

**Whitehorse, Yukon****Wednesday, November 29, 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 World Diabetes Month**

**Mr. Mitchell:** Mr. Speaker, I rise today on behalf of all members of the Legislature to pay tribute to World Diabetes Month. World Diabetes Day is celebrated each year on November 14, on the birthday of a famous Canadian, Sir Frederick Banting, who, along with Sir Charles Best, made the initial discoveries that led to the discovery of insulin in 1921.

World Diabetes Day was organized by the International Diabetes Federation and supported by the World Health Organization with the aim of coordinating diabetes advocacy worldwide. It has become the primary global awareness campaign of the diabetes community and reaches millions of people around the world in more than 150 countries. This year on World Diabetes Day, the Canadian Diabetes Association's focus was to raise the awareness that diabetes is a cardiovascular disease. Heart disease is such a serious complication that four out of five people with diabetes will die of it. More than 240 million people worldwide have diabetes and the epidemic is growing. Within 20 years this number is expected to grow to 380 million people.

This year's campaign slogan, "Diabetes care for everyone", focuses on raising awareness of communities and groups in both developed and developing countries that experience difficulties in accessing optimal health care.

Diabetes is one of the most common chronic diseases of childhood. It can strike children at any age, including preschool children and even toddlers. Yet diabetes in children is often diagnosed late or it is misdiagnosed completely. Those closest to the child — family, school staff, family doctors — may not be aware of the ominous signs. Type 1 diabetes is growing by three percent per year in children and adolescents and at an alarming five percent per year among preschool children over all. Diabetes can interfere with the normal developmental tasks of childhood and adolescence, which includes succeeding in school and transitioning to adulthood. There is also an increase in the onset of adult diabetes.

This past weekend, the Yukon Medical Association held its annual general meeting, and one of the priority issues raised by Yukon doctors is this growing problem of diabetes. Diabetes in the Yukon is much worse than in other parts of the country. Currently, there are approximately 870 people being treated for diabetes in the territory, but it has been estimated that as many as 8,000 or more may be diabetic and don't know it.

First Nation people in the Yukon and across Canada are at a very high risk for diabetes. The rate of diabetes in First Nation people is three to five times that of the general Canadian population.

Every 10 seconds, one person in the world dies of a diabetic-related complication. In the same 10 seconds, two more people develop the disease. Statistics like this have compelled the International Diabetes Federation to mount a campaign named "Unite for Diabetes" to bring a resolution on diabetes to the United Nations.

It is of the greatest importance that all Canadians join in supporting this campaign. We must all work toward preventing diabetes and improving the quality of life for those affected through research, education, service and advocacy. Early diagnosis and education is crucial to reducing complications and saving lives.

We salute our doctors, health care professionals and front-line workers for their dedication and service in addressing this most serious disease.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Introductions of visitors.

Returns or documents for tabling.

Reports of committees.

Petitions.

**PETITIONS****Petition No. 1 — received**

**Clerk:** Mr. Speaker and honourable members of the Assembly, I have had the honour to review a petition, being Petition No. 1 of the First Session of the 32<sup>nd</sup> Legislative Assembly, as presented by the Member for Mount Lorne on November 28, 2006. This petition meets the requirements as to form of the Standing Orders of the Yukon Legislative Assembly.

**Speaker:** Petition No. 1 is accordingly deemed to be read and received.

Are there any other petitions to be presented?

Are there any bills to be introduced?

Are there any notices of motion?

**NOTICES OF MOTION**

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to continue utilizing the integrated resource management regime for the Yukon government departments in responding to proposed resource development activities in order to ensure consistency and meeting established timelines for permitting.

I give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon and the Yukon Housing Corporation to work together on implementing a priority housing policy for individuals leaving abusive relationships.

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

THAT this House urges the Yukon government to protect electrical ratepayers in the territory and help reduce greenhouse gas emissions from diesel generators by discouraging the installation of electric heat as the primary heating source in new construction.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to begin a client service assessment to determine the level of care required for our elders in Old Crow, including infrastructure requirements, staffing levels, access to health services and the availability to the services that are enjoyed by other Yukon seniors and elders.

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

THAT this House urges the Yukon government to develop a comprehensive land use and development policy for the McIntyre Creek green space area, which is bordered by Yukon College, Rabbit's Foot Canyon, Mountainview Drive and Porter Creek South, by

(1) ensuring the public has been consulted before any decisions regarding this land are made;

(2) addressing the concerns of the Kwanlin Dun First Nation government, the Ta'an Kwäch'än First Nation government, Yukon College, the City of Whitehorse, and the residents of Porter Creek South, who represent major stakeholders in this issue; and

(3) protecting against the potential environmental impacts that may result from development in this area.

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

THAT this House urges the Yukon government to take the necessary steps to ensure that the budget cutbacks to the Federal Advisory Council on the Status of Women and the removal of the words "women's equality" from its mandate will not jeopardize the efforts of many women's organizations in the territory that support and advance the rights of women.

**Mr. Edzerza:** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Yukon government to maintain the high quality of museums and cultural centres in the Yukon by implementing the museums strategy without further delay, to guarantee at least the current level of financial support for museums on an ongoing basis and to pressure the Government of Canada to reinstate funding for the museums assistance program to its previous level prior to being slashed by 50 per cent by the current Conservative administration.

**Speaker:** Are there further notices of motion?

Is there a statement by a minister?

This then brings us to Question Period.

## QUESTION PERIOD

### Question re: Childcare tax benefit

**Mr. Mitchell:** Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Finance minister introduced changes to the Yukon's *Income Tax Act*. While these changes will save Yukoners some money, they fall far short of what the Yukon Party promised on the campaign trail just a few weeks ago. For example, the Yukon Party promised to exclude the childcare benefit from income determination for social assistance. For some mothers receiving social assistance, this could mean up to \$143 a month. This is something that can be done immediately and can be done by regulation. It is an issue that the government has been aware of for some time. It easily could have been ready for this fall sitting. Why is the Premier making single mothers wait? Why are these changes not on the fall agenda?

**Hon. Mr. Fentie:** In a moment of levity, if I may, only the leader of the official opposition would deem \$4.3 million being put back into Yukoners' pockets as "some benefit". The government side considers this to be a significant benefit back into Yukoners' hands, and that is why we moved forward with these amendments. These amendments keep Yukon in sync with the federal tax regime.

To the issue in question, there is some confusion around what particular area the member refers to with respect to child tax benefits and other measures. The issue in question that we as a government have committed to is being worked on as we speak. It's not in an income tax amendment because it's Revenue Canada that sets those tax mechanisms, not the Yukon government.

We will do our work to ensure that we can offer these benefits to those particular individuals in that segment of Yukon's society but, in this case, the government is very pleased that we were able, through the hard work of Finance officials, to quickly amend our act to provide these benefits this year and next.

**Mr. Mitchell:** The Yukon Party promised to exclude the childcare benefit from income determination for social assistance. They could have done that immediately; they have chosen not to do so.

Mr. Speaker, last year the Harper government introduced the universal childcare benefit. This benefit is designed to assist Canadian families through direct financial support. The UCCB payment is paid on behalf of children under the age of six years in instalments of \$100 per month per child. In other words, a parent gets \$1,200 a year.

In fact, they do not get that much, because they must pay both federal tax and Yukon tax on that amount. While we cannot change the federal tax, we can do something about the Yukon tax. We could introduce a tax credit, for example. Will the Premier introduce a tax credit to ensure that parents do not pay any Yukon income tax on this \$1,200?

**Hon. Mr. Fentie:** You know, Mr. Speaker, let's look at it on the basis of how the member is presenting the question. The first part of his supplementary is a measure that has already been done — I believe back in July of 2006 — with respect to what the federal Conservative government did back then. So, we've already addressed that measure.

On the particular measure that the member refers to in the latter part of his question, that is the work we are doing today. The Finance officials, and all those in the department who would be responsible in this area, are diligently doing their work to ensure that the measures we bring forward will, in fact, provide the desired benefit and results for this particular area of Yukon society.

**Mr. Mitchell:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I am pleased that the officials are doing their work. The question is why the Premier didn't ask them to do the work sooner.

Mr. Speaker, I am asking the Yukon Party government to help parents out. I am suggesting two simple changes that would not take a great amount of work, but the government has not yet brought them forward. They are instead telling parents to wait. The Yukon Party promised to exclude the childcare benefit from income determination for social assistance. This change could be done in time for the next round of SA cheques. We are a month away from Christmas.

We are also asking the Yukon government not to make Yukon parents pay tax on the \$1,200 a year they received from the Government of Canada. The current approach reminds me of that hands-in-your-pocket TV commercial that we've been seeing lately. Let's get the Yukon government's hands out of parents' pockets.

Will the Premier address these two issues before this House rises?

**Hon. Mr. Fentie:** Mr. Speaker, I would disagree with the leader of the official opposition. What we have tabled in this sitting with respect to income tax amendments is not the government's hands in Yukoners' pockets; it's the government putting \$4.3 million back into the pockets of Yukoners — a distinct difference.

#### **Question re: Education reform**

**Mr. Fairclough:** The education reform project is a partnership project of the Council of Yukon First Nations and the Yukon government. It is mandated to involve all partners in education, consult on education matters, and make recommendations to all governments to initiate change to improve the education system.

Now, we're approaching the third anniversary of that project being launched, and yet we have not seen a single page tabled on this initiative. Now, I have heard that the department officials have read a copy. Therefore, I can only assume that the government has, too.

So, my question to the minister is: what is the status of the project?

**Hon. Mr. Rouble:** I'd like to thank the member opposite for his question and to let him and all Yukoners know that the government is committed to building an education system that meets the needs of all Yukoners and meets the needs of our individual learners so that they can grow up and lead meaningful lives, and also so that we can meet the needs of our community — to ensure that we have people in our community that are prepared to take advantage of all the opportunities.

We know that there are changes we need to make in our education system. We're sitting down and doing the hard work with our partners. We're making changes. We're going to refine

the system and make it better for all Yukoners now and in the future.

**Mr. Fairclough:** The question I asked was a very simple one. Why couldn't the minister answer the question? What's the status of the project? I know that they have read the report.

Now, Yukoners have waited many years for changes to the *Education Act*. They have been very patient, and First Nations have been waiting for many years as well — seeking a solution to many of the unique problems. The education reform project was seen as a vehicle that would begin the process of change. First Nations are becoming increasingly disillusioned. They are hearing talk, and we are hearing talk, of the drawing down of education in some communities or even forming a school board in others.

Now, the problems are well known, well studied, and well articulated, and it's time for action. So, when is this report going to be tabled?

**Hon. Mr. Rouble:** Mr. Speaker, I can certainly say we are taking action. In the last couple of weeks since taking office I have met with the Chiefs Committee on Education. I have met with the youth summit on education reform. I have had brief meetings with the Yukon Association of School Councils, and I have met with the Yukon school administrators.

We are taking action. We are working with our partners to identify the issues and to look at the concrete steps that need to be taken to revamp the system to best serve the needs of all Yukoners. We are working on it.

**Mr. Fairclough:** All that consultation and yet he can't tell us when the report will be tabled.

I have difficulty accepting the fact that we are still being placed on hold. It seems to be common knowledge on the street that the report is ready. Once the report is tabled, there will be a lot of time spent studying and reviewing it and consulting with the public. That time will be required before the report can be acted upon — more time added to the meter. Time is of the essence, they say, and it is time for the minister to act. Will the minister commit to consulting with the reform commission officials and reporting back to the House before the end of this sitting with a time frame of when Yukoners might expect to see and read the report? Will he do that?

**Hon. Mr. Rouble:** Education is one of those things we are always reforming. I have never met a teacher who has taught the same class twice. I am incredibly proud of the changes and the reforms that have been made in the last couple of years: things like investing \$300,000 into cultural activities in schools; like the development of the Individual Learning Centre; like \$500,000 in the 2006-07 budget to develop new and more culturally relevant curriculum; expanding the Yukon native teacher education program and working with our partners to create the Yukon First Nation Education Advisory Council. There is stuff being done.

I'm looking forward to sitting down and working with our partners and meeting with the executive of the education reform team and ensuring that we can move the process forward in a way that best meets the needs of all Yukoners. We have a lot of work to do; we have come a long way in a couple of years, but we are still committed to going forward and ensuring

that we have the best education system in Canada to meet the needs of all Yukoners now and in the future.

**Question re: School construction planning**

**Mr. Cardiff:** Mr. Speaker, on September 19 of this year, the Department of Education issued a sole-sourced contract worth \$69,760 to a Vancouver consultant for school planning studies. Apparently these studies relate to three schools — F.H. Collins, Porter Creek Secondary and the proposed new school in the Copper Ridge area — yet during the election campaign that month, the Member for Whitehorse West was talking publicly about the government's plans for at least two of those schools. If we go back quite a bit further, one of those schools was announced out of the blue by a Yukon Party candidate in the Copperbelt by-election last year, much to the surprise of Department of Education officials. Why is the department spending \$70,000 on planning studies when the Premier and his colleagues seem to be perfectly content to invent new school projects at the drop of a writ?

**Hon. Mr. Rouble:** Mr. Speaker, we all know that our schools and having the right facilities in the right place are of incredible importance to all Yukoners. We're doing our homework to make sure that we have the right facilities in the right place to meet the needs today and tomorrow. Mr. Speaker, we made a commitment to take a look at — to build a school in Copper Ridge. That's in the platform. Now, we heard the leader of the official opposition yesterday say it must be an elementary school. Well, Mr. Speaker, before we make a decision like that, we're going to do our homework. This is a school. Let's do the homework and find out what's the best facility, for the right purpose, that meets the needs today and in the future.

**Mr. Cardiff:** Well, we're certainly not questioning the need for planning. In fact, we think a lot of the school construction projects need a lot of planning, with a lot of input from the people who are most affected, the parents and the students. Apparently that's not the Yukon Party way. Imagine. During the election, we also heard about the Premier, out of the blue, at a public forum telling people in his riding of Watson Lake that they would be getting a vocational school of some sort. One reason, apparently, would be to train workers for the Cantung mine. So I don't know — maybe Carmacks will be getting a vocational school to serve the needs of the Minto mine.

Will the minister tell us what planning if any his department has done regarding any new school facility in the Premier's riding, or was that just a paper-napkin plan for strictly political purposes?

**Hon. Mr. Rouble:** All of us in this Legislative Assembly have a responsibility to all Yukoners. We have a responsibility for education and making sure all our youth are prepared for the opportunities of tomorrow. One of the opportunities we have for tomorrow is certainly in the trades and training area, and I'm sure the Member for Mount Lorne would agree with me that a career in the trades can be a very rewarding profession and calling.

Mr. Speaker, we need to wake all our students up, not just here in Whitehorse but all across the territory, about the opportunities in trades and to increase the amount of vocational training and trades-related training we have throughout the territory.

We put it in our platform; it's important to the future and it's something we're going to work on.

**Mr. Cardiff:** The minister didn't answer the question again. He didn't tell us what planning has been done and who has been consulted. The idea of involving real people in planning schools seems to be a foreign concept to this government. Over the summer, for example, the English-language stream at Whitehorse Elementary School was quietly eliminated. There was no consultation with the English-language parents in downtown Whitehorse.

There will be a new school of some sort to serve outward expansion of the Copper Ridge area, but has there been any consultation with the parents about the possibility of expanding Elijah Smith or Golden Horn Elementary, which could serve families in that area? Parents in Riverdale and downtown have no idea what's in store for F.H. Collins; parents in Burwash don't know what to believe.

Since we're being asked to imagine tomorrow, let me ask the minister this question: what does he imagine would actually happen if he asked parents, through their school councils, to identify priorities for school construction and renovation over the next four or five years, or would the Premier allow him to do that?

**Hon. Mr. Rouble:** In the couple of weeks since taking office, I've had the opportunity to meet with the chief and council on education; I've met with the school administrators council; I've met with the school council association from the Yukon; and I've also met with various other teachers and professionals. I've been very open to starting the dialogue with them and hearing their input.

Also, I've signed off on the contract that started the study to look at what the best facility for Copper Ridge is. That contract is also looking at the facilities we have now — Porter Creek Secondary School and F.H. Collins — to look at how they can best serve the needs of the community.

So, to answer the member opposite's question, we're having the meetings. I'm getting to know the different people involved and their priorities, and we're starting action. Contracts have been let.

**Question re: Macaulay Lodge**

**Mr. Edzerza:** Yesterday, I asked the Minister of Health and Social Services about his plans for the Thomson Centre. In his response, the minister reiterated the Yukon Party commitment to provide 44 new continuing care beds at Thomson Centre, as well as a number of palliative care beds. The minister referred to wait-lists for continuing care beds at Macaulay Lodge.

Is it the minister's intention that Macaulay Lodge will continue in its current role, or does he have some other purpose in mind for it — the way his predecessor did?

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** I would think that the answer to that has been pretty evident from the press releases we've put out and from the communication I've made on that. We need the Thomson Centre in addition to Macaulay Lodge to supply us with enough beds to keep up with the demand. Macaulay Lodge is intended to continue in exactly the same role as it's doing right now. The Thomson Centre will provide us with

continuing care beds to do two things: address the existing wait-lists and provide us with the capacity in the future to prevent us from having to have wait-lists. Thirdly, we will use it for the provision of a palliative care unit.

