plan deserves recognition because it will have a real and lasting impact on the day-to-day lives of our people for years to come.

Mr. Speaker, the release of the draft north Yukon regional land use plan is imminent for the parties to review and hopefully approve. What's important here is that this plan will be the first land use plan developed under chapter 11 of the *Umbrella Final Agreement* and how this Yukon government deals with finalizing this first plan will set the tone for the rest of the Yukon. My constituents are looking forward to using the good work of the North Yukon Planning Commission and working with new strategies, like the threshold approach to land use and other initiatives laid out in the plan, which will help preserve and protect the land, water and wildlife of north Yukon and also provide for sustainable development and use. I optimistically await the Yukon and Vuntut Gwitchin governments moving forward together with this draft plan and working collaboratively toward its finalization.

Mr. Speaker, I would be really lax in attending to duty if I did not speak on the caribou issue. It has been eloquently articulated by every Vuntut Gwitchin MLA about how important the Porcupine caribou herd is to our people. I reaffirm in this Legislature that the destiny of the Porcupine caribou herd is without a doubt the same destiny as that of the Vuntut

Gwitchin; they are inseparable. The intricacies of the relationship we have with the caribou is what makes us unique. The caribou give us strength and a sense of security when they are healthy. The Porcupine caribou herd has sustained our culture for thousands of years. Without them, our culture will simply perish. At this point in time, there are too many unknowns with regard to the herd, especially the lack of a recent population count and the need to complete a comprehensive harvest management plan.

Because there is much we don't know about the health of the herd right now, there is much uncertainty. I believe everyone who has an interest in the herd must come together very soon to discuss all the threats to the herd and decide on some short- and long-term solutions for them.

We must begin the process of checks and balances so the best solutions can be made soon, like the increased hunting pressure on the herd from the N.W.T. side of the border and the easy access that the Dempster Highway provides.

Mr. Speaker, there are many initiatives that a Yukon public government can do to help minimize the threats to the herd, like make an application to the United Nations and propose to designate all of the northern protected areas in Alaska and Canada as an international biosphere reserve or world heritage site, and new initiatives like hosting an international Porcupine caribou conference and bringing the scientists, the community traditional knowledge specialists, Canadian and American decision makers together under one roof to hear first-hand what the scientists have to say and the stories and submissions of the Gwich'in and Yukoners alike. I believe Yukoners expect our public government to be leaders alongside the Vuntut Gwitchin in the effort to protect the Porcupine caribou herd.

For example, I believe Yukoners expect members of this Legislature to participate in community grassroots initiatives like attending Wilderness Week in Washington and engaging the international community to advocate our position on the threats to the herd and making applications to the United Nations to protect their habitat. A short- and long-term strategy must be implemented if we are to achieve a successful conclusion to this matter. All these options should be within the realm of the Yukon government to show Yukoners that their government is willing to do what it takes to protect this herd from all its threats.

Mr. Speaker, the mid-term election results in the United States also bode well for the Porcupine caribou herd, the Gwich'in and Yukoners. The federal, territorial and First Nation governments working together to grasp this rare political opportunity and set the stage to make it easy for the next American administration to protect the calving grounds of the Porcupine caribou herd forever should be a priority. The Porcupine caribou herd is arguably the most studied herd in North America. Erring the side of conservation in this time, when there are too many unknowns, must be the limiting factor when decisions are being made about the herd.

Mr. Speaker, it is my hope that this government will not hesitate to do what is necessary to protect this herd from any threat, including the minister exercising his powers under Sec-

tion 194 of the *Wildlife Act* to control the harvest, especially along the Dempster corridor.

We all must be prepared to make personal sacrifices and not rule out anything that may be necessary to protect this precious Yukon heritage, including a formal review of the Canadian Porcupine caribou management agreement by the parties, especially in the new northern self-government era where First Nations now have legislative control over their people and access to their lands. It may be appropriate to ask ourselves the question: is the Porcupine caribou management agreement still achieving what it was negotiated to achieve back in 1985? There is a Gwich'in saying: Jidi vididochu ianjit nanoo zrii. "You people only hunt what you need." I have no choice but to expect the best possible outcome because any other result and the ramifications are inconceivable. If we can implement a coordinated plan to eliminate the major threats to the Porcupine caribou herd with the participation of all governments, the Porcupine Caribou Management Board and all stakeholders and with a sense of urgency, I believe we can succeed in protecting this priceless heritage for the long term.

