

**Whitehorse, Yukon****Monday, April 23, 2007 -- 1:00 p.m.**

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

*Prayers*

**DAILY ROUTINE**

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

Tributes.

**TRIBUTES****In recognition of the Yukon Human Rights Act**

**Mr. Inverarity:** I rise today on behalf of the Official Opposition to pay tribute to the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Yukon *Human Rights Act*. It is also the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Canada's adoption of the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. It is the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms* that protects many individual rights and gives the courts the power to strike down legislation that violates protected rights.

The Yukon Human Rights Commission supports human rights in the Yukon Territory and has looked into complaints of unfair treatment under the *Human Rights Act* since 1987.

The Yukon *Human Rights Act* has been working to make sure everyone in the territory knows and understands that everyone has rights to look after.

The act ensures basic freedoms for Yukoners and sets up the Human Rights Commission to look into and to try to clear up complaints about unfair treatment. We celebrate the progress of human rights made on the road to equality over the past 20 years. We still have many miles to go. As we look back on the progress we have made, we must also look ahead to the future and what still has to be accomplished. There are still injustices here and around the world that need to be addressed. Only by working together, by understanding our rights and by educating others can we hope to ensure the rights and freedoms we are guaranteed by the *Human Rights Act*.

We thank the Human Rights Commission and the Board of Adjudication and their staff for their dedication to human rights, to the services they provide to help individual Yukoners who feel they have been treated unfairly under the Yukon *Human Rights Act* and to the training and education information they give to schools, to the public and to community groups.

**Hon. Ms. Horne:** I rise today to pay tribute to the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Human Rights Commission, which began serving the Yukon public with the assent of the Yukon *Human Rights Act* in February 1987. The mandate of the Yukon Human Rights Commission is a promotion of human rights and the resolution of situations of discrimination as described under the Yukon *Human Rights Act*. The commission provides training and educational resources to schools, community groups, employers, service providers and the public. The Yukon *Human Rights Act* also prohibits discrimination in the areas of employment services to the public, membership in unions and

other occupational groups, tenancy and public contracts. This government understands the importance of human rights as a tool for resolving the many difficult political situations faced by nations and states throughout the world.

The *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* proclaimed by the General Assembly in 1948, sets out basic rights and freedoms, to which all women and men are entitled. Among them are the right to life, liberty and nationality, to freedom of work and to be educated, the right to food and housing and the right to take part in government.

These rights are legally binding by virtue of two international covenants to which most states are party. One covenant deals with economic, social and cultural rights and the other with civil and political rights. Together with the declaration, they constitute the *International Bill of Human Rights*. The declaration laid the groundwork for more than 80 conventions and declarations on human rights, including the two international covenants, conventions to eliminate racial discrimination and discrimination against women, conventions on the rights of the child against torture and other degrading treatment or punishment, the status of refugees and the prevention of punishment of the crime of genocide and the declarations on the rights of persons belonging to national, ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities, the right to development and the right of human rights defenders.

I ask that all members rise with me and recognize the importance of human rights to the evolution of nations and states, not just in the Yukon but around the world.

**In recognition of Victims of Crime Awareness Week**

**Hon. Ms. Horne:** Today I also pay tribute, Mr. Speaker, on behalf of all members of this Assembly, to Canada's second national Victims of Crime Awareness Week being held from April 22 to 28. I invite all members of this Assembly to join with me in extending our heartfelt condolences to the families of those killed at Virginia Tech. Let us continue to remember them in our thoughts and prayers.

As I said a moment ago, this is Canada's second national Victims of Crime Awareness Week. The theme chosen for this year is, "It's time to listen". We care deeply about providing the services to ensure a safe and secure society for all Yukoners.

These services include the VictimLINK crisis line in partnership with the Government of B.C. This is a toll-free, 24-hour telephone service that provides support, information and referral services for victims of family and sexual violence.

The Domestic Violence Treatment Option Court in Whitehorse and Watson Lake recognizes family violence as a serious criminal act and it provides innovative solutions that combine court proceedings with proven benefits of offender treatment and support for the victims of spousal abuse.

The children-who-witness-domestic-violence program is a new program that provides counselling services for the children who live in families where domestic violence has occurred and the parents are involved in the domestic violence court process.

The victim services and family violence prevention unit offers support services and professional assistance to victims of physical, emotional and sexual abuse, as well as treatment pro-

grams such as the spousal abuse program and the sexual offender risk management program.

We have a responsibility to respect the rights of all victims and their families. Let us continue to support and listen to the needs of victims of crime. During the second national Victims of Crime Awareness Week let us be aware of the needs of victims, recognize our progress and continue to listen to and address the needs of victims.

Gunilshish. Thank-you.

### In recognition of National Immunization Awareness Week

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** I rise in the House today on behalf of all Members of the Assembly to pay tribute to the week of April 22 to 28 as National Immunization Awareness Week. In addition, I would like members to join me in congratulating Grayson Vanderbyl from Holy Family Elementary School, the Yukon winner of the Canadian Immunization Poster Contest. The contest was organized by the Public Health Agency of Canada in partnership with the Canadian Coalition for Immunization Awareness and Prevention and is held every two years to help raise awareness of the benefits of the immunization. Grayson is a grade 6 student whose message is to be safe, stay healthy, get immunized, and that fits very appropriately with this year's national theme of immunization updates.

Immunization is not just for infants and children. It is for all of us. Vaccines provide long-lasting, effective protection against infectious diseases for people of all ages. One hundred years ago infectious diseases were the leading cause of death worldwide. In Canada they now cause less than five percent of all deaths. This is due primarily to immunization programs from coast to coast. Immunization is the cornerstone of effective primary health care. Immunization plays a key role, because it protects not only those who are vaccinated, but also the general population by preventing the spread of disease. In the last 50 years in Canada immunization has saved more lives than any other health intervention.

Yukon's immunization rates for infants and children are among the best in Canada. We cannot say the same thing for our adult rates, because we do not know. Most adults think their immunizations are up to date, but unless they have actually talked to their local health nurse recently about immunizations, that may not be the case.

I encourage all Members of the Legislative Assembly to check if their immunizations are up to date. If they are, I congratulate them for taking this healthy step, and if they are not, I encourage them to do so in the very near future.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

### TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

**Speaker:** Under tabling returns and documents, the Chair has for tabling the report of the Chief Electoral Officer of Yukon on the general election held October 10, 2006. This report has already been distributed to the Members of the Legislative Assembly and to the media.