**Mr. Edzerza:** I would like to follow up with the related issue of what this government plans to do about the serious need for in-patient psychiatric care and for medical detoxification. In his answer yesterday the minister offered to provide a copy of his party's election platform, which he claimed laid out a very clear blueprint of how the government planned to proceed. Well, Mr. Speaker, I've read that document carefully. All I can suggest is anyone who uses that as a blueprint won't be building a mental health facility; they will be building castles in the air. Talk about imagining tomorrow; this is an imaginary blueprint for an imaginary facility.

Has the minister set aside one single penny to start planning for a medical detox facility or for an in-patient psychiatric facility?

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** I urge the Member for McIntyre-Takhini to take a closer look at the Yukon Party platform and actually read it rather than rely on his speech writers for his comments.

It is very clear from our platform that we are committed to moving forward on actions such as treatment facilities for assisting people in dealing with substance abuse, and that would include dealing with both medical detox and working in partnership with the Department of Justice to help offenders and people seeking treatment, which will help them address their root problems — the root causes of some of the crime that we see within society and the effects of substance abuse.

There's a very clear substance abuse action plan within our platform. I would urge the member to read it. It's very clear that we have a strong clear blueprint for moving forward on these areas with regard to mental health. I have told the member opposite about some of the investments that we have made to date and the announcements that we have made. I would point out press releases that we've sent out over the last year that show how we are advancing in dealing with this area. We are moving forward, and we're going to continue to move forward.

### Speaker's statement

**Speaker:** Before the member asks his final supplementary, I would again remind members not to personalize debate. It seems to be getting to be a habit here, and I loathe interrupting you both during your question and answers, but if forced to, I will.

Member for McIntyre-Takhini, you have the floor.

**Mr. Edzerza:** The minister has referred to \$50,000 in planning money related to mental health needs. According to the minister's answer yesterday, this was aimed particularly at residential support for people with mental health challenges. But if we read between the lines, this issue starts to look suspiciously like the government's approach to a new correctional facility: you study it and stall it or set it aside for another day or another year or another mandate. Imagine it tomorrow or the next day. I would like a direct, up front answer from the minister. Will the Yukon have a dedicated medical detox facility and

a dedicated in-patient psychiatric facility within the current term of this government? Yes or no?

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** First of all I must address the issue. We are moving forward here. The suggestion that the significant action taken in correctional reform was simply about a new jail is very surprising to hear — from the member opposite of all people.

Particularly with regard to questions regarding mental health, I would refer the member to a press release from late August of this year where we made the announcement of expanded clinician services to assist people within communities in terms of mental health problems in helping them cope with those challenges. Those were the announcements of expanded rural services: a clinician located in Dawson City and expanded youth services through a new youth clinician for mental health.

We are moving forward with regard to the in-patient and the residential supports, and I look forward to announcement dates and capital projects in the years to come. We are moving forward on this. I have stated what we have done in this fiscal year. I will leave announcements for the 2007-08 budget until the 2007-08 budget is tabled in the House.

### Question re: Goods and services tax, visitor rebate program

**Mr. Elias:** I have some questions for the Minister of Tourism. In the Yukon, tourism is the largest private sector employer and annually adds approximately \$165 million to the Yukon's GDP. At the end of September, the minister's federal Conservative colleagues decided to cancel the visitor rebate program. Under this program, international tourists and business travellers are reimbursed for the GST they pay on eligible goods and short-term accommodation.

Yukon tour operators are upset about these cuts and made their opposition clear to the federal Standing Committee on Finance during a meeting in Whitehorse on October 2, 2006. The president of the Tourism Industry Association of the Yukon asked the federal government to reverse the elimination of the GST visitor rebate program.

My question for the minister is simple: does the Yukon Party government support the decision made by the federal Conservatives and, if not, what is the minister doing about getting the decision reversed?

**Hon. Ms. Taylor:** I would like to thank the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin for this very important question. Of course, no, the Yukon Party government does not support this decision made by the federal government. In fact, as the member elaborated just a few minutes ago, this decision is reeling through industry across the country. I have had the opportunity to meet with a number of proponents in the tourism industry here in the Yukon, including the Yukon Convention Bureau in particular, and the Tourism Industry Association of the Yukon, as well. We on this side of the House are not supportive of this proposed change. We feel there's still an opportunity for the federal government to realize this very large mistake and the cost to the tourism industry.

We are taking action. I will be raising this particular issue specifically with the minister responsible for industry in a few short days in person. I will also be fielding a conference call

with him in the next couple of hours. I will also be sending a letter, which I just signed off earlier today.

**Mr. Elias:** The president of the Tourism Industry Association of Canada doesn't think much of the cuts that the minister's federal colleagues brought in. He said Canada's competitiveness as a tourism destination is at stake. While other countries are going out of their way to attract visitors, Canada is essentially rolling up the welcome mat. All our major competitors with taxes comparable to the GST have visitor rebate programs, and a number of them have, in fact, been expanding those programs and making them easier to access. The GST visitor rebate program enables tour operators and convention planners to price the packages they sell in foreign markets without the GST. The result is an average six-percent price advantage that allows them to compete against other companies that do the same within their tourism offerings. This change is going to hurt Yukon businesses next summer. What is the minister going to do to help these businesses?

**Hon. Ms. Taylor:** Mr. Speaker, as I just explained a few moments ago, our government is taking issue with the federal government's recent decision to eliminate the GST visitor rebate program. We are taking issue with it. In a couple of short days, I will be raising this directly with the federal minister responsible for industry. I've also elaborated my specific concerns and our government's concerns by way of a letter. We will also be speaking directly with the minister very shortly by way of a phone call.

Mr. Speaker, at the same time, we continue to raise border-related concerns and so forth. But what are we doing on this side of the House? I tell you, there is a lot of optimism for the tourism industry. One, starting with the national marketing campaign — \$5 million, \$2 million of which our government is providing toward that \$5-million campaign, in conjunction with our sister territories. It is the largest campaign of its kind to market the north's coming of age, of which tourism is a very important component.

We will continue marketing our rubber-tire traffic related programs and our joint Yukon-Alaska programs, which have just received an international award of recognition, I might add. We continue with new investments and product development, and looking to expand investments in our tourism cooperative marketing fund, available for businesses to market their products themselves. So we are continuing with a whole host of initiatives.

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

**Mr. Fairclough:** My question is for the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources. The Bonnet Plume Outfitters' actions this past year have caused concern for many Yukoners. Why can an Alberta-based company come to our Yukon and, in total disregard for the laws of the land, build a massive lodge and three cabins on a heritage river in a very pristine part of our territory? Ordinary, hardworking, tax-paying citizens are forced through a long and tedious process with no guarantee of success at the end.

Will the minister give Yukoners the unequivocal assurance that this outfitting company will not be allowed to do this and

that the department will take immediate measures to remove the buildings?

**Hon. Mr. Fentie:** As I relayed to the member opposite yesterday, this particular issue is also in a legal action. Of course, neither governments nor anyone should preclude the outcome of legal action. We cannot compromise that process.

I share the member's concerns. This is something that is inappropriate and unacceptable on Yukon's land base, and I want to go into this further by expressing to the member opposite that that is why it's so important to have such things as the policy brought forward, when it comes to the outfitting industry. We now have a mechanism to deal with matters such as this on the land base, because there is a set of parameters in place today on what the outfitting industry can do on the land base and what it cannot do.

**Mr. Fairclough:** If the Premier got a legal opinion on that he would find that, despite this civil action taking place, the Yukon government can take action. It was reported in the media that, in the process of building this new facility on the Bonnet Plume River, damage was inflicted on the core samples of a private mining company — a company that had the legal right to explore and store their samples on this property. It was also reported that core sample boxes were destroyed.

Mr. Speaker, we cannot condone such alleged actions and, if we want to encourage exploration in our territory, we must not send the message to the mining industry that outfitters can come, willy-nilly, and destroy private property without suffering the repercussions of the law.

Will the minister or the Premier — they both have a duty here and an opportunity to do what is legally and morally right — get rid of the buildings? Will he do so?

**Hon. Mr. Fentie:** Of course the government will do exactly what it is obligated to do; so too will Justice, but I have to express to the member opposite that there is a distinct difference between a legal opinion and a legal ruling. That is an important matter here. I want to go on by saying that now that we have a policy — the member referred to the mining industry and their concerns — we can now demonstrate to the mining industry beyond any doubt that there are parameters around what can happen on the land base with respect to outfitting concessions and what outfitters may or may not do on the land base. That is critical, but I can assure the member that if he is concerned that this may have some significant negative impact on the tremendous increase in investment in the mining sector here in Yukon today that this issue certainly will not slow down, compromise or impede what is coming, because the projections for the coming year involve even more investment.

**Mr. Fairclough:** So the minister and the Premier are choosing to not act on this matter and stall even more. The minister has had every opportunity to do the right thing. He has had an opportunity to take the side of Yukoners against an Albertan outfitter who has shown utter contempt for Yukon law and Yukoners. There was no consultation with First Nation governments, and there was no permission sought. Once again, I ask the minister or the Premier to put the interests of the Yukon government and Yukon First Nations first — demand that the buildings be removed and that the site be restored to its

original condition. Will the Premier commit to that if the minister won't answer the question?

**Hon. Mr. Fentie:** The process that is unfolding today is to determine exactly what will be done with respect to this issue, but we are not going to impede or interfere with or preclude due process. That will take place. We share the member's concerns and find this conduct, should it be shown that this is inappropriate in any way, shape or form — which today's indicators demonstrate — is unacceptable, then the resulting issues will be dealt with accordingly within all the purview and responsibility of government. That is exactly what all the department officials charged with this responsibility will do, but we will allow due process to unfold. With all the regulatory and legal requirements that we have in the territory today, I find it disturbing that any individual from any sector of the Yukon, whether it be the citizenry or the corporate community or others, would access land or conduct activities on our Yukon land base that are either illegal, inappropriate or unacceptable.

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

#### Unanimous consent re: 2006 fall sitting

**Hon. Mr. Rouble:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of the House leaders to seek the unanimous consent of the House for the manner in which the 2006 fall sitting shall be managed.

Members of the Legislative Assembly will be aware that there was an all-party agreement in place before this sitting began that specified:

(1) the sitting would open on Thursday, November 23 with the Speech from the Throne;

(2) the government would introduce three bills for the consideration of the House being:

(a) a supplementary appropriation for the 2005-2006 fiscal year,

(b) a supplementary appropriation for the 2006-2007 fiscal year, and

(c) a bill amending the *Income Tax Act*;

(3) the motion for the appointment of the Standing Committee on Rules, Elections and Privileges would set the membership of the committee as including three government caucus members, two official opposition members and one third party member and direct that the chair of the committee be a government caucus member who would participate in all votes before the committee; and

(4) the sitting would conclude on Wednesday, December 13.

The government has introduced the bills that were agreed upon. Also, notice of the motion appointing the Standing Committee on Rules, Elections and Privileges now appears on the Order Paper. That motion clearly reflects the agreement respecting its membership and its chair.

The matters that the House must indicate its agreement on are the closing day for this fall sitting and the manner in which the business of the House will be dealt with on that closing day.

Therefore, on behalf of the House leaders, I request the unanimous consent of the House that:

(1) the closing day of the 2006 Fall Sitting be Wednesday, December 13, 2006; and

(2) the provisions of Standing Order No. 76 apply on December 13 in the same fashion as if that closing day had been established pursuant to Standing Order 75.

**Speaker:** Do we have unanimous consent?

**All Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**Speaker:** Unanimous consent has been granted. We will now proceed to Orders of the Day.

#### ORDERS OF THE DAY

#### 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. Fairclough.

**Mr. Fairclough:** I would like to continue to respond to the Speech from the Throne. I've brought up many issues already and I would like to focus on a bit more before I conclude.

One of them is about what's not in the Speech from the Throne and what was in the Speech from the Throne when the Yukon Party first got elected. This is a really important one and I'm hoping that the ministers — the new ministers and new members — take this seriously because this is not what the Yukon Party has done over the past four years and it's a very simple one but one that's very important. It's called "consultation". We brought up this issue about many government initiatives over the past four years — proper consultation, Mr. Speaker — and we're always told that government has. But what in fact has happened is that government has made a decision and they go out to the public or organization or First Nation and say, "How do you like us so far?" That's not public consultation or meaningful consultation.

Now, for the Education minister, this may be new to him. We have something that is very important here called the education reform and, to the new Minister of Justice, take note because if they want to have success here, I don't think that they should be following the Yukon Party plan in how they consulted in the past.

I would just like to point out, Mr. Speaker, that the Speech from the Throne differs from the previous Speech from the Throne where "consultation" is not there any more. I will draw your attention to the old Speech from the Throne where they did say, and commit to, mutual respect, consultation and collaboration with Yukon First Nations. Now we have cooperation and collaboration and partnership.

I know we've asked the question: would the government please do proper consultation and, if they don't know what the definition of that is, perhaps follow the Delgamuukw definition of consultation and meaningful consultation? So far, they have not demonstrated that.

Let me give you an example of a decision and direction that government has made that affects Yukoners: the outfitter policy. Now, the blame game took place here — blame the federal government. They did the consultation, and the Yukon Party said there was proper consultation. Yukoners were involved in this. But do you know what happened when a First Nation asked for documentation on the consultation? Well, this

is what was given to them, and so I ask these ministers to take note, because I hope they don't follow. The government officials produced minutes of an information session on the policy that was requested by a First Nation. It was actually minutes of a meeting in Carmacks at the Heritage Hall. That was their documentation and consultation — interesting, when we ask again. This is a very big decision, and we would expect that Yukoners would be engaged in discussions in developing this policy. We heard today in Question Period again that the Premier is falling on this policy to guide him through some of the messes that have taken place out there, and they're big. They're big.

Let me give you another example, Mr. Speaker, of the importance of the commitments of the government. They committed to implement land claims and to do whatever they can to assist First Nations in doing that.

I'll give you an example where a lot of work could have already been done. The policy on outfitters' quota: let's stick with this one for awhile. That policy is still being followed today — the process and so on. That policy dates back to 1993, basically before land-claims finalization, close to the same time, but it doesn't involve the processes that are laid out in the land claims agreements.

So here we go — we're way behind time. When it comes to developing policies that will affect government and how they make decisions that will affect Yukoners, we would expect that the Yukon government would develop policies in consultation with Yukoners. It's a very simple thing.

Along with consultation, a commitment was made in the last Speech from the Throne on respect for First Nations and other governments — municipalities and so on. That's a big one to follow and one that, at times, is not hard to do at all. If the Yukon government is in fact involving organizations and First Nations in some of these big decisions, then why interfere or change things midstream?

I'll give you one more example of that — and the new ministers can take note of this, and others, too. The Carmacks school — here we allowed the community to make a decision on its design and how it would be built. Close to the end of it being designed, the minister stepped in, the Premier stepped in, and changed things from what the community wanted.

Now I would think that that is not a respectful way of dealing with the community or the First Nation on that matter. The other, as far as respect goes, would be to deal with the issue and not run away from it. We have had some things happen here in the last term of the Yukon Party that were really big. I hope that it doesn't happen again because I don't think that we progress much when this happens. That is a demonstration outside of this House by a senior level government and many other senior level governments because they felt that they were not involved and the decisions that were being made by the Yukon government were wrong, and they wanted some answers. I think that any government — it is tough to govern and it is tough to be a minister — should face up to the people and at least talk to them instead of running away from the problem, because it only got worse. We saw a second demonstration outside of this Legislature and it makes it tough because First

Nations do not want to do it. They don't like doing that. They are governments in their infancy, trying to get things done, trying to make plans. It really forces people to look at how they can do things better or differently or more suitable to their communities.

You all know that First Nations have the ability to draw down education. They don't want to do it but, if they have to, they will. That is what they have looked at as far as basically the last alternative if things don't work out. It is very messy, but I suppose there are some positive things that came out of that. One of them was the education reform process. It will address many of the issues that small communities are faced with in education.

So I guess my advice to the new member is not to follow the Yukon Party policy on how they consult, but to actually go out and do it. I know the Education minister doesn't want this to go sideways, and they want to be open and accountable. Then, let's do it — that's another one that I'd like to get into. Do the proper consultation, and I believe things will go a lot better than they have on the rocky road the Yukon Party took over the last four years in some areas.

They committed in the throne speech, again, as they did before — this is a cut-and-paste throne speech from the last one — to be open and accountable. We raised this in the House before, when the very first piece of legislation that came across the floor of this House from the Yukon Party side was to repeal the *Government Accountability Act*. If you want to be open and accountable — or the government does — then, why do that? Since then, we have not heard from the Yukon Party at all about making improvements to the act, bringing it forward to the floor of this Legislature and moving on beyond that point.

We on this side of the House, the official opposition, will keep government accountable to ensure that they are more open to the public about exactly what they would like to do over the next four years. And we're trying to do that. We're trying to do that by asking them to table reports in the Legislature. Let's not let these reports go on for years and years and not act upon them.

I asked a question today about the report from the education reform commission — and no commitment. I thought the commitment from the Yukon Party side was to work cooperatively with the official opposition — keep us informed — so we can move ahead and we don't have to stall on these issues. We haven't gotten off to a very good start on this matter.

I would like to see the government side be a lot more open than they have in the past. The new ministers have an opportunity to do that. And why not? Why do we have to wait years to have some of these decisions being made?