In closing, because I have the responsibility of representing what my constituents consider to be true and just, I voice my desire for a civilized working atmosphere here in the Legislature and throughout this government's mandate. Obviously we do not always have to agree, but tact and diplomacy must prevail in our lasting deliberations to solve problems. It is my hope that we can all work together to achieve many bipartisan resolutions to the issues we all face in the best interests of our Yukon.

My constituents of Old Crow have given me direction to continue to move forward and to improve the relationship between them and this Yukon government by working toward easy victories in north Yukon so that we can work together to solve problems that affect us. We want partners to make our communities stronger with a solid economic base because, in the end, it is how successful we are in bettering the day-to-day lives of Yukoners together.

Thank you — mahsi' cho — for providing me the opportunity to speak here today.

**Hon. Mr. Hart:** I'm truly honoured once again to accept this opportunity to respond to the Speech from the Throne. It is indeed my privilege to be standing among you, representing the riding of Riverdale South. I look forward to the challenges and rewards of working with all Members of the Yukon Legislative Assembly to continue to do due diligence on behalf of all Yukoners.

First I would like to start by thanking the residents of Riverdale South who have again elected me to represent them in the Legislature. I am very privileged to have received the support and trust of the residents of this riding. To the residents of Riverdale South, thank you for allowing me to continue as your MLA to serve on your behalf and bring forth your issues to government.

I would also be remiss if I did not take this opportunity to thank my wife and family for their continued support and advice during the previous term and the most recent election.

Without their support and encouragement, the task would have been insurmountable and I'm truly thankful to them for their commitment to me and belief in me, not only as a legislator but, more importantly, as a husband, father and grandfather.

As well, I would like to thank the many dedicated people who assisted not only in my personal campaign but also in the Yukon Party's campaign. Whether they knocked on doors with me, made calls on my behalf, put up lawn signs, kept helping me put up lawn signs that mysteriously kept falling down, generated databases, compiled and delivered flyers during their Thanksgiving weekends or contributed their time or money, their belief in the vision of the Yukon Party and what we can accomplish as a government is not only overwhelming but also very appreciated.

Being elected is an opportunity to participate and assist in creating change. I'm reminded daily of what an honour and privilege it is to be entrusted with this responsibility. I am pleased to be part of this team, which is making those important and necessary changes in order for us to live in a better Yukon.

I decided to run in this election for a very different reason from the one when I first ran in 2002. In 2002, I ran for public office because there was no economy in the Yukon. A number of my good friends were forced to leave because they could not find any employment within the territory. They attempted to obtain various jobs outside their chosen profession or trade until they could no longer afford to stay. These individuals had families and, of course, they were all part of the exodus of people who left the Yukon.

These, coupled with other factors, such as the non-existent public sector development, mining initiatives, the major drop in tourist traffic and the uncertainty over devolution, all contributed to my decision to run for office in 2002. This time around, the Yukon is in a very different economic state. Through our government's vision, decision and dedication, and the hard work of our public and private sectors, we have built a strong foundation for the future of the Yukon. The Yukon now has a rekindled economy. With unemployment at a historic low and increasing population and property values on the rise, this government's financial health is among the best of all jurisdictions in Canada, as evidenced by the Auditor General of Canada's report.

I am confident that the Yukon is poised to continue its advance on the pathway to growth and prosperity by continuing the vision and the direction that was established by this government in the election of 2002. Our government's new vision, *Building Yukon's Future Together: A Clear Vision for a Bright Future*, has four major pillars: achieving a better quality of life, building healthy, safe communities with skilled and adaptable people; protecting Yukon's pristine environment, preserving our wildlife, and studying and mitigating the effects of climate change; promoting a strong, diversified private sector economy by developing Yukon's vast natural resource, wilderness tourism potential, agriculture, arts and culture, information technology, film and sound, as well as the traditional industries of outfitting and trapping; and finally, practising good governance with strong fiscal management and a climate of cooperation,

collaboration and partnership with our First Nation governments, our two sister territories, our provincial counterparts and the federal government.