The Chair also has for tabling the report of the Auditor General of Canada, entitled *Transportation, Capital Program and Property Management, Department of Highways and Public Works*, dated February 2007. This report was distributed to the members, the media and the public on February 2, 2007.

Further, the Chair has for tabling a report from the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly on the absence of members from sittings of the Legislative Assembly and its committees.

Are there any further documents for tabling?

Are there reports of committees?

### REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

**Mr. Mitchell:** I have for presentation the first report of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts. This report is based on public hearings held in February of 2007. It was released to Members of the Legislative Assembly and the public on April 12, 2007.

**Speaker:** Are there any petitions?

Are there any bills to be introduced?

### INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

#### Bill No. 32: Introduction and First Reading

**Hon. Mr. Hart:** I move that Bill No. 32, entitled *An Act to Amend the Ombudsman Act and the Public Service Group Insurance Benefit Plan Act*, be now introduced and read a first time.

**Speaker:** It has been moved by the minister responsible for the Public Service Commission that Bill No. 32, entitled *An Act to Amend the Ombudsman Act and the Public Service Group Insurance Benefit Plan Act*, be now introduced and read a first time.

*Motion for introduction and first reading of Bill No. 32 agreed to*

#### Bill No. 33: Introduction and First Reading

**Hon. Mr. Fentie:** I move that Bill No. 33, entitled *Act to Amend the Waters Act*, be now introduced and read a first time.

**Speaker:** It has been moved by the Hon. Premier that Bill No. 33, entitled *Act to Amend the Waters Act*, be now introduced and read a first time.

*Motion for introduction and first reading of Bill No. 33 agreed to*

#### Bill No. 34: Introduction and First Reading

**Hon. Mr. Kenyon:** I move that Bill No. 34, entitled *Act to Amend the Liquor Act*, be now introduced and read a first time.

**Speaker:** It has been moved by the minister responsible for the Yukon Liquor Corporation that Bill No. 34, entitled *Act to Amend the Liquor Act*, be now introduced and read a first time.

*Motion for introduction and first reading of Bill No. 34 agreed to*

**Bill No. 102: Introduction and First Reading**

**Mr. Inverarity:** I move that a bill, entitled *Act to Amend the Yukon Human Rights Act*, be now introduced and read a first time.

**Speaker:** It has been moved by the Member for Porter Creek South that a bill, entitled *Act to Amend the Yukon Human Rights Act*, be now introduced and read a first time.

*Motion for introduction and first reading of Bill No.102 agreed to*

**Speaker:** Are there any further bills for introduction?  
Hearing none, are there notices of motion?

**NOTICES OF MOTION**

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to collaborate with First Nations, community groups and non-government organizations to provide an integrated childcare system, including creating more available spaces for children of all ages, that better serves the educational and cultural needs of parents and their children in all Yukon communities.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon, in conjunction with the Government of Canada, to provide more resources to combat the growing problem of aboriginal diabetes.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to provide funding for cultural centres in order for First Nation people, non-First Nation Yukoners, visitors and future generations to have an opportunity to appreciate the unique culture, talents and history and traditional knowledge of Yukon's first inhabitants.

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

THAT this House urges the Yukon government to provide the funds necessary to add the Ibex Valley region to the list of 17 other areas identified to receive cellular communication infrastructure in this year's budget currently before the House.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to begin public consultation immediately, held by Government of Yukon officials, on the recently introduced Smoke-Free Places Act, with a completion date of October 30, 2007.

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

THAT it is the opinion of this House that

1) weekly food allowances for social assistance recipients in the Yukon are \$37 for one person and \$185 for a couple with three children, when the actual costs for nutritional food can be triple that cost;

2) the maximum rental allowance for a single parent with three children on social assistance is \$640 a month, while rental

rates in Whitehorse for three-bedroom accommodation range from \$1,000 to \$1,500 per month;

3) the annual social assistance rate for a couple with two children in the Northwest Territories is \$23,036, which is nearly double the equivalent Yukon rate of \$12,253;

4) more and more Yukon families are turning to food programs or scrimping on food in order to pay their monthly rent;

5) social assistance rates have not met basic needs in the Yukon for a decade and a half; and

THAT this House urges the Yukon Party government to immediately act on recommendations made many times in the past to address the real needs of people living in poverty by increasing social assistance rates significantly without delaying while another review takes place.

I give notice of the following motion:

THAT it is the opinion of this House that

(1) wages of childcare workers in the Yukon do not reflect the responsibility involved nor the skills required for the work they do;

(2) most childcare workers are earning below the low-income cut-off, which means they are living below the poverty line;

(3) wages are a critical factor in influencing the quality of care for Yukon children and for the rate of turnover of childcare staff;

(4) wage rates for childcare workers are directly related to the grants given childcare facilities by the territorial government; and

THAT this House urges the Yukon government to increase the direct funding given to Yukon childcare facilities as well as the childcare subsidy paid to families and to establish a permanent, stable funding source for all daycare facilities in the Yukon so that wages of childcare workers can be maintained at a level that is appropriate for the essential service they provide.

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

THAT it is the opinion of this House that

(1) a review of the *Landlord and Tenant Act* is long overdue to make the legislation more understandable, more accessible and more responsive to the needs of both landlords and tenants;

(2) under the current *Landlord and Tenant Act* a landlord has the responsibility to provide and maintain rental units in 'a good, safe, healthy and tenantable state of repair', and the tenant has the responsibility to pay the rent when it is due;

(3) instances of neglect of these responsibilities have recently been observed and there is no way to resolve these disputes under the current act; and

THAT this House urges the Yukon government to conduct public consultations on the outdated *Landlord and Tenant Act* and bring forward amendments to the act and its regulations that outline minimum housing and health standards as well as mechanisms to solve landlord and tenant disputes, and to do so in an expeditious manner.

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

Are there any statements by ministers?

### Speaker's statement

**Speaker:** Before we proceed to Question Period, the Chair would like to make a statement about an event that occurred on April 19. During Question Period, the Leader of the Official Opposition said, and I quote: "The idea of announcing major parts of the budget outside the House demonstrates contempt for our political heritage and our elected institutions." As the Chair of Committee of the Whole pointed out in a statement on December 9, 2003, and the Speaker reiterated on March 30, 2004, contempt for the Legislature is a specific and serious charge. Contempt for the Legislature is a finding that only the Assembly can make after consideration of a substantive motion to that effect. It is not a statement that members are free to interject into debate.