Now, I would like to go over some points that were made and committed to by the Yukon Party over the last four years. I have five minutes left. Obviously I don't have much time to go into some of these. One of them was a climate change strategy. What did the Yukon Party do over the last four years? Can the new ministers answer that question? Maybe we would refer back to the platform or the throne speech, but there is not a lot committed to address the issues of climate change itself. It is unfortunate because we'll be seeing a lot more reports from



NGOs and perhaps other governments and First Nations coming out over the years to come and I hope we're not stuck in a position where we should have done a few simple things and we haven't done them.

Now, I heard the Member for McIntyre-Takhini talk about treatment centres and so on. Here's another one, Mr. Speaker, if the government wants to make improvements. We talked about the cost of sending people for alcohol treatment and drug treatment and so on outside the territory. Here we have First Nation facilities. A lot of them are out in the communities, hard to get to. I refer to Tatlain Lake, for example. If I can give that example again — and I hope the Minister of Health and Social Services takes note of this — here we have an organization, the Northern Tutchone Council, taking this initiative because it's important in their communities to take people out to Alberta, I think, and B.C. and other places to have them train as counsellors to deal with addictions and so on. Now, the treatment centre is out at Tatlain Lake, and you have to go by snowmobile or fly there, or take a four-wheeler. Yes, it's out, and people wanted that. But when it comes to referrals by the Yukon government, it doesn't go there because the department itself does not recognize these counsellors as qualified, or others may not be up to the standards of what the Yukon government sees for counsellors, contrary to what the First Nations believe, because these are people who have a lot of training in other organizations outside of the Yukon — to bring that expertise back.

Over the last four years, the Yukon Party hasn't done anything to recognize that. Why?

They would like to continue to try to work with the department on this matter, but we're not getting anywhere. So why not use the facilities we do have here in the territory and be good fiscal managers and show some efficiency in the department and work with what we have here? They haven't done that.

There are commitments they haven't done over the last four years, which they said they would do, and they're promised again. Let me bring up one: to build a jail. It was committed to, the Yukon Party found a way to delay it, it was committed to again, but there's nothing yet. We're going to have to really keep an eye out for what the Yukon Party will do over the next few years, and perhaps sooner.

I know my time will run out shortly. Here's another one: what about ANWR and their commitments to ensure the Porcupine caribou herd calving grounds and winter range are properly taken care of? Four years have gone by and we've seen the Yukon Party take sides with those other than Yukoners on this matter — companies and so on — and no real commitment or ways of assuring the people of the north that their issues will be taken care of as far as the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge is concerned.

I know my time has run out. I'm hoping there will be more time during general debate. I'll bring up many of the issues I have left on my paper.

**Hon. Mr. Rouble:** Mr. Speaker, it is indeed my honour and my pleasure to rise in the Legislative Assembly once

again today to respond to the Speech from the Throne. It is an honour to be elected and doubly so to be re-elected. Being given the chance by constituents and being elected the first time is one thing, but then going out and talking to them again and having their voice continued support for you indeed is an honour and, well, certainly a responsibility. I am sure all of us in the Assembly feel that responsibility to work on behalf of our constituents and to work for the betterment of the Yukon and to act in the best interest of all Yukoners.

I would like to thank my constituents — the folks in the beautiful Southern Lakes — in the communities of Carcross, Marsh Lake and Tagish who welcomed me into their homes and sat down around their kitchen tables or a campfire or even stopping on the street, to bring forward their issues, their concerns — for them to come forward and tell me where I was doing a good job and where I needed to improve. I appreciate their honest and open criticisms, and I have taken them to heart. I thank them for their support and for their trust.

Here in the Assembly, I would like to thank those folks who helped out on my campaign. There are 18 of us, but we all know that there are many more people behind the scenes who work with us in our communities and in our campaigns to help the political process, to help raise issues and to help facilitate the whole campaign. I would like to thank them all very much for their personal dedication and their contributions of time and energy.

I would also specifically like to thank Ethel Tizya and Kevin Barr. They are two fine, upstanding citizens from the beautiful Southern Lakes who also put their names forward in the last election. I commend them for taking the risk involved in running in an election and for being willing to put their names forward and for getting involved in the process. I thank them very much for the good campaign that we ran; we had a great debate at the Marsh Lake Community Centre. It was a campaign that focused on issues and positions, and I think that's where campaigns should focus. They both did a great job, and I welcome conversations with them in the future because I know they have a great wealth of knowledge about the issues that were brought forward to them.

Also, Mr. Speaker, I really must offer my thanks to my wife Sophie. I certainly could not do it without her, without her faith in me and her support, and I would just like to give her a little bit of special thanks.

Mr. Speaker, I am honoured by the trust and the faith my constituents have in me, and I will do my best to live up to their expectations. I was proud to campaign on the Yukon Party record of accomplishments and on the direction we put forward in our platform. Many times during the campaign — and I am sure my colleagues in the Yukon Party can attest that they, too, heard similar comments — I heard things like, "We like what you and your party are doing; keep doing it."

There was a lot of talk of consistency, a lot of talk about the approach that we had taken to things and, of course, Mr. Speaker, there were some criticisms; there usually are. Those are helpful. I mentioned criticisms. I am sure the criticisms will be expanded upon in due course by the faithful opposition, whose role it is to point out the areas of improvement or to

identify issues that might be tweaked or fine tuned in order to better address the situation at hand.

Mr. Speaker, if I could just pass on one suggestion to the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin. I should tell him that I thoroughly enjoyed his address the other day. It was very well done. I look forward to our debates in the Assembly. If his first speech is any indication of the quality of debate that's yet to come, I am sure we will do well.

I would also add that, if there is a note to be passed across, the pages can do it. My eyesight isn't what it used to be, and I'm afraid I can't read your writing from two sword-lengths away.

We put forward an excellent platform and a vision. Mr. Speaker, that's what I'm very excited about. The Yukon Party vision said we would strive to achieve a better quality of life by building healthy and safe communities with skilled and adaptable people, that we'll protect Yukon's pristine environment, preserve our wildlife and study and mitigate the impacts of climate change.

We committed to promoting a strong, diversified private sector economy by developing Yukon's vast natural resources, our wilderness tourism potential, our agricultural opportunities, our arts and culture communities, information technology, film and sound, as well as the traditional industries of outfitting and trapping. We also put forward the priority of practising good governance with strong fiscal management and a climate of cooperation and collaboration in partnership with our First Nation governments, our two sister territories, our provincial counterparts and the federal government.

This is a vision I will strive to work very hard to implement and to turn the important vision — the vision that has been endorsed by Yukoners — into reality.

I was elected to represent the diverse people of the beautiful Southern Lakes. This includes the communities and neighbourhoods of Carcross, Marsh Lake, Tagish, Atlin Road and the Lewes Lake Road. It shares the land with the Carcross-Tagish First Nation and the Kwanlin Dun First Nation and includes a very diverse group of people. Actually, they're a great bunch of people, Mr. Speaker. One of the best aspects of being in politics and running as an MLA is the opportunity to get out and meet everyone. The experience of going to everyone's door and knocking on it, saying, "Hi. How are you? What do you think?", is a great one. I strongly encourage everyone with an interest to get out and participate in that type of exercise.

It's great to meet your neighbours, find out what they think, and how they think and what their priorities are. But, as I said, it's a very diverse group of people. There are people who are young, people who are old, there are rich, there are poor, there are people of First Nation ancestry and non-First Nation ancestry. There are also rednecks and tree-huggers, hippies and yuppies. It's a very diverse group of people but, through that diversity, comes its strength. There is always an opportunity for a good conversation, and you can always find someone who will agree with you and, at the same time, find someone who will disagree with you.

The reasons why people live in the riding are as diverse as the people themselves. Many of them live there for the beauty

of living in the area. As the Member for Kluane was mentioning, they've moved to Kluane and indeed, some constituents have made the move to Kluane. But many enjoy the beauty of the beautiful Southern Lakes — the mountains, the lakes and the vistas that go on and on. I certainly appreciate those who stay and live in the riding.

There are people who live there because that's where they were born, and that's their traditional home. That's a great reason to be in a community — when you have that connection with the community, that tie to the land. The other challenge is, too, that we also need to work on making sure that we have opportunities, so that we can stay in the community that we love.

There are people who live there because of the isolation. They wanted to get away from it all, so they moved out to the wilds of the Yukon. On the other hand, there are people who live there because of the sense of community — because of the strong ties in the neighbourhoods that we have.

Mr. Speaker, there were people who moved out there because — well, there was available land at one time. There was a big challenge in finding property or a place bigger than a quarter of an acre here in Whitehorse. So, many people moved out to the area so they could acquire land or have land available for farming.

There is a certain portion of the population, too, Mr. Speaker, who live out there because of lower property taxes and people who have moved out there to get away from the confines of a city or how some people might feel restrained by community bylaws. I'm often reminded that people moved out to the beautiful Southern Lakes to take advantage of the lower taxes and to get away from all the rules and regulations. Usually in those conversations, not too far later, we also get on the fact of what else needs to be done or what should be done to prevent someone else from doing something or what else we need in the community.

Mr. Speaker, there are many reasons why people live out there and enjoy living out there. As I said, it's a great community with diverse people. The communities themselves are quite diverse, and this is a message that I'd like to pass on to my colleagues here in government and to those folks in the departments: that there are three different and distinct communities in the Southern Lakes. When you consult in one, it isn't the same as consulting in all. There are differences between Carcross, Marsh Lake and Tagish. Carcross is a beautiful, established community. It's one of the oldest modern communities in the territory. Mr. Speaker, the Carcross-Tagish First Nation has been there since time immemorial, and the community has been there, or the new town or the formal town of Carcross has been there, for over 100 years. It has a tremendous amount of potential: as I've said before, it is a jewel in need of some polish.

The community of Tagish, again, is another old and established community in the territory. For many years it was looked at as a place of recreational properties; a place where you had your weekend cabin or a summer getaway. It has made a transition and, as I tabled in the Assembly during the last session, there are several hundred people who reside year-around in the

community of Tagish. It is no longer just a collection of week-end cottages, but a collection of permanent homes.

The same holds true for Marsh Lake, which many would look at as the fourth largest community in the territory. One of our challenges has been to find an exact population count of how many people actually live out there, because we have guesses of anywhere from 500 to 800 people who live in the community. It is certainly more than just a bedroom community or suburb of Whitehorse.

The riding of Southern Lakes has a lot going for it, as I have mentioned. It has become a normal part of our vocabulary now. It is indeed the beautiful Southern Lakes and, while we haven't adopted the formal recognition of the name change, I think in practice it has certainly changed. It is a beautiful part of the planet with great people who are willing to get involved, willing to participate in their community and willing to help their neighbours.

We have a good road network with the Alaska Highway and the south Klondike Highway. Due to the efforts of the previous Highways and Public Works minister, we now have the Tagish Road brought up to modern standards and chip sealed. It is a great place to go for a Sunday drive and, if anyone in here hasn't had the opportunity to make that trip, when the weather breaks a little bit I would encourage everyone to get out and take a tour and enjoy the beauty of the neighbourhood.

Also, we have a tremendous communication infrastructure, with telephones available throughout the riding. That might be humorous to some, but that certainly wasn't the case a few years ago. We also have an expanded cellular telephone network, so now we have cellular telephone access in Carcross and Tagish and in parts of Marsh Lake and, as was in the Yukon Party platform, a commitment to enhance the cellular capabilities in the not-too-distant future. We also have Internet access, with high-speed Internet available almost entirely throughout the riding.

So there are some strengths we can build on in the community.

We also have some very good infrastructure with volunteer fire departments, EMS groups, waste-disposal sites, some community wells and recreation facilities.

We also have some challenges ahead of us in the riding. We have a lack of consistent infrastructure. In some areas we have new buildings and, in others, we have areas where upgrades and a brand new building are needed. We need access to affordable potable water throughout the riding. I know there has been extensive work done on bringing a well to the Army Beach area, but the tap isn't turned on just yet. One of the projects I will certainly be working with my colleagues on in the very near future is working to establish a second source of potable water in the community.

We also have some challenges with access to health care. We do have a nursing station in one community; we have a visiting nurse in another; and in another community, thanks to the efforts of one of the people in our EMS services, there's now some wellness care but, for the most part, people have to come into Whitehorse. So we do have an issue of inconsistent health care.

Mr. Speaker, one of the characteristics of the riding is the aging population. The beautiful Southern Lakes is a place where many people have chosen to retire. In fact, if we look at the community of Tagish, the average age of the population there is 47. Here in Whitehorse it is about 35. So, as you can expect with having an older population, that brings about different needs and different concerns in the community.

Mr. Speaker, we also have an issue with a lack of an economic centre or centre of commerce. There is downtown Carcross but it does need other room for people to carry out commerce. We do need to have other places where people can operate and be employed by businesses. It is true that many people do either work from home or come into Whitehorse for employment, but I think we can all agree that it would be beneficial in many different regards to be able to have employment opportunities in your own backyard.

Now, another challenge that we have is access to land either for people to create new homes or, as I mentioned, for commercial purposes or indeed for agricultural purposes.

The area has some great opportunities ahead of it as I've discussed in here many times. Tourism is a wonderful opportunity that many in the territory have already started to tap into, but it does have the potential for much more growth and development. As I mentioned, it is also home to many home-based businesses with the addition of high-speed Internet and some of our increased communications capacities. It is possible for people to run not only local and national businesses but international businesses from the area. It's not unusual to be traipsing along a gravel road and find a log cabin and find someone inside who is working on a project internationally over the Internet, and by having this capability and capacity in the community it allows many people from very diverse backgrounds — whether they are photographers or engineers or scientists or researchers — to come and make the community home.

They're still able to carry out their business or profession, and I can't think of a better place than sitting on the shores of one of the beautiful lakes and still being in touch. I know I'd much rather do that than be in an office cubicle in downtown Toronto. So that's an incredible opportunity for us out in the area. We have the ability to attract people who do want to get away from it all but still stay in touch.

Mr. Speaker, we do have several issues on the horizon. As I mentioned, the aging population is one that we will need to be very cognizant of and take steps to address. In Tagish, as I mentioned, the average age is 47. Certainly, if we look at the average age of the folks on the emergency medical services, the age is much older than that. As I've joked with them and with others, Mr. Speaker, when they're responding to a heart attack, there's a risk of causing more. This is an issue that, while sometimes we can make light of it, is an important one and we do need to take action on it. Mr. Speaker, these are looming issues that we as a government will need to address. The aging population and the services that they need and require and the services that they've been contributing in the past that they might not be able to contribute any more will certainly need to be addressed.

Also, we have aging infrastructure. In the community of Carcross, the Carcross recreation centre and the curling rink there — I'm sorry to say, but its day in the sun was some time ago, and we now need to work on replacing that structure. I know we do have a group in the community that is actively working on it, and I look forward to working with the community to discuss the needs that we have and how we can work with government and the Minister of Community Services on getting a new facility to replace the one that obviously needs to be retired.

We've seen the situation where there is unplanned development, and we certainly recognize the need to have planned development. There is a need to do our land use planning and our community planning in the area to figure out what we all want the landscape to look like now and into the future, so we have some challenges in that regard. Also, as the Carcross-Tagish First Nation government and the Kwanlin Dun government have signed their land claims and self-government agreements, we now enter into the next step of working in a cooperative, collaborative way with those governments and looking at how we will all work together to best satisfy the needs, concerns and issues of our constituents.

As I mentioned in the introduction, many people during the campaign said to me, "We like what you've done. Keep on doing it." Really, I'd like to continue to build on that — to continue working on what we've started. There has been some criticism from the members of the opposition that there is nothing new in the throne speech. Well, maybe that is what's new: there is consistency; that we've put forward a vision, and now we're working toward it. We're not changing for the sake of change. There was an important reason why we put forward that vision, and we're still walking down that path, or continuing on that trail.

Four years ago when I was first elected, I really tried to work on recognition of the community's situation and their needs, to help get those addressed. We had countless meetings with the local advisory councils in Carcross — formerly CAPC, now the South Klondike Local Advisory Council, the Tagish local advisory council and the Marsh Lake Local Advisory Council — and with the recreation associations and the fire departments.

Annually, the Premier came out and met with the three different communities, to formally meet with all residents and to have a very good and open discussion about where the community was at and where people saw it heading in the future.

Also, Mr. Speaker, I would like to point out that the Minister of Community Services has been out to the area many times, and he has sat down with the local advisory councils and me. We contacted them and said, "Hey folks, what's on your list of issues and where do we need to go and let's have a meeting directly with the minister." I am very appreciative of the minister finding time to come out to meet with the community. There were some very good meetings. We certainly got the to-do list, and I am proud to say that many of the items have been crossed off.

As I said, there are three different communities and really there are three different themes for my priorities, some of the initiatives that I will be working on.

In Carcross, the theme there would be community development. As I mentioned, Carcross is a beautiful place. It is a jewel in need of some polish. We need — government, the community and the First Nation, those businesses doing business there — to all get involved to bring some polish to it.

I was very pleased to see the \$3 million, part of which came from the federal government and part from the territorial government for the waterfront development. I am very appreciative of the department's process for community consultation. Carcross has been frustrated many, many times in the past by developing a plan and then watching it sit on the shelf. Instead we took the approach of finding the funding source first. We found the \$3 million and then we went to work with the community and said, "Okay, here's our envelope, and now what are some of the priorities we need to work on?"

The walk bridge was first and foremost the issue that many people brought forward. Many of you here, and listening, will have fond memories of seeing the walk bridge in Carcross and maybe walking across it or fishing from it, but we all know the state of disrepair that it is in.