It was these directions that this government was taking that convinced me to again put my name forward to run for office. I knew I wanted to be part of the team that would be leading the territory in this direction. I've always been a believer in, "If you want something done, then you have to do something about it." We had a major issue to fix, and now it's time for some fine tuning. It appears that Yukoners have agreed. It is worthy to note that this government is the only government since 1989 to achieve a second mandate. This is indeed historic and clearly demonstrates that people of the Yukon want political stability and continuity.

I also ran because I wanted to represent my constituents. Over the past four years, I have heard that the economy is doing well. But I've also heard that we need to do something about the drug and alcohol abuse, petty crime, break-ins, child issues and education. I'm a true believer that if you want to get something done, you have to get involved.

We asked Yukoners to imagine a better and brighter tomorrow. I want to work on these issues, as it is truly an honour to be involved, working on behalf of Yukoners in order to make Riverdale South and the Yukon a better place to live. Riverdale is one of the more mature and developed subdivisions in Whitehorse. There are many established ski trails and other multi-purpose trails throughout Riverdale, utilized by residents from every part of the city. The Millennium Trail is probably the most utilized trail in the city. The completion of the bridge makes it a loop trail and one of the busiest trails in Whitehorse. Many of the crescent streets are scenic, with much of the vegetation being well looked after and blending in with the residential homes.

Riverdale is a very rich neighbourhood — rich because it has a huge diversity of residents from all walks of life who are involved in many professional and trade fields and demographics that cover the full range, from newborn to elderly, and representing local, ethnic and First Nation groups.

Incidentally, the constituency that I represent has over 1,500 students in five different schools; namely, Christ the King Elementary, Selkirk Elementary, Grey Mountain Primary School, Vanier Catholic Secondary and F.H. Collins.

Given the improved economy and people's ability to upgrade their houses, and new people getting into the market, the turnover rate since the last election has been substantial. As a result, there are many new issues emerging in the constituency.

Over the past four years as a member of this Legislative Assembly for Riverdale South, I have worked with the residents of Riverdale South on initiatives including ensuring ongoing commitment to programs such as FireSmart and CDF; assisting in community projects such as the Riverdale Community Association FireSmart project, Liard Park cleanup and improvements, and the upgrade of the Chadburn Lake trail system; ensuring upgrades to F.H. Collins, Christ the King, Grey Mountain, Vanier and Selkirk schools; working to identify traffic problems and recommending solutions to the City of Whitehorse; working to identify youth issues in the riding and

working with local youth associations and clergy to discuss program ideas for youth in the riding; defending our green space; working hard at establishing and representing the French directorate.

During the past election campaign, I committed to the residents of Riverdale South that I would continue to make youth and education priority areas in the riding, including continuing improvements and upgrades to F.H. Collins School, Christ the King, Grey Mountain and Vanier.

I worked to recommend traffic solutions in the riding and continued to ensure access to quality health care for all Yukoners; worked to fully implement the substance abuse action plan, including the *Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act*, and continued to back the seniors games and support the needs of seniors housing.

Of the major issues I consistently heard during the past campaign, I am pleased to specifically outline the steps our government is taking to ensure the residents of Riverdale South achieve a better quality of life.

We asked Yukoners to imagine a tomorrow where our children are not faced with crack houses and drug dealers in their neighbourhoods. In order to achieve this objective, our government is committed to implementing the substance abuse action plan based on four strategic directions: harm reduction, prevention and education, treatment and enforcement. Our government has stated that there will be a zero tolerance for drug dealers and the enforcement provisions of the substance abuse action plan will be utilized to ensure drug houses are shut down in the Yukon and drug dealers are forced to leave the territory.

One of the enforcement tools is a *Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act*, which allows enforcement officers to shut down drug houses and other illegal activities in our communities. Investigators have now been hired and the office is in operation. Our government is also focusing on new treatment options and facilities for those who have become addicted to drugs, in accordance with the initiatives outlined in the corrections action plan.

Our government will be introducing a therapeutic problem-solving court to the Yukon justice system where those offenders with challenges, such as addictions, FASD, or mental health problems, are able to work with the court to address the treatment needs of the offenders.

During the election, Yukoners were asked to imagine a tomorrow where our elders and seniors are able to stay in their homes and within their communities as their needs increase. To achieve this, our government is committed to delivering expanded home care services, reopening the Thomson Centre, establishing a palliative care unit and consulting with Yukoners on new elder and senior facilities in Teslin and other communities, in addition to those being planned or already under construction in Watson Lake, Dawson City and Haines Junction.