The Chair appreciates that members have strongly held views and they wish to express those views; however, the use of the word "contempt" in the context used by the Leader of the Official Opposition on April 19 is not in order.

We will now proceed to Question Period.

### QUESTION PERIOD

#### Question re: Budget spending

**Mr. Mitchell:** I have some questions for the Premier about the budget that was delivered on Thursday. A quick look at the numbers released last week shows that there is plenty of money floating around the territory, thanks to the Government of Canada. In fact, our reliance on Canada has increased since last year. Given all that money, it is hard to understand why this budget is lacking so many things. We certainly have the money; it is really a question of political will and political ideology.

At the end of the year, even after all the spending, we will have more than \$85 million in the bank. The budget before us does not improve the lives of people on social assistance or those looking for help with childcare. It does little to combat climate change and, because there is no money to start construction of a new jail, it means at least another four years before a new facility is ready and in use.

With all this money in hand, why is this government not doing more to correct the social deficits in our territory?

**Hon. Mr. Fentie:** I think the operative word here that the Leader of the Official Opposition has brought forward to the floor of the House is "quick". Obviously the member has done an extremely quick review of the budget, because a more deliberate and detailed critique of this budget for the fiscal year 2007-08 would see a tremendous amount of emphasis in all the areas that the Leader of the Official Opposition has just brought forward, whether it be childcare and our commitments in the election campaign or the long list of targets that we are working on with the Minister of Health and Social Services leadership. It is all being dealt with. On the social side, I can tell the member that a tremendous amount of work is being done in that regard. This government has strengthened, overall, the social safety net in this territory.

To suggest that there is nothing in this budget for the environment flies in the face of all the evidence. In fact, this is a budget that clearly demonstrates this government's commitment to Yukon's environment.

**Mr. Mitchell:** All these things are not in the budget because the Yukon Party government has other priorities. Looking after the most vulnerable in our society has never been a priority of this government, and this budget demonstrates that very clearly. There are all kinds of rhetoric about caring for society and achieving a better quality of life for Yukoners, but it's not backed up by action.

This is a government that has piles of money to spend. So much money is coming from the Government of Canada that there is hardly room to store it in our Yukon banks. We are getting more than \$590 million from Canada for 32,000 people, yet the poorest of the poor are being told to wait. Children and their parents are told, "No, we need to study more." Staff working at the jail get the message: you're not important to the government; keep working in an unsafe building. Why, with so much money at hand, is this government doing so little to help people who cannot fend for themselves?

**Hon. Mr. Fentie:** Mr. Speaker, here is the problem with the member's position: in fact it is this Yukon Party government, when it comes to childcare under our first mandate, that increased the investment in childcare under our first mandate by some 40 percent, up to a total of \$5.3 million more in the system, and we're going further. But we do things in a very focused, thoughtful and deliberate manner because we are responsible for the taxpayers' money.

Now, the member is back on this position of largesse from Canada and the Government of Canada, and again I remind the member opposite that a very fundamental principle of this country is sharing the wealth, and the Yukon being a small jurisdiction of some 30,000 people should not preclude it from being able to provide services at a standard level that all other Canadians enjoy. That's what equalization is about and that, Mr. Speaker, is what the territorial funding formula is about.

But if the member, again, stopped the quick review of the budget and looked closely at it, he'd see own-source revenues growing along with our ability to invest in Yukon's future.

**Mr. Mitchell:** Once again we are getting all kinds of smoke-and-mirrors excuses. No one is denying our right to have our fair share from Canada. It's that we are not using the money as we should. This government is spending \$862 million this year. It has lots of money for power projects and for building roads, but it can't seem to find the money for some much-needed improvements on the social side of the ledger. Perhaps it's because they think their supporters don't like people who need social assistance. Maybe this government thinks that women should stay home and the government should not be in the business of childcare. Maybe this government thinks that people in jail should just be made to suffer in a condemned building. Whatever the reason is, it's not good enough. The time has come to bring some balance to the spending habits of this government. When will they address some of these urgent social matters and make sure they receive the attention that they deserve from this government?

**Hon. Mr. Fentie:** Let's look at this, as the budget lays it out for the member opposite. When it comes to the social fabric of this territory there are two departments that are the most responsible: Health and Social Services and Education. When you look at the budget, Health and Social Services is almost 31 percent of total investment, followed closely by the next largest investment in Education.

To suggest that the Yukon today is not paying attention and providing the necessary emphasis on the social side of the ledger is a direct contradiction of fact. We are proud of our investment on the social side of the ledger, and we are very proud of the investment of balance that allows us to grow our economy at the same time. And I would suggest in debate here that we'll find that that growth in the economy has helped reduce the pressure on our social system, because more and more people are finding jobs today in the Yukon. There are always those in need; we have an increase in social assistance for those with disabilities already, and we are going to go further.

**Question re: Social assistance rates**

**Mr. Mitchell:** Mr. Speaker, Yukoners were astonished when last week's budget failed to deal with social assistance rates in this territory. Rates have remained largely unchanged for the past 16 years. Unfortunately, everything else has escalated. There are many Yukoners out there who are in dire need. Single mothers who are trying to survive are now below the poverty level. This is a disgrace. The uncaring arrogance of government is being wreaked upon those who can least afford it.

When is this Premier going to stop this government's arrogant neglect of these Yukoners and adjust the social assistance rates to at least a comparable level with the purchasing power of 1991, the last time they were set?

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** The tone coming from the Leader of the Official Opposition is very disturbing and it simply does not reflect the facts. The member is not recognizing the fact that the Yukon's social assistance rates are under review right now. We are doing the work and, at the end of the day, we will come up with the right determination and take the appropriate action.

Unlike the members opposite, we don't have the luxury of pulling figures out of the air because we have to be accountable to the taxpayers. We have to make the right decision; we have to ensure that the hard work is done, and right now the Department of Health and Social Services is doing that work -- reviewing the social assistance rates.

I would point out to the members that again they are failing to grasp the issues. There are two issues, both of which are being reviewed: adequacy and assisting people to move off social assistance and into gainful employment in the labour force, which assists them to move forward and to live meaningful, positive lives within the work force rather than being forced to depend on social assistance.

**Mr. Mitchell:** My tone is meant to exactly reflect the severity of the issue. Words, smoke-and-mirror tactics, Mr. Speaker -- rhetoric doesn't put food on the table. Grandstanding doesn't pay the rent. A society is ultimately judged by how it

treats its least fortunate. I shiver to think of how this present Yukon government will be judged.