So we actively got to work. At a recent meeting, I was proud to see that the community was having another look at what is soon to be the final plan of what the walk bridge will look like. I am very excited by that project and, with a bit of luck and hard work on everyone's part, we'll get it through the permitting process this winter and be able to start construction on it next summer. I know that will be a very exciting new initiative in the community, and it will go hand in hand with some of the other waterfront development projects, like the carving cabin or the beachfront bathroom area or the dock cleanup or the riverbank cleanup or the new dock. These are some of the very exciting projects that we're going to be working on with the community to prepare it to take advantage of the economic opportunities that are coming. We're all aware in here that the White Pass train will once again be returning to Carcross. Next summer, it will be coming into town six days a week and bringing with it tens of thousands of visitors. What a great opportunity coming into the community.

Also, in the past, we have worked on Destination: Carcross, which brought together several different partners. It brought together the territorial government, the Carcross-Tagish First Nation, White Pass & Yukon Route and many other people who were interested in the economic development of the community. I look forward to working on those initiatives and taking that to the next step. As well, we have plans on the books for fire hall renovations and some of the regular upkeep that you would expect, like replacing the water truck.

Now, Mr. Speaker, this is also an opportunity to start to identify some of the other issues that we have and that we need to work on. Unfortunately, as it is no stranger to really any community in the territory, substance abuse is also an issue in Southern Lakes.

We need to take steps and implement the substance abuse action plan to — well, to stop it from occurring, frankly. We

also need to take action to work with people and prepare them to take advantage of the opportunities that are coming in the very near future. Just by way of example, Mr. Speaker, this past summer we had an opportunity to do a waterfront cleanup project in the community of Carcross, part of the waterfront development. Our government had planned to remove derelict docks and the logs and typical debris that you see along the riverfront there and, when we went out to invitational tender in the community — we wanted to keep the work local — unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, there was no one who responded to the tender. So, we need to recognize that and treat that as the wake-up call that it should be and work to prepare people to take advantage of the opportunities that are there in the community.

In Tagish, the theme has been community safety. We worked very closely with the community and they did a great job with implementing a fire department survey that went out and identified the residents of the area and who lived where and just became aware of how to get to Joe Smith's house, for example — which was a challenge because, up until very recently, we didn't have consistent street names or house numbering. So — and I can hear chuckles in here, Mr. Speaker — while that might seem a normal piece of business when you have a community, it was only very recently that the order-in-council was signed — and I was glad to see it implemented — to identify the street names for the community; not only there, but also in Marsh Lake.

Also, we have an addition going on to the fire hall now. It's certainly an important piece of infrastructure in the community. Well, Mr. Speaker, we need a place to park the ambulance indoors. I look forward to seeing that project through to completion. There were also some issues with FireSmarting and brushing. We also still have an issue of having the majority of people in the community living at the end of a dead-end road. There is only one way in. That can make some very severe situations in the event of a forest fire in the area, so we have to work with our partners and with the community to address the appropriate solution and resolution to that issue.

Now, we also did things like add an additional Tagish school bus.

I was very excited about recognizing and addressing many of the issues in Tagish. We're going to continue to work on that. I know that in that community in particular there are strong issues with seniors care, and health care for seniors and those with disabilities. As well, there are issues like handyman services. These are some of the services we have offered in other communities. We need to get some of those same programs implemented in Tagish, and also look at expanding our recreation programs.

In Marsh Lake, the issues were basic community infrastructure. As I mentioned, there are quite a few people living there, but for a long time it has just been recognized as a cottage or bedroom community and hasn't been rightfully recognized as a community. I'm proud to say that's changing.

There has been expansion of the cell service there and the Internet. As I mentioned, we're taking action on the Army Beach well, and I hope to see that come to completion in the

very near future. There are issues there with road upgrades that need to continue to happen.

There's a recycling centre and, while it might be an old issue in many communities, in Marsh Lake it was a very recent issue. Unfortunately, due to a fire, we had to replace it. I am glad to see that it is now again up and running. We've also made the transition there to a transfer station.

Also, I would very much like to express my thanks and to formally put it on the record for the Minister of Community Services that I would like to thank him for his efforts and the efforts of his department in constructing the Marsh Lake Community Centre. This is a beautiful new facility with a gymnasium, a meeting room and a small meeting room. Mr. Speaker, this is a great facility that is now being very well used. In fact, just this weekend, there was the inaugural brunch there. Despite the minus 41 temperature, we had over 80 people come out for breakfast. So either we had some very hungry people who were willing to start their cars at 40 below, or we had some people who were very interested in participating in their community and in being active.

Those are some of the issues going on in my riding. There are concerns there. There are legitimate issues and legitimate needs that I will work with my Cabinet and caucus colleagues on addressing, as well as on addressing issues throughout the territory.

Mr. Speaker, we heard the key initiatives from the throne speech. Unfortunately, I don't have time in the address today to go through those and to identify them, but I think many of us — in fact, the majority of us — in the Assembly would agree that these are very worthwhile initiatives and that they are looking after the interests of Yukoners. I certainly look forward to implementing them and getting action on them.

Mr. Speaker, I was honoured when the Premier came to me and talked about becoming the Education minister. Education has been a passion of mine. I very much look forward to performing my functions and responsibilities in this area and working to make the Yukon a great place to live, to learn, to grow and to be.

I would also like to thank the members of the opposition for their comments over the last couple of days. It sounds like we will be able to build upon our past successes and build upon our relationships. I know I very much enjoyed working with them on the Public Accounts Committee, in different exchanges or in the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association. I think if we focus on our similarities rather than trying to exploit the differences, we will go a long way.

In closing, I would again like to thank my constituents and my family for their support, and I look forward to following the directions set out by the Yukon Party and to implementing the platform that was endorsed by Yukoners.

**Mr. Cardiff:** I am pleased to rise today as the acting leader of the Yukon New Democratic Party and the MLA for the riding of Mount Lorne to respond to the Speech from the Throne.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of our leader, the MLA for Whitehorse Centre and the MLA for McIntyre-Takhini, who is our

newest New Democratic member in the House, we would like to congratulate you on your re-election as the Speaker for this, the 32<sup>nd</sup> Legislature. Under your guidance our caucus is confident that all members of the House will be able to work together in a respectful manner for the benefit of all Yukoners.

It is our commitment as an NDP caucus to respect this House, all its members, and the rules and procedures throughout this mandate.

I would also like to congratulate the Premier and his caucus colleagues for their return to government, as well as the leader of the Liberal Party and his caucus for their election into the role of official opposition. Working together we should be honoured to participate in a democratic process that allows us to represent Yukon's interests territorially and nationally during this next mandate.

I'd also like to take the time to thank my constituents for putting their trust in me and I would like to thank my family, my friends and all the supporters who continue to work tirelessly during elections and between elections. I would not be able to stand here, Mr. Speaker, for a second term as the MLA for Mount Lorne without their support and their hard work. I wish I could name all of these individuals but I know that they know who they are. I am honoured and I am grateful for their continued support.

None of us here in this House could do what is required without the dedication of the individuals who do that hard work outside these walls. They turn our words into the realities of needed legislation and legislative reform, as well as infrastructure, policy and programs, which result in the front-line delivery of needed services in our communities.

This, Mr. Speaker, leads me to bring to your attention a number of promises made by the Yukon Party government during its last mandate and the light that they cast on this government's most recent commitments in their Speech from the Throne. Mr. Speaker, Yukoners were asked this past election, by the Yukon Party, to imagine a better and brighter tomorrow and I must say that the results of the past election indicate that Yukoners agree. They would like a better and brighter tomorrow, yet I remain confident that many of those people would still hope for a better and brighter today.

In my role as MLA for Mount Lorne, as well as acting leader, I'm obligated to speak on behalf of not only the constituents of my riding, a responsibility that I bear sincerely — I take it really seriously — but I have to speak as well for all the members of our party across the territory and, as importantly, on behalf of all Yukoners who do not have a voice within a particular party or a particular philosophy.

It's on behalf of these individuals whom I want to speak for now: our elders, our homeless, our youth, families, those with health concerns or housing concerns, and those who fall between the cracks of our justice and education systems, those who still need training and well-paid jobs, who need — not want, but need — a brighter future today, not tomorrow.

I'm glad to say that, thanks to the efforts of New Democrats since party politics began and thanks to our leader and the caucus during the last mandate, some Yukoners do have a brighter future today. The enacting of the *Safer Communities*

and *Neighbourhoods Act*, an initiative that was brought forward by our leader and the NDP caucus during the last mandate, has ensured that today there is a process by which children will not be faced with crack houses and drug dealers in their neighbourhoods.

We want to say to this government that this is not a matter that Yukoners wanted to imagine for tomorrow; these children couldn't wait. The parents couldn't wait. The front-line justice workers and social workers couldn't wait.

While the throne speech has recognized the need for new treatment options and for facilities for those with addictions, let us not forget there is an opportunity through our own educational facilities here in the Yukon to determine whether or not expanded training opportunities here can increase the number of qualified addiction workers and reduce the workload of stressed service providers who work in those jobs.

I need to mention that First Nations and our communities are crying out for facilities that would enable those who need these services to remain close to their families for ongoing support, and we need to ensure that after-care services are available alongside those treatment programs. In that regard, I want to emphasize some of the points that were made by my colleague, the Member for McIntyre-Takhini. He was very eloquent in what he said yesterday.

He talked about his experience as a First Nation person, about the need to develop partnerships with First Nations, and to support addiction treatment centres throughout the Yukon. That's the promise that was made in the Yukon Party platform, but we don't find it in the Speech from the Throne. I don't know — maybe it's just another empty promise. We certainly hope not.

For far too long, treatment centres outside the Yukon have been used, even though they're more expensive. They don't build capacity here. They don't employ local people and, worse than that, they separate the addicted person — the person who has the problem — from their family and community. And when they return, they often relapse, because the local pressures when they return are not taken into account.

It gave me a start yesterday when I was listening to what he was saying. He equated it to the mission school approach of "shipping them off". Just like we used to ship kids off to school, we ship off people with addictions problems and sometimes even mental health problems — you ship them out of the territory. I guess you might say that the government may have a kind of an "out of sight, out of mind" attitude toward this.

But it's not only First Nation persons who are given this unsuitable and unproductive treatment. Non-First Nations who want to do something about their addictions are either forced to line up for months for treatment at the Sarah Steele Building, or a lot of times they have to go Outside and most times it's at their own expense. They, too, have to leave their families and their communities where they live and, a lot of the time, it means that they just don't go.

This commitment to open community treatment centres needs to be a central part of the substance abuse action plan.

As my colleague pointed out, the infrastructure is there in several First Nations communities and only needs to be built

upon. Much of the work has already been done. We heard that again today from the Member for Mayo-Tatchun.

Now, the Premier may object to the costs of expanding treatment services, despite his promise, but he needs to recognize the costs of continuing substance abuse problems are far greater in the long run because substance abuse leads to family breakdown, it leads to violence, it leads to incarceration, it leads to poor mental and physical health, and we all pay for that in real dollars. So why not invest in prevention, treatment and the treatment of addiction in the first place.

Mr. Speaker, I do want to congratulate the government of the day for introducing a therapeutic problem-solving court to help offenders, the majority of whom, I am sad to say, are members of First Nations communities, some suffering with addictions and family histories of violence as a result of the oppression epitomized by the history of residential schools. Unfortunately, these members of our communities remain for now, until tomorrow comes, trapped in our correctional facility, a building that could be found in any Third World country. For now, they remain isolated without the addictions counselling and other educational and health initiatives that other progressive regions of our country have developed to reduce recidivism and to return these citizens to a productive life, free from crime.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask the Premier to remember that Yukon women still face discrimination of inappropriate accommodation within that facility. This cannot wait for tomorrow. Something needs to be done today. It is our responsibility as lawmakers to uphold the rule of law. We cannot be seen to tolerate discrimination or to be indifferent where human rights are a concern.

As a long-time member of the construction industry — you may remember in my former life, prior to politics, I worked for many years as a journey-person sheet metal worker, so I have hands-on knowledge of working in the construction industry. I know the challenges of construction here in the north — many years of experience. I know how important it is to have qualified workers and fair business practices in order to have the successful completion of building construction projects. So, I am speaking from direct experience, and I can understand that there are construction delays on projects and that they occur despite the best efforts of the people in government and the people who are working on those projects. What I would like to hear over the course of this sitting is how the government plans to complete the construction projects it said it would complete during its last mandate. I am referring to such things as the unfinished school in the riding of Mayo-Tatchun. It is still not complete. It has been in the process of being built for over a year now and they just barely got the roof on recently, from what I understand. There is the unfinished extended care facility in the Premier's own riding of Watson Lake — that has been under construction for well over a year as well. I recall driving through Watson Lake more than a year ago and the hole in the ground was there. There was something going on.

What's going to happen with that? We might as well bring up the "unstarted" extended care facility in Dawson City. Mr. Speaker, we're looking forward to hearing when "tomorrow

comes" for these communities while we consider the government's new plans to re-open the Thomson Centre as a continuing care facility with a palliative care unit.

We heard in the throne speech a long list of other goals that this government is again asking Yukoners to imagine for tomorrow, including affordable housing, accessible housing, a territory-wide childcare and early learning strategy, more support for children with disabilities, greater access to doctors and other medical professionals, skills and trades training, more of our children graduating from high schools — wouldn't that be grand? — opportunities for seniors, for stay-at-home parents, for students, for those on social assistance. And we realize when we look at this list that the throne speech does not include the hard facts that demonstrate that there is a real strategy somewhere over there and a plan to even accomplish these goals. They haven't provided the details, Mr. Speaker, and they don't seem prepared to.

It may have been simpler for the government to commit to adequate wages for childcare workers as the childcare community has made clear that it is their view that adequate wages are the means by which we will see the greatest barrier to quality childcare finally removed. Imagine that. I don't know if the minister could imagine that.

Mr. Speaker, it may have been simpler for the government to commit to raising social assistance rates for housing and food allowance, as the Liard First Nation and other governments and agencies have specifically asked for.

It's too bad that the minister couldn't imagine that. It may also have been simpler for the government to commit to working with First Nations, with communities and with industry to ensure that impact benefit agreements provide for maximum employment and training opportunities and a fair share of benefits from the extraction of Yukon's resources and some of the major projects that are going on or are proposed.

Progressive impact agreements will ensure that Yukoners come first and that they are receiving fair wages as skilled workers. I think it's important in communities that the people who live in those communities have the first shot or at least the opportunity to receive the training and have the benefit of real jobs on these projects as opposed to being relegated to the end of a shovel or a broom or mucking out the bunkhouse. It's too bad the government couldn't imagine that.

But Mr. Speaker, we will applaud the government for recognizing that these matters still need to be addressed. We are going to watch to see what their strategies and their plans are as they are made public, and we hope that they will be made public.

I would like to turn to what the throne speech has indicated as priorities for the environment, Mr. Speaker. It's interesting — we see that the government's focus has shifted from pretty much little interest in addressing environmental issues to recognizing that environmental issues such as climate change are actually a priority for Yukoners. We are hearing about a new climate change research centre of excellence and a cold climate innovation cluster, which in themselves are good ideas. What we have yet to learn, and what I think that the minister has yet

to learn, is how the government intends to partner with industry.

Industry is a vital component to ensure the successful transfer of research to technology and ensure that market-driven and economically viable opportunities are available for Yukon businesses and the Yukon public.

What we heard yesterday in Question Period is that the government is looking at the project — it's doing studies in terms of what research could be done and how to recruit the private sector to become a big part of this. The minister still didn't know what the centre is going to be used for. He didn't know what they were going to do with it. He didn't know what the economic feasibility of it was. And he doesn't want to make decisions about facts and figures when he doesn't know what they are. It brought back to mind some of the things that I heard from the other side of the House, and it seems to me that the government is ignoring one of its own stated rules by proceeding with commitments before they've actually done the appropriate planning — which this particular minister required. It was all about having a business plan, about doing the planning before you could get the money, before you could make the commitment. Well, they've made the commitment, but they haven't done the planning.

The other thing I think we need to remember that's important about the environment and the actions of the previous government is that it was during the last mandate that the protected areas strategy basically lay in tatters. We saw no intent by this government to protect wildlife habitat, wetlands and sensitive ecosystems.

Let us also remember that, during the last mandate, we did not hear that the government had an interest in developing alternative energy strategies. So, what we find ourselves doing now is still developing transmission lines that, by the way, are recognized across Canada as old technology.

This government is asking Yukoners to imagine a tomorrow where Yukoners have ready access to land, but what we saw from the previous government — and what we hope will change in this government — is a government with land policies that have caused nothing but conflict. They have not respected land plans, traditional uses or community concerns. This comes home in my riding loud and clear when you look at what the government did there with respect to ignoring and not respecting the land plan for the Hamlet of Mount Lorne and the Carcross Road by allowing spot land applications, by not respecting that community's desire to have planned development.

Look at what has happened with outfitter land policies: conflicts, not respecting the traditional uses of the land, not respecting First Nation traditional territory, and it has caused conflict. We need to get away from that. We need a policy that is administered fairly for all Yukoners regardless of who they are.

These conflicts were also apparent through the planning process used for the Whitehorse Copper subdivision. The government's heavy-handed approach in that development and elsewhere is evidence that there is still a great deal of work that needs to be done in terms of proper consultation and cooperative planning before tomorrow finally comes.

