

**Whitehorse, Yukon****Thursday, April 19, 2007 -- 1:00 p.m.**

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

*Prayers*

**INTRODUCTION OF TABLE OFFICERS**

**Speaker:** As members are aware, Patrick Michael retired as Clerk of the Legislative Assembly on March 30, 2007, after almost 30 years as a table officer in this Assembly. Succeeding Mr. Michael as Clerk of the Legislative Assembly is Floyd McCormick, who has been Deputy Clerk since 2001.

We are also pleased to welcome Mr. Douglas Arnott as our Acting Deputy Clerk for the 2007 spring sitting. Mr. Arnott is the Senior Committee Clerk at the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. He has had previous experience as Acting Deputy Clerk in this Assembly, having sat at our table for the fall 2000 sitting and the 2001 spring sitting. On behalf of the House, I would like to thank the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and particularly the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, Ms. Deborah Deller, for making Mr. Arnott available to us. Please welcome him to the House.

*Applause*

**INTRODUCTION OF PAGES**

**Speaker:** It now gives me great pleasure to announce that the following students will be serving the House as legislative pages for the 2007 spring sitting. They are Ben Barrett-Forest, Alex Bouchard, Aryn Clarke, Will Mahoney, Bryson McLachlan, Molly Purser, Ryan Sutherland and Teresa Vandermeer-Chasse from Vanier Catholic Secondary School.

Today we have with us Aryn Clarke and Will Mahoney. I would ask the members to welcome them to the House at this time, please.

*Applause*

**Withdrawal of motions**

**Speaker:** The Chair also wishes to inform the House of the changes that have been made to the Order Paper. The following motions have been removed from the Order Paper because they are outdated: Motion No. 3, standing in the name of the Member for Kluane; Motion No. 54, standing in the name of the Member for Mount Lorne; and Motion No. 60, standing in the name of the Member for Klondike.

**DAILY ROUTINE**

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

Are there any tributes?

**TRIBUTES****In recognition of National Volunteer Week**

**Hon. Mr. Hart:** I rise today to pay tribute to all the Yukon volunteers during National Volunteer Week from

April 15 to 21. National Volunteer Week celebrates the spirit and energy of Canada's volunteers with the theme, "Volunteers grow community".

The recent volunteer participation devoted to hosting the 2007 Canada Winter Games has set a new benchmark across the north. Thousands of hours were dedicated to the games by volunteers of all ages to many diverse roles and tasks, all of which made the games a complete success. The games were a success because of the unwavering commitment of our volunteers. The dedication of all the volunteers was not missed by the many athletes, coaches and fans who travelled from across the nation to be here.

I have received many letters from across Canada expressing appreciation and congratulations to the Yukon for hosting a great Canada Winter Games. These letters pointed out and demonstrated the value of our volunteer effort that was put forth. Their comments articulated appreciation for the volunteers who made their visit one they will remember forever.

The venues were wonderful in every way. It was, however, the volunteers who made it outstanding and memorable for everyone. The orange army of volunteers set a new standard that future games' host societies will strive to meet. Whether they can exceed the efforts of Yukoners remains to be seen. The Yukon has raised the bar. While the games are still fresh in our minds we should not forget the many hundreds of volunteers who, each day, perform a role that is meaningful. The Yukon is truly blessed with citizens who possess the volunteer spirit that makes so many projects and events successful. Volunteers add value to our communities that is beyond calculation. They are performing their important duties in many diverse ways. It is the volunteer coaches who introduce youngsters to the exciting world of soccer, hockey, figure skating or any other number of sporting activities. It is the parents who hold the bake sales, the other fundraisers and help pay for equipment and/or travelling expenses. It is the senior who reads to the hospital patient; it is the engineer who helps to design a playground.

It is also the numerous service organizations who raise funds for a wide range of donations within the community. It is the ordinary people who gather together to pick up the litter and make our communities better places to live. It is the volunteer firefighters who answer the alarm when crisis strikes. It is the people who care for animals in the humane societies. It is also these, and many, many more, who voluntarily perform the tasks that make these events successful, and at the same time they make our communities better places to live.

The Yukon Volunteer Bureau adds value for the many organizations they assist through the year by providing training and other programs designed to encourage volunteerism and holding great events.

To help better support our volunteers and this important work, the Yukon government is supporting the Volunteer Bureau so it can continue to contribute its very worthwhile services.

People from all walks of life and all ages are enriching our lives through their volunteer contributions. As Yukoners, we benefit greatly from the work of our volunteers who freely give of their time, energy, talent and experience, which contributes to a better quality of life for all of us.

I ask all members to rise with me and join in thanking all of the Yukon volunteers for the valuable and much appreciated services that they provide.

**Mr. Mitchell:** I rise today on behalf of the Official Opposition to also recognize National Volunteer Week and our volunteers. The Yukon is largely the special place it is largely due to the effort and work put in by volunteers. Countless Yukoners work within non-government organizations and in many other capacities, such as volunteer fire departments and, in general, just working around the Yukon within our communities to make Yukon a special place.

Most recently there was the 2007 Canada Winter Games, which was an incredible example of how our volunteers come together. From February 23 to March 10, 2007, Whitehorse was honoured to host the first Canada Winter Games north of 60. Athletes and guests arrived from all across Canada, from sea to sea. Volunteers from across the Yukon and, indeed, from other provinces and territories joined with Yukoners to host them. Our compliments go to the host society and their staff for a job well done.

Thank you to the many sponsors, without whom the games would not have succeeded. To all the coaches and managers, we thank you for your dedication and commitment to sports and to youth in the Yukon. To our Yukon athletes from across the territory and to those athletes who visited, we are so proud of you. You have all shown our Yukon heart and embodied the true spirit of the games.

We have raised Yukon's profile for future competitions. Well done, Team Yukon.

For the pan-northern athletes, the exhibition of the Dene and Inuit games were included in the Canada Winter Games for the first time. This was a perfect venue to showcase the culture and traditional games of the Dene and Inuit peoples to the rest of Canada.

To our volunteers, almost 4,000 strong, you have shown our true northern hospitality to the rest of Canada. You were Yukon's goodwill ambassadors. You have helped Yukon leave an indelible impression of a welcoming community upon every visitor. Your contribution is a major reason the 2007 Canada Winter Games were called the best ever by so many athletes and coaches and visitors. To each and every one of you, we give a heartfelt thank you. The strength of one's community is in its citizens, and you have proven we are a strong and successful community.

To the Yukon Volunteer Bureau, which recently celebrated its 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary, we want to thank you and all of your volunteers for the work you do and the services you provide in assisting so many organizations in training and facilitating volunteer work in Yukon.

Thank you.

**Mr. Cardiff:** Mr. Speaker, in this Volunteer Week and Education Week in the Yukon, we in the third party would like to salute volunteers, who are the backbone of non-government and community organizations. Volunteers manage to find time to devote to working behind-the-scenes or in the front lines of hundreds of organizations in our communities that depend on them. Much of their work is done to enhance our lives in sports, social services, education, environmental concerns, fighting diseases and many other fields. Not one of us in the Yukon is left untouched by volunteers in our daily lives. We would like to extend our heartfelt respect and thanks to them.

We would also like to salute those volunteers, especially, who are involved in educating our children, youth and adults. Volunteers are involved in education by coaching sports, assisting special needs children, leading youth groups, teaching literacy skills to adults and in many other ways. They reflect and give meaning to the broad theme of Education Week -- lifelong learning -- and we would also like to take this opportunity to say thanks to them.

#### **In recognition of Education Week**

**Hon. Mr. Rouble:** Mr. Speaker, this week is Education Week in the Yukon, and it is with great pride in our accomplishment and hope for the future that I rise in this House today to pay tribute to Education Week, a time dedicated to celebrating educational opportunities in the territory. The theme of Education Week is "Opening doors to lifelong learning", and I am very impressed with how the Yukon's education community has jumped on board to participate this week, either through open houses or special activities.

While I am here today to pay tribute to Education Week, what it is really all about is the people who deliver and pursue education in the territory rather than a special set of dates on the calendar.

The purpose of Education Week is to celebrate the hard work and dedication of everyone involved in education and to create awareness of educational opportunities available to Yukoners. During this week, many organizations are opening their doors so that Yukoners can find out about the kind of educational opportunities that they have to offer. Schools, school councils, First Nations, Yukon College campuses, the RCMP and non-government organizations that provide educational services and programs to Yukoners will take part in celebrating Education Week.

I urge Yukoners to seek out what interests them to find out more about the opportunities that are out there and to open doors to lifelong learning opportunities.

Many people are involved in education in the territory and it is with great respect and thanks that I would like to acknowledge everyone who is part of our school communities. Each and every one of our public school teachers, educational assistants, secretaries, maintenance staff, vice-principals and principals are committed to their students. Our school counsellors play an integral role in the governance and development of our schools and I wish to express my thanks and gratitude to them as well.

While the public school system has an undeniably big impact on the learning that goes on in our society, learning first begins at home and I would like to acknowledge the parents who are involved in their children's learning because they are the ones who give them the confidence and positive attitude that they then bring to school.

While school-based staff is the public face of education, administrative staff at the Department of Education play a key role in supporting and facilitating the delivery of our education system in the Yukon. They do everything from making sure the school bus schedules are harmonized, to getting engaging and culturally relevant curriculum in our classrooms, to developing policies to protect and support students, to administering apprenticeship programs, to hiring the best teachers in the public school system -- the list goes on and on.

I would like to formally recognize the role that Yukon First Nations play in education; it is also a very important one. I commend the many Yukon First Nation people who are involved in education, including elders, native language instructors, liaison and support workers, representatives on school councils and other education-related bodies, and First Nation leadership.

While, for many, the word "education" means kindergarten to grade 12, learning is really a continuum that spans our entire lives. Formal and informal education opportunities are abundant in the Yukon, and there are several very excellent organizations that support lifelong learning every day. I commend the instructors and the support staff at Yukon College for their hard work, both in Whitehorse and in the communities. This government appreciates the excellence in post-secondary education that they provide.

I would also like to thank the staff and volunteers at the non-government organizations throughout the Yukon that support a variety of educational opportunities for Yukoners. The pursuit of literacy and healthy lifestyles, among other things, are well supported through such organizations.

Finally, and perhaps most important, I would like to thank everyone who is a learner, at whatever stage of life they are at. We all have something to learn in life, and we all have something to teach. When we all walk down the path of lifelong learning, our communities are healthier and more vibrant places to live. Education helps us to get involved, to participate more efficiently and effectively in our family, in our community and in our workplace. Education helps us to get involved and participate and really make life more meaningful.

Whether they are learning basic reading skills, learning to use technology, researching and assembling complex science projects, finding out about healthy living or acquiring new skills to use in the workplace, Yukoners are embracing the idea of lifelong learning. I would like to commend all Yukoners who actively seek opportunities to educate themselves.

I am pleased to pay tribute to Yukoners for their dedication to lifelong learning, and I am pleased to recognize this week as Education Week in the Yukon.

**Mr. Fairclough:** I rise on behalf of the Official Opposition to join with my colleagues in this Legislature to pay tribute to Education Week. Education Week is celebrated this year from April 16 to 20, with the theme, "Opening doors for lifelong learning", as the minister said. There are many activities and events creating awareness of education opportunities in each and every community. Today and tomorrow, 18 young Yukoners will learn about parliamentary democracy and meet with the Speaker, as they did today, and with some of the Members of the Legislative Assembly.

Today, from 4 p.m. to 6 p.m., a community education fair is being held at the Department of Education's open house at 1000 Lewes Boulevard. On Friday, the students of Tantalus School will enjoy reading day, where every student in every class will read for 20 minutes. Parents are encouraged to also join in. The Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation will be hosting an education fair in the community hall in Old Crow. Everyone is welcome. The Nelnah Bessie John School in Beaver Creek will host literacy games.

Mr. Speaker, these are small examples of the many events being held across the territory during Education Week. We encourage all Yukoners to get involved and attend one of the many open house opportunities around the territory.

Partnership in education is important -- partnering of students, parents, professional educators, First Nations and all levels of government. Meaningful partnership, including parental and public participation, results in the highest quality of education in the territory. Education is more than just learning to read and write. Education is developing the whole person, including the intellectual, physical, social, emotional and cultural potential of all students in order to help them become more productive, responsible and self-reliant members of Yukon society.

Our education system must instill in our students a respect for family, community and lifelong learning. Students of today are our leaders of tomorrow. During Education Week, the tributes belong to those who make it happen -- the students, the teachers, the parents, the volunteers and the citizens throughout the Yukon who all contribute to education by their leadership and example of lifelong learning.

Mahsi' cho. Thank you.

### **In recognition of Law Day and Law Week**

**Hon. Ms. Horne:** I rise today to pay tribute to Law Week. This year is special because Canada is celebrating the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the proclamation of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. Law Day is an annual event recognizing the anniversary of the proclamation of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* signed on April 17, 1982.