Would this minister like to live on \$37 a week for food? Or does he think a diet of Kraft Dinner and Mr. Noodles is adequate?

The consumer price index as published by Stats Canada and the Bank of Canada both indicate that the cost of living has increased some 35 percent since the rates were last adjusted.

When will this Premier and this minister stop all the government's mumbo-jumbo and set new rates that reflect the inflationary increases of the past 16 years?

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** Again, Mr. Speaker, the member opposite is not reflecting the facts. The Yukon social assistance rates, compared to the rest of the country, are higher than most jurisdictions. Despite that, there are areas we feel hold merit for review, and we are committed to doing that. We committed in our election platform to review social assistance rates. That is what we are doing right now. We need to do the hard work of government, and that is what is being done right now by officials. I look forward to receiving that report.

Again, I point out to members opposite that we are looking at two areas: adequacy and what is keeping those people on social assistance. We don't believe that people want to be on social assistance. We want to help them move away from it. It may be areas related to lack of training or financial impediments to moving into the workforce. We want to accurately identify the reasons, determine the appropriate action and put in place the programming to assist people to move into the labour force and be successful. That's what we are doing. We will do that as quickly as the work can be completed.

**Mr. Mitchell:** Laudable goals, but they don't help those people who are on social assistance right now.

How many people do you think, Mr. Speaker, have not had a raise in their income in the past 16 years? I will answer that: it is precious few. The impact on these Yukoners is horrendous. Many of these same people have had to deal with other problems as well, such as health issues and issues surrounding children and elderly relatives. The list goes on. This budget ignores the least fortunate. It ignores women, children and those Yukoners who have come into conflict with the law. This is happening at the same time that this government is harvesting truckloads of money from Ottawa.

Will the minister set a schedule today for when we can expect to have the new rates announced, so that all Yukoners can go to bed this evening feeling and knowing that today we took the first step in righting a wrong?

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** Again, the confrontational tone from the member opposite is not helping the debate. I have to remind the member, as I have on past occasions, that in addition to the rates that are in place under social assistance, there is the ability for emergency funding at the discretion of the director if, in any way, shape or form, a family is not able to meet the necessary funding requirements for food, clothing, shelter or replacing a hot water heater or stove -- all kinds of equipment. The member is not recognizing that fact. I have reviewed this with officials. My officials have assured me that they are confident that those needs are adequately being met at

this time both through the regular rates and, in some cases, through emergency rates. They have reflected on the numbers and those decisions will be made to ensure, as we go forward, that the base rates adequately reflect the common needs of the public on social assistance.

I point out to members opposite that at no time are people being placed in peril. The emergency funding provision, which is at officials' discretion, does provide the ability if, in any way, the rates are not adequate. We are doing a comprehensive review, and we will make the appropriate decisions based on that.

**Question re: Thomson Centre reopening**

**Mr. Edzerza:** My question is for the Minister of Health and Social Services. Last August 24, 2006, the Minister of Health and Social Services announced that the Thomson Centre would be reopening within six months. It has now been eight months and there is no sign of the Thomson Centre reopening any time soon. In November I wrote to the minister, asking for an update. In his response, the minister said the centre would be opening early in the new year. I failed to ask what year he was referring to, and I guess in hindsight I should have.

Will the minister give us a precise date when the Thomson Centre will reopen, and will he tell us what the final cost of repairing and refurbishing this facility is expected to be?

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** In reference to the member's question, the Thomson Centre has been a significant challenge. As has been pointed out, an NDP government began the construction and a significant mistake was made in the approach that was taken in that they did not build the building to code. This has resulted in numerous challenges that we thought were resolved.

The announcement the member is referring to -- I would remind the member that I advised the public of our expected date for opening, that our target date was six months from that point. That was based on assuming that everything would go well. It has not gone well. We have determined that there are more problems, more deficiencies within the Thomson Centre, including more mould that has been discovered. That is being addressed because we cannot move our clients into a building like that where there is mould, considering they are a very fragile client group.

At the moment, the plan, with the exact timelines for implementation, is before Cabinet. I expect to be making an announcement on the timelines for opening up more beds for continuing care within a month's time.

**Mr. Edzerza:** It shouldn't come as a surprise that this project has dragged on for so long without any conclusion. In fact, I can't think of one single construction project this government has completed on time. But there is another reason why the Thomson Centre hasn't opened yet, and it has to do with the staffing levels. Will the minister confirm that there are barely enough continuing care nurses to operate Macaulay Lodge and the Copper Ridge facility, let alone reopen the Thomson Centre?

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** I thank the member opposite for the question, and I would remind him that yes, as he noted, staffing levels within health professions is somewhat competitive these days; however, officials are quite confident that we

can indeed hire the people necessary for opening the Thomson Centre at such point as we are able to do so. If the member is referring to staff turnover, that does occur at this point due to the expected number of people retiring, the demographics within our nursing field, and that is expected to be a reality from coast to coast within the next years to come. That is why we have taken steps, such as our health human resources strategy, the new nurse mentoring program, the increased investment into the nurse bursary, and doubling the total amount of that, to help us recruit nurses and to help us get our own Yukon students into the nursing field, and have them come back to serve in the territory.

**Mr. Edzerza:** For the minister's benefit, I will table an ad that is running in this month's edition of *Canadian Nurse* magazine. The ad says that the Yukon is looking for general duty nurses, community health nurses, flight nurses and community nurse practitioners, as well as registered nurses and licensed practical nurses for three long-term care facilities. The ad quotes a salary range between \$56,089 and \$76,379 with a retention bonus of \$3,000 to \$6,000 per year. This would lead a normal person to believe that these are full-time positions. Yet, qualified nurses who respond to this ad are being told there are only auxiliary positions available. How does the minister expect to meet the Yukon's need for nurses if the best he can offer is auxiliary positions?

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** First of all, to correct the member opposite's understanding of it, the minister doesn't offer these positions. The staffing levels are dealt with by the department. We deal with the overall policy and fiscal allocations related to this, but the hiring is dealt with by the staff of the department.