There is a lot to imagine about how the government is going to achieve this without having the conflict. I could probably go on about land and land use planning and the importance of it, but I would like to move on to something else that is also dear to my heart.

I would like to talk about Yukon's educational needs, needs that I don't see addressed in the throne speech. Some needs are, but some are missing.

One of the concerns I have is the failure during the past six years to complete the *Education Act* review, to reach out to First Nations who are still trying to ensure that their culture and language are reflected in the curriculum of our schools in a meaningful way. It's more than troubling to hear that we have unhealthy facilities. It's pretty clear that the road to success is still a long way off when we see so many of our children failing to finish high school. These failures have led to school councils, teachers and the Department of Education itself strained by the lack of supports and resources. There are a number of things, Mr. Speaker, that could improve this situation greatly. You know, we could be progressive enough to follow other jurisdictions, other regions that have removed school fees, thereby ensuring that all the partners in education can focus on education instead of selling chocolate bars and discount certificates. What's that about? Our children shouldn't be forced to do that in order to participate in the education system. We could also examine a number of educational models across Canada, achieving greater retention rates for First Nation students. They exist. We have to begin working more cooperatively, and we need to recognize that real partnerships with First Nations, with communities, with students, and with parents are an integral component for a model education system. It's about sharing power. The government can't have all the power in every facet of government. You need to share it.

We need to share it with the communities, with the parents and with First Nations in order to get to where we need to get to, to make the education system something that is for all students here in the territory. I guess it's pretty obvious that stuff like this is pretty close to my heart. That's because not only am I the critic for Education, but I was involved with Yukon College for a number of years. I chaired the Yukon College Board of Governors as well. I was a parent. I raised three boys, who all came through the education system. As well, as has been mentioned before, there is the fact that I'm a tradesperson. Because of that, I think that the minister and government can be assured that I'm going to be watching really closely. I want to see a real change in the approach that this government takes to education, and I want to see a real change in education outcomes.

I'd like to say a few words about the commitment made in the final paragraphs of the throne speech. In fact, I find this commitment so important, in terms of the effect it could have on how public business is conducted in the territory, both today and in the tomorrow that we're being asked to imagine. I'd actually like to read the commitment into the record once again.

The throne speech says, "This government remains committed to practising open, accountable, fiscally responsible government through legislative renewal and the provision of



balanced budgets as a way of the future." The Commissioner went on to say, "My government is committed to working constructively with all members of the House to improve the operation of its committees and the proceedings of the Legislature itself."

Well, Mr. Speaker, I would very much like to imagine a tomorrow where those commitments have moved beyond the stage of mere throne speech rhetoric and are actually fact here in the House. It's interesting to note that in the last election all three parties recognized the need to serve the Yukon public better by adopting improved procedures and work habits in this Assembly. It's something that we've been hearing for a long time, so it's interesting. It was part of everybody's commitment but it is not surprising.

It's also important to note, I think, that the only party that has made a consistent and concerted effort to bring about positive change in terms of how government and the Legislative Assembly can better serve the Yukon is the NDP. Let's look at the record from the last Legislature for a minute. Bill No. 104, *Act to Amend the Public Service Act* — after waiting for two governments to live up to their promises to come up with legislation to protect public servants who act in conscience to report wrongdoing in the work place, the NDP took the rather unusual step of introducing its own whistle-blower protection — legislation. The other parties, and specifically the government's side, hid behind procedural tactics to avoid dealing with it.

Bill No. 105, *Act to Amend the Conflict of Interest (Members and Ministers) Act*, and Bill No. 106, *Act to Amend the Financial Administration Act*, would have prevented the kind of situation we saw previously where Cabinet ministers were being seriously delinquent in paying off debts owed to the public. Bill No. 105 would have helped ministers avoid situations where they could not perform their jobs fully because of conflicts between their public and their private roles.

Bill No. 107 was a major bill that would have achieved two important objectives. First, it would have allowed Yukon people to take an active role in deciding if and how our voting system should be reformed. Secondly, it would have engaged not only the Legislative Assembly, but it would have engaged Yukon people in a discussion about how to improve the functioning of this Legislative Assembly. That bill outlined a wide range of subject areas related to legislative renewal, which is what I am talking about — the commitment. They weren't interested in it then. It was introduced as a private member's bill by our leader, the Member for Whitehorse Centre, on October 10, 2004.

Bill No. 107 outlined a wide number of issues that could be included in the consultations and discussions about how to improve the workings of this Legislature. They included a code of ethical conduct for members; ways to increase the role and the effectiveness of government private members and members of the opposition; options for increasing resources and support to MLAs' constituency responsibilities; measures to increase public awareness of the legislative process and encourage public participation in decision making; amendments to the Standing Orders respecting fixed opening dates for sittings. I am sure *Hansard* staff would like that. Our staff would like that. The

people in the departments would like that. They would like to know when they are going to be called into the Legislature to do budgets or deal with legislation. They would like to know that in advance. We would like to know it in advance. It is not a bad thing. I'm glad we are moving forward with compensation and the role of legislative committees. I'm glad to see that we're moving forward on some of that and that there are some changes — mechanisms for reviewing government bills before second reading, measures to improve ministerial accountability to the Legislature and the use of free votes.

Mr. Speaker, what's important to note is that if the side opposite had been sincere about reforming the system and hadn't killed that groundbreaking bill without even considering it, the kind of legislative reform that they're talking about and that they were committing to could be in place today, not tomorrow. How do we know that this is not just a bunch of rhetoric? Do we know that they're really committed to it? I certainly hope that they are.

Finally, our caucus introduced Bill No. 112, *Act to Amend the Legislative Assembly Act*, which would have given voters a direct say in how they are represented in the Legislature by requiring a member who leaves a political party they ran for in the previous election to seek an endorsement from their constituents before joining a different party. Unfortunately, none of these progressive measures were priorities for either of the other two parties. So it's a bit of a surprise, but at the same time it's a pleasure now to see them both waving the flag for legislative renewal. We look forward to working with them. We hope that they're as committed as we are.

During the recent election campaign, the leader of our party even went so far as to say that an NDP government would involve other party leaders and the public in setting the territory's economic direction. That type of cooperative approach to how public business is conducted is virtually unheard of. In fact, I kind of think it is almost revolutionary, groundbreaking. But what response did we get from the Premier? There was deafening silence. We didn't hear the Premier say anything in response to that. What response was there from the Liberal leader? Once again, deafening silence. Let's hope that silence isn't the measure of how committed they are to working together cooperatively for the public good. Let's hope that they'll consider things that are a little bit out of the box, that are more revolutionary, that make things better for the people who are outside of this Legislative Assembly.

I think history has shown that the NDP can be very patient. We can be very tolerant. We're willing to share the credit when other parties decide it's time to get behind our vision and put those things into practice. That's why we have medicare in this country. That's why we have veteran pensions, seniors pensions and a raft of other progressive social programs that would never have ever seen the light of day if it hadn't been for the NDP or its predecessor, the CCF.

In conclusion, let me state for the record that our caucus welcomes the government's newfound commitment to legislative renewal. We welcome the newfound interest of the Liberal Party in this issue. We will do our part to bring about a positive change, because it will make all of us more effective as legisla-

tors and the public demands it. That's what we're hearing them say. They want us to do a better job. I think, though more important, Mr. Speaker, it's the right thing to do.

Thank you.

**Hon. Ms. Horne:** Mah-sah-ayiti, bonjour, good day. I rise today to speak in support of the Speech from the Throne. It speaks to the same issues that are near and dear to my own heart.

Mr. Speaker, you may not have noticed that the 2006 Speech from the Throne contained similarities to the one given in 2003. When I heard it, I thought to myself, good on you. You know what? If it ain't broken, don't fix it. It ain't broken, Mr. Speaker, so don't try to fix it. Yukoners don't think it is broken. It is what gave us our second majority mandate. Yukoners wanted the positive continuity in the direction the Yukon is going under the leadership of the current government.

I would be remiss if I did not take time to thank the constituents who supported me. I would not be here if it were not for you, my family, dear friends, and I would be remiss if I did not name my Chihuahuas who waited at home for me in the evenings. Günilschish, merci beaucoup, thank you. I will do you proud.

A reporter, after the first day in the Legislature, asked me how it felt to be in the Legislature. I responded, "I feel humbled to be in the hall, in this hallowed room where we are the caretakers of Yukon's future." Mr. Speaker, I agree with the honourable Member for Vuntut Gwitchin. I sincerely hope that we can work together in unity and respect within these walls to make the Yukon we only imagined yesterday become a reality today. Let's not base our decisions on personalities or personal agendas. Let's keep the big picture in mind.

I decided to run for public office because during my life I have gained a wealth of experience. I have a richly diverse background and a well-rounded business sense, and I have developed good common sense. My experience affords me the insight into what it takes to make a healthy and prosperous living in rural Yukon as well as the ability to identify and pursue opportunities where they exist and the ability to materialize results that will benefit residents.

Mr. Speaker, I have always had a strong community commitment, and I believe this was a time in my life to step forward. It was a natural step forward for me. I am happiest when I am doing things for others. I had been doing it within my volunteerism and professional work, and this was a natural step forward. I want to help contribute to this positive trend in the Yukon, both in the areas of economic development and social policy. I believe it imperative that current growth in economic prosperity, which has returned to the Yukon under the vision and policies of the current government, continues. I was especially impressed with Yukon Party's solid record of accomplishments, with this record of facilitating strong economic growth and its attention to social policy, to ensure the well-being of our Yukon families and all Yukoners in general.

Mr. Speaker, I firmly believe the Yukon Party has proven its ability to create a bright future for our children with a strong economy and healthy communities. The culture and traditions

of the Tlingit Nation and all Yukon First Nations are extremely important to me. I take a keen interest in learning and practising them. In saying this, I will also sensitively represent and support the interests of all Yukoners in a professional, non-partisan manner.

I will endeavour to balance the Justice portfolio and, at the same time, be attentive to the needs of my constituents in the Pelly-Nisutlin riding. I will hold regular meetings in Teslin, Ross River and Faro. I will work on developing partnerships between public government and the First Nation government, which is critical, and I will devote time to promoting and facilitating partnerships and dialogue between First Nation governments, municipal governments and the Yukon government to ensure maximum benefit to all community members is realized.

It is imperative we solidify the development and strengthen government-to-government relationships between First Nations and government. The First Nation treaties were negotiated over a period of 30 years and we are now down to the important task of implementation. This is no minor task; it is key and it is crucial that our governments work together cooperatively for the benefit of all Yukoners. I feel absolutely confident the current government is working on this with this end in mind, or I wouldn't be here.

Transportation links are critical to the development of economies. I believe they go hand in hand with developing tourism opportunities as well as resource-based opportunities. In mining, such as Red Mountain, they are paramount. I will work to ensure the Robert Campbell, Klondike and Dempster highways are targeted for the next highway reconstruction initiatives of the Government of Yukon.

I will assist Ross River in achieving their development goal of building a cultural centre to create better opportunities for tourism in the community, as well as strengthening their cultural heritage. Ross River has asked for a local advisory council and I will help facilitate that.

Improved marketing for the South Canol, natural unblemished beauty in the rough, wildlife and unique cultural history and heritage: this would assist all communities in the riding to develop their own unique tourism opportunities.

The voice of women in politics is growing stronger. We must be heard. Statistics show half of Yukon voters are comprised of the female population yet the percentage of women in office is minuscule: 11 percent, as our honourable member opposite pointed out Monday. Also, 30 percent of Yukon voters are First Nation, yet they are also underrepresented. I represent both these groups. I trust I can take initiatives that are both bold and creative while representing both groups. Yukoners, when they vote, will have to remember to keep this in mind when they go to the polls the next time. The women were put forward; it's up to the voters to put them in.

I want to work with the communities to strengthen their community infrastructure and support programs, like the community development fund, which aids communities to realize their goals. I feel government should be there to support good common sense community development based on recognized needs and feasibility. I will help communities work toward these goals but, at the same time, ensure they are sustainable,

not a burden to the community and, further, ensure there are amenities to suit all age groups.

I personally sat on a volunteer seniors health care board in Teslin and I've lobbied for seniors care facilities within the communities, increased home care to enable seniors to remain in their own homes, the need for a safe house for victims of spousal abuse, to continue to provide support to women and families in need. The current government has heard these concerns and is addressing them.

In my volunteer work with the Teslin Historical Society, using programs like the community development fund and funds from the Department of Tourism, we have developed a beautiful little park within the centre of Teslin village. Not only was it affordable, it was driven by and for the community. It was accomplished with reasonable resources. It beautifies the town, and it assists in keeping the visitor for a longer stay. It's a prime example of the community helping and developing itself — achievable development — and improving the infrastructure without creating high maintenance costs or ongoing crippling costs to the community.

I'm going to take a few minutes here to give you a little history on the Tlingit government. The Tlingit Nation lived a rather idyllic lifestyle on the coast of Alaska. There was an old legend that says two sisters came to Alaska from someplace unknown to the Tlingit Nation. One of these sisters married a man and moved south and became mother of the Haida Nation. The other sister married another man and remained in Alaska and became the mother of the Tlingit Nation.

You will notice now that both have symmetrical cultures today. Because the Tlingit lived a rather idyllic lifestyle on the Pacific coast, food was plentiful. They didn't have to spend much time in survival mode, thus they enriched their lives with art pieces, ornately carved houses, boats, masks, poles and eating utensils. They also set up a sophisticated governing system.

History has credited the Tlingit with having formed the first chief and council to act as a governing body in North America prior to European influence. Their trading empire was only rivalled by the Incas in South America. They traded up and down the coast, as far away as Mexico.

There are still Tlingit in Hawaii. If anyone tried to infiltrate their trading empire, they annihilated them, a practice only dropped after the Klondike Gold Rush. They protected their trade route through the passes into the Yukon. When the Hudson's Bay Company built Fort Yukon, they were seen as the competition and were burned out by the Tlingit. They never did rebuild.

The Tlingit government is based on the clan system. There are five clans and each clan can be likened to the opposition. In the present day it is difficult to reach a decision since it is built on the fundamental of consensus. In the prior century it was easy. If there was any opposition or criticism or breaking the rules laid out by the chief and council, the transgressors were given some survival gear — an axe, a fist of salt, a knife and fork — and banished from town — the end to vexing opposition. We are lucky we live in a democratic society now.

There is one story about one clan opposing another on an issue. It went on for about a year. The clan leader of the one

opposing clan sent word to the other clan leader that he wanted to forget the past and be friends again. To prove his point, he was preparing a large feast or potlatch in his honour. At the actual potlatch the hosting clan leader sat the guests opposite him in the longhouse. He got up to sing the praises of the opposing clan leader and, during the speech, the cannon was rolled out from under its hiding place under the covering tablecloth of the head table and fired at the opposition.

One part of our culture that I have always admired is that when a truce is made or forgiveness bestowed upon someone, and only after paying an excruciating penance, it is considered the past and never brought up again.

In our current Tlingit government, once a decision is made at council for the betterment of the nation, no matter how vehemently one might object initially, we stand behind the government with undivided support and respect.

Mr. Speaker, it is a testament to the skill of my colleagues that in four years' time we were able to address the biggest priority facing Yukon. Four years ago we were elected to provide leadership in achieving a balance between the economy and the environment, practising good governance and achieving a better quality of life.

At that time, we said the 2002 election was about leadership and the economy. In four years we addressed those concerns and we continue. Our honourable friends opposite argue that we were merely passengers who got on a free ride due to the federal government's largesse and rising world mineral prices. I would like to point out that the world mineral prices mean we are benchmarked against other jurisdictions worldwide. When we came to power, our neighbours — but not Yukon — were enjoying a booming exploration industry. Despite the fact that people worldwide wanted minerals, no one wanted to come here and get them because of a lack of investor confidence.

Due to some solid work on our part, we have been able to restore that confidence. I applaud our Premier and the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources for their good work.

Mr. Speaker, as I said a moment ago, the real story is that we have restored investor and residents' confidence in the territory. Let me give you one example of that renewed confidence: lot sales. Nothing indicates someone's confidence more than the willingness to purchase land. Businesses can be moved, but not the property on which they sit. Because of people's confidence in our economy, Yukoners bought up our available lot supply.

The members opposite complained that we didn't do enough to keep a two-year supply of lots on hand. I guess we could have adopted the approach the Liberals took, which was to drive the Yukoners out of the territory.

Mr. Speaker, under the Liberal watch, only 80 lots were sold in their best year. At that rate, we would have had a six-year supply. At the rate of annual sales for 2000, selling 34 per year, we would have had a 14-year supply. The reason we are facing a lot shortage is because we, the Yukon Party, made the Yukon an attractive place to live.

Mr. Speaker, thankfully, we were able to turn our economy around. We did that through achieving a balance between the

economy and the environment and through practising good government. No longer are Yukoners economic refugees fleeing the territory to seek a better life elsewhere. Yukoners are staying here, and many of those who left are moving back. This is where our heart is; this is our home. To me, a lot shortage means people want to stay here, want to live here, want to raise their families here, and that means they have confidence when they imagine tomorrow.

I would like to review our commitment to practise good governance. We passed and implemented legislation that created a Yukon forum. We have and continue to work on joint consultations concerning corrections and education reform. We have changed the way we account for our finances to bring our reports into line with the Public Sector Accounting Board standards. This ensures that when someone compares our books with other jurisdictions, they will be comparing apples to apples now.