This team that you see before you today is working for a tomorrow where affordable, accessible, high-quality childcare and early learning services are available for children and parents in all Yukon communities. We are committed to delivering a territory-wide childcare and early learning strategy for chil-

dren and parents based on the priorities that parents themselves have established. It is this government that is working to ensure that children with disabilities receive therapies and support services they need to achieve their full potential and live happy, productive lives. We are a government that is committed to expanding support services currently provided to children with autism to include children with other severe disabilities, such as cerebral palsy, muscular dystrophy and Down's syndrome.

Yukoners were asked to imagine a tomorrow with more doctors and other health care professionals because more of our children have been given access to higher education and have returned home to practise here. Our government is committed to ensuring that Yukon families have improved access to doctors and other medical professions they need through measures designed to increase accessible health care for all Yukon families.

Yukoners were asked to imagine a tomorrow where all skills and trades training that Yukoners and their children need is available in Yukon schools, and more and more Yukon children are able to graduate from high school and pursue post-secondary education. This government is committed to introducing a comprehensive skills and trades training strategy to meet the needs of our growing and prosperous economy and to implement the findings of its major education reform initiative.

Yukoners were asked to imagine a tomorrow where help is available for seniors, stay-at-home parents, those on social assistance and students to participate in a job market, and we are committed to assisting potential employees to enter the labour market and to help employees fill existing vacancies in the entry-level workforce.

Yukoners were asked to imagine a tomorrow where Yukoners have ready access to meet their land needs. Our government is committed to making land available to Yukoners for community, residential, recreational, agricultural, commercial and industrial purposes while respecting the interest of the existing land holders. We will accomplish this by streamlining the land application process and ensuring that the appropriate policies and administrative structures are put into place to manage Crown land in the territory and throughout.

Yukoners were asked to imagine a tomorrow where the Yukon is renowned for taking innovative steps to address climate change with its own Climate Change Research Centre for Excellence for the North. As part of its climate change strategy, our government is committed to establishing Yukon College as the Climate Change Research Centre for Excellence for the North, building a cold climate innovative cluster situated at the Yukon College campus to specialize in three general areas of cold climate technology, including building construction and maintenance, municipal infrastructure and geotechnical works, increasing inventory monitoring, data collection and research on the impacts of climate change on the Porcupine caribou herd and other wildlife species such as moose, caribou, bears and Yukon wood bison.

Promoting the Old Crow campus of Yukon College is an integral part of research on the Porcupine caribou herd to ensure local and traditional knowledge is utilized in strategies to lessen the impacts of climate change, as is including the Yukon

Wildlife Preserve as an affiliate of the Yukon College Climate Change Research Centre of Excellence in order to study the impacts of climate change on Yukon wildlife.

We have put forth a vision of tomorrow where the Yukon is renowned for protecting, preserving and celebrating its pristine environment, sensitive ecosystems and wilderness landscapes for the benefit of future generations and the global community.

Our government is committed to meeting its obligations to establish special management areas, habitat protection areas under land claims settlements, as well as to plan and manage a system of wilderness preserves, natural environment parks and ecological reserves throughout the territory. As part of this initiative, our government is committed to showcasing Yukon parks and urging the Government of Canada to increase its investment in its three national parks in the Yukon, including upgrading the Parks Canada presence in Dawson City.

Yukoners, through their vote, have chosen a prosperous tomorrow whereby economic activity will be robust from now into the foreseeable future, fuelled by the demand for the territory's abundance of mineral, oil and gas and other resources, as well as the dramatic expansion of the tourism sector due to the increasing demand of international travellers seeking to experience Yukon's breathtaking wilderness and northern cultures.

Our government is committed to providing access to land, regulatory certainty, business incentive, marketing programs and the provision of necessary transportation and energy infrastructure to support the development and growth of a prosperous and diversified private sector economy.

Yukoners voted for Yukon's coming of age through effective leadership, political stability, cooperative governance, and strong fiscal management.

Our government is committed to continue its cooperative approach to governance, whether it be with municipal governments, First Nation governments, our two sister territories, neighbouring jurisdictions such as Alaska, B.C., Alberta, the provincial governments through the Council of Federation and the Government of Canada.