I would point out to the member opposite that it has for years been common to run ads in some of these journals nationally, such as he refers to, for anticipatory recruitment. As the member is noting, he has heard that there are only auxiliary positions available and that is in fact good news. That means that the full-time positions are filled, but the fact is there is significant turnover within the labour force. The number of nurses, coast to coast, nearing retirement age in the next five to 10 years, and those who are retiring today, is a particular challenge. That is why the department on an ongoing basis engages in recruitment efforts, both locally and nationally.

**Question re: Annie Lake Road**

**Mr. Cardiff:** I have a question for the Acting Minister of Highways and Public Works. Last August I wrote to ask the former minister if the department would honour a formal agreement to maintain the old Annie Lake Road that has been in place since the road was realigned in the 1980s. On November 3, the current minister wrote back assuring me that, "The department will continue to provide the highest level of service possible to secondary roads within its budgetary limits" -- those were the minister's actual words from the letter.

The government has \$32 million worth of unspent money at the end of March, so money can't be the problem. Why has the minister ignored his commitment by allowing the old Annie Lake Road to become impassable this year?

**Hon. Mr. Kenyon:** This is an issue, I'm sure, that is on the agenda of the department, and I'd be happy to get that in-

formation back to the member opposite at our earliest convenience.

**Mr. Cardiff:** Well, they have all the information they need, and the minister has all the needed information.

There are seven homes in that area that rely on the old Annie Lake Road for access. One of the residents is nearly eight months pregnant and may need to get to town in a hurry very soon. Twice in recent weeks I've been down that road as far as I could go, and twice I've sent pictures to the minister showing the extensive flooding that's making the road impassable. Now the minister has ignored my emails and no maintenance work has been done. I've received no replies. Yet in his letter in November, the minister said that this road has historically been plowed once per week, on average, in the wintertime.

Why has the road been neglected, and when can my constituents expect to see work crews out there to fix the problem?

**Hon. Mr. Kenyon:** I can certainly sympathize with the member opposite, having gotten stuck on a downtown road -- actually in Copper Ridge. Flooding is not uncommon this time of year, and it is a common problem, be it downtown Whitehorse or Outside.

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

**Hon. Mr. Kenyon:** Well, Copper Ridge is sort of downtown.

I again do not have those figures at hand at the moment. I will endeavour to get the department at their earliest convenience to get those answers.

**Mr. Cardiff:** When I wrote the minister two weeks ago, the situation was bad enough. The road was impassable and now it is even worse. This morning I received an e-mail from a constituent saying that two families at the end of the road who rely on commercial septic service have been denied that service because the road is impassable. As a result of that, they have sewage running over their yards and possibly into the Watson River. Since I can't get anywhere with the Acting Minister of Highways and Public Works, let's try the Minister of Health and Social Services.

Will that minister take immediate steps to prevent a public health hazard by getting his colleagues to fix the road so that the septic service can get its vehicles down there without any further delay and so that my constituents can get in and out of their homes?

**Hon. Mr. Kenyon:** Again, it is certainly something that has been up front in media and discussion and indeed in song -- "There's flooding on the Marsh Lake road again". Flooding is definitely a problem this year; snow load is a definite problem this year; and I am suspicious that there are a number of areas seeing problems with that again -- from city streets in Whitehorse to, I'm sure, city streets in all our communities -- that are exacerbated significantly in the more rural areas. This is something that Highways and Public Works will have to be out working on. Having had the pleasure of working with these crews over the last few years -- we have some of the very best highways crews in the world, and I am sure they will be looking at this in their best prioritized fashion.

### Question re: Whitehorse Correctional Centre rebuild

**Mr. Inverarity:** I have a question for the Minister of Justice.

Mr. Speaker, this government cancelled the construction of the new correctional facility five years ago. Since that time, this government has talked about creating the best correctional system in Canada. This government has talked about planning to build a new correctional facility. This government has talked and talked and talked while five years have gone by.

This government now has presented us with a budget that includes \$3.24 million for a new correctional centre design. It is more talk, still no action. Will the minister tell the House why the government is still talking about planning a new correctional facility after all these years?

**Hon. Ms. Horne:** Mr. Speaker, the question the opposition should be asking is: what is the government doing to keep Yukoners safe? My response to that question is that we did an extensive consultation across the Yukon. We identified substance abuse as a key contributor to crime in our communities. To reduce crime we are tackling the substance abuse issue through the substance abuse action plan. A key part of that action plan is the safer communities and neighbourhoods legislation, which is now up and running. Complaints may be lodged by calling 456-SCAN, or 456-7226. Our investment in this budget is a prerequisite to getting a tender-ready project. We are building a new facility.

**Mr. Inverarity:** I guess I was looking for answers to questions, not more questions. I have lots of those.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Justice has also stated on several occasions that this government has no desire to simply warehouse people in the Whitehorse jail, but for the past five years that is exactly what the government has done. Five years ago, under the Liberal government, a new correctional facility was actually being constructed. This government has stopped the construction of this project.

Mr. Speaker, that was five years ago. For five years now, the clients of the correctional facility have been warehoused, waiting for this government to take action. We now see a budget that allocates money for more planning. Will the minister tell us how much longer the inmates of the Whitehorse jail can expect to be warehoused?

**Hon. Ms. Horne:** The members opposite seem to be fixated on a building. This government's interest is in helping people, helping Yukoners. We recognize that the same old way of dealing with offenders was not -- and is not -- working. We have far too many offenders to be warehoused in a building. Our government recognizes that the corrections action plan offers a clear vision for a bright future for our correctional system. That is substantially different from the current reality. It is a vision for a correctional system that is client focused and offers a continuum of correctional services in the community, the correctional facility and places of transition.

Our government wants our corrections system to be a place of healing, of reintegration into the community. We want to be the best in Canada.

**Mr. Inverarity:** This is more of a dream than a reality. This government is pouring more public money into planning the new jail, and the public still has no idea of how much the facility will ultimately cost and when it will be built. This government has spent \$1.4 million over the past few years on upkeep of the existing facilities. This government has also spent \$2.4 million on consultation on corrections that said, "We need a new jail."

In the current budget allocations, there is \$3.24 million for planning to build a new jail. Millions of tax dollars have been spent on this project, and it appears that millions more will be spent. Can the minister tell us when the construction of the new facility will be completed and the inmates will move in?

**Hon. Ms. Horne:** Again, the members opposite are fixated on a building, a jail. We are not building a jail. We are building a correctional facility. Our investment in this project is a prerequisite to getting a tender-ready project.