Mr. Speaker, the Yukon Party government is already actively engaged in both increasing revenue for municipalities and reducing their operating expenses. For example, we worked with the Association of Yukon Communities and with the Council of Yukon First Nations to negotiate a revenue-sharing formula: incorporated communities, 68 percent; Yukon First Nations, 25 percent; and YTG, on behalf of unincorporated communities, seven percent. It was our way of signing the gas tax agreement.

Indeed, we offered to shoulder the administrative burden so that the Yukon communities and First Nations would have more money. We have helped communities to find ways to reduce their expenses. Insurance costs, for example, were increasing beyond what many communities could afford. In 2003-04, we began reimbursing unincorporated communities for the cost of liability insurance for all recreation facilities and programs.

In 2004, we amended the *Insurance Act* to provide for a system of self-insurance for municipalities, which reduced their insurance expenses. We support the long-term funding of municipal infrastructure. We work with municipalities to design and implement the gas tax adjustment agreement while respecting our areas of jurisdiction, as laid out by the Constitution of Canada.

When a municipality didn't have the adequate resources, the Yukon Party went above and beyond our negotiated share and carried the difference so the communities could benefit. Our Yukon Party government has worked with Yukon communities to deliver community infrastructure through the municipal rural infrastructure fund, the Canada strategic infrastructure fund, the comprehensive municipal grant, extraordinary funding agreements and the community development fund.

As communities complete their planning work, money available through the gas tax agreements will also be available to establish new community infrastructure. We are also in consultation with local government through the Association of Yukon Communities to improve the *Municipal Act*.

Mr. Speaker, as I just outlined, through a cooperative approach, through fiscal responsibility and careful management of our projects, we provided, and do provide, good governance.

We have found ways to increase the revenue stream coming into communities and found ways to help reduce their expenses. The payoff is that places like Ross River, Faro and Teslin have more money to provide capital and operational improvements for their residents.

I would now like to focus on our commitment to achieve a better quality of life. The first question is: what makes for a better quality of life? It is having our family, our loved ones — especially our children — and our seniors and elders living close enough that each generation can enrich the lives of the other.

It is a safe, secure home, free of violence in a peaceful united community. It is a modern and reliable telecommunications network that enables us to interact with family, friends and business. It is improved health care. It is improved education opportunities. It is an efficient, dependable transportation system that connects residents with each other and enables the exchange of goods and supplies with neighbouring jurisdictions.

In each of these areas we have made great progress, whether it is increasing funding for Yukoners going Outside for treatment through the health access fund; making the Yukon more attractive for medical practitioners to move here; helping young doctors with their financial obligations so they can set up new practices, or paying retention bonuses. We have found creative ways to address them.

We have invested heavily in our education system. For the youngest, we made full-time kindergarten an option. For those in grade school we have invested in new facilities like the Tantalus School in Carmacks. We have also invested more money in helping our children encounter and explore the trades and technology fields. We invest in helping young people re-engage in the learning system through innovative approaches like the Individual Learning Centre. For those pursuing post-secondary studies, we indexed the Yukon grant and we boosted Yukon College's base funding by \$1 million annually.

Through our work on the Internet and cellular telephone systems, we are establishing and improving a modern, reliable telecommunications network.

We continue to upgrade and improve our transportation system. We have work ongoing throughout the territory from large-scale construction projects in the Haines Junction area to bridge projects along the Alaska Highway. There is work being done along the North Klondike, Silver Trail and Dempster highways. With the Shawkak project coming to an end, we are now shifting our focus to the Campbell Highway.

As the MLA for Faro and Ross River, the two communities most affected by this roadwork, I am very pleased to support this initiative.

Mr. Speaker, our mandate four years ago was to balance the economy and the environment, to practise good governance and to achieve a better quality of life, which we have done.

I would now like to turn my attention to our goals for this mandate. Our mandate this term is to continue to achieve a better quality of life by building healthy, safe communities with skilled and adaptable people, to protect Yukon's pristine environment, to preserve our wildlife, and study and mitigate the

impacts of climate change, to promote a strong, diversified private sector economy by developing Yukon's vast natural resources, wilderness tourism potential, agriculture, arts and culture, information technology, and film and sound, as well as the traditional industries of outfitting and trapping, and to practise 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.

I would like to speak for a few minutes about our new mandate. I am excited about focusing on a better quality of life. We have several initiatives that will help us move forward.

Earlier I talked about how together we would do better. I talked about how important a collaborative, cooperative approach is. The benefits are tangible. By working in cooperation, Yukon, Canada and local municipalities had been able to deliver much-needed facilities for communities in my riding. We can build healthier communities by providing the necessities of life, like potable water and sewage infrastructure. These services, which are often taken for granted, are so important and sometimes very expensive. By working together, we have found ways to help my communities build these services.

For example, the Town of Faro received funding for the Ladue Drive waterline replacement, which has a total project cost of \$210,117. The Town of Faro is also upgrading a wastewater sewage line. The existing waste-water line, built in 1969, has been impacted by erosion and there is potential risk for a failure, which would contaminate the local area and a nearby stream. The governments of Canada and Yukon will contribute \$58,993 of the project's \$88,490 total cost.

The Village of Teslin has undertaken a sewer main project. The total cost is about \$1,900,000, of which \$1,268,182 will be covered by Yukon and Canada.

So you see, Mr. Speaker, by working together with this government, communities in my riding were able to access close to \$1.5 million in additional infrastructure funding.

However, healthy communities are more than water and sewer pipes. They are places that have high-quality education resources, appropriate medical facilities, recreation opportunities and, importantly, places where the community can unite. This government has worked very hard to provide high-quality education opportunities. I am pleased to hear of his vision and of the progress my colleague, the Education minister, has made in this area. He and I recently attended a graduation ceremony for grade 6 students who completed the drug abuse resistance education program, or DARE program, at Selkirk Elementary.

I am pleased that we as a party have committed to examining the feasibility of an elders and seniors care facility in Teslin. Our elders are important contributors to social stability in our communities and to the fabric of family life. Grandparents can often help guide young people through the teenage years.

In Ross River we built a community hall that I hope will serve as a focal point for the community. It will be a place where the town will be able to come together under one roof. Mr. Speaker, through my discussions with you and the Member for Riverdale South, I have come to appreciate just how deeply you are committed to providing safe, healthy, positive alterna-

tives for young people. Whether it is by engaging them in sports like hockey, boxing, running, skiing or any one of a number of other options, you are helping to connect them with your community and model for what it means to be a contributing member of society. I applaud you both for this.

In my own community of Teslin, one of the elders, Sam Johnston, who is well known to this Chamber, both as a former member and the one who offered the opening prayer here just a few short days ago, teaches young people archery. It is because of people like Sam Johnston that our world is a better place.

Our children represent 20 percent of the population today and 100 percent of the population tomorrow. Imagine tomorrow. We have invested heavily in the golf course at Faro. These are places where our young people can find healthy choices. The youth in Faro are offered annual membership fees for \$5 to encourage their participation and help them build a foundation for their healthy lifestyle.

I am committed to helping seniors and elders remain in their homes for as long as possible. However, there comes a time when more assistance is required than can be provided in a home environment. Mr. Speaker, I applaud this government for opening up 44 more beds at the Thomson Centre for continuing care. We are also opening up a palliative care unit at the Thomson Centre. However, as I noted earlier, I am also committed to the establishment of a seniors care facility in Teslin. I heard very clearly during this campaign that in Teslin we need a care facility that will accommodate couples who require different levels of support. I am pleased to see that we will be looking into it.

We have seen a steady increase in the number of people who retire and remain here. My goal is to see couples able to live together in their home community in a care facility that allows them to have their independence and the assistance they need. The story of the two seniors in British Columbia who were to be separated because of seniors home rules is appalling. They committed suicide to avoid such a separation.

I would now like to turn my attention to safe communities. I will continue to emphasize prevention programs. I will also continue to advocate for healthy, positive, constructive alternatives for young people, such as sports and recreation programs. However, we face the problem of drug and alcohol abuse, and this challenge is incredible.

Almost all serious crime can be traced back to alcohol and drug abuse. We are implementing the substance abuse action plan, of which the *Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act* is a part. This legislation allows government to pursue civil instead of criminal solutions. It allows concerned neighbours to contact an investigator who will then determine if illegal activities, such as drug trafficking, are occurring.

However, the safer communities and neighbourhoods legislation is only one prong of a multi-faceted solution that is built around four key themes: education and prevention, harm reduction, enforcement and treatment. I would like to talk more about each of these points.

Our first priority is to prevent people from becoming involved in these destructive behaviours. To that end, we are looking at both existing and anticipated programs to ensure

they work in concert to educate people on the perils of substance abuse.

We recognize that people, often children, are confronted by substance abuse before they are able to fully understand the consequences.

We want to work with our partners to offer age appropriate educational materials. We also recognize that some children grew up in rocky homes where substance and domestic abuse is present. By counselling these children, we aim to break the cycle of abuse. Mr. Speaker, here are some of the current and developing initiatives we have in the area of education and prevention: aboriginal shield, underdevelopment; alcohol and drug education in public schools, be prepared to talk to your children about drinking; community planning and development; counselling for kids; community training in addiction issues; drug abuse resistance education program; healthy lifestyles and work experience project; resource directory for Yukon communities; support for students at risk; women's health forum; for those people who do become engaged in substance abuse, we have programs to help reduce the harm they do to themselves and to others by minimizing the risk associated with these behaviours through reducing their supply of substances and in providing a more safe environment for them.

Mr. Speaker, we are working on several initiatives related to enforcement: community enforcement campaign, getting tough on drug dealers, reducing the availability of drugs, restricting access to certain cold medicines, reducing bootlegging, safer communities legislation, secure identification cards and targeted enforcement. This government has absolutely no tolerance for those who wish to destroy our communities to feather their own nest. We will not tolerate drug dealers, bootleggers or those who exploit young women. We are wholly and fully committed to addressing these issues.

I just mentioned some of the programs that we're working on, and as I announced on Monday of this week, we have implemented the SCAN office as of today. We will do more to follow in the very near future.

We are committed to stopping this activity in our communities. The fact is that we have people in our communities who have problems. They have widespread problems with addictions to drugs and alcohol. These people are our co-workers, our neighbours, our friends, our families. We will not tolerate inappropriate behaviour, but the solution is not to build a correctional facility to be a bigger warehouse so we can lock more people up for longer periods of time. The responsible thing is to construct a facility with programming and living spaces that facilitate accountability, healing and rehabilitation for the inmate population. We will provide the resources for programming to those who are incarcerated, which will help prevent problems that will bring them back in the old, revolving-door syndrome.

We acknowledge First Nations are the majority of the population in Whitehorse Correctional Centre and we will gear the programming to their cultural needs and help to get in touch with their spirituality and to feel good about who they are. In fact, what we need to do is more toward a First Nation healing centre that reflects First Nation culture in the way the facility is

designed and operated. This planning constituted extensive consultation throughout the Yukon. We had 160 community meetings before the design of the new correctional facility was put into the planning stage. We want to help them. If we are going to bring healing to our communities, we have to help those who struggle with addictions, be it alcohol or drugs. The community wellness court is one of the initiatives that came out of the substance abuse action plan.

I have so much more to say. I could go on another hour here.

By working together in cooperation, we are able to deliver programs that would otherwise be unavailable to Yukon. And by working together in cooperation in this House, we will be able to give Yukoners a better way of life that would otherwise be unavailable.

Mr. Speaker, günilschish, merçi beaucoup, thank you.

**Mr. Inverarity:** Thank you for this opportunity to rise in the House today. I am truly honoured by the constituents of Porter Creek South and humbled by their confidence in my ability to represent their interests and concerns here in the Yukon Legislative Assembly.

This is a very interesting and exciting time for me, both in my personal life and in my professional career. I am overwhelmed by the support I've received from family and friends, my campaign volunteers and especially the support I've received from my fellow members of the Liberal team.

I must thank my wife Mary first of all. She has stood with me for the past 30 years. Her enduring support and unwavering belief in my human qualities is the force that drives me forward to accept the responsibility of public office and the responsibility to do all that I can to make my home, the Yukon Territory, a happy, healthy and vibrant place to visit and a better place to live.

As you may be aware, my son is an able seaman and communications specialist in the Canadian Navy. He is currently on board the *HMCS Ottawa*, which is deployed in the Persian Gulf. I must thank my son for two things. First, for making me such a proud father. My son's dedication and commitment to achieving his personal potential inspires me to reach beyond today and, in my capacity as a member of this House, create a Yukon that my son wants to come home to.

Some of you may have noticed that I wear this yellow ribbon. It is a sign, a symbol of support for our troops overseas. So I thank my son, as well, for symbolizing the bravery of Canadian servicemen who protect the freedom and prosperity that is the democratic right of all Yukoners and all Canadians. I encourage you all to offer support for our brave servicemen. I know on a daily basis I pray to God that my son will return home safe and sound.

I would like to thank my daughter for her encouragement and support. She symbolizes for me a zest for life and a love of learning. She is currently enrolled in the Northern Alberta Institute of Technology. While I wholeheartedly support her efforts in education, her absence makes me painfully aware of the missing pieces in the Yukon education system and urges me to

create a Yukon where children don't have to leave home to get an education.

I'd like to thank again the constituents of Porter Creek South for the confidence they have displayed in me and for all the congratulations and well-wishing I have received since election day. I wish to thank my campaign manager and agent, the volunteers and election campaign team. Without their loyalty and support throughout the election and the direct contributions of their time and human energy, I truly believe I would not be here speaking in this House today.

My very special thanks are extended to Pat Duncan, who has unselfishly supported me in my bid to carry on with the important contributions that she has made to the residents of Porter Creek South and the Yukon. I bear witness to the grace and the dignity that Pat has demonstrated as she has let go of what she cares for so deeply in order to pursue her higher personal priorities. It is my intent to try to serve the constituents of Porter Creek South at least as well as my predecessor did.

Mr. Speaker, I stand before this House a rookie. The thoughts that I give here are the thoughts and the feelings of my constituents and the other Yukoners who have shared their ideas, their concerns and their insights on how I might make a difference, how I might contribute to the Yukon and make it a better place tomorrow than it is today.

People have told me that they imagine the Yukon as vibrant and progressive. Yukoners have told me that indeed they imagine a better and brighter tomorrow. They have also told me that imagination is no longer enough. Yukoners want a vision; we want a vision of what the Yukon will be and a plan to get us there. People have told me that they imagine a Yukon that has a prosperous economy. They imagine a Yukon that is growing to meet the needs of its citizens. Yukoners know firsthand, however, the hard economic reality of a mine closing, in the lean times when federal transfer payments are cut. This has been reality. No imagination is required.

Yukoners have told me that they are concerned about diversifying Yukon's economy that is not dependent on federal transfer payments. We can imagine megaprojects, a pipeline or a railroad that may bring long-term prosperity to the Yukon. But there is no clear vision — there is no plan to get us here. In such a vacuum I cannot imagine a railroad or a pipeline being built in my lifetime.

Yukoners have told me they imagine a diversified economy that includes consideration for small businesses, medium-sized companies with 20 to 50 employees and value-added manufacturing and knowledge-based industry exports, just to name a few. I believe that economic diversification, prosperity and justice can best be won by both men and women through free enterprise.

Mr. Speaker, I am left with an image that this government has at least some notion or idea about this. I am left to imagine this because the issues are not addressed in the government's election promises or Speech from the Throne.

Yukoners have told me that they imagine a Yukon that has a social conscience, where landlords and tenant rights are fair, useful and enforceable by law. They also imagine a Yukon

where access to affordable land for homes, recreation and commercial use is a right and not just an endurance test.

I can imagine a tomorrow where Yukoners have ready access to land to meet their needs. I can imagine a streamlined application process. I can imagine ensuring that appropriate policies and administrative structures are in place to manage Crown land in the territory. I just cannot imagine this government hitting these imaginary targets any time soon.

This past weekend I drove around Whitehorse with visitors from Saskatchewan. They were amazed at the size of the Yukon's capital city, its beauty and the active development, but were confused that the average price of a home is \$255,000. They told me that the average price of a home in Regina, the capital of Saskatchewan, is a mere \$145,000.

This government wants us to imagine land use policies and affordable housing and imagine that this will all come to pass. Yukoners do not need to imagine escalating costs for housing. They don't have to imagine the dwindling supply of building lots. They don't have to imagine bureaucratic barricades, soaring construction costs and restrictive regulations. This is our reality; no imagination is required. Tomorrow is here.

This government is asking us to imagine a brighter future that is much different from the reality of today. Imagine it is then that all we have is no clear vision and no plan.

I would like to mention a few of my critic area responsibilities. I am the critic for Justice, Economic Development and Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board. I believe my background will suit me well in these critic areas. I will also say that my door is always open to constituents and all Yukoners. They can bring their comments, or any of the concerns they may have, to me.

Of particular concern to the residents of Porter Creek South is the Pine Street lot extension and the commitment of this government to ensure Yukon College receives sufficient endowment lands. Residents can be sure we will be watching this government as it tries to deal with these issues as well as the development of the lower bench.

Mr. Speaker, my cup overflows with gratitude for the blessings I have received. I am deeply honoured by the confidence of my supporters. I believe that service to community is the best work of life, and I will use this blessing to create a better Yukon today and tomorrow.

**Hon. Mr. Fentie:** Well, before I start, if I could, although the Standing Orders do not allow it, I'd like to refer my time back to the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin so she could continue on her dissertation of the very positive climate in the territory, and I applaud her for her recognition of what has transpired over the last four years and where the territory is going.