Law Day is organized by the Canadian Bar Association. This year's theme is "Access to justice". The Canadian Bar Association, through its Law Day activities, offers the public an opportunity to learn about the law and legal system. Law Day in the Yukon will be celebrated through the 17<sup>th</sup> annual Law Day charity fun run and walk, which will take place

tomorrow, Friday, April 20. This run has been ongoing since 1991, and up to 326 have participated in the past. Last year only 89 runners came out, and I sincerely hope our numbers are up this year.

The fun run starts outside the Law Courts building on Second Avenue and follows a six-kilometre loop around town. It costs \$20 for an adult and \$15 for a child. This includes a t-shirt and refreshments from the run sponsor, Tim Horton's, after the race.

The proceeds for this year's charity fun run will be donated to CAIRS, the Committee on Abuse in Residential Schools Society. I would like to congratulate the volunteers who make the Law Day charity fun run possible. I would also like to encourage all members of this House and Yukoners to take part in the run if they can.

Günilschish.

**Mr. Cardiff:** I also would like to rise on behalf of the third party to pay tribute to National Law Day.

National Law Day is in recognition of the anniversary of the proclamation of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. As we just heard, we're celebrating the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Our *Canadian Charter* means that all of us enjoy rights to equality under the law. We are given the rights to freedom of religion, expression, association and peaceful assembly. We are proud on this side of the House to have been responsible for the Yukon human rights legislation, despite great resistance to it. Our Yukon Human Rights Commission works very hard to uphold the values that we all hold dear. We encourage everyone to take part in activities celebrating the law and commemorating our *Charter of Rights and Freedoms*.

Thank you.

### In recognition of Senator Ione Christensen

**Mr. Mitchell:** I rise today on behalf of all members to honour the career of Senator Ione Christensen. Ione Christensen was raised in Fort Selkirk, where her father, G.I. Cameron, was the RCMP constable. She started school in Fort Selkirk's one-room school and completed her secondary school studies in Whitehorse. After graduating, she went on to college, where she earned a business administration degree. From 1958 to 1967, Ione worked for the Government of Yukon in a variety of increasingly senior positions. Between 1967 and 1971, she worked at home, caring for her preschool children.

Ione served Yukon in many ways. She served as justice of the peace, a juvenile court judge and as chair of the City of Whitehorse Planning Board. Ione was elected to two terms as Mayor of Whitehorse, during which she served as the chair of the Association of Yukon Communities and as a director with the Federation of Canadian Municipalities.

Ione was appointed Commissioner of the Yukon in 1979. She later resigned that post to defend the principles of self-determination that eventually were confirmed in the revised *Yukon Act*. From 1980 to 1986, Ione was the president of Hospitality North Ltd., during which time she also served as a director of Petro-Canada, a director of Pan-Arctic Oil

Ltd., and chair of the Yukon Placer Mining Guidelines Review Committee.

From 1984 to 1989, Ione worked in the Whitehorse office of Energy, Mines and Resources Canada, and also served as vice-chair of the Yukon Economic Council. From 1989 to 1994, Ms. Christensen was chair of the Yukon government's Advisory Committee on Waste Management and she also served as executive director of the Crossroads alcohol and drug treatment centre.

In the early 1990s, Ione served as executive director of the Yukon Foundation, executive director of the Yukon Outfitters Association, and a partner of Cameras North. In 1994, Ms. Christensen became a member of the Order of Canada. In September 1999, she was appointed to the Senate of Canada, representing the Yukon, where she served until her recent retirement in December 2006.

Over the years as our Yukon senator, Ms. Christensen worked on numerous important issues including nuclear energy, Canada's water supply, global warming, issues surrounding First Nation youth in urban Canada, First Nation economic development, fetal alcohol spectrum disorder, cruelty to animals and, of course, she worked to help obtain the funding for the 2007 Canada Winter Games.

Perhaps her most important work, which will have an impact on Yukoners for years to come, was the senator's sponsoring of amendments to the *Yukon Act*. This is our constitution, and since 2001 we have more or less been masters in our own house because of the passage of this historic legislation.

Another major project in recent years was the senator's work on helping to renew the Yukon Placer Authorization. This project has been ongoing since late 2002. Ione grew up with firsthand knowledge of placer mining, so she knows the importance of this industry to our economy and, indeed, to our identity. We all thank her for her great work on this project.

Ms. Christensen concluded her time in the Senate with a final statement on December 4, 2006, addressing the current federal government's cuts to literacy programs.

As our Yukon senator, Ione travelled extensively throughout the Yukon attending functions in each and every community. Even though Ione has retired from the Senate, she is continuing to serve the public having accepted an appointment to sit on the Legislative Assembly's Electoral Boundaries Review Commission. I am sure we will soon see her travelling throughout the Yukon, visiting communities and seeing many lifelong friends.

On behalf of this House and all Yukoners, we thank you, Ione, for your dedication, your commitment and your many contributions to Yukon and our way of life. Best wishes to you and your family. Enjoy your well-deserved retirement.

*Applause*

### In recognition of Canada's veterans

**Hon. Mr. Fentie:** I rise today to pay tribute to Canada's veterans, in particular those who served at Vimy Ridge. It has been 90 years since the major historic event, the Battle of Vimy Ridge, took place in northern France. For weeks

before the battle, Allied forces prepared to take this heavily fortified enemy stronghold, and at 5:30 in the morning on April 9, 1917, four Canadian divisions stormed the ridge. Three days later the Canadians controlled the entire ridge. It was an important victory for the Allies and for the young nation of Canada. It is said it was a time in history when Canada truly came of age as a nation, but it came at great cost -- 3,600 Canadians were killed and another 7,000 wounded.

Today we pay tribute to the supreme courage and sacrifice of our forefathers who bade farewell to family and friends. They joined the Canadian forces and ventured far from home to make a difference. The debt we owe to our veterans can only be repaid through active remembrance and reflection on their priceless contribution. Today we pay tribute and give thanks for those who gave so much.

Thank you.

**Mr. Inverarity:** I rise on behalf of the Official Opposition to mark the 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Battle of Vimy Ridge. The Vimy memorial is to honour the sacrifices of Canadian troops in France during the First World War: 3,600 Canadian soldiers died and 7,000 were wounded in the service of their country during the four-day assault on Vimy Ridge, which began on April 9, 1917.

Canadians helped turn the tide of battle when they won a major victory at Vimy Ridge and, as the Premier stated, many historians feel this battle was truly one of the turning points that established Canada as an independent nation.

Approximately 100,000 people attended the rededication ceremony of Canada's historic site in France. Some 3,600 students from all over Canada, including five students from F.H. Collins and their history teacher, were also in attendance at Vimy Ridge. Each student had been assigned one Canadian soldier who had died at Vimy, and each student created a tribute, be it an essay, a letter, a poem, a painting, or even a song to his or her soldier.

In Whitehorse, a gathering was held on Saturday, April 14, at the Whitehorse cenotaph, where more than 150 people, including a group of visiting reservists, stood in remembrance to mark the anniversary of Vimy Ridge. Wars have touched the lives of Canadians of all ages. Fathers, sons, daughters and sweethearts were killed in action, and many of those who returned were forever changed. We all owe a debt of gratitude to the soldiers who fought so gallantly and sacrificed their lives for freedom and families that were left behind.

Today we also honour the men and women who serve in our current military. For all the conflicts being fought in far-off lands, there is much to remember. Like the veterans of Vimy Ridge, they are the men and women who serve wherever they are needed. They face difficult situations with bravery. They bring honour to themselves, to their loved ones and to their country. They are the ordinary Canadians who make extraordinary sacrifices.

In closing, I quote from King George VI: "Without freedom, there can be no enduring peace, and without peace, no enduring freedom."

### In recognition of Earth Day

**Hon. Mr. Fentie:** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to what is a very important annual event -- Earth Day for 2007.

With April, our thoughts finally turn away from a long, cold and indeed an exceptionally snowy winter, and we start to look forward to the coming summer. Yukoners are famous for talking about the weather, but never before have our weather chats carried with them such concern for the future of our planet. This coming Sunday marks international Earth Day, a day that is ours not just to talk about the weather and display our concern for our future, but a day to put our concern into action.

This year's Earth Day literature bears the slogan, "Take the next step". This theme is more than appropriate, because the time for talking and worrying about the environment and climate change has come to an end.

Here in Yukon, it gives me great pride to say that we have turned the corner and begun to turn climate change initiatives into real action. Our government has been striving for innovation and adapting to climate change through the establishment of the climate change research centre and the innovation cluster. We will continue to impress on the federal government the importance of this centre's work.

We are also committed to increased monitoring, data collection and research on how climate change is affecting our land, water, fish and wildlife. We are endeavouring not only to plan for the future, but to keep climate change in mind in our everyday operations.

In the past year, we have succeeded in converting 10 percent of our fleet vehicles to high-efficiency compacts and subcompacts, reducing our emissions here in the Yukon. This year, we will unveil the climate change action plan, based on our already completed climate change strategy. We have committed to take the next step.

We encourage Yukoners to join with us. Celebrate Earth Day with one of the many activities in your community or area. If you are in Whitehorse, there is a full day of food, education and fun at the Mount McIntyre Recreation Centre. This is based on the theme of celebrating actions on climate change. There are also activities on the Whitehorse waterfront, at Marsh Lake's Swan Haven and out in our communities. Join with us and participate. When the day is over, remember to "take the next step".

**Mr. Edzerza:** I rise on behalf of the third party to pay tribute to Earth Day, April 22, 2007. We use this day to raise awareness of environmental concerns. Despite nearly universal support for the values involved in environmental issues, there are individuals, corporations and governments who resist acting to protect our environment. They stall on taking action or they reject attempts at solutions to our most severe environmental problems, like climate change.

They even take steps that degrade the earth by supporting development that can devastate our land, our water and our air. Active involvement in response to Earth Day and what it represents means more than a nod and a nice word once a year. It means more than simply monitoring pollution, detailing the crisis we are in or looking at ways to mitigate the damage. We look to our leaders to protect and enhance our air, our water, our forests and our wildlife on this sacred planet. We look to them to demonstrate active involvement in our environment and its biodiversity.

Every day of the year is Earth Day. We trust that those who can make the daily decisions about our earth do so with loving hands. After all, it is our responsibility to protect Mother Earth, not destroy her.

**Mr. Elias:** I rise today on behalf of the Official Opposition to pay tribute to Earth Day. April 22, Earth Day, is the largest, most celebrated environmental event worldwide. More than six million Canadians join 500 million people in over 180 countries in staging events and projects to address local environmental issues and celebrating the importance of our planet's natural systems. This year's theme is a "Call for action on climate change", which is a continuation of a three-year campaign launched on Earth Day 2006 to educate consumers, corporations and governments worldwide on the urgent need to take concrete steps on climate change.

It is critical to the future of Canada's ecosystems to educate our young people about wild plants and animals and their role in our environment. I would like to recognize all Yukoners, especially the schoolchildren, who are participating in Earth Day. Virtually every school child takes part in an Earth Day event -- an important date on the school activities calendar. With our young people reminding us to care for the earth, there is hope for the future.

I would like to acknowledge the dedication and hard work that Yukoners involved in environmental organizations in the territory contribute every day. Many events are being held in communities throughout the Yukon. The Yukon Conservation Society will be holding their Earth Day celebration at Mount McIntyre Recreation Centre on Sunday, April 22, from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. You are encouraged to drop by and participate in the biodiversity games, interpretive hikes, bike rides, workshops and activities and listen to their presentation and guest speakers. They will also feature displays and teach you how you can take action on climate change.

Earth Day is a celebration that continues to bring environmental initiatives to the forefront, a day to celebrate the wonder of life on our planet and protect the balance of nature. We must protect our oceans, preserve our waterways and wetlands, and protect our endangered species and our forests.

I encourage all Yukoners to be responsible environmental citizens and respectful of our northern environment. Let us work hard to achieve local solutions to improve the ailing state of our world's environment and become better stewards of our land, water and wildlife.

As we celebrate Earth Day on April 22, 2007, I encourage Yukoners to renew our commitment to protecting the environment and to leaving our children and grandchildren with a legacy of clean water, clean air and natural beauty. Let us pay tribute to our Earth, our mother.

Thank you. Mahsi' cho.

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

## INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

**Speaker:** The Chair would like to draw members' attention to the presence in the public gallery of the participants in the 2007 Yukon Youth Parliament and their supervisors. Welcome.

*Applause*

**Hon. Mr. Hart:** I would like to ask my fellow colleagues in the Legislature to help me welcome the grades 11 and 12 Civics class of Vanier Catholic Secondary School and their teacher, Mark Connell, here in the Legislature today. Thank you.

*Applause*

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

Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

Reports of committees.

Petitions.