Our government is committed to working with the Northwest Territories, Nunavut and Canada to create a new northern vision, demonstrating that Canada's north of 60 is coming of age — that Canada's northern frontier will become Canada's future, and that the territories will play an increasingly important role in Canada's federation. The fact that Yukon, in collaboration with its two sister territories, is hosting the 2007 Canada Winter Games is an acknowledgment of this new reality and gives the north an opportunity to showcase itself to southern Canadians.

Our government remains committed to completing and implementing land claims, as well as making First Nations full partners in economic development throughout the territory. This government will work with First Nations, Yukon College and the private sector to provide training for Yukon First Nations for land claim implementation, especially in relation to capacity development for First Nation governments.

Mr. Speaker, on the issue of the three departments I'm covering, I'd like to just raise a couple of quick issues. With

respect to Community Services, I'm pleased to see that my department is very involved in getting the Canada Winter Games underway. We're working very hard with both the national board, as well as our own local committee, to ensure that we host successful games on behalf of the north. It's important that the people of the Yukon recognize that this is a very important event they can be involved with. There is a lot to be gained from it — from both a community and territorial point of view.

I think it's an excellent opportunity for us to really showcase that we in the north know how to live. We don't live in igloos, and we do have rental cars. We don't have polar bears, unfortunately, but I think it's a very important process for us to put on a good show — demonstrate that we can do this — so that one of our sister territories can take it on the next time it comes due.

Mr. Speaker, as minister responsible for French language services, I would like to say a few words about our commitment to providing government services in French. Nous sommes privilégiés au Yukon d'avoir une communauté francophone pleine de vitalité, une des plus dynamiques au Yukon. La communauté francophone du Yukon travaille à assurer des services de qualité pour ceux et celles qui parlent le français et ceux et celles qui, comme moi, l'apprennent.

We have established a very constructive working relationship with the Association franco-yukonnaise and we are committed to continuing to work with them to improve service delivery in the priority areas they have identified.

Ces priorités sont la santé, les services sociaux, le développement économique, la sécurité publique, l'éducation, la justice et les communications. Nous sommes fiers du travail que nous avons accompli et des services qui sont présentement offerts. Nous voulons continuer d'améliorer la qualité et le nombre de ces services.

We are proud of the collaboration that the Yukon francophone community continues to demonstrate in working with a number of partners to develop its artists; to expose all of us to French-Canadian talent; to provide opportunities for French-speaking youth to strengthen their cultural identity by participating in activities such as les Jeux de la francophonie; to draw French-speaking tourists to the Yukon and to help integrate immigrants to our territory.

Nous allons continuer notre dialogue avec le gouvernement fédéral afin d'arriver à une entente de financement pour les services de santé en français à l'Hôpital général de Whitehorse et les programmes de santé que le gouvernement du Canada a transférés au gouvernement du Yukon il y a déjà plusieurs années.

Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to be a member of the Ministerial Conference of the Canadian Francophonie, a network of provincial and territorial ministers responsible for French language services and the francophone affairs across Canada. We recognize, as the February 2006 Decima poll confirmed, that more and more Canadians, including 80 percent between the ages of 18 and 34 value Canada's two official languages and consider this a defining characteristic of being a Canadian.

Mr. Speaker, under the Public Service Commission, I am looking at continuing work with our IPS — investing in the public service — program, ensuring that we have a succession format so that we can have appropriate staff in place when our large volume of baby-boomers starts to retire, and we'll continue to work on that.

I thank you very much.

**Mr. Fairclough:** Mr. Speaker, I, too, would like to respond to the throne speech. But first of all, like others, I would like to thank a few people for allowing me to be able to stand in front of the camera and respond to throne speeches and ask questions in this House. Thank you to all those who have volunteered, of course, on my campaign in the election, and many other elections that I have gone through — some of the same people have worked on those campaigns. It is with their help that I was able to win in the election and be here today. This campaign was a bit different, as others have said, with me being with the Liberal Party. That was a challenge in itself. Mr. Speaker, in the end, I was quite happy to see that there was an increase in the percentage of voters who supported me in the election. That has gone up since the last election, so there is a clear message out there that people want me in this position to represent them.