When I imagine tomorrow, I see a place where people who struggle with substance abuse will receive the help they need, not be locked in a warehouse. The point of the exercise here is not to see how many people we can lock up in a jail; our goal is to make Yukon a safer, healthier and happier place. A new correctional facility is one component of a much broader strategy. It is one part of our response to the criminal activity in the Yukon. Modern corrections administration supports moving from simply a secure facility that detains inmates, to a multi-level, secure place of healing.

We recognize that many of our offenders have issues that stem from the abuse of drugs and alcohol, or who suffer from FASD. One of the options we are looking at includes addressing mental issues.

Our goal is to bring healing. We will bring healing by offering support for victims.

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

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

### GOVERNMENT BILLS

#### Bill No. 6: Second Reading -- *adjourned debate*

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

**Mr. Mitchell:** Before we get to the budget itself, we'd like to talk a little about the process that this Yukon Party government has used to get us to this point. Let's start with the fact that even before we came into this House to debate the budget, a third of it had already been approved outside this House by special warrant. It is an incredibly arrogant way to run a government and it is also common practice under this Premier's watch.

A disturbing characteristic of most second-term governments is that they become arrogant and dictatorial. They think they know what's best for people and they make decisions without asking anyone's opinion but their own. Sadly, this has

already become the case with this Yukon Party government and we are only a few months into their second mandate.

On March 16, the Yukon Party government approved almost \$300 million in spending by special warrants. In other words, they spent \$300 million, almost a third of the year's entire budget, with no public scrutiny, no comment or debate whatsoever from the people's elected representatives here in the Legislature.

This approach is arrogant and dictatorial. It also demonstrates how little respect this government shows for this House and for the elected representatives in it. I asked the Premier in Question Period on Thursday why his government has so little respect for this institution that he couldn't even bother to come to this Legislature to ask for permission to spend \$300 million. But he had no answer.

A few years ago when the Premier bypassed the Legislature in a similar fashion, he described it as an effective way to manage the public's money. Well, 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 recall the Legislature 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 refused to cooperate with the opposition parties. He knew the opposition parties would approve interim spending but even that simple courtesy wasn't extended.

He also blamed the Canada Winter Games. Now we have only known about the Canada Winter Games for the past five years, so we think that that excuse really holds no water. 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." This government has bypassed the Legislature by using \$300 million worth of special warrants. This is not the first time they have done it and, unfortunately, 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 is 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 and without public debate. \$300 million has already been spent with no public discussion.

Let's move on to another way that this government demonstrates how little respect and regard it has for this 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, and indeed around the world in parliamentary systems, for many, many years. Several Finance ministers have resigned in this country over the leaking of budget information before those plans were 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 prior to hearing the budget speech. This government has blatantly disregarded the parliamentary practice of budget secrecy and, in the process, Mr. Speaker, I be-



lieve that they have cheapened the democratic process. It leaves the public to wonder why the Premier has such little regard for this institution that he can't even be bothered to make the budget announcements here first.

Now there is a simple way to demonstrate that the Premier and this government do respect the Legislature and the tradition of tabling budgets. They would not make any budget announcements outside the House until the budget was first released here in the Legislature in front of the people's elected representatives. In the government's arrogance, they seem to have forgotten already whose money they are spending. When the government makes budget announcements outside 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 and respect for the institution is diminished and that our Legislature will eventually be rendered irrelevant.

Parliamentary democracy is not well served by a government conducting one-sided public relations events on the budget well in advance of members having an opportunity to hold the government to account for the budget in this Chamber.

Earlier today, the Premier made remarks about how we have only had a quick look at it. Well, that is true, Mr. Speaker, because we only just got the budget. Unfortunately, large chunks of it were preannounced around the territory.

Last week the Minister of Education was up at Yukon College signing over \$500,000 in funding that had not yet been announced and certainly had not been debated in this Legislature. It's bad enough that the Premier shows so little consideration for this institution, but now he has his ministers following in his footsteps. In our view, the idea of announcing major parts of the budget outside the House demonstrates a lack of respect 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". That nails it for me. It is a nearly mindless disregard for the Legislature.

### Speaker's statement

**Speaker:** Order please. The Chair made a ruling earlier today about using the term "contempt" for the Legislative Assembly. The honourable member is not using that terminology, but he is making that inference time and time again. I know that the honourable member is an articulate individual and I know that there are other ways to describe it.

The Chair is not comfortable with the direction that the honourable member is taking. The implication, from my perspective, is one of contempt. That is the accusation he is making against the government. It is not something that I can say to you is wrong; however, what is going to happen is that it is going to cause discord. I would ask the honourable member to keep that under consideration when he speaks, please.

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

Back in the fall of 2006, the Premier campaigned on a promise to hit the ground running. Basically, he said that he would spend the first term getting everything up to speed and then we would see action in the second term. People believed

him and expected him to keep his word. This first budget demonstrates that those promises are already starting to unravel. Instead of hitting the ground running, we think he has hit the ground crawling. There is a lot of planning but not a lot of action.

This first new budget doesn't deliver on many of those long-term plans on economic diversification, on improving our education system, on improving the land disposition process, to name a few long-term issues that were not addressed.

And we all know, the Legislature has started its sitting very late this year. The Premier blamed the Canada Winter Games. Now this has become a bit of a running joke with the public servants that I have spoken to over the last few months. We have only known, as we said, about the Canada Winter Games for about five years, which certainly would have been plenty of time to accommodate getting a budget ready this year.

The real reason we are so late, of course, is because this government hasn't really done very much since they were re-elected. The contents of the budget demonstrate that there was no reason to wait so long to bring it forward. This delay has been completely unnecessary. Several of the major recent announcements have not even made their way into the budget. For example, the \$10 million for the new power line doesn't even show up. Now, I guess I shouldn't criticize the Premier for pre-announcing that budget item, since he then neglected to get it into his budget. I guess it's just pre-announcing some future budget item.

On April 14, 2007, this government announced its commitment to providing \$850,000 toward the development of a new youth-elder activity centre, in cooperation with the Kluane First Nation at Burwash Landing. That's a laudable goal, a good program, but again, this money is not actually in the budget. I wonder if the Premier bothered to tell the chief that when he told him that the project would be going ahead. The Premier has said over and over that the delay was so proper planning could occur. It is obvious that has not happened with so many items having been announced, but not finding their way into this budget this year. We have a good start already on a supplementary budget and the current one is only four days old. So much for good fiscal planning.