Are there bills to be introduced?

## INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

### Bill No. 4: Introduction and First Reading

**Hon. Mr. Fentie:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that Bill No. 4, entitled *Third Appropriation Act, 2006-07*, be now introduced and read a first time.

**Speaker:** It has been moved by the Hon. Premier that Bill No. 4, entitled *Third Appropriation Act, 2006-07*, be now introduced and read a first time.

*Motion for introduction and first reading of Bill No. 4 agreed to*

### Bill No. 5: Introduction and First Reading

**Hon. Mr. Fentie:** I move that Bill No. 5, entitled *Interim Supply Appropriation Act, 2007-08*, be now introduced and read a first time.

**Speaker:** It has been moved by the Hon. Premier that Bill No. 5, entitled *Interim Supply Appropriation Act, 2007-08*, be now introduced and read a first time.

*Motion for introduction and first reading of Bill No. 5 agreed to*

### Bill No. 6: Introduction and First Reading

**Hon. Mr. Fentie:** I move that Bill No. 6, entitled *First Appropriation Act, 2007-08*, be now introduced and read a first time.

**Speaker:** It has been moved by the Hon. Premier that Bill No. 6, entitled *First Appropriation Act, 2007-08*, be now introduced and read a first time.

*Motion for introduction and first reading of Bill No. 6 agreed to*

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

## NOTICES OF MOTION

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** I rise today to give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House establish an all-party select committee on anti-smoking legislation with a mandate including touring the Yukon to consult with the public on legislative options for banning smoking in public places; and

THAT the motion establishing such a committee be tabled and called for debate during the 2007 spring sitting of the Legislative Assembly, thus enabling consultations to be carried out in 2007.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to take immediate action to address the serious environmental and economic effects of climate change on the Yukon.

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

THAT this House urges the Yukon government to commence each spring sitting prior to the March 31 end of the fiscal year to allow members the opportunity to review and pass interim spending plans, instead of using special warrants without debate.

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

THAT it is the opinion of this House that the Yukon government should announce a schedule for the release of the education reform project report and, further, indicate the time frame where all interested stakeholders will have an opportunity to have input into what they want their education system to be.

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

THAT it is the opinion of this House that

(1) the sexual and physical abuse suffered by aboriginal children in residential schools and the consequent disruption of their families, communities and cultures are tragedies that Canada must be accountable for;

(2) apologies have been made on behalf of Canadians by the Prime Minister to Japanese families interned in the Second World War, to the Chinese for the head tax levied upon them and to Maher Arar for the imprisonment and torture he suffered;

(3) to help foster a new and positive future with aboriginal peoples in Canada and for all parties to begin to heal, it is incumbent on Canada to apologize for the abuse suffered by them in residential schools funded by Canada;

4) the Minister of Northern Affairs and Northern Development and the Prime Minister have refused to offer any

apology as part of a compensation package negotiated recently; and

THAT this House urges the Yukon government to join with many churches, MPs, MLAs and aboriginal organizations in urging the Minister of Indian Affairs and the Prime Minister to offer an immediate public apology on behalf of all Canadians to all aboriginal peoples in Canada for the abuse that took place in residential schools in the Yukon and the rest of Canada.

Thank you.

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

THAT this House urges the Yukon government to move forward without delay to implement the Kyoto Accord in the Yukon as a significant step in a more comprehensive strategy to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the Yukon.

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

THAT it is the opinion of this House that

1) changes to the *Workers' Compensation Act* have been under review for more than four years, which is much longer than necessary;

2) Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board stakeholders recently sent a letter to the minister unanimously urging him to expedite the process by bringing forward nine specific changes for the Legislature to consider in the fall of 2007; and

THAT this House urges the minister responsible for the Yukon Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board to bring forward act amendments in the fall legislative sitting that address the nine priority changes that stakeholders have identified and to direct the *Workers' Compensation Act Review Panel* to complete its work without incurring any additional costs and without any further delay.

**Speaker:** Are there any further notices of motion?  
Is there a statement by a minister?

This then brings us to Question Period.

## QUESTION PERIOD

### Question re: Special warrants

**Mr. Mitchell:** A disturbing characteristic of many second-term governments is that they become arrogant and dictatorial. They think they know what is best for people, and they make decisions without asking anyone's opinion but their own. Sadly, this is already the case with this Yukon Party government, and we are only a few months into their mandate.

Let's begin with an example, Mr. Speaker. On March 16, the Yukon Party government requested almost \$300 million in spending authority by special warrants. In other words, they spent \$300 million -- almost a third of the entire year's budget -- with no public scrutiny; no comment or debate whatsoever from the people's elected representatives here in the Legislature. It is arrogant and dictatorial. It also demon-

strates how little respect the Premier has for this House and for the elected representatives in it.

Why does the Premier have so little respect for this institution that he can't even bother to come to this Legislature to ask for permission to spend \$300 million?

**Hon. Mr. Fentie:** Well, frankly, that is why we are today. We are here to table the fiscal budget for the year 2007-08, and thoroughly debate it.

The member made a comment about disrespect. The mechanism of special warrants is nothing of the sort. Frankly, does the member assert that paying employees' wages is disrespectful? Does the member assert that providing Whitehorse Hospital Corporation its required resources to continue to deliver health care to Yukoners is disrespectful? Does the member assert that providing non-government organizations that are out on the front lines each and every day delivering programs and services to those in need is disrespectful?

Mr. Speaker, the special warrant is for nothing more than non-discretionary spending. If the Leader of the Official Opposition has issue with that, then tell Yukoners where they would have spent employees' wages, where they would have spent hospital monies, where they would have spent NGOs' needs?

**Mr. Mitchell:** I think we just heard the Premier say, "Better late than never." It is better to beg forgiveness than to ask permission. It is a fine example for the secondary school students here today.

A few years ago when the Premier bypassed the Legislature in similar fashion, he described it as an effective way to manage the public's money. It is effective all right, but it is also arrogant, undemocratic and completely unnecessary. There is no reason to bypass the Legislature. All the Premier had to do was call the Legislature back before March 30 and get interim spending authority to see it through until the full budget was passed. Did the Premier do that? No, he arrogantly refused to cooperate with the opposition parties. He blames the Canada Winter Games for his inability to table his budget on time. As the editor of the *Whitehorse Star* once said of the Yukon Party government's spending habits, "Warrants are meant to be relied on during emergencies. They were not designed as a mammoth vault to be exploited for political expediency."

Why does the Premier think he doesn't have to come into the Legislature to get approval to spend \$300 million of the public's money? Why does he treat this Legislature with such little respect?

**Hon. Mr. Fentie:** I'll not even engage with the Leader of the Official Opposition on the meaning of respect for this institution. The member has put forward a lot of adjectives. I believe he is talking about fiscal management, so I'll focus in on the adjective, "effective".

The finances of the territory under the Yukon Party government's watch have been dramatically improved. We have been very effective in our fiscal management and prudent on behalf of Yukoners. It wasn't that long ago, under a Liberal government, that we were getting qualified audits. We were

not fully reporting our liabilities to the Yukon public, and we had a mere \$400 million to \$500 million to invest in this territory. That is no longer the case. We are no longer getting qualified audits. We have a healthy financial position. Our budgets are hundreds of millions invested into Yukon to create stimulus, provide programs and service delivery, enhance education, improve our health care system, address substance abuse — the list goes on and on — protect our pristine environment. This is effective fiscal management, and special warrants are a good, effective tool.

**Mr. Mitchell:** Well, Mr. Speaker, it usually takes a second-term government a couple of years to reach this stage of arrogance, where it just thinks it can do whatever it feels like. It has taken this government only a few months.

The Yukon Party government has bypassed the Legislature by using special warrants worth \$300 million. This is not the first time they've done it and, from what I hear, I'm sure it won't be the last. One of the main duties we have as MLAs is to decide how to spend taxpayers' money. It's our job to weigh different options and decide how best we can serve the public. We should do that in front of the public, as we are doing today. Instead, this Yukon Party government makes these decisions in secret with no public debate. \$300 million has already been spent without public discussion.

Why does the Premier not think it's important for the public's representatives to debate how taxpayers' money should be spent before it has been spent?

**Hon. Mr. Fentie:** I would encourage the Leader of the Official Opposition to do exactly that. Let's look back over the last four years and how the Official Opposition in this House has debated the public's money.

In debating the public's budget, we have experienced on countless occasions, in every budget sitting, endless discussion and little debate and, at the end of the sitting, by agreement in this House, hundreds of millions of dollars were passed in this Assembly without one word of discussion. So I would submit, Mr. Speaker, that it's the members opposite who have to sharpen up on their debate, commitment, and responsibility to the Yukon public so we have the opportunity to debate not only the non-discretionary part of our budget, but all of the budget in great detail.

It's a big budget that is once again heavily investing in Yukon's future, whether it be our social fabric, our environment or our economy. We are investing as Yukoners asked us to invest in the last election. This is not arrogance; this is responsibility. This is not arrogance; this is hard work. This is not arrogance; this is the demonstration of commitment to the public.

#### **Question re: Budget announcements**

**Mr. Mitchell:** Mr. Speaker, I have some questions for the Premier about how little consideration this government has for the Legislature. A fundamental part of the democratic process is to announce spending decisions and the budget first in the Legislature. This has been the practice of governments across Canada for many, many years, and several Finance ministers have resigned in this country over the leaking of budget information before those plans have been



announced in their legislatures. Under the Yukon Party government, this has not been the case. Over the last few weeks, we have seen over \$20 million in announcements outside this Legislature. This government has blatantly disregarded the parliamentary practice of budget secrecy, and in the process I believe they have cheapened the democratic process. Why does the Premier have such little respect for this institution that he can't be bothered to make budget announcements here first?

**Hon. Mr. Fentie:** I know the Official Opposition is really anxious about the government engaging with its public, because the public is talking about what the government is doing and what their government intends to do, not talking about what the opposition wants the public to talk about. In most cases, that is to criticize the government.

Mr. Speaker, this has nothing to do with respect for this Assembly. This has everything to do with a government providing its public as much information as possible. That is our job. That is our responsibility. This institution is one venue for that to take place.

For it really to work, we need a constructive debate from the members opposite, not what we've experienced to date. We're here to constructively debate this budget. It is a budget that is tabled in the public interest. The members opposite, if they have good ideas, if they have options that they think money should be spent on, should bring them forward. This is not about respect for an assembly. It's about what we have to do as elected officials.

**Mr. Mitchell:** Mr. Speaker, there is a simple way to demonstrate that the Premier and this government have respect for the Legislature. They would not make any budget announcements outside the House until the budget has first been released here in the Legislature, in front of the people's elected representatives.

In the government's arrogance, they seem to have already forgotten whose money they are spending. When the government makes budget announcements outside of the House well before they happen inside the House, there is a danger that the representative role of each and every member of this House is undermined, respect for the institution is diminished and our Legislature is rendered irrelevant. Parliamentary democracy is not well-served by the government conducting a one-sided public relations event on the budget well in advance of members having the opportunity to hold the government accountable for the budget within this Chamber. Why does the Premier put public relations ahead of respect for this Legislative Assembly?

**Hon. Mr. Fentie:** I know that the member opposite really struggles with this particular aspect of good governance by which we engage the public in all possible ways we can. I am really encouraged to hear something else: the member has just stated that it is the public's money. It wasn't that long ago that they were accusing us of simply spending federal largesse. I am really pleased that the Official Opposition has grasped what this country is all about in the fair sharing of its wealth.

Yes, it is the public's money. We are informing the public of exactly where we are spending it and where we intend to spend it. We have done nothing different from any other government in this country, including, by the way, the Liberals.

**Mr. Mitchell:** Earlier this week, the Minister of Education was up at Yukon College signing over \$500,000 in funding that has not yet been announced and certainly has not been debated in this Legislature. It is bad enough that the Premier shows no respect for this institution, but now his ministers are following in his footsteps. In our view, the idea of announcing major parts of the budget outside the House demonstrates contempt for our political heritage and our elected institutions.

In a similar case in another Canadian jurisdiction, this practice was described as "a nearly mindless disregard for the Legislature". Why does the Premier, in his arrogant way, continue to run this place like a banana republic --

**Speaker:** Order please.

#### Speaker's statement

**Speaker:** Sit down, please. The honourable member can say what he wants about the government as a collective, but when you start pointing out individuals as arrogant, that is against our Standing Orders. I would ask the honourable member not to do that.

You have the floor.

**Mr. Mitchell:** Why is this government so arrogant so as to continue to run the Yukon as if it were a banana republic where rules and traditions mean nothing?

**Hon. Mr. Fentie:** I would caution the Leader of the Official Opposition not to confuse hard work and getting things done with arrogance. If anything demonstrates that hard work can get things done, it's the recent history of this territory. I need not get into that detail.