First, Mr. Speaker, I must say how deeply honoured and privileged I am to have been once again chosen by the people of Watson Lake to represent the community. Watson Lake and the southeast Yukon are certainly an important part of Yukon, its past, its present, and indeed will be in its future. I'm proud to be able to once again represent the community and am deeply honoured with the trust and the confidence placed in me.

Secondly, I would like to extend to all members of this Assembly our congratulations. They are in order. This is a significant decision, a difficult one, to be sure, for those who ran in the recent election and were not successful. You are to be congratulated. Also, to all members who were elected to this House, those congratulations also include the understanding of the tremendous responsibility that is very much a part of this institution and the job we must do.

It's also important that I reflect on what has transpired with respect to the work that has been conducted by government over the past four years. Far too often, there are hundreds and hundreds of people who go unrecognized. We in this House spend a great deal of time in debate and discussion about what is transpiring in Yukon, but on many occasions we neglect to express our gratitude and appreciation and recognize the hundreds and hundreds of public servants who daily ensure that the programs and services that we need to deliver to Yukon people to provide a better quality of life are indeed delivered in a manner intended. So, to all those people, we in this House extend our recognition and appreciation.

The recent election was about tomorrow. It was about Yukon's future and why the future is the most important element of what governance is about in today's Yukon. If we look back in history, the Yukon has, unfortunately, been dealing with a situation where there was continued political instability and the negative net results of that instability.

In the 2006 election, Yukoners chose to go down a different path. They have chosen to look into the future and not look into the past. The Yukon Party, as a government over the last four years, went to work on what we committed to do in the election of 2002. We first set the priority of revitalizing and rebuilding Yukon's economy, and I think the evidence is clear — much has been accomplished for today's Yukon, and its economic fortunes have been dramatically improved.

It is important that the recent election was about tomorrow and was about the future. In this House, in this sitting, we have tabled the blueprint for that future.

I don't want to delve into rebuttal, which is in many cases the standard practice, but I must say that I want to encourage the members opposite to recognize what the Speech from the Throne is. It is an executive summary of the blueprint and the road map with which the Yukon Party government intends to lead the territory into that future when we express our vision of imagining tomorrow.

The overall design of that future and direction is the commitment that we made in this document to the Yukon public in the recent election. It is about building Yukon's future together and it demonstrates a clear vision for a bright future.

When you look at the results of the election, Mr. Speaker, I think it is clear that Yukoners chose this vision, for they have re-elected a majority Yukon Party government. There is significance in that election result. For 17 years the Yukon Territory has not re-elected an incumbent government. In 2006 that trend has changed. I think it demonstrates that Yukoners firstly wanted political stability. They wanted that as part of the ingredient of leading this territory into its future. They recognized that

much of the work that had been done to date was laying the groundwork and the foundation for that very future.

Let me speak just very briefly about what comprises the main pillars, the cornerstones of the Yukon Party government's vision for the future of this territory. They include achieving a better quality of life, and I think that is critical because achieving a better quality of life is what we must do. It is our responsibility and our obligation to the Yukon public that their quality of life continues to improve government by government, year by year, mandate by mandate.

This is what good governance is fundamentally all about. We do that by ensuring we can build healthy and safe communities. We also must ensure that we have skilled and adaptable people, because no matter how clear and how consistent a vision a government may have, the people are the important ingredient in making sure that we realize that vision to build that future. We can never underestimate the importance of Yukon's environment, our ecology and our wildlife, and I think it's clear that we, the Yukon Party government, demonstrate that one of our highest priorities is that very area of Yukon's society: the vision that Yukoners have and the belief they have in the importance of our environment. So, another main pillar is to protect that pristine environment, preserve our wildlife — and there are very significant reasons for preserving Yukon's wildlife. Much of that connects to the cultural aspects of Yukon aboriginal people, for it is the wildlife and the land that is clearly a foundation for Yukon First Nation culture.

But we must also look into the future when it comes to Yukon's environment and its wildlife and what is happening globally and the impacts that we are experiencing. So we must have a better understanding of what climate change is doing and we must be able to adapt and mitigate those impacts so that we can be successful in preserving and protecting what is so important to Yukoners.

Of course, another main pillar is promoting a strong, diversified private sector economy by developing Yukon's vast wealth, its natural resources. There's wilderness tourism potential beyond anybody's vision these days in the Yukon. We have scarcely tapped the potential of this tourism area.

Agriculture is an important component of a diversified economy in Yukon, as are arts and culture, information and technology — film and sound industries are already contributing to Yukon's economic turnaround — and also the traditional industries of outfitting and trapping. All these areas are economic engines that are active in today's Yukon, building and revitalizing, contributing to Yukon's improving economy.

We have heard on many occasions that all that's happening here is government spending. But I disagree, Mr. Speaker, and so does the government side. We do so because we committed to Yukoners in the last mandate to deliberately stimulate immediate, short- and mid-term and longer term stimuli in Yukon's economy by using Yukon government budgets as an investment tool. That is exactly what has happened. And what does that produce? What results do we get from increased and improved stimuli? We get a sense of optimism, we get confidence in our private sector and our business community, and that in itself contributes to more investment from the private



sector complementing what government is doing with its investments and using budgets as a tool. Are there examples and evidence of what I have just stated? Yes, there are. In the mining sector, we have seen dramatic increases in investment. In small business, all we have to do is look around us, and I think it's clear that when you see the construction and the massive investment taking place in the private sector, we are definitely on the road to continued growth, prosperity and, of course, well-being.

Another pillar, Mr. Speaker, that has great importance to government in building its future is practising good governance and strong fiscal management. We must work in a climate of cooperation, collaboration and partnership, and one of the main elements of that for Yukon is the fact that our land claims process here in the territory, our final agreements, and the Yukon self-government agreements were intended to form a collaborative approach to governments in the Yukon, where Yukon First Nation governments and public governments collaborated to build Yukon's future.

The Yukon Party government has taken that further. We have applied the same principles with our sister territories. I need not go into the long list of successes because of that, but a couple of areas that are important is the improved health care in the Yukon and, of course, how we have managed to create a pan-northern approach and atmosphere for the Canada Winter Games.

We've also applied the same principles in dealing with our provincial counterparts and the federal government. That, Mr. Speaker, demonstrates, once again, the successes we've achieved in making sure that Yukon's presence and position at the national table is relevant to Yukoners' desires, needs and indeed in building Yukon's future.

These are the main pillars laid out in the throne speech, which is, as I said, an executive summary of the road map or blueprint for Yukon's future under the leadership and guidance of the Yukon Party government. I will briefly expand on a number of areas of that vision that make up that blueprint or that road map as we continue to build Yukon's future.

I would hope that, as we work with our opposition here in the Legislative Assembly, that we will collectively contribute to that very future, for we as a government are merely providing that blueprint or road map. The opposition has every opportunity to contribute along the way as we reach each and every milestone on the journey of building Yukon's future.

A better quality of life is critical to the positive future of any jurisdiction — a future that will contribute to the well-being of any jurisdiction's citizens. The most important area of quality of life must be education, and we as a government have placed a high priority on educating Yukoners, especially our young people.

There are so many areas that we have been focused on in our education system, but the overriding initiative — the umbrella if you will — is the education reform project. Our minister, the member from the beautiful Southern Lakes, has definitely taken on the challenge and in such a short time since being appointed to Cabinet and sworn in, he has clearly demonstrated a clear understanding of the importance of educa-

tion and what it means to the future of this territory and to the vision and the commitment of the Yukon Party.

I wish to at this time extend my congratulations to the member from the beautiful Southern Lakes and also express to him how grateful I am at his tremendous understanding. The member is a quick study and his commitment and dedication certainly have not gone unnoticed.

There are other areas of education that are of the greatest importance, and as we continue with the education reform process, we will continue to work in those areas.

Recently, a lot has been discussed regarding literacy and federal cutbacks. I want to assure the members of this House, those involved in the areas of literacy and Yukoners that this government will never shirk or stand down on its responsibility when it comes to literacy and what it means to education for our territory. That is solid, irreversible and never wavering. We will never deviate from that commitment.

Of course schools and the facilities and the environment within which we educate our young people are also critical. We have demonstrated in the past that where need was very evident — in this case the community of Carmacks — we built a school. Now we are going to embark on a major planning initiative to ensure that the appropriate facilities are constructed in areas like Copper Ridge; that we address the issues and pressures of schools like F.H. Collins and Porter Creek Secondary.

These are very much about Yukon's future because these institutions will make a significant contribution to educating Yukoners and building that future. We cannot forget the culturally relevant areas and programming that must be in our education system, nor can we ever diminish the importance of language, whether it is our First Nation languages, or the franco-phone programming we have in our systems. Those will obviously continue.

We as a government have taken it a step further in looking into that future, when you consider our investment and commitment to the school of visual arts in the community of Dawson City. When you really look at that initiative, it's clear that we have taken another step in advancing Yukon's education system and providing more opportunity and more access for Yukoners and others who may want to come to the territory and avail themselves of this opportunity.

In other areas of education, expanding and supporting alternate education initiatives and, of course, apprenticeship programs and post-secondary education and skills training is fundamental to building Yukon's future. I need not go into great detail but I think it's clear in today's Yukon that we must do certain things. One of those is to ensure that Yukon students, children, high school students and others have access to vocational training.

The jobs that are available in today's Yukon, to a great degree, are about vocational training, or they are about the trades and skills that we can provide here in the territory through our education system, starting in our secondary schools and dramatically increasing the emphasis in these areas with a very fine institution — Yukon College.

Mr. Speaker, it's also important that we recognize the role Yukon plays nationally when it comes to post-secondary and

skills training. It is fundamental in this great federation that all Canadians have this opportunity. As you may be aware, we continue to work with our colleagues in the provinces and territories to develop what is a national strategy for post secondary and skills training. To wrap up education and its contribution to Yukon's future and the vision of our government, we must also recognize the pursuit of education and the striving to attain one's personal best by providing assistance to our students. We can never, ever, ever forget the contribution that teachers make to our education system, and we will continue to provide that recognition through such things as awarding people for excellence. The contribution our teachers make is critical to educating Yukoners and building Yukon's future.

When it comes to healthy communities we have to deal with many other facets of society. Of course, dealing with alcohol and drug abuse is one of those areas. This is a social ill that is not restricted to Yukon but is a social ill that we all recognize is everywhere in this country. We have embarked upon a major plan to deal with this particular area of society and all that goes with it. Our substance abuse action plan is very comprehensive, detailed and is going to contribute to being able to improve our ability to deal with and manage this particular problem that we face.

As the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin pointed out here this afternoon, it has four main areas of focus. Harm reduction, prevention and education are under those two pillars, as well as a long list of areas that we already are working on and more that we will be working on as we evolve and implement the action plan. Treatment is critical, and I've heard some criticism here today about our commitment to treatment. Let me assure the members in this House and all Yukoners that we are, in this mandate, going to address needs and treatment to the greatest extent possible.

One of the areas I think is important is working with First Nations. There are available facilities, and I think it's important that we engage with First Nations that have available facilities to see how best we can incorporate some of those aspects into delivering treatment. But it's also important that we recognize how this connects to correctional reform because many of our challenges in our justice system and corrections system are the direct result of substance abuse. I think it's clear that that contributes to the recidivism rate that we feel is just far too high and must be dealt with. We must reduce that rate by putting treatment and programming into a correctional facility that meets the needs of Yukoners.

That is exactly what our Minister of Justice is doing today. Along with her planning committee and others, we are putting together the necessary components of implementing the plan, as far as a correctional facility being constructed, and also the programming therein.

But there's more, Mr. Speaker, and that includes enforcement. Enforcement is a fundamental requirement in dealing with substance abuse, street crime and other matters in this area. It all contributes to quality of life and to safe and healthy communities. That is why we as a government began that work in the last mandate, and that is why it's part of our vision for

tomorrow's Yukon, and we will continue that work in this mandate.

Protecting the family is always a priority, and there's a good rationale for that — because the family unit is a major contributor to quality of life and to safe and healthy communities. We can never forget our elders and our seniors. So, as we go forward, we as a government will continue to build Yukon's future, to ensure that the quality of life that seniors and elders are living is definitely the one that they deserve.

In all areas that we possibly can, we will assist our elders and our seniors in making sure that they have the quality of life they deserve. We have done some things already that contribute to that, whether it be the pioneer utility grant and building multi-level care facilities, such as the one under construction in the community of Watson Lake, the soon-to-be assisted-living unit that will be under construction in Haines Junction and, of course, as quickly as possible we will be carrying out the necessary assessment of the needs there for seniors and elders in the community of Teslin. In the community of Dawson City that commitment has been made, and we will be advancing with respect to a facility there.

We must continue to care for all Yukoners. Of course, that means a health care system that will meet Yukoners' needs and once again our minister, the Minister of Health and Social Services, the MLA for the riding of Lake Laberge, though in the past mandate very new and did not have a lot of time to work in this area, to date has done a masterful job in dealing with caring for Yukoners. The minister will be continuing through the course of this mandate to deliver the goods to Yukoners, enhancing and improving our health care system and contributing to building this quality of life and Yukon's future. To our minister, I extend congratulations and the greatest appreciation for his dedication and commitment. We will always as a government place the greatest emphasis on caring for our children because, when we talk of future, our children are our future, and the care and attention we provide them today will have a direct bearing on the future that we speak of.

We can never diminish or underestimate what arts and culture mean to any social fabric and how important the social fabric is to ensuring that we can achieve the future that we all desire.

One of our most competent ministers in the last mandate, I must say, our MLA for Whitehorse West, will continue in this area. The member has certainly made a significant contribution, is a champion for the arts and culture community, and the minister will continue to ensure that that community, that constituency and all that goes with it will be part of building this better and brighter future for Yukon. That is our vision for quality of life, including other positive activities, and that is sports, recreation and those commitments.

Again, the future is about our environment and our vision for managing and protecting the environment. I want to move quickly to the issue of climate change. Again, there is a lot of discussion around climate change. I value that discussion, but I want to put on record here today that there is some limited understanding by those who may criticize government on what

has transpired to date and where we are going in dealing with this issue.

We have a climate change strategy. It is public; it has been tabled; it is for the benefit of the members opposite and any Yukoner who wishes to review that strategy and all that it means. We are actively working on it and we will be doing so in direct consultation with Yukoners and First Nation governments and working on a strategic action plan and implementing our climate change strategy.

But in the recent election, in looking into Yukon's future we made a commitment of great significance. That is establishing Yukon College as a climate change research centre of excellence and so it should be. This institution, if we implement the correct initiatives and provide the necessary tools, can make a great contribution to the issue of climate change here in the Yukon and across the north.

Much of that surrounds the issue of adaptation, research and development. I must remind the members opposite, if they don't know or have forgotten, that research and development is another major economic tool and, as we go forward, achieving success in this commitment and delivering this type of research in Yukon, we will add another economic engine to the Yukon Territory, at the same time dealing with climate change in our environment and the impacts therein.

This also includes the private sector and the innovation cluster within the corporate community for cold climate research. Let's look at some examples: highway construction, building construction. Why do I say that? In today's Yukon, climate change is impacting these areas. With melting permafrost, we are experiencing more and more problems with our roadbeds and highways. We are experiencing structural damage to our buildings, and these are but two examples of what research and development — through an innovation cluster with the corporate community, looking into cold climate research and construction — can contribute to addressing these problems.

We must never forget our wildlife and the role the Department of Environment will play in dealing with that matter. For us to better manage, conserve and protect Yukon's wildlife, we must have the necessary science and baseline data to contribute to the decisions and measures we must apply to achieve conservation and preservation. That is why we look into the future; it's all about tomorrow. That is why we are going to undertake a major initiative of updating and upgrading Yukon's baseline database.

I encourage all members to recognize the importance of the Department of Environment and the role it will play in preserving and protecting Yukon's wildlife and in contributing to building Yukon's future, but also the role it will play in our ability to better manage and address climate change.

We look to — as we should — the Department of Environment and the many talented and skilled individuals within it, to do the work. We will provide you with the tools and resources you need to conduct that work.

Managing Yukon's air, land, water and wildlife resources are critical, and we will continue to do that. It is about the future.

There are other areas of importance to the environment, and I think one of the critical elements is recognizing the role the department will play in ensuring that responsible development will take place in the Yukon. That is why, in the past mandate, we commenced with what we call "integrated resource management". The need for this updated database is so that the department, within that concept of integration, will be able to contribute readily and substantially to responsible development through mitigating measures here in the territory.

Of course the future is about the economy and the fact that we have to have a vision for an economy. To date, I think it's clear that the Yukon Party government has demonstrated that vision. I don't need to get into all the detail, but it did begin with fiscal management, with investment using government budgets as economic tools, and increasing the stimulus, thereby creating an environment of optimism and confidence, and the rest is now history.

We are at a point in Yukon's economic evolution — what we call the pathways to prosperity — where improvements in many sectors are happening. We are experiencing improvements and growth in so many sectors. I think it's fair to say that one area that we all know — all the evidence clearly shows this — will drive our economy over the next decade, and that is our mining sector.