When I do bring forward ideas to the floor of this Legislature, I'm hoping that for a change maybe some of the ministers can hear what I have to say and what my constituents are saying and maybe have it reflected in the budgets as they develop them, because every member here has raised issues of concern in their ridings and have not necessarily seen them reflected in the budgets put together or actions of the ministers and, Mr. Speaker, some of them are very small. So, to the many people out there, I thank them for their hard work in every community in my riding. Sometimes it is a bit difficult to go out and do this type of campaign. Every riding is unique, of course, and I do want to thank them. This is my fourth time to be elected, Mr. Speaker, and every time I knock on the doors — most people do not go to every door throughout their mandate, but at election time you go there and basically ask for people to support you. It was very interesting to go door to door again and hear what people have to say. I am going to be bringing those ideas forward here, and whether they are small or big initiatives, I'm going to bring them forward again. I'm going to write letters on their behalf to ministers, whether federal or whatever, Mr. Speaker. I will be doing that. I'm hoping that the government side will take this seriously and try to work into their departments how they can accommodate the communities in my riding.

So I thank those hard workers out there who got me elected in this last election. Without them I wouldn't be able to stand in front of you here today and respond to the Speech from the Throne.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to start by saying that I listened to the Commissioner as she read the Speech from the Throne, I watched the reactions of members of this House when the Commissioner read the Speech from the Throne, and I took note. I think the media also took note. I think everybody was

quite surprised to note that the Speech from the Throne was short and wasn't filled with new things that we could expect this government to be doing over the course of their mandate.

I watched the ministers on the government side and did not see any excitement as the Commissioner read the Speech from the Throne. Perhaps it's because a lot of it has been said before. I know the ministers on the government side will be hearing from the opposition as we critique their decisions, the departments, the Speech from the Throne and the platform. It wouldn't be any surprise to them that we are going to be bringing up issues that have already been mentioned — or maybe talking extensively about direction that was already given four years ago and that is being said again. I will certainly be going through that.

I normally go through the Speech from the Throne page by page, paragraph by paragraph. I know this one is five-and-a-half pages long, and a lot of it, I would say, is already in the Yukon Party platform and some of it is in the Speech from the Throne from 2003. I think it was read in months after the election.

There are a couple of areas that I really want to go into. I am hoping that because the Speech from the Throne was short and is not reflective of a lot of what has been mentioned on the doorstep, that when we debate the spring budget, a lot of things that were left out will be reflected there.

I am also hoping that the Yukon Party takes seriously the promises made by their candidates who lost in the election. You just do not make promises without expecting your party to back them up when it is elected. A lot of those will be brought forward by the opposition to remind government again that Yukon is big and has lots of demands in a number of different areas.

The Mayo-Tatchun riding is a big riding, land-wise; I think it takes probably 25 percent of the total land mass of the Yukon. Of course, I never get to go to the north end of it because the only way to get there is to fly by helicopter. The riding does go as far north as Old Crow and follows the Northwest Territories' border right down to about 20 miles south of Carmacks. It is a big riding and a lot of times you need a four-wheel drive to see people in the riding.

For example, when going to Pelly Farm, the road is not always in good condition and, particularly this summer, it was in very rough shape. Of course, that is another area that I'll be asking about.

I listened to members opposite in the reply to the Speech from the Throne. I listened to some of the opposition and their response to the Speech from the Throne. I've taken note, and I know that many people out there will go through *Hansard* and the Blues and pick out areas of interest they see as important and bring them to opposition to raise in the Legislature. I think that is our job.

Once we get into general debate on the supplementary budget, which is a very big one, we will bring forward a lot of community issues that probably have been said in this House and probably heard by the Yukon Party government. Unfortunately, from what we gather here, a lot of it is not reflected in the supplementary budget that is before us for debate.

I've had a lot of people in my riding express interest and concern on so many fronts. It's hard to bring it all together but, over the next five years, hopefully we'll try to make some accomplishments from this side by working together.

There were a lot of other concerns raised with me. A lot of constituents have asked me to look into matters, and I'll definitely be doing that.

On the political front, there is a lot of concern about government's actions over the last four years. I wanted to go through that, Mr. Speaker, because there were promises made in the last mandate of the Yukon Party government, and what we have been hearing from the Yukon Party candidates and the Premier and many of the ministers is that they have fulfilled those commitments. One of the things that the Yukon Party said in their last throne speech was that they were going to establish eight priorities of the Yukon Party. As we go through the short throne speech, what we have seen is a lot of the previous throne speech, sometimes word for word. Does that mean that the Yukon Party is going to continue to promise this, or are these just good words for the government to say at the moment?