I will focus on the member's argument. The member was standing here on the floor of the Legislature saying that we should not pre-announce anything; it's a big secret and it must be brought here first. Yet they stand up and support the Kelowna accord where a \$5.2-billion announcement was made without one penny being in a budget. Mr. Speaker, the member can't have it both ways.

#### Question re: Kyoto Accord

**Mr. Hardy:** I think I am going to ask questions about some of my favourite topics: health and the environment.

It has now been almost a decade since the Government of Canada signed the Kyoto Accord to reduce greenhouse gases. In spite of the foot-dragging by two different federal governments on implementing this agreement, other Canadian provinces and territories have adopted implementation plans. The Yukon, of course, has not.

Will the Minister of Environment be coming forward with an implementation plan this sitting or will he continue to act as if there is no need for the Yukon to take action?

**Hon. Mr. Fentie:** First, I would like to extend a welcome to the Member for Whitehorse Centre, welcoming him back to our Assembly and wishing him and his family, of course, the very best.

But I would point out to the member that this government has taken action. This government has tabled a climate change strategy. The government is in the process and inviting all members opposite to join and participate in the development and finalization of the strategic action plan to implement our climate change strategy.

Furthermore, I have to point out that Kyoto and its targets are one thing, but the Yukon's emission factor is very limited. Our problem, in most cases, is the impact of climate change -- this global phenomenon -- and what it's doing to our wildlife, our environment, and so on. So we are also focused on adaptation. I think that's an important part of our strategy overall.

Yes, we will continue to reduce our emissions. The recent announcement about fleet vehicles and reducing the harmful emissions from that area is one example, and we intend to do much more. Overall, we are focused on results: emission reduction, adaptation, innovation. We are focused much less on partisan debate but more on the results for this.

**Mr. Hardy:** To be really frank, the actions taken so far are going to have very little impact. We need to take much more drastic action. We need to recognize the seriousness of the position we as a species are in.

As recently as yesterday, the federal Environment minister was raising all sorts of alarms about the economic impact of Kyoto on Canadian industry. I hope this minister isn't being misled into believing we shouldn't proceed with the implementation of Kyoto because of concerns by lobbyists for Ontario businesses and industries or the tar sands of Alberta.

Moving ahead on Kyoto should be just a first step toward a comprehensive strategy for dealing with climate change, and it is going to take a lot more than what has been suggested so far. Yukon could lead by example as it has done in many other areas.

Will the minister tell us exactly when his government will have an effective, comprehensive climate change action plan in place for the territory? Does he have a deadline on that?

**Hon. Mr. Fentie:** We have already implemented the strategy itself, and it has been made public -- very much a part of our overall approach to this global phenomenon. We are in the process of finalizing the strategic action plan. We recently convened a major environmental forum -- the first ever in the Yukon -- to engage with stakeholders, professionals, scientists and others to contribute to our way forward in dealing with climate change.

We are going to update and modernize our database for a reason that is obvious: so that we have a better understanding and we are more informed on what impacts we are experiencing and what we can do to address those impacts. Here in the Yukon we will do everything we can. Globally, much more must be done, and I would at any point joint forces and lend my voice to the third party's in ensuring that

globally we're recognizing that more must be done. We will not dictate to Canada. Canada, as they said, will bring forward their plan. Let us not forget that the former Liberal government for years trumpeted the Kyoto Accord while Canada's emission factor rose by some 27 percent.

**Mr. Hardy:** Well, I won't disagree with the minister in regard to the inactivity of the former Liberal government when it came to implementing Kyoto. It sat on a desk for over seven years, but what I'm talking about is what's happening in Yukon, what kind of leadership we can give in the Yukon, and what people are looking for in regard to what is happening in the environment, what is happening with air quality, what is happening in our food chains, what is happening in our communities, what is happening with our health and how we're connected to it. I would really like to know if the minister will put a greater degree of resources into research and study of what is actually happening in the north. Will he lobby very much to have a centre built up here to continue that research?

**Hon. Mr. Fentie:** The short answer, Mr. Speaker, to the Leader of the Third Party, is yes, unequivocally yes. We are going to invest significantly in research, and all Yukoners are aware that that is a major plank in our dealing with climate change. But we want to enhance awareness and understanding of climate change and its impacts on Yukon, its people and its economy. We want to reduce and will reduce our emissions through more efficiency and, of course, a focus on hydro; build Yukon environmental, social and economic systems that are able to adapt to this global phenomenon. Of course, we will continue to strive forward so that Yukon is a northern leader for applied climate change research and innovation. That work and process has already begun. Some of those investments we will touch on in this budget as it relates to the collection of data and modernizing our database, which is very important.

#### **Question re: Smoking-ban legislation**

**Mr. Hardy:** Mr. Speaker, on November 27 last year, the Minister of Health and Social Services told this House that the government has not ruled out the possibility of developing smoking legislation for the territory at some point. The minister went on to say in his own words, "However, it is not the appropriate time to do so." Mr. Speaker, the Yukon is the only jurisdiction in all of Canada that has not passed legislation to restrict smoking in enclosed public places. Will the minister finally acknowledge that this time is an appropriate time to take action; and if not, will he tell this House when he thinks it will be appropriate?

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** I thank the Leader of the Third Party for his question. I of course welcome him back to the Assembly and wish him and his family the very best.

With regard to the member's question, as the member will note, earlier this afternoon I tabled a motion proposing the establishment of a select committee of members of the Legislative Assembly to tour the Yukon and discuss with Yukoners legislative options for implementing a ban on smoking in public places.

We share the member's concern about the impacts of tobacco. In fact I would remind the member opposite that this is about the latest step in a series of events that have led to this. Over the past three years, we have invested nearly \$1 million in new money in tobacco reduction and prevention activities within the Department of Health and Social Services.

**Mr. Hardy:** Every day that goes by that we don't have a ban in place is a tragedy. That is the honest truth.

There are times when leaders have to lead. A true leader is one who leads from the front and not from the rear. The minister has an opportunity to show this kind of leadership and I hope to see it.

Smoking has been identified as a leading cause of preventable death in Canada. It takes 45,000 Canadian lives each year. It costs our health system millions of dollars. Yukoners have the shameful distinction of having the highest percentage of smokers in Canada. A growing number of organizations, including municipal governments, are calling for a territory-wide smoking ban. That is the public calling for it.

Will the minister make a commitment to do whatever it takes to have smoking legislation in place and in force no later than June 1, 2008?

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** I appreciate the member's question, and certainly I think it's important to point out that both the health information and public perception related to smoking have changed and evolved over time. It was not so many years ago that it was quite commonplace for individuals at business meetings and coming into their offices, back in the 1950s, to be offered a cigarette from the silver case on the desk. It was considered rude not to do so. This has evolved over time to the removal of smoking from areas such as airplanes and, gradually, from public places. This has now occurred. It is now occurring nationwide. We agree that we are committed to moving forward on this. In fact, I would remind the member that all government-owned facilities have, for quite some time now, been smoke-free and will continue to be so.

We will take the next step. We are committed to moving forward on legislation banning smoking in public places, but we think it is important that we have members opposite participate in this committee. There are Yukoners who have concerns about the impacts of this. We think it's only fair to listen to them and consider what, if any, changes should be made based on those concerns within the legislative options.

As far as the timelines noted by the member, I think it is a target to shoot for, but as a collaborative process we will have to work with them on it, as well.

**Mr. Hardy:** Mr. Speaker, I would suggest that we pass a bill that we will be introducing in the Legislative Assembly, and then do the public consultation on the regulations, because the minister himself has admitted that there is going to be a smoking ban. That's already a given. Let's move forward, get the bill passed this sitting and then we will totally support consultation for the regulations.

I'd like to broaden the question a little bit though. Smoking is not the only environmental factor that contributes to

some of the most serious illnesses affecting Yukon people. Air quality in general, especially in buildings, is a very real concern. The City of Whitehorse has a motion on the Order Paper for next month's Association of Yukon Communities convention calling for Yukon-wide air quality standards. Yesterday, the president of the Yukon Registered Nurses Association made similar calls for air quality standards. This is clearly another idea whose time has come.

Will the minister direct his department to start developing air quality standards for the territory in the same manner that water quality standards were developed recently?

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** I think what should be pointed out is that in addition to our commitment to move forward on anti-smoking legislation, a review of environmental health regulations is going on right now, and we're taking a look at that to ensure that they are up to date, modern and reflective of that. As far as issues, though, about standards of air, there are certainly linkages to other departments such as Environment in this area, and we will continue working on this. The thing that I would urge members to recognize is that when governments move forward, one of the things officials do is take a look at other jurisdictions to see what is done and what the impacts of certain legislative provisions have been. We want to ensure that we are reflecting best practices and not repeating a mistake that has been made in another jurisdiction through not having done our due diligence. This is a step at a time, and I would suggest to the member opposite that the next step is moving forward here on anti-smoking legislation, and we certainly hope that the members will join with us in an all-party committee to tour the territory, hear Yukoners' concerns, determine if any changes are necessary to address those concerns and then ultimately lead to the tabling of legislation at the earliest opportunity.

As I have stated in a motion, we would certainly like to see, with the opposition's participation, the consultation done in 2007.

#### **Question re: Budget announcements**

**Mr. Mitchell:** I have some more questions for the Premier about how little respect this government has shown for the Legislature we are meeting in today.

The Yukon Party government decided this spring to bypass the Legislature and spend \$300 million through special warrants. Then they decided to make \$20 million of spending announcements outside of this House before even asking this Legislature to approve the funding. It makes a mockery of the entire process. I will ask the Premier again: when is this government going to begin showing the smallest bit of respect for the political institutions and practices that are at the heart of our political system?

**Hon. Mr. Fentie:** This is an endless argument because it is a matter of the member's opinion, but I can assure the member, all members of this House, Yukoners and anyone else who cares to listen that this government has the greatest respect for this institution and the democratic process. I think that is plain when you consider how Yukon governments and the evolution of responsible government have taken place in this territory. This is not an issue of disrespect

of anything, and I said to the member opposite earlier: don't confuse hard work and getting things done with disrespect or arrogance or some other opinion the member may have. I would urge the member to move along to some constructive debate.

The budget is before the House. The member can debate the budget at great length. The member can, should the member choose, come forward with options and different directions for investment. We are maintaining a direction in investment and budgeting that began in 2002. I think Yukoners are comfortable with that. Our fiscal position is stronger, our investments are getting more done, and we will continue that approach.

**Mr. Mitchell:** I am just going to take a moment, for the clarification of the students who are here today, to remind the Premier, as he well knows, that we can't ask questions about the budget in Question Period today, and I assure him we will be asking questions about it in the near future.

This morning the Premier told radio listeners that he would take every opportunity to inform the public about the spending plans the government has in order to keep them informed. He simply doesn't care whether they are made here in the Legislature first or not. To the extent that these statements imply that parliamentary institutions and processes tend to interfere with the government's message to the public, such statements tend to reflect poorly on those institutions and processes.

When the government or any member claims that a budget presentation is needed outside the House, well before it happens inside the House in order to communicate directly with the people or because of a perceived flaw in a parliamentary institution, it cheapens the importance of the institutions themselves. Why does this government persist in demeaning this institution?

**Hon. Mr. Fentie:** We could really dig into this, because I could list a number of examples that a former Liberal government announced in the public long before any budget was even constructed. In fact, they had to call an election, Mr. Speaker. But I am not going to do that. I am here today and this government is here today to table its budget and begin what we would hope is a constructive debate. This is a large budget in all its facets. It is a budget that is investing in a quality of life for Yukoners. It's a budget that is investing in the protection of our environment. It is a budget that is investing in diversifying and strengthening Yukon's economy, and it is a budget that invests heavily in the practice of good governance.

Now, if the member has a dispute with all of that, that would be the member's opinion. We will continue to inform our public with every means at our disposal.

**Mr. Mitchell:** Mr. Speaker, I do believe that it all comes down to arrogance. This government doesn't care about process or rules or decorum. All that matters is public relations and politics. It's a sad statement on the priorities of this government. It's also a sad reflection of what this government thinks of the importance of the Yukon Legislative Assembly.

I will ask the Premier the question in a different way. We have, perhaps, four more years of this government bringing forward budgets. Will this Premier and his government show respect for our institutions by introducing those budgets in this Legislature first and end the practice of using special warrants as a matter of convenience every time they want to spend the public's money? Will he commit to doing that?

**Hon. Mr. Fentie:** Quickly, I will say that we will commit to investing the Yukon public's money in the Yukon public interest. We have in the past and we will continue to do so. The member made mention of decorum, and I must point out when it comes to decorum in this Assembly that it wasn't the government's side that misrepresented correspondence from the Ombudsman's Office, creating the spectre of illegal activity at the Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board. It wasn't this government that --

**Some Hon. Member:** Point of order.

#### Point of order

**Speaker:** Member for Copperbelt, on a point of order.

**Mr. Mitchell:** On a point of order, there was no misrepresentation. There was a quote taken from a letter. It's the member's opinion that the quote doesn't reflect the full body of the letter. There was no misrepresentation. The quote was taken from a letter.