Yukon is blessed with a treasure trove of resources in this area and I think we have to commend, and I will commend, our Member for Porter Creek Centre, the past Minister for Energy, Mines and Resources. All that he has accomplished over the last four years dictated that the same member take on the challenges of the department and building Yukon's resource sector in this mandate. It is much about Yukon's future and, if we all agree and I don't think anybody will disagree, the mining sector will drive Yukon's economy over the next decade. I have every confidence that the minister responsible will ensure that we will maximize return to Yukoners through responsible development and growing the mining sector here in the Yukon through investment, development and indeed production.

Let us look at a couple of examples of why I am saying that. To go, in four short years, from a meagre \$6 million of investment in what is a region of great wealth when it comes to minerals and precious metals — we have gone from a meagre \$6 million of investment to where we are at today where it is substantially higher. The projections are, I believe, somewhere in the \$100 million area. But also with the recent announcement from Sherwood Copper of being able to raise \$85 million more to invest in their project, I think the evidence is clear and I congratulate and commend our Member for Porter Creek Centre and his efforts and commitment in leading this territory over the last four years when it comes to managing our resources and the job that he will definitely do in leading our territory over the course of the next mandate in building this future we call a better and brighter future for all.

Providing land for Yukoners is essential, we know that. Our position as a government is that we cannot allow the inability of access to land to impede our economic growth; therefore, we will deal with it. Two ministers will: our Minister of

Community Services and our Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources.

I want to make a point. I would encourage the opposition to recognize that their criticism is folly because, under their watch and leadership over the many years that the opposition benches were in charge and in government, their answer to keeping lot inventory at a very high level and at low cost was to create an economic environment where there was a massive exodus of people. There was no demand for property and land. Today, there is. That is testimony to where this territory is going.

We must continue to promote small business, trade and investment. It is essential to our economic well-being and for delivering on pathways to prosperity. We must ensure energy. When it comes to energy self-sufficiency, and improving and constantly marketing Yukon as a destination, infrastructure is a fundamental element of economic development and growth.

There are so many other areas, Mr. Speaker, but it comes down to practising good government. It must be cooperative, it must be collaborative, and it must continue to recognize the role that First Nation governments play in building Yukon's future.

Mr. Speaker, this is the vision, briefly put, for the Yukon and of how we, the Yukon Party government, intend to lead. This vision is where we're going. This is the vision that we committed to Yukon people in the last election. This is the vision that we will deliver on and this is the vision that Yukoners recognize as the right vision. I commend the plan to this House, and I would encourage all members to recognize that the contribution we all can make to this vision is something that will benefit Yukon today, tomorrow and long after.

**Mr. Nordick:** Mr. Speaker, on Monday I gave a little history lesson on how my riding and Dawson City saved the Yukon. I would remind everyone that although our communities may be small in numbers, we are an integral part of the heart and soul of the Yukon.

Mr. Speaker, I will speak about more current issues in my riding. Exploration and mining were on a downward path four years ago and now, thanks to our government's initiatives, we are experiencing a strong growth in that industry. I believe we are on a correct path to ensure that large mines come into operation. This will help drive our economy for years to come.

We all have family and friends who benefit from this industry. I know exploration and mining have benefited my family and friends. We will work with industry, the federal government and First Nations to establish a greater certainty for access to resources, water licences and permits to continue this positive growth in the industry.

KIAC and the Dawson City Arts Society are an important part of our community. Our government is committed to support the creation and implementation of the school of visual arts with KIAC, Yukon College and Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in First Nation.

As you all know the history behind the City of Dawson's financial situation, I would like to emphasise that we cannot let happen to other communities what has happened to mine. Some

people may complain, and rightfully so, that the re-establishment of the mayor and council took too long, but in the end it was the Yukon Party government that took the corrective measures to put Dawson back on secure financial ground.

Last week it was cold. Actually it was colder than minus 40 in my community and we just recently started skating. We live in Yukon and we are unable to create ice in our own recreation facility until late November. This failure caused by previous governments is inexcusable. Our government will work with the City of Dawson to ensure that this problem gets rectified and we have a useable recreation centre. Once again the cause of this problem was mismanagement by previous governments. This will not happen on our watch.

The Klondike is an integral part of the Yukon's economy and future. A large portion of this economy is tourism. Despite the problems we've had in the past — 9/11, SARS and our current and future problems like passports, GST — we will overcome these problems. We are committed to ensuring that this industry improves and remains a vital economic arm.

We will work in cooperation with industry, communities and First Nations to implement the new Yukon tourism brand that promotes Yukon as an attractive year-round destination. We will showcase Yukon parks and urge the Government of Canada to increase its investment in Yukon, including Parks Canada's presence in Dawson City.

I would like to acknowledge the gentleman who wrote the paper to help me get the story of Dawson's history across, but most of all, I'd like to recognize all the seniors of my riding, the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in seniors whose knowledge is essential in maintaining the culture and heritage. All seniors are an important part of our communities, for they hold the knowledge and wisdom that our youth need to prepare for their future and, yes, let's imagine tomorrow.

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

**Some Hon. Member:** Division.

#### Division

**Speaker:** Division has been called.

#### Bells

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Mr. Nordick:** Agree.

**Mr. McRobb:** Disagree.

**Mr. Elias:** Disagree.

**Mr. Fairclough:** Disagree.

**Mr. Inverarity:** Disagree.

**Mr. Cardiff:** Disagree.

**Mr. Edzerza:** Disagree.

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

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

*Motion No. 27 agreed to*

### **Motion to engross Address in Reply to Speech from the Throne**

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** Mr. Speaker, I move that the Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne be engrossed and presented to the Commissioner in her capacity as Lieutenant Governor.

**Speaker:** It has been moved by the government House leader that the Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne be engrossed and presented to the Commissioner in her capacity as Lieutenant Governor.

*Motion agreed to*

**Speaker:** Government Bills.

## **GOVERNMENT BILLS**

### **Bill No. 31: Second Reading**

**Clerk:** Second reading, Bill No. 31, standing in the name of the Hon. Mr. Fentie.

**Hon. Mr. Fentie:** Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 31, entitled *Act to Amend the Income Tax Act*, be now read a second time.

**Speaker:** It has been moved by the Hon. Premier that Bill No. 31, entitled *Act to Amend the Income Tax Act*, be now read a second time.

**Hon. Mr. Fentie:** Well, continuing in this overwhelming environment of cooperation, I am very pleased to be able to present to the House what is an important amendment to our tax legislation here in the Yukon, considering the benefits that will accrue, to the greatest extent possible, to Yukoners at large.

The prime purpose of this bill is to incorporate into our *Income Tax Act* recent changes made to the federal *Income Tax Act*. The Yukon and other provincial and territorial governments very often mirror federal tax initiatives to simplify — I stress "simplify" — the process for the taxpayer and, of course, for administrative efficiency. Therefore, when Canada makes changes to federal income tax legislation, ours must often be similarly amended.

As you are aware, Canada has, over the past while, announced many changes that affect the personal income tax that individuals pay. For the most part, Canada's changes affect the existing non-refundable tax credits. However, Canada also made provision for additional credits for adoption expenses, public transit passes, and the Canada employment amount. As well, Canada restructured the dividend grossing-up and credit. Canada's changes increased the credits available to individuals and hence reduce the federal tax they pay.

This bill before us today amends our *Income Tax Act* to ensure that our credits mirror those at the federal level. Without this bill, Yukoners would be paying more income tax. Second-

ly, this bill streamlines our own *Income Tax Act* to ensure that we will continue to offer the same non-refundable tax credit block as the federal government. Specifically, the legislation has been redesigned in order to better mirror future changes made to the non-refundable *Income Tax Act* credit block by Canada.

This will ensure that as Canada makes changes to its credits, our income tax legislation will follow in parallel. I am very pleased to say that the low-income family tax credit is also being restructured to specifically exclude in its calculation any payments parents receive from Canada for the universal child-care benefit. I would take a moment to stress this point because today we heard from the official opposition that this was not the case. As I stated, we have already done that work and I repeat it here today. It is an amendment in our legislation. As a result, the low-income tax credit received by Yukoners will not — Mr. Speaker, will not — be reduced as a result of that income.

Finally, this bill corrects some minor errors in the current *Income Tax Act*. These errors have not had any effect on taxpayers here in Yukon and are simply housekeeping in nature. The effect of these changes will be felt when Yukoners file their 2006 tax returns. The bottom line is that this amendment leaves more money in the pockets of Yukoners. Specifically, an additional \$1.7 million will remain in the hands of Yukoners for 2006, and \$2.6 million will remain in the pockets and hands of Yukoners for 2007. In total, over the next two years Yukoners will experience \$4.3 million in tax benefits.

This is not the first time this House has been asked to pass legislation of this nature. It is routine and ongoing. It is our commitment to improve the quality of life of Yukoners, but in this case it is also part of putting more money back into the pockets of Yukoners when we are capable and able. I am very pleased about our ability to do so here today and commend the Department of Finance and its officials for so quickly putting together the amendments that we will now have in place so Yukoners, starting in 2006 and continuing on into 2007, will realize these significant tax breaks. I am sure that increased disposable income for Yukoners from those breaks will find its way into Yukon's economy.

Thank you.

**Mr. McRobb:** We in the opposition do see the good news in this bill. We believe it could have gone a lot further in helping Yukoners and, especially, it could have gone a lot further in substantiating the government's own promises. Now, I detect there's a dispute about the childcare tax benefit and the ability of this bill to handle it. We'll probably be able to examine that in closer detail in Committee of the Whole after these second reading speeches are concluded. But I would like to put on the record that, while the changes will save Yukoners some money, they fall far short of what the Yukon Party promised on the campaign trail just a few weeks ago.

For example, Mr. Speaker, the Yukon Party promised to, and I'll quote: "exclude the childcare benefit from income determination for social assistance." For some mothers receiving social assistance, this could mean up to \$143 per month. This is

something that could have been done immediately and can be done by regulation. It is an issue that the government has been aware of for quite some time. It easily could have been ready for this fall sitting. We wonder why the Premier is making single mothers wait. Why were the changes not on the agenda of this fall sitting?

Look at what else the Yukon Party promised, and I quote again: "to exclude the childcare benefit from income determination for social assistance." That could have been done immediately but this government has chosen not to do so. Mr. Speaker, the federal Harper government introduced the universal childcare benefit. That benefit is designed to assist Canadian families through direct financial support.

The benefit payment is paid on behalf of children under the age of six years, in instalments of \$100 per month per child. On an annual basis, a parent gets \$1,200 a year for each child. But, in fact, they don't get that much because they must pay federal tax and Yukon tax on that amount. While we cannot change the federal tax, we can do something about the Yukon tax. We could introduce a credit, for example.

We would like to know if the Premier would entertain introducing a tax credit to ensure that parents don't pay any Yukon income tax on this \$1,200 received from the federal government. I believe, Mr. Speaker, this was reviewed today in Question Period, and the answer from the government side was no.

As I understand it, this situation could be improved with some better cooperation, and if it means rolling up our sleeves and doing a bit more work in this session, I'm all for it.

**Mr. Cardiff:** We in the third party also recognize that there are some benefits that will accrue to Yukon citizens through these improvements to the *Income Tax Act*, largely bringing the Yukon tax regime into line with the changes that have been made federally.

I would like to echo a little bit of what the official opposition party House leader said about the government's promise about the childcare benefit — the \$1,200 — and ensuring that Yukoners, especially low-income Yukoners such as single parents, mothers on SA, don't end up having to pay tax on that.

One of the other things I found out today is that it is excluded, that it doesn't affect the low-income family tax credit. One thing that I did find out today is that the low-income family tax credit is \$300. It is interesting; I remember back to the election campaign and some of the things — that both the Premier and the leader of the official opposition used this line during the election. I don't have the quote perfect — I don't have it in front of me, but I'm sure I could get it — but they both said this during the election, that societies or governments are most often judged by how they treat their least fortunate citizens.

It goes back to some of the things that I was mentioning in my response to the throne speech. That quote is from the greatest Canadian — T.C. Douglas, leader of the CCF, leader of the NDP and behind some of the most progressive legislation. One of the most brilliant men in politics in Canada, probably, said those words. So when I find out that the low-income family tax

credit is only \$300 a year, I think that maybe the Premier should have looked at including something in this bill to ensure that that level is raised. When you look at the changes to the *Income Tax Act*, it puts more money in the pockets of the more fortunate people, the people who have to pay tax.

What we need to think about is that by doing this, yes, we're putting more money into the pockets of people who go out and spend money. Normally that's not a bad thing. But you can also look at the government, which has a surplus; it has money. It has money to spend but hasn't done things it could do to put money in the hands of those people who are less fortunate. Both the Premier and the leader of the official opposition used that quote.

What I think the Premier needs to do is to put taxpayers' money where his mouth is and actually do something that's effective for people who are the least fortunate. When you take — I believe the cost stated in the press release is that this is going to put \$4.3 million, I believe it was, over two years into the pockets of Yukon taxpayers. That's probably not a bad thing. Why don't we put \$4.3 million into the pockets of the least fortunate, the people who are on social assistance, who go from social assistance cheque to social assistance cheque and have a hard time making their rent payments, who have a hard time feeding their families — why can't we do something like that? So while I can see the benefits of this to a certain sector of our population, unfortunately there are people who are being left behind in this instance. I just think that we should take the opportunity. I agree with the opposition House leader that if it takes a little more time or a little more hard work, why don't we get down to work and do it?

I look forward to exploring this a little bit more when we get into Committee of the Whole.

Thank you.

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

**Hon. Mr. Fentie:** I want to emphasize the positive nature of this bill because, if I think back over the last decade that I've been in this institution, I cannot recall on any occasion where this kind of significant return to Yukon taxpayers has been implemented by any government. I think it's fair to say that the members opposite can make arguments about where we could do more, because that's always the case, Mr. Speaker. We as government — in fact, we as members of this Assembly — can always do more and do better.

But I think there is an issue here, and it's not a dispute; it's confusion. The official opposition critic makes mention of the fact that we are not living up to a commitment with respect to the childcare benefit. I know the member must have — if he didn't have the briefing this morning that the government provided, then I will provide some information. I refer the member to Bill No. 31, *Act to Amend the Income Tax Act*, to section 3(6). The act is amended by adding the following subsection: "For the purpose of subsection (1)" — I just have to recite this for clarity — "an individual's income does not include any ben-

efit under the *Universal Child Care Benefit Act* (Canada) referred to in subsection 56(6) of the federal Act."

So I impress upon the official opposition that if we are talking about something different, then let's engage in debate on what that matter is. But to suggest that we have not delivered on the childcare benefit issue would be, in fact, incorrect, Mr. Speaker, because it is written right in the bill itself and I refer to that section to ensure that all members understand that it is in the bill.

But there are other areas, of course, that we can address, and at no time did the government side say no. We've never said that no, we would not address those areas. In fact, we stipulated that we are working on a number of areas, and one of the elements of that, one of the issues, I think for all of us here because it does address those in our society who would benefit greatly from any kind of assistance we can provide — we are working on that particular component of our tax regime because it's not something we can do by simply amending our legislation. It is Revenue Canada's legislation. If they are not amending theirs, then it is simply something we cannot do here.

What we can do is look at what other options are available to Yukon to address that specific issue. But it is incorrect to suggest that the childcare benefit has not now been addressed. It is in this amendment. I have referred to the section, and I would encourage the official opposition to recognize that we should maybe try to bring some clarity to what it is they are expressing as being undone.

I would also point out that a great deal of commitment has been made by all parties in the election campaign. I think the road map and the blueprint that we have brought forward is extensive, and it is going to require a great deal of work. To suggest that all this can be done in four days of any legislative sitting or in two months of any mandate is just not reasonable, because it's impossible.

I also want to suggest to the members opposite that in criticizing the government side, they are actually criticizing and diminishing the hard work of public servants who went immediately to work on amending Yukon's tax legislation so that Yukoners would be provided the benefits in 2006 and 2007.

What this translates into is an overall tax savings of about \$791 for Yukoners. I want to compare that with what the official opposition has been offering, which was somewhere in the neighbourhood of \$250. The significance here is that, before we jump to criticism, let us all reflect on those who do the hard work to come up with, instead of an election campaign commitment of a \$250 benefit, amendments in our tax regime that result in almost \$800 benefit to Yukoners.

I once again commend the Finance people for their good work and express to our esteemed colleagues opposite that we should be a little more prudent and diligent in our debate so as not to diminish the role that hard-working people within the corporate structure of government continue to do on behalf of Yukoners.

I say to the member opposite that, though these are amendments that will mirror the federal government's legislation, it is necessary to ensure that Yukoners are not being left out. The members opposite make mention of Yukoners being

left out. This bill is to ensure that Yukoners are not left out and that Yukon citizens, Yukon taxpayers — Yukoners — will receive the same benefits that other Canadians will enjoy, thanks to the reduction in taxes.

So let me put into context what it is we are trying to accomplish here. We have presented to this House measures to amend the *Income Tax Act* to provide those benefits to Yukoners. I see this as a good thing. I see this as a contribution to a quality of life for Yukoners by putting more disposable income into their pockets, and in doing so that will generate benefit across the territory, as that disposable income finds its way into the overall stimulus of the Yukon and our well-being.

I would hope that the members opposite will be giving full support to this bill in second reading and through Committee, and give it its expeditious passage because we want to ensure that Yukoners will realize these benefits in 2006. In the spirit of cooperation that the members opposite have been trying to demonstrate, that support for this bill would help clarify that particular area of cooperation.

Thank you.

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

**Some Hon. Members:** Agreed.

*Motion for second reading of Bill No. 31 agreed to*

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

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