We are here to hold governments accountable for what they commit to. We've heard from some of the ministers about how well the economy is doing, how better off Yukon is than it was four years ago. I brought up some of those issues, Mr. Speaker, during the campaign because the Yukon Party was campaigning on that, but people are saying, "Not so." The economy is not as nice nor as well off as the Yukon Party says it is, and the commitments that the Yukon Party says they've accomplished were not there.

Let me give you one example when it comes to economic development or the economy itself — the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources, for example, in forestry says that forestry will thrive in 2005. And what do we have now for the industry, Mr. Speaker? We're heading into 2007. We still need a good forest management plan. The best that has come up so far is the minister and the government side trying to deal with the beetle kill, and not much more than that.

What about the mining sector? I know that the Yukon Party is very pro-mining and they have talked to people out there about how much they have done to improve the mining sector here in the territory. This went on throughout the campaign, and guess what? When you look at the record over the last four years, how many major mines opened in the territory? Can you count them? I can't because there were none — not even one, not even one mine. With all the work that took place with the Yukon Party, we haven't even got to that point yet. And I know what is going to happen when Minto is up and running. The Yukon Party is going to take credit for that; they will. The minister will stand up and say they did all this work. They promoted things at the Yukon Forum with First Nations, getting them as full partners in economic development. But the fact of the matter is that when it comes to this particular mining outfit, it wasn't the Yukon Party that promoted it, pushed it, tried hard to get local people working, it was the First Nation itself.

Throughout this throne speech, I didn't hear the government giving a whole lot of praise or giving credit to those who

deserve it — for example the First Nations. They played a big part in where the economy is today. There is a lot of money flowing through the First Nations.

They are buying things; they are building houses; they are keeping the economy going. All we need to do for proof of that is go down to Home Hardware; go to the auto industry. First Nations people are buying a lot of vehicles; they are building a lot of homes; doing a lot of work in and around the communities that could have been done, for example, by the Yukon government.

They are doing the roadwork, a lot of sewer work, drilling wells and keeping people employed all over the territory. It is noticed by industry. They say over and over again that the Yukon would not be in the position it is in if it weren't for First Nations' drive to get things done. A lot of businesses would have fallen apart. Guess what? The Yukon Party didn't seem to want to recognize that.

I have to give a lot of thanks, I guess, to the Selkirk First Nation for really getting out there and negotiating with the mining company, and getting the best deal they possibly could and getting their people working, and showing governments how to do things. If you quickly compare that to the Carmacks school, for example, how many local people are working on that project? Very few. This was a win-win project. The government failed the community on that, and they failed to manage the project well.

The Yukon Party says that we have a greater number of people working here and we have increased numbers of people coming back to the territory. Well, the Carmacks School does have people from out of the territory working on that school — people from Newfoundland. That's how far away we have to stretch to get people working in this territory. They could have had the school built by local people or a local Yukon company doing this project.

They're on the ball. They are trying to get involved in government projects but they don't seem to have the interest of the Yukon Party — they don't. Take the example of the athletes village. What happens when there is a bid in there that is basically from a First Nation company? They just get bumped aside and nothing happens there. What about the Dawson City bridge which was a failure with the Yukon Party? A First Nation company came in but they were not even recognized to even give a bid. It's those types of things that anger people out there, not just First Nation people but a lot of the local businesses and construction companies that could have got the work that is a result of government spending.

So is the government going to improve things now over the next five years? Are we going to see that improvement by the Yukon Party? Are they going to commit to Yukon people for a change?

We'll see; we'll see about that. And it's our job, of course, to ensure that the Yukon Party does commit to Yukoners more than they have in the past.

Mr. Speaker, the first throne speech by the Yukon Party was on rebuilding the economy. I went through a couple of examples of that, where there were failures to recognize communities and so on. What sector of the economy did they re-

build? I'll tell you the biggest one is probably in the mining sector. People were mining government, that's what they were doing, not mining the ore out there.

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

*Debate on Motion No. 27 accordingly adjourned*

*The House adjourned at 5:30 p.m.*