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** On the point of order, Mr. Speaker, I would submit to you that there is no point of order; it is merely a dispute between members.

**Speaker:** I would prefer that the honourable member let me make the rulings.

Hon. Premier, you have the floor.

**Hon. Mr. Fentie:** As you can see, I'm anxious to get to the budget so that we can deliver the speech and begin debating the budget.

On the point of order, I have no --

#### Speaker's ruling

**Speaker:** Well, then sit down, please.

From the Chair's perspective, there is no point of order. There is simply a dispute between members. The Leader of the Official Opposition, you have the floor.

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

**Speaker:** Are you done?

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

**Hon. Mr. Fentie:** Mr. Speaker, it wasn't this government, when it comes to the issue of decorum, that tried to make the case right here in this Assembly that the government would have a hiring office at the Adult Warehouse. These examples are all in *Hansard*, Mr. Speaker. So, yes, we would like to see decorum improved in this Assembly, especially from the Official Opposition.

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

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

### GOVERNMENT BILLS

#### Bill No. 6: Second Reading

**Clerk:** Second reading, Bill No. 6, standing in the name of the Hon. Mr. Fentie.

**Hon. Mr. Fentie:** Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 6 be now read a second time.

**Speaker:** It has been moved by the Hon. Premier that Bill No. 6, entitled *First Appropriation Act, 2007-08*, be now read a second time.

**Hon. Mr. Fentie:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and, indeed, a welcome to all members of the House.

Mr. Speaker and honourable members, today it is my honour and privilege to table the 2007-08 budget, the first budget of our second mandate. The Government of Yukon's capital and operation and maintenance budget for 2007-08 is a total of \$861.7 million. The operation and maintenance budget totals \$649.4 million, of which \$58.5 million is a recoverable. The capital budget, further increasing and enhancing stimulus in the territory, totals \$212.3 million, of which \$80.3 million is recoverable.

Mr. Speaker, on October 10, 2006, we asked Yukoners to imagine tomorrow by giving us a second mandate to enable our government to implement its election platform, *Building Yukon's Future Together: A Clear Vision for a Bright Future*.

Yukoners responded by giving us a majority government -- the first incumbent government to be returned to office since 1989.

Our 2006 election platform carries on with the direction we established in 2002 and provides Yukoners with political stability and continuity. Our government's vision to build Yukon's future is based on four major pillars: first, achieving a better quality of life for Yukoners; second, protecting and preserving our environment and wildlife while studying, mitigating and adapting to climate change; third, promoting a strong diversified private sector economy; and practising good cooperative governance with strong fiscal management.

Since our re-election last fall, we have been busy working on behalf of Yukoners to turn this vision into reality. This budget, together with successive budgets, will be utilized to implement our election commitments over the course of the next five years, while we go about building the Yukon's future together.

Let me delve into achieving a better quality of life. It begins with the pledge we made to make the 2007 Canada Winter Games here in Yukon a resounding success and a memorable experience for Yukoners and guests alike. That leaves a lasting legacy and provides facilities for future sport venues. With the help of thousands of Yukoners, the host society, the City of Whitehorse and the numerous corporate sponsors, this commitment was met in full. The 2007 Canada Winter Games have been recognized as the best ever and gave the Yukon, the Northwest Territories and Nunavut the

opportunity to showcase the north to southern Canadians. Hosting the first Canada Winter Games north of 60 is testament that the Yukon has truly come of age. Yukoners made these games a huge success and we can't thank them enough.

Building healthy communities is similarly an integral part of this pillar. During the 2007 election campaign, we promised Yukoners that there would be zero tolerance for drug dealers and a focus on treatment and new treatment facilities for their victims. Also, there would be attention paid to prevention, harm reduction and education.

On the enforcement side, in November and December of 2006, our government introduced two major action items for our substance abuse action plan.

The first was the implementation of the *Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act*, otherwise known in short as SCAN. This has provided our government with a way to respond to concerns of Yukoners about illegal activities, such as selling illegal drugs that are making our communities and our neighbourhoods an unsafe place to be.

Since opening the SCAN office, the office has received over 65 complaints resulting in five evictions under the act. Officials in the Department of Justice, led by our minister, continue to work with the First Nations to ensure that SCAN can be successfully implemented on First Nation settlement lands and that both Yukon and First Nation governments are able to respond with the appropriate services when actions take place.

Mr. Speaker, \$400,000 will be invested in this budget on the SCAN office to ensure the safety and security of all Yukoners from the social disorder that is caused by the detrimental effects of substance abuse.

The second action initiative under our plan was the establishment of the RCMP street crime reduction team, which became operational as of April 1, 2007. The team, consisting of six police officers, a criminal analyst and a communications strategist, is part of a larger coordinated effort to address the visible social disorder that is caused by substance abuse that detracts from the quality of life of law-abiding Yukoners.

Our government is committed to providing approximately \$1.5 million of new funding to the RCMP for the next three years for the street crime reduction team.

On December 8, 2006, the Yukon Forum approved the correctional redevelopment strategic plan. Led by our minister, this plan provides the direction for reaching correctional reform and involves First Nations, non-government organizations and other stakeholders.

As part of this strategic plan, the development of options for a new correctional centre is the focus for the 2007-08 capital budget. A building advisory committee has been established, including First Nation and government officials to work through a phased process to determine how corrections should look in the Yukon and identify the appropriate facilities to support this plan. Mr. Speaker, \$3.24 million has been allocated in this budget for the development of the new correctional centre, which will take into account the consulta-

tions undertaken over 15 months with First Nations and stakeholders throughout the Yukon.

Mr. Speaker, this is the prerequisite step to building a new facility. On the treatment side, the community wellness court is another action initiative resulting from this government's and this House's substance abuse action plan. This is part of why I say that we do commit ourselves to this Assembly.

The substance abuse action plan was developed here by all members and supported here in this institution by all members. It has also created a specialized therapeutic court to deal with offenders with drug or alcohol addictions, symptoms of FASD and indeed mental health issues. The court will provide a comprehensive treatment plan that will include judicial supervision, substance abuse treatment, random and frequent drug testing, incentives and sanctions, clinical case management, and social services support.

Mr. Speaker, \$523,000 is being provided in this budget for the operation of the new community wellness court. \$200,000 of these funds are recoverable from the National Crime Prevention Committee. As well, we are focusing on working with First Nations and non-government organizations to develop more treatment centres and more treatment programming. I might add here that the Department of Education is proceeding to implement another drug-deterrent program, the canines for safer schools program, at Porter Creek Secondary School, thus meeting one more area of our commitment in dealing with substance abuse.

One of the most important constituencies in our territory is Yukon women. The Women's Directorate, in partnership with the Department of Justice, is facilitating the design and development of educational materials to raise awareness of family and sexualized violence against women and children in the Yukon. Phase 1 and phase 2 have been completed in the three-year campaign. The third phase in 2007-08 will be focusing on the production of Yukon-relevant training videos for our front-line workers. The goal is to meet a well-defined need to enhance skill development for effectively working with women and children who have experienced sexual violence. Under the leadership of our minister, the Women's Directorate is providing \$108,000 to implement this major initiative.

Mr. Speaker, the Women's Directorate is introducing a new initiative of \$175,000 for women's equality funding programming that will enhance the social, legal and economic equality for Yukon women and girls. Organizations will have an opportunity to apply for a three-year contribution agreement for projects that: provide direction and programs that support advocacy for women; advance women's equality through research and policy development; support initiatives that enhance awareness, education and social action on women's equality issues; and support the development and capacity of women's organizations to effectively enhance women's equality in Yukon.

Another area, Mr. Speaker, "Educating today for jobs tomorrow", is a major plank. To this end, our government has increased apprenticeship registration in Yukon's 48 des-

ignated trades by more than 39 percent in this territory since 2003. It is also worthy to note that 19 percent of Yukon apprentices are now of First Nation ancestry, which is one of the highest First Nation participation rates in the whole country. Also, this government proceeded with another initiative for women, the initiative of women in trades and technology.

The emphasis on apprenticeship programs and trades training is part of our comprehensive skills and trades training strategy. We are also committed to providing new incentives to increase the labour pool for entry-level jobs in the service and retail industries.

One group being targeted is seniors. Mr. Speaker, we are pleased to announce that a targeted initiative for an older workers program will begin in May 2007 and will run for two years in Whitehorse and Yukon communities. The program will be jointly funded by the Yukon and federal governments and will be delivered by Yukon College. The total cost of the program will be approximately \$650,000 over two years. The targeted initiative for older workers will recruit 140 individuals between the ages of 55 and 65 who want help developing employment skills.

Another group, Mr. Speaker, is the area of immigration and immigrant workers. The Department of Education, led by our minister, has allocated \$200,000 in this budget to develop, in conjunction with the federal government, an immigration portal -- an on-line resource to efficiently provide immigration information to potential immigrants to Yukon.

We also believe that literacy is a fundamental building block of education. Our government, led by our minister, continues to support literacy as a priority. In 2006, through the Literacy Action Committee, we funded 136 literacy projects throughout the territory. It has been said that it takes an entire village to raise a child. Our government, through an allocation of \$90,000, is pleased to continue to support and expand the whole child program, which focuses on involving students, parents, teachers and community leaders in developing a positive and inclusive education experience for children. The whole child program has run successfully at Whitehorse Elementary School for the past five years and was expanded to the Elijah Smith Elementary School last fall.

The elders in the school program is another innovative program that is unique to each school, is accessible to all First Nations in the Yukon and makes the classroom a more culturally relevant and engaging place for students to learn. Our government's major education reform project is continuing and is designed to identify a common understanding of what our education system needs to accomplish for all Yukoners, including the needs of Yukon First Nation students. It will be concluded by next fall.

Mr. Speaker, led by our Minister of Education, our government made a platform commitment to support the establishment of the school of visual arts in Dawson City, in partnership with the Klondike Institute of Art and Culture, Yukon College and Tr'ondek Hwech'in First Nation. Investment of \$270,000 has been allocated in this budget to fulfill

the commitment to implement the initial foundation year of the school.

Another area of assisting elders and seniors is an integral part of providing a better quality of life for Yukoners. Our government is continuing to increase the inventory of affordable housing for elders and seniors. After consultations with seniors organizations, the Yukon Housing Corporation has decided to utilize the 48-unit residential complex, which was used for the athletes village, for seniors social housing. The seniors housing complex, together with the Yukon College student residence, will be one of those lasting legacies of the 2007 Canada Winter Games.

Mr. Speaker, led by our minister responsible, at the same time the Yukon Housing Corporation is providing \$1.8 million in this budget to construct an affordable housing facility for seniors in Haines Junction. The Department of Health and Social Services is proceeding with the construction of the multi-level care facility in the community of Watson Lake. The masonry firewall was completed in 2006, and the structural steel erection is about 75 percent complete. Work related to roof insulation, insulated wall panels and the concrete floor systems is underway. Tenders are pending for the roof membrane, windows and doors as well as for exterior grade work and site development.

Our 2006 election platform makes a commitment to support non-government organizations that provide services to elders, seniors and other Yukoners. I am pleased to say that, led by our Minister of Health and Social Services, the department is acting on that commitment, Mr. Speaker, by allocating increased funding to NGOs.

Here are some examples: \$46,000 for Options for Independence; \$15,000 for the Line of Life; \$13,000 for Canadian National Institute for the Blind; \$5,000 for the Foster Parent Association; \$103,000 for the Yukon Family Services Association-Outreach Van to expand services; and \$20,000 per year for the next five years for the Rick Hansen Foundation.

The department will be working with other NGOs to review their needs over the coming year.

In September of 2004, at the First Ministers' meeting on health care, our government, together with our two sister territories, successfully negotiated a \$150-million fund over five years for the three territories to support health reform, help improve access to services and support the cost of medical travel.

The territorial health access fund gives the Yukon \$4.6 million this year to support various activities, led by our Minister of Health and Social Services.

Some of the current year's highlights include: \$368,000 for a palliative care program; \$116,000 for early psychosis intervention; \$162,500 for the healthier eating or nutrition program; \$90,000 for advanced directives; \$2.1 million for the health and human resource strategy; \$157,000 for improved tuberculosis support; \$129,000 for increased mental health supports at the community level; and \$93,000 for emergency preparedness planning.

Mr. Speaker, the total value of the territorial health access fund over five years is \$21.6 million. The health human resources strategy is of fundamental importance to ensuring the right mix, quantity and skills of health care providers, as well as ensuring that health care providers work effectively together.