Re-announcements. Now, there are some re-announcements in this budget like the \$1.8 million in Haines Junction for a facility for seniors and elders, which was in the budget a year ago, and it's again a budget highlight item. We are wondering how many years will set the record for highlighting something in a budget that has been previously announced. Again, it's trying to do something that couldn't be accomplished the first time. How many years does the minister intend to take credit for this announcement? Will we see it again next year?

Since the Premier made the budget public on Thursday, we have learned that several items are not in this budget. A contribution of \$10 million to the electrical grid was announced but not allocated. Same for the third wheel at Aishihik and the Burwash activity centre, as I have mentioned. This, of course, draws down the year-end surplus by approximately \$16 million additionally.

The recent settlement with the Yukon Employees Union is also not accounted for in this budget. At three percent per year for three years, it is a substantial sum of money.

Before the Minister of Finance accuses us of not supporting our public servants, I want to make it clear that we do. They work extremely hard on behalf of all Yukoners, and they deserve to be appropriately paid for their hard work. But while recognizing that this agreement is not yet ratified, it would seem prudent to at least allocate the amount of the tentative agreement within the budget.

On the other side of the ledger, there is the federal infrastructure money at \$25 million a year for the next seven years. Now, this year's \$25 million is not in the budget and it has been explained to us by officials that it is because we do not yet have the cheques. Perhaps there are other items. So we know there will be additional revenue flowing from Canada.

Are there any other items outstanding? How realistic a picture are we actually seeing?

I am going to, no doubt, surprise and perhaps please the members opposite by telling them that there are things in this budget that we like, and a great deal of them. It would be near impossible to spend \$862 million without doing many good things on behalf of many Yukoners.

I want to recognize some of those things here this afternoon: \$400,000 for the operation of the *Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act* office to address illegal activities such as drug dealing, potentially prostitution and other onerous activities that really destroy neighbourhoods.

Now, Mr. Speaker, all members supported this last year when it was raised. I, for one, and all of us on this side of the House are glad to see that there is funding for this undertaking in this year's budget. We know that it will make a difference and it will help to improve the quality of life in many of our neighbourhoods.

There is \$478,000 for the RCMP street crime reduction team. We now know that most of this is not new money and that other services have been cut and dollars moved to be within this initiative, but we think the initiative itself is a good one.

There is \$103,000 for the Outreach van. This was a project that the Minister of Health and Social Services initially refused to support. From this side of the House, we asked question after question during Question Period. We raised it again and again during debate on the Health and Social Services budget and we said that this service was being put on by volunteers, by NGOs, by service organizations who are funding it with some funding as well from government, but they could only run it two days a week. We noted that the problem exists seven days a week. The problem of youth at risk and other people at risk is not a two-days-a-week problem so it can't be addressed with a two-days-a-week band-aid.

At the time, the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources, in his budget reply, said it should be funded by community groups. He said he was okay with the Rotary Club and other service clubs and NGOs carrying the ball on this important service. They made fun of us, from that side, asking that it be funded to a greater extent. Now, of course, they are providing

the money. We are pleased that the Yukon Party government has followed up on our suggestion and is funding this initiative.

Another idea that has found its way into the health care section of the budget is the collaborative health care clinic trial program. I am pleased that the government is moving on yet another idea that was first suggested by us in our election platform. When it was first suggested, we were criticized for it during the election but, I guess, on further reflection and on consulting with health care practitioners, the government has seen that it is a worthwhile idea. I am glad to see that they are going to move forward and try it.

There is \$1.1 million to assist museums and First Nation cultural heritage centres. Those are good things.

There is \$1.5 million to support arts groups -- again, positive initiatives.

There is \$90,000 for the whole child initiative. This one is dear to my heart, as my wife worked as an educator for 14 years at Whitehorse Elementary School, which is the school where the program was first piloted. I myself volunteered for many years at Elijah Smith Elementary School where it has also now been implemented.

I want to thank the Education minister for ensuring that this money made its way into the budget. There is \$1.285 million for fish, wildlife and habitat surveys, including the harvest management plan for the Porcupine caribou herd, which I know is important to my colleague, the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin.

There is \$480,000 for implementation of the new placer regime. Placer miners have played a crucial role in the development of this territory for 110 years or more. It is important that we work constructively to maintain this part of Yukon's economy and history while also ensuring that we protect Yukon's environment, particularly water quality and fish habitat. I know that many Yukoners at all levels of government, including our Member of Parliament and senator and members from all sides of this House, worked on getting a new placer regime, and I'm glad to see that it is supported in this budget.

There is \$400,000 to continue the success of the Look Up North national marketing campaign. I am sure we will hear much more about that from the honourable Tourism minister. We have just experienced all the excitement and positive reaction to our hosting of the Canada Winter Games. It is valuable to build on that positive exposure and use it to increase the number of visitations and support our tourism and retail sectors. I am pleased to see this program carrying forward.

There is \$9.2 million to expand the Whitehorse Airport terminal building and parking improvements. Again, this infrastructure will help us increase our tourism opportunities by allowing us to meet the new security and Customs requirements to accommodate more international flights.

There is \$10 million to upgrade the Alaska Highway along the south shore of Kluane Lake. I know that my colleague, the Member for Kluane, is happy to see that proceeding. We should also say thank you to our American friends and neighbours who provide us with funding for that project.

There is \$765,000 for film and sound incentive programs. I have always supported these programs. I have supported them and spoken about them publicly long before I was a member of

this Assembly. Over the years they have been improved on and enlarged by successive governments of all political stripes. This helps to grow a made-in-Yukon industry and capacity that is renewable and can provide jobs and opportunities for many years to come. I believe that our recording artists, filmmakers and technical people are second to none, and it is extremely important that we show them the support they need to take a leadership role in these industries.

There is \$1.875 million for training Yukon residents on heavy equipment operation. We have a shortage of trained heavy equipment operators right now. I think that this government should have anticipated this and addressed this sooner, but I am pleased to see that they are doing so now.

There is \$32.5 million for the northern housing trust fund to be used by First Nations to address their affordable housing needs. Now, this money has actually nothing to do with this government. It flowed as a transfer from Ottawa, but after a lot of discussion and debate -- some of it acrimonious -- fortunately there has been a resolution, and I am pleased on behalf of First Nation governments that this money is now flowing and the balance of it has been transferred.