The strategy is key in allowing our government to meet its platform commitment for the recruitment and retention of doctors and other health care professionals. Elements of the strategy include: health professions policy support for addressing professional legislation, health information sharing, policies and liability issues; family physician working group support, resident support and incentive program; nursing mentorship program to increase the number of nurse mentors to prepare new nurse graduates to enter the workforce and prepare existing nurses to become ready for positions in community nursing, specialty nursing and nurse leadership; a bursary support for professional education; support programs for health professional students, new grads, medical residents and a student summer placement program; emergency medical services training to enhance the level of training to the national primary care paramedic level and advanced care paramedic level for ground ambulance and medevac ambulance attendants; and work with members of the health care community on a pilot project to establish a collaborative care medical practice.

As you can determine, Mr. Speaker, our health human resources strategy is very comprehensive and is designed to improve the health care and well-being of Yukoners, thereby delivering a better quality of life.

In addition, the Department of Health and Social Services has included additional staffing in this budget to respond to increased service demands in the areas of children in care, family support services, adoption, foster care, supported independent living, adult protection, health promotion, and community nursing.

It is with considerable pride that I state that all of the initiatives by the Department of Health and Social Services related to our five-step FASD action plan have now been implemented.

Our government has devoted considerable resources over the past five years to deal with this most serious affliction and will continue our implementation plans in this and future budgets.

Community services and infrastructure are also important ingredients in achieving a better quality of life for Yukoners.

Our 2006 election platform commits our government to work with the federal government, First Nations and community governments to upgrade and construct high quality community infrastructure.

The Department of Community Services is meeting that commitment throughout the territory and, led by our minister responsible, a total of \$9.7 million is being invested out of the municipal rural infrastructure funding program for a variety of community projects. These include: \$477,000 to complete the Mayo Community Centre; \$1.7 million for a small-

diameter, piped-water project with the Selkirk First Nation; \$1.4 million for the Takhini North water and sewer project with the City of Whitehorse; \$278,000 for BST surfacing of Two Mile Road within the Liard First Nation village; \$5 million for the Hamilton Boulevard extension with the City of Whitehorse; \$285,000 for the Lakeview Avenue water and sewer project with the Town of Watson Lake; and \$415,000 for the development of water and sewer and road infrastructure with the Champagne and Aishihik First Nations.

A further \$7.3 million is being spent under the auspices of the Canada strategic infrastructure fund for the following initiatives: \$1 million for the Dawson City sewage project; \$764,000 for the Carmacks sewage treatment project; \$1.5 million for the Carcross waterfront project; and another \$4 million for the Whitehorse waterfront project.

This budget is also providing funds for other community infrastructure projects such as: \$1.055 million to construct the Golden Horn fire hall; \$900,000 to complete the construction of the M'Clintock-Army Beach water supply; \$800,000 for BST surfacing of a second-class access for the Taku subdivision; \$650,000 for BST surfacing of the second access for Carcross; and \$792,000 to address infrastructure needs in Dawson City.

Mr. Speaker, one of the major challenges facing the Yukon and community governments today is land for residential purposes, particularly here in the City of Whitehorse. We are growing, Mr. Speaker, due in large measure not only to population growth but our expanding economy. However, the City of Whitehorse and our government, through our land protocol, are working hard to meet this challenge. There is investment of \$6.25 million included in this budget for planning development of the Porter Creek lower bench and the Porter Creek Pine Street extension. A further \$5 million is being provided for the development of 30 lots in Grizzly Valley.

Now, although the 2007 Canada Winter Games have been concluded, our government's commitment to supporting sports and recreation will continue. The Department of Community Services has included \$400,000 in this budget to prepare Team Yukon for the 2008 Arctic Winter Games to be held in Yellowknife and is making a further \$75,000 contribution to send Team Yukon to the 2008 North American Indigenous Games in Cowichan, British Columbia.

Mr. Speaker, no one can dispute the minister responsible for Tourism and Culture's real focus on arts and culture. This is fundamental and is all about achieving a better quality of life for Yukoners. It is also our commitment. The 2007 Canada Winter Games afforded First Nations from across the north the opportunity to participate in a multi-disciplinary trade show and exposition. We called it the Gathering of Northern Nations Trade Show and Cultural Expo. This highly successful initiative, supported through Culture Quest and the Department of Tourism and Culture, was led by the Yukon First Nations Tourism Association. It showcased and celebrated the diversity of northern aboriginal communities, businesses, arts, crafts, performers and culture, allowing everyone who attended the opportunity to celebrate their unique

culture, talents, and traditional knowledge. Culture Quest has proven to be a successful initiative. Culture Quest was developed through the decade of sport and culture as a strategic initiative with the Yukon Arts Centre, managing the program on behalf of the Department of Tourism and Culture. During the games, more than half of the artistic works created from 2003 to 2007 were presented on stage or shown in Whitehorse galleries. Visitors and Yukoners enjoyed music and song, dance and theatre, and artistic works by First Nation youth and Yukon community participation.

The next big goal is the creation of programming by northern artists for the 2010 Olympic Games in Vancouver.

The Department of Tourism and Culture recognizes the important role that arts, culture and heritage play in contributing to the social and economic well-being of Yukoners.

Mr. Speaker, \$500,000 is again being provided in the capital budget for the arts fund that supports artists and communities in creative endeavours such as festivals, events, training, touring and art creation of all forms. A further \$60,000 in the capital budget provides support for the arts and crafts strategy, which has been instrumental in supporting the *Art Adventures on Yukon Time* studio guide and the Yukon Buyers Show.

The Department of Tourism and Culture is providing another \$1.5 million to support art groups and art initiatives, such as the Dawson City Arts Society and Yukon Arts Centre. This money also supports the advanced artists award and the Yukon arts funding program, in addition to the artist in the school program, administered by the departments of Tourism and Culture and Education, in keeping with our 2006 platform commitment, Mr. Speaker, to develop a better quality of life for Yukoners.

Our government is also providing \$1.1 million in this capital budget to assist Yukon museums, interpretive and First Nation cultural and heritage centres with operations and staffing costs. Our government has also contributed \$729,000 toward the expansion of the MacBride Museum to address programming and exhibit needs that ultimately contribute to the further development of the Whitehorse waterfront.

Speaking of the Whitehorse waterfront, a report was commissioned that asked Yukoners this question: what do people want to see, or not see, along the Whitehorse waterfront? Thirteen consensus items were identified in the report summarizing people's thoughts, concerns and wishes for best uses for the land owned by the Yukon government and the government-owned heritage buildings along the waterfront.

A proposed arts and heritage village is one potential component that would add to the vision of the waterfront. The government will continue working with the City of Whitehorse, the Kwanlin Dun First Nation, Ta'an Kwach'an Council, private business and other stakeholders to achieve this vision.

Our government is also continuing to work cooperatively with the Kwanlin Dun First Nation government and other levels of government to enable the Kwanlin Dun to complete its proposed cultural centre on the Whitehorse waterfront. Mr. Speaker, \$19 million from the Canadian strate-



gic infrastructure fund is being provided over three years for basic infrastructure along the waterfront, such as water, sewer, street improvements, upgrades to the Kishwoot Island suspension bridge and restoration or relocation of heritage buildings.

In this fiscal year, the Yukon Beringia Interpretive Centre will be entering into its 10th season of operation. Mr. Speaker, \$230,000 is being allocated for the upkeep and maintenance of the facility, as well as an upgrade for new requirements for lighting levels and exhibit presentation, as a result of the proposed addition of the Klondike horse hide. It should be noted that the Yukon Beringia Interpretive Centre launched a climate change display in 2003, well ahead of its time. The centre is proving to be an important research and scientific mainstay for ice age history, especially as it relates to climate change and global conditions that impact not only our northern habitat, but humanity as well.

Mr. Speaker, protecting and preserving our environment and wildlife is, of course, a major pillar. This pillar is important to all Yukoners, as we all know. Yukon's climate change strategy has four goals in dealing with this area: enhance awareness and understanding of climate change impact on Yukon's environment, people and economy; reduce greenhouse gas emissions through efficiency improvements within Yukon government programs in the short term and additional measures related to infrastructure development in the long term; build Yukon environmental, social and economic systems that are able to adapt to climate change impacts and are positioned to take advantage of opportunities presented by climate change; and support efforts to establish Yukon as a northern leader of applied climate change research and innovation.

The development of a climate action plan is currently underway and is anticipated to be completed in 2008. I would encourage the members opposite to participate.

Mr. Speaker, \$145,000 is being allocated in this budget for the action plan that will outline specific actions and initiatives our government will undertake in response to climate change. The action plan will benefit from broad public consultation to ensure it is relevant to Yukoners.

In February, I met with the federal Minister of Environment, the Hon. John Baird, as well as with the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, the Hon. Jim Prentice. We talked about the impact of climate change on our territory. We pointed out that the federal government's approach must also include adaptation initiatives.

Our government is seeking federal support to develop the climate change research centre of excellence at Yukon College as well as the cold climate technology and innovation cluster. Work has begun on establishing the climate change research centre of excellence already. A group of deputy ministers will oversee an in-house assessment and gap analysis of areas and opportunities for coordination and support of the centre of excellence. This assessment and gap analysis will help determine the focus of our government's next steps.

Now, Mr. Speaker, on March 20, 2007, our government, in conjunction with the federal Minister of Environment, announced a \$5-million investment for the Yukon as part of a trust fund set up by the federal government to support provincial and territorial projects that help reduce greenhouse gas emissions and air pollutants. Our government will be utilizing this \$5-million to install -- I am pleased to say, Mr. Speaker -- a third hydro turbine at the Aishihik hydroelectric plant in southwest Yukon. It is estimated that this project will reduce Yukon's annual greenhouse gas emissions by some 3,800 tonnes by decreasing the territory's reliance on diesel-generated electrical energy that would otherwise be required during peak demand times. Also, Mr. Speaker, on April 3, 2007, our government announced that it will allocate up to \$10 million in funding for stage 1 of the Carmacks-Stewart transmission project from Carmacks to Pelly Crossing.

Our government is committed to the long-term efficiency and reliability of the territory's hydroelectric system as part of our climate change strategy. Stage 1 of the Carmacks-Stewart transmission line, Mr. Speaker, will reduce greenhouse gas emissions by up to 24,100 tonnes per year and more if a second mine goes into production in the Carmacks area. It will also end Pelly Crossing's reliance on diesel-generated electricity, I believe further reducing another 1,400 annual tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> emission.

On March 22, 2007, the Department of Environment hosted the first-ever Yukon annual Environmental Forum, with over 180 delegates and presenters from around the Yukon. A major goal of the forum was to bring people together from various interests to discuss how Yukon fish, wildlife and environmental data collection can be improved for sound natural resource management. Sound decisions on land use planning and development require up-to-date information on fish and wildlife populations and the availability of suitable habitat. Increased monitoring, data collection, and research on the impacts of climate change on wildlife species was a major environmental commitment in our recent election campaign. Mr. Speaker, our government is allocating \$1.285 million in this budget to meet that commitment as part of an ongoing program and multi-year plan.

The Porcupine caribou herd is of special concern, and the Department of Environment will be working with our partners, the Porcupine Caribou Management Board, affected First Nations, the Government of the Northwest Territories, Canada and the State of Alaska to develop an inter-jurisdictional harvest management plan to address conservation needs of the herd.

The Department of Environment is currently conducting surveys to identify new key areas in the Peel River watershed planning region for sheep and moose winter range areas and improving our knowledge of the Hart River caribou herd winter range. The Na Cho Nyäk Dun, Tr'ondek Hwech'in and Tetlit Gwich'in First Nations are assisting with these surveys.

Digital maps of nest location sites for raptors, eagles, peregrine falcons, gyrfalcons and osprey are also being updated and added to our database.

In keeping with our land claim commitments, our government will be approaching affected First Nations to start the management planning process for new territorial parks created under recently settled land claims, namely Agay Mene and Kusawa Lake.

The Yukon public will also be asked to participate in the planning process for these new territorial parks which will start in this fiscal year.

At this juncture, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would like to point out that the Yukon, when it comes to land base under multiple forms of protection, is second only in the country to British Columbia.

At the same time our government will be expanding our Celebrating Yukon Parks program in 2007-08 to raise the profile and public awareness of Yukon territorial parks for residents and visitors alike. This initiative will expand the public outreach component of the program by partnering with Yukon tourism visitor information centres across the territory and in Whitehorse in the delivery of interpretive program information presented by uniformed, seasonal parks branch staff.

Other program materials will be produced to promote public understanding and appreciation of parks and protected areas, such as posters, slide show/DVD presentations and a series of campfire interpretive talks.

Mr. Speaker, \$75,000 is being allocated in this budget for the Celebrating Yukon Parks initiative, and it is being coordinated with Yukon Tourism's "Larger than Life" marketing initiative.

The Department of Environment is working with the Yukon Outfitters Association and the Teslin Tlingit Council to develop a new initiative to train Yukon residents in big game guiding and horse wrangling. The program is designed around an apprenticeship-style format and is intended to provide the industry with a pool of trained individuals while encouraging more Yukoners to become involved in big game guiding. \$105,000 is being provided under the northern strategy fund for this new initiative.

Building on the success of the past, the Department of Environment is expanding its Yukon parks officer program to ensure that our government campgrounds are indeed family-oriented places that are secure and enjoyable. To that end, \$330,000 is being provided in this budget to expand this program in keeping with our commitments made during the 2006 election.

Another platform commitment is to support recycling. Nine government departments are participating in a corporate shredding and recycling pilot project aimed at reducing the amount of paper burned or sent to the landfill.

Confidential material in locked bins is taken for processing through an industrial shredder by Yukon government employees hired through the training and work experience program for people with disabilities. The processed material is taken to Raven Recycling and approximately 30 tonnes of material have been processed since October of 2006. This project, which also contributes to the government's commit-

ment to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, employs two people with disabilities, with two on-call staff as backup.

The Department of Energy, Mines and Resources delivers a broad range of energy efficiency and renewable energy programs through the Energy Solutions Centre, including programs like project porch light and the washing machine rebate program.

These all add up, Mr. Speaker, to our commitment and efforts to protect Yukon's pristine environment and wilderness.

We are pleased that the third pillar has shown great success over the last four years. That pillar is to promote a strong, diversified private sector economy. Recent statistics speak for themselves as to how well the Yukon economy is doing. Yukon's population is continuing to grow, while our unemployment rate is continuing to fall. In February, Yukon's unemployment rate stood at 3.2 percent, the lowest in the country. In December of 2006, Yukon's unemployment rate was as low as 2.5 percent. These rates are historic lows, never experienced before in Yukon. In the past five years, mining exploration in Yukon has increased ten-fold — from \$8 million in 2002, to over \$80 million in 2006. The future for mining as a strategic industry indeed looks bright. When total exploration and development expenditures for 2006-07 are tallied up, they could surpass a quarter of a billion dollars.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in a very short time, Yukon's mining industry has turned around and is making a significant contribution to a strong, diversified economy here in Yukon. In the latest Fraser Institute survey of jurisdictions across the world considered to be the most attractive for mining investment, Yukon rose to 11<sup>th</sup> place from 21<sup>st</sup> place last year. Since we took office in 2002, we have risen from 41<sup>st</sup> place to 11<sup>th</sup> place. This is a great accomplishment for this territory.

Our job as a government is to ensure that Yukon's investment climate for minerals remains competitive, and we are meeting this task in various ways: by working with Yukon Minerals Advisory Board; providing project facilitators to assist major mining projects as needed; identifying ways for Yukon to provide production-focused incentives to the mineral industry; and via the Yukon geological survey, ensuring that Yukon's geoscience database and the overall knowledge and awareness of our non-renewable resource potential are second to none in Canada.

Mining and tourism remain the economic mainstays of the Yukon economy, while placer mining remains the backbone of the mining industry.

Our government is allocating \$480,000 in this budget to invest in the final year of the placer secretariat so that the implementation of the new placer regime for the Yukon can be completed. A further \$170,000 is being provided in this budget for ongoing monitoring and inspections of the new placer regime by client services and inspections.

While mining and tourism are going to continue to be the major strengths of the Yukon economy over the course of the next two decades, other sectors such as oil and gas, for-

estry, value-added manufacturing, film and sound, culture and knowledge-based industries will all help to diversify and strengthen Yukon's economy. To this end, the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources is currently identifying the economic opportunities created from the forest management planning efforts in Haines Junction, Teslin, Watson Lake and Dawson City by concluding the request-for-proposal process to salvage wood in southeast Yukon and getting a new sustainable harvest limit for timber in Teslin and the southeast Yukon.

The department has also supported the formation of the Yukon Wood Products Association to help provide input to our government on forest policy legislation and operational issues, as well as creating a forum in which we can work with industry in developing and promoting a wood products industry that is appropriate for this territory.

Similarly, the department is completing the 2007 request for posting and is proceeding with a call for bids for oil and gas exploration in northern Yukon. The Department of Energy, Mines and Resources is also responsible for the development of Yukon's energy resources.

In addition to advancing the Yukon energy framework strategy, our government will also be updating and modernizing the government's model for the Yukon Development Corporation and the Yukon Energy Corporation in keeping with our commitment to the Yukon public.

Tourism has been, is and will continue to be one of the key strategic industries driving the future major expansion of the Yukon economy. Led by our minister, we will continue to focus on international travellers seeking to experience Yukon's breathtaking wilderness and northern cultures. Further, we are successful in our marketing campaigns. More and more southern Canadians will want to experience what the north has to offer, as well. "Marketing Destination Yukon" is highlighted in our 2006 election platform. We made a commitment to market the Yukon as a quality travel destination through general awareness campaigns, especially in relation to Yukon's traditional markets in the United States, Canada and Europe. We made a commitment to work with industry, communities and First Nations to implement the new Yukon tourism brand that promotes the Yukon as an attractive year-round destination.

Mr. Speaker, the Department of Tourism and Culture is meeting these commitments head on. The tourism cooperative marketing fund provides direct funding and investment to encourage market-ready tourism businesses, First Nations, municipalities, organizations and partnerships in the promotion of Yukon's tourism product.

Mr. Speaker, \$350,000 is being allocated for marketing projects administered by the department, and another \$150,000 is being provided for trade and consumer shows administered by the Yukon Tourism Industry Association.

This fund, first initiated by our government in 2004, leverages matching dollars from the tourism industry -- a partnership. This means that approximately \$1 million is being invested in marketing Yukon through tourism product from

across the territory targeted at prospective visitors at the national and international levels.

The department is continuing to implement its "Larger than Life" tourism brand, with another \$100,000 of investment in this budget for highway signs, photography and the development of new templates and graphic standards for multiple communication media.

Other Yukon government departments are also embracing the Yukon tourism brand for recruitment and promotional programs. Trade shows and marketing campaigns help us market Yukon to the outside world. The displays that are taken to these events showcase Yukon to an audience that is looking for something different, something special, something unique, something that is larger than life. That is our Yukon.

On February 15, 2007, the three territories, as part of the Canada Winter Games, launched a \$5-million national "Look Up North" marketing campaign. This campaign was designed to promote and celebrate Canada's north as a great place to visit, to invest in, and to live. The marketing campaign is a joint initiative involving the departments of Tourism and Culture and Economic Development and it includes promotional spots for national television and movie theatres along with print advertising and magazine supplements. A new Web site, [www.lookupnorth.ca](http://www.lookupnorth.ca), was created to support on-line advertising and to centrally manage interest generated by the marketing campaign.

On April 10, 2007, I and my two fellow premiers, Premier Handley of the Northwest Territories and Premier Okalik of Nunavut, hosted a "Tourism Wonder" event at Toronto's Design Exchange. A select audience was invited to explore the territories as a tourist destination through contemporary and traditional performances, authentic northern cuisine and vignettes to illustrate the beauty of the northern experience.

Mr. Speaker, \$400,000 is being allocated in this budget to further leverage the promotion of Yukon to southern Canada and continue the awareness campaign.

The Northwest Territories and Nunavut have confirmed that they wish to continue additional pan-northern marketing post-Canada Winter Games because of the success of the national marketing campaign that we've already experienced. Our government plans to continue to utilize the pan-northern collaborative approach with the Northwest Territories and Nunavut in order to develop a new, comprehensive tourism marketing agreement with the Government of Canada that showcases the north to southern Canadians and the global community. We believe that one of the greatest legacies of the 2007 Canada Winter Games will be increased tourism visitation and economic investment in the territory for years to come.

Mr. Speaker, in speaking of sports and tourism, I believe it is appropriate here to acknowledge the good work of the Yukon Convention Bureau in delivering sport tourism assistance to organizations bidding on regional and national competitions. Through the decade of sport and culture, the Department of Tourism has provided funding to the Yukon

Convention Bureau yearly since 2003 and assisted with the test events held in and around Whitehorse leading up to the Canada Winter Games. The department also provides \$200,000 to the Yukon Convention Bureau for cooperative marketing initiatives.

Tourism Yukon is developing an interactive strategy to address the growing use of Web site and electronic marketing by tourism worldwide. For example, Mr. Speaker, Outcrop Yukon, a local agency, was successful in winning the \$650,000 contract over the next two and a half years to develop and implement the interactive strategy, including a new [www.travel yukon.com](http://www.travel yukon.com) to be launched later this fall. Rubber-tire traffic from the Lower 48 states and southern Canada continues to provide the lion's share of Yukon's visitation. The Yukon's scenic drives initiative that commenced in 2004 is designed to continue to attract this important tourism market to Yukon. Four Yukon highways -- the Alaska Highway, the Klondike-Kluane loop, the Golden Circle route, and the Silver Trail -- are all currently on the Web site. The Dempster Highway, the Campbell-Canol route and Southern Lakes will be added this spring. An electronic marketing campaign and production of a direct mail-out piece promoting the Yukon's scenic drives initiative to potential visitors will also accompany the Web component. Mr. Speaker, \$400,000 is being allocated in this budget to support the scenic drives initiative.

Now, in 2007, phase 1 of a multi-year project will see the construction of a new \$1.811 million visitor reception centre in Tombstone. This will lead the way for making this site one of the premier park and tourism facilities in our territory.

The Department of Highways and Public Works and the Department of Environment are working with the Tr'ondek Hwech'in First Nation to construct this new centre. In addition to providing construction jobs, this initiative will also generate seasonal positions to operate the centre and create park access opportunities for tourism operators in conjunction with the Tr'ondek Hwech'in First Nation.

The buildings will be constructed to the Leadership for Energy and Environmental Design or LEED, which is a certified standard in accordance with our government's climate change strategy, showing how environmental best practices can work in harmony with this very special geographical area of the Yukon.

Airline service is also of particular importance in our government's efforts to market Destination Yukon. Accordingly, the Department of Tourism and Culture has developed partnerships with Air North and Air Canada.

Air Canada continues its commitment to provide affordable one-way fares to Whitehorse and other western Canadian destinations to facilitate fly/drive options. Air North, Yukon's airline, plays an important role in Yukon tourism, with its nine weekly flights to Vancouver and three flights weekly to Calgary and Edmonton. These Air North flights help promote the gateways cities program in Calgary, Edmonton and Vancouver. Yukon also boasts international airline service, with direct flights from Frankfurt, Germany, to

Whitehorse by Condor Airlines. It is estimated that Condor Airlines injects \$7 million annually into Yukon's economy. The airline is planning to extend its 2007 tourism season from May 8 to October 29.

Mr. Speaker, if the Yukon economy is going to continue to grow, our government must make significant investments in transportation, communication and energy infrastructure, as well as information technology. Condor Airlines is a case in point. The airline has indicated to us that it is interested in exploring the potential for even further growth, should the Whitehorse airport facility expansion be completed.

The Department of Highways and Public Works is providing a temporary in-transit lounge at the Whitehorse Airport this spring, thus enabling Condor to meet security requirements for the Frankfurt-Whitehorse-Alaska schedule.

Mr. Speaker, \$6 million is being provided in this budget to construct an addition to the Whitehorse terminal building in order to accommodate federal Customs security requirements and to provide an in-transit lounge for international flights. This investment contributes to our economic well-being and ensures that we maintain our status as an international airport.

A further \$3.2 million is being provided to complete phase 2 of the Whitehorse Airport parking lot expansion and improvement project.

Also, if Yukon wishes to promote increased tourism rubber-tire traffic, we must continue to upgrade our highways networks and bridge infrastructure.

Yukon has been blessed in this regard by the continuation of the Shakwak project, which allows the upgrading of the north Alaska Highway with 100-percent recoverable funds from the Government of the United States.

\$10 million is being provided in 2007 for road construction along the south shore of Kluane Lake near Sheep Mountain. This is from kilometre 1700 to 1707.

Other Shakwak projects include the following: \$7.15 million to complete the replacement of the Donjek River bridge at kilometre 1822; \$1 million for design work to replace the Slims River and Duke River bridges on the Alaska Highway; \$3 million to begin a two-year construction project to replace the Duke River bridge at kilometre 1768 near Burwash Landing; \$6 million for paving to replace the deteriorating sections of the BST surface along the Haines highway between kilometre 174 and kilometre 192, as well as access and intersection improvements through the Village of Haines Junction; and \$1.1 million for BST and revegetation for the section of reconstructed highway between kilometre 1692 and kilometre 1700.

The Canada strategic infrastructure fund enables our government to upgrade the southern portion of the Alaska Highway with 50-percent recoverable funds from the Government of Canada.

\$6.235 million is being allocated to widen and strengthen the Teslin River bridge at Johnsons Crossing. Completion of a new deck is part of the Department of Highways and Public Works' ongoing bridge asset management program, and this project will deliver a fully rehabili-

tated structure that will be in service for the foreseeable future.

A further \$500,000 is being provided to complete the design for the replacement of the Lewes (Yukon) River bridge deck at kilometre 1939. Reconstruction is planned to begin late in 2007 with completion scheduled for 2008.

Other highway improvements include: \$1.3 million for production and application of gravel for the Dempster Highway to improve the road surface; \$600,000 to complete reconstruction of the Atlin Road from kilometre 1 to 6 with BST, installation of guardrails, revegetation of the right-of-way and replacement of the boat launch at the Little Atlin Lake; and \$875,000 for improvements to the south Robert Campbell Highway with the application of BST to reconstructed sections and some culvert replacements.

Our government is also allocating \$6.5 million in this fiscal year for information technology initiatives across the government, which represents an increase of \$680,000 over the previous fiscal year. For the last three years, an average of \$5.8 million has been invested annually for new computers, servers, network equipment and applications that support the many programs and services delivered by government. The additional funds recognize our increasing reliance on technology and the growth of our information technology assets and will provide additional economic opportunities for the expanding Yukon IT sector.

The Department of Economic Development led by our minister is also supporting the long-term development of Yukon's economy with funding and investment for economic infrastructure initiatives. Projects like the Alaska-Canada rail link pre-feasibility study and the port access study will provide enough objective and quantified information to enable public and private sector investors to take a serious look at developing additional infrastructure in Yukon.

Our government continues to support the analysis of major infrastructure initiatives including transportation, energy and telecommunications with an allocation of \$800,000 included in this budget. The Department of Economic Development, through its business funds, implemented in 2004-05, and its film and sound incentive programs, has contributed to the continued growth of Yukon's business sector. To date, the department has approved the following amounts: the enterprise trade fund has funded 177 projects for a total of \$1.3 million, with \$600,000 being allocated for 2007-08; the regional economic development has funded 42 projects for a total of \$756,000, with a 2007-08 allocation of \$450,000; the strategic industries development fund has funded 54 projects for a total of \$2.639 million, with an allocation of \$1 million for 2007-08; and the film and sound incentive program has funded 105 projects for a total of \$1.482 million, with \$765,000 being allocated in 2007-08.

On April 4, 2007, the department announced that it will be increasing the maximum applicant eligibility for the Yukon filmmakers fund from \$5,000 to \$8,000 to further support increasing Yukon filmmakers' skills and fostering the development and marketability of their projects. The Department of Economic Development also administers the

ever popular community development fund, or CDF, as it is known.

The community development fund continues to assist community groups to undertake projects that improve community health and well-being and strengthen local economies by creating employment and improving infrastructure.

In keeping with our 2006 election commitment to maintain the community development fund, \$3.312 million is being provided in this fiscal year.

Of course, Mr. Speaker, the last pillar is the pillar that makes the aforementioned pillars work, and that is practising good government. It concerns practising good government and includes our commitment and concern of practising good government and includes our vision of Yukon coming of age through effective leadership, political stability, cooperative governance, and indeed strong fiscal management.

With respect to fiscal management, it is important to note that the Auditor General of Canada has given the public accounts of the Government of Yukon a clean bill of health for four consecutive years. This is a significant tribute to the fiscal management of our officials in the Department of Finance and, in fact, for all of our departmental officials. Our government is blessed by having highly dedicated professional public service here in the territory. We believe it is the best in Canada and we want to keep it that way. That is why our government is committing \$1.382 million annually to support our investing in public service initiatives that provide a range of programs dealing with professional and technical development, knowledge transfer between older and younger employees, workplace health and safety, orientation, recruitment modernization, work/life balance, employee recognition and accommodation for employees with disabling conditions.

The Public Service Commission has also developed an 18-month Yukon government leadership forum program to prepare current and future senior managers to deal with contemporary leadership issues within the government structure. This program is both a professional development and succession planning opportunity. All these initiatives are designed to support the government goal to be an attractive employer to current and new workers in order to provide high quality service to the public.

Mr. Speaker, our style of governing sets us apart from previous Yukon governments. We practise cooperative governance and we form partnerships. The Department of Community Services supports the orderly establishment and operation of effective local governments. On April 5, 2007, our government initiated a review to examine funding for local community governments in relation to the delivery of their programs and service responsibilities. The purpose of the funding review is to work with the Association of Yukon Communities to consider real-world fiscal demands they presently have related to the programs and services they provide to their citizens and to identify possible areas of improvement.

Our 2006 election commits our government to work with Yukon First Nations to: promote cooperative govern-

ance based on mutual respect for each other's jurisdictions; utilize the Yukon Forum to implement such major initiatives such as the northern strategy, the targeted investment program, the northern housing trust, the *Children's Act* review, the correction action plan and education reform; re-establish the intergovernmental forum with the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development; make First Nations full partners in the economic development of the territory for the mutual benefit of all Yukoners; and assist First Nation governments in capacity development.

Mr. Speaker, our government is making progress on all fronts in meeting these commitments. In governance liaison and capacity development, for example, the Executive Council Office is allocating \$324,000 in operation and maintenance and \$290,000 in capital for the creation of a new program that will lead to the development and implementation of a capacity development strategy in cooperation with First Nations, and support other activities to strengthen cooperative governance in the Yukon.

In our first mandate, we established the Yukon Forum in law. The Yukon Forum enables the Government of Yukon to sit down with 14 Yukon First Nation governments to deal with matters of mutual interest and, of course, of significant benefit to the Yukon. For example, at the Yukon Forum, held December 2006, the Government of Yukon and Yukon First Nation governments continued their partnership by approving 17 projects under the first round of the northern strategy, valued at \$9.34 million, from the trust. Some of these projects include: \$193,438 to undertake community-based research related to ice patch discoveries involving six Yukon First Nations; \$345,985 to conduct community-based education and discussion forums to help Yukon First Nations implement policies on the management of traditional knowledge pursuant to the traditional knowledge policy framework developed by the Yukon First Nation heritage group; a further \$235,603 to build capacity in Old Crow and three other rural communities to provide emergency medical services; \$136,500 to study the feasibility of a Yukon First Nation regional healing and wellness centre; \$450,000 to develop a First Nation tourism strategy and associated business support program to develop tourism as part of First Nations' overall economic development and partnership in Yukon; and \$1 million to construct forestry mainline roads in the Champagne-Aishihik traditional territory; \$400,000 to cooperatively develop recreational and residential lots on both Teslin Tlingit Council settlement land and Yukon government Crown land; and \$1,875,000 for community-based heavy equipment operation and road maintenance training.

At the same forum, our respective governments also agreed that Yukon's \$50-million share of the northern housing trust would be allocated by having \$32.5 million going directly to Yukon First Nation governments and \$17.5 million to be invested by the public government to meet affordable housing needs for the Yukon public.

Our government is also supportive of the First Nation governance and capacity development. Included in this budget is \$100,000 for the Yukon Forum and \$7.382 million

in funding to support the implementation of First Nation final and self-government agreements.

At the same time, the Public Service Commission is providing \$300,000 to fund five new positions in the First Nations Training Corps. The First Nations Training Corps, which operates within the Public Service Commission's workplace diversity employment office, supports our government's land claim and employment equity commitments by contributing to making the Yukon public service a more representative place to work.

As stated earlier, our 2006 platform contains a commitment to work with First Nations to re-establish the intergovernmental forum with the Government of Canada. This forum enables the Yukon government and First Nations governments to sit down with the federal Minister of DIAND in a manner similar to the Yukon Forum.

At a meeting in Ottawa with the DIAND minister, the Hon. Jim Prentice, he agreed to re-establish the intergovernmental forum and a meeting will be scheduled for this summer.

Mr. Speaker, our list of accomplishments in making Yukon First Nations full partners in the economic development of the territory is extensive and includes the following: ongoing support for the Aboriginal Pipeline Coalition; successful collaboration with the Selkirk First Nation on the Minto Mine development; working with First Nations in Teslin, Watson Lake, Ross River, Dawson City and Haines Junction to complete and implement strategic forest management plans; and working cooperatively through partnerships with First Nations to develop closure plans for the abandoned type 2 mine sites such as Faro and Mount Nansen.

On April 13, 2007, our government announced its commitment to provide \$850,000 toward the development of a new youth-elder activity center in cooperation with the Kluane First Nation at Burwash Landing.

The new facility will provide a modern, year-round venue for a variety of community activities as well as other programs and will be the largest indoor gathering place along the northern portion of the Alaska Highway.

It is important to note that these initiatives are all over and above the numerous projects being undertaken under the northern strategy and northern housing trust.

Our pan-northern approach with our two sister territories has also provided major benefits to all three territories, such as health care funding, sovereignty and security, territorial formula financing, the Canada Winter Games and, of course, a major investment in infrastructure as tabled in the recent federal budget.

In November 2006, the three territories renewed the northern cooperation accord in Iqaluit, replacing the original accord signed in Nunavut in 2003.

On March 19, all three northern premiers were invited by the federal minister, the Hon. Jim Flaherty, to hear the good news that the territorial formula financing agreements that were discontinued by the previous Liberal government would be reinstated on a principles basis. Of course I men-

tioned the \$175-million infrastructure fund over the next seven years.

The new territorial formula is based primarily on the recommendations of the federal expert panel on equalization and territorial funding, and that is the joint territorial submission to the expert panel.

These new arrangements include three separate and independent territorial grants, an expenditure base that reflects fiscal needs and a meaningful escalator incorporating both growth in population and in provincial and local government expenditures.

Moreover, these arrangements reflect a gap-filling concept that integrates territorial revenues based on the representative tax system while providing comprehensive revenue coverage and an explicit economic development incentive. Something that we were striving for since taking office has now been delivered -- the economic development incentive.

I cannot overstate how important this new territorial funding formula arrangement is for the Yukon. It is perhaps the most important achievement of our government to date. The outcomes of such an agreement for Yukon include increased investment and design logic that will promote long-term and sustained fiscal stability for the territory now and into the future.

I want to thank all those Department of Finance officials who worked so hard on this very important issue since 2004. We owe you a tremendous debt of gratitude.

Our government also has a very close working relationship with Alaska, Alberta and British Columbia. In January, a delegation of Yukon government ministers met with their Alaskan counterparts to renew the positive working relationship with Governor Sarah Palin's new administration.

Topics for discussion included large infrastructure projects, such as the Alaska Highway natural gas pipeline, the Alaska-Canadian rail link pre-feasibility study and the port access strategy study. Discussions were also held on tourism partnerships and renewal of the Alaska-Yukon Intergovernmental Relations Accord.

On March 1, I had a similar meeting with the new Premier of Alberta, Premier Ed Stelmach, who has replaced Yukon's good friend and long-serving Premier in Alberta, Premier Ralph Klein. Once again, the meeting was designed to carry on the positive working relationship that Yukon and Alberta have developed over the years. Mr. Speaker, one clear example of that is our access to Alberta's health care system.

Now, in conclusion, Mr. Speaker, the 2007-08 budget is the first budget in our current five-year mandate. I couldn't thank Yukoners more at this juncture for giving us this opportunity. We are proud of this budget and all the good work it will do. This budget is our first instalment in meeting the commitments outlined in our election campaign, *Building Yukon's Future Together: A Clear Vision for a Bright Future*. Mr. Speaker, I believe the majority of Yukoners will say that we are off to a very good start in fulfilling the vision we offered to Yukoners on October 10, 2006. This budget is the product of many hands, and we wish to thank all the depart-

ment officials who worked so hard to put a very large budget together.

I also want to pay special tribute to several senior officials who have retired or who are currently in the process of retiring after having served this territory for several decades: Mr. Patrick Michael, Clerk of the Yukon Legislative Assembly; Mr. Bruce McLennan, Deputy Minister of Finance, whom I've had the good fortune to have advising me as minister on the finances of the territory; Mr. Gordon McDevitt, the Deputy Minister of Education; Ms. Noreen McGowan, Assistant Deputy Minister of Justice; and Mr. J.P. Flament, Director of Intergovernmental Relations. These individuals served above and beyond the call of duty, and this territory owes them all a debt of gratitude for their decades of public service.

Mr. Speaker, I commend the 2007-08 budget to all members of the House for their consideration. This budget invests in the quality of life for Yukoners. This budget invests in the protection and preservation of our very important environment. This budget invests in growing Yukon's economy, strengthening Yukon's economy and diversifying Yukon's economy by strategically focusing on the private sector. This budget, once again, invests in practising good government. I commend the budget to the House, and I look forward to the debate.

Thank you.

#### **Motion to adjourn debate**

**Mr. Mitchell:** I move that debate be now adjourned.

**Speaker:** It has been moved by the Leader of the Official Opposition that debate be now adjourned.

*Motion to adjourn debate on Bill No. 6 agreed to*

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

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

*Motion agreed to*

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

*The House adjourned at 3:47 p.m.*