There is \$614,000 for capacity development strategies with First Nations. We championed this idea in our election platform. We've heard from First Nation leader after First Nation leader how much they struggle with the capacity issues. We have the better part of 4,000 -- well over 3,000 -- working for the Government of Yukon, and some of our First Nations may have one person dealing with a particular issue, and yet they are dealing with five or 10 or more officials in the Government of Yukon, and even a greater number of officials in the Government of Canada when they deal with issues having to do with implementation in a whole variety of areas, particularly when it comes to land use planning and land use issues, where they have one person who is trying to do all this work. We brought forward the idea of something like this during the campaign: to build the capability and the capacity within the First Nations, and we appreciate this government's cooperative spirit in implementing another Liberal idea.

I wanted to start by talking about some of the positives that are in the budget. In opposition we are always accused of being negative, and it's a difficult task because we are actually here to hold the government accountable. We are here to ask questions, and to ask not only why but why not. Sometimes we forget to recognize that we need to talk a little bit about the positives that are going on and about all the hard work that the officials across this territory -- the civil servants -- are doing on our behalf. It should not ever be thought that when we criticize government policy, and we hold government to task for political ideology or policy decisions, that we are criticizing the civil servants, because they are there to work and serve the government of the day, and indeed many of them have served governments from all three political parties, and they have done so well.

This does, however, bring me to some thoughts on what is not in this budget. As I have said, we can support many things in this budget. However, there are in our view some glaring omissions.

It has been frequently noted by many parliamentarians that a society is ultimately judged by how it treats its least fortunate people, and this budget does not do well enough in this regard. We are very disappointed once again by what is not in the budget. We once again have massive funding coming to us from the Government of Canada. We deserve it. Yukoners are entitled to the same level of service as any other Canadian, and we recognize that when you are this small a jurisdiction, you can't look at per capita funding. We have to have sufficient funds in order to provide the same level of health care, the same level of education and the same justice programs as we would expect living anywhere else in Canada.

However, we now take in more than that \$590 million this year from Canada, as shown in the main estimates, and we know there is another \$25 million on the way for infrastructure, and probably some other programs yet to be announced in the coming year by Canada because we are in a possible election year for the Government of Canada and there will probably be announcements coming out periodically. Yet there is not funding to increase social assistance rates.

We debate this back and forth. In Question Period, we are forced by time limits and, unfortunately, it is Question Period, not answer period. We ask the questions, and the ministers on the other side perhaps chastise us for the way in which we ask them and say that we are being rash in suggesting that something should be rushed into. We are not suggesting something should be rushed into, but surely over the past four years there was time to investigate this, to do consultation. Surely over the past almost six months before this budget was tabled there was time to do consultation.

When we say consultation, it is less consultation in many ways than it is examination, because it doesn't take consultation to take a look at some of these amounts and come to the conclusion that they are not sufficient for the people involved. We talked about \$37 per single person on social assistance. Clearly, that is not sufficient to pay for the food that anybody would need if they were living on social assistance.

We talked about some of the other amounts. Looking at it here for some of the areas out of town -- an example is food allowances. We have mentioned that, in the rural areas, it goes up a bit. It is \$40 weekly or \$87 semi-monthly. These figures do go up depending on how many people are in a household. So, for two people, it's \$74 a week, for three it is \$111. I am sure that there is not a member in this Legislature who has not done shopping for their family or for themselves on many occasions. I know how difficult it is to buy food and have a balanced diet with this kind of money. As a former realtor, I know that one would be hard pressed to come up with very habitable accommodations for \$390 a month, which is the amount we are looking at for a single person needing housing.

The Minister of Health and Social Services has indicated that the government wants to look into the reasons why people are on social assistance. The government wants to look into finding ways to get people off of social assistance. The government wants to come up with incentive programs. I am a little concerned about the term "incentive programs" because there is a bit of an implication -- indeed, last fall when we de-

bated this issue in the Legislature, there was almost a tone or implication by this Health and Social Services minister that there needed to be incentives because people on social assistance were more or less sitting back with their feet up, munching chocolates and watching television because it is such a great way of life.

There may be people who are not in the workforce and could be but, by and large, I think that most people want to be in the workforce when they can and "incentives" might be the wrong word. Perhaps we should be looking for words that describe the possibility of assisting people with a transition, so that they can retain their social assistance money while also beginning to enter the workforce.

Not everyone is going to be able to be in the workforce. There are some people with issues of training or education. For others, there may be more underlying reasons why they are unable to do so. It may be that they are single parents who cannot afford to put their children in childcare in order to take the jobs for which they would be qualified, because they would literally be taking almost a full complement of their income to support the childcare system.

There may be people who have suffered from difficult up-bringsings or have some degree of fetal alcohol syndrome effects. There are all kinds of reasons why people end up on social assistance. It may be because people have been through difficult marital breakups and there has been fallout from that. There are a variety of reasons.

I think it is very important that we don't look at people on social assistance as if they have chosen to be there. It's fine to say that we are going to do the right job of looking at what the right formula is at the end of the day. In the meantime, with every week we spend and every month that goes by -- in this case, with every year that has gone by. And when I say that, I recognize that this has occurred over many governments over many years. All sides of this Legislature bear some responsibility for how long this has been overlooked, but right now, the Yukon is going through, as the members on the other side like to tell us, some very good times, some more affluent times, and we are certainly getting more funding than we have ever seen before from the senior level of government. The financial reasons for not doing so are not there. I would hope that it is not some sort of judgemental reason that is why we have been so slow in acting on this.

There is also no increase shown to improve the childcare system. There is no additional funding for parents of children in daycare. There is no new support for the daycare providers. There are no new incentives to assist people in improving their qualifications in order to make this a career choice, rather than simply a stopping point.

This government criticized us during last fall's election campaign for citing specific targets. We suggested increasing the childcare direct operating grant to licensed childcare centres and family day homes by some 25 percent, increasing the subsidy to parents by \$100 a month, and raising the income cut-off to qualify by 25 percent. They said that we were pulling numbers out of a hat -- not at all, Mr. Speaker. We came up with

those as suggestions after talking to many daycare providers and many parents who have children in daycare.

The government said they wanted to continue studying this. If they want to do it by more than this amount, that's great. We will certainly not challenge them if they can come back and say that 25 percent is the wrong amount, if they think it should be 30 percent. That would be great. If they say that it should only be 20 percent, well, we might challenge them on that, but at least it would be 20 percent. Again, as with so many things, they continue to study it and nothing is being done.

There is nothing in the world that prevents this Finance minister or the Health and Social Services minister from saying that they are going to raise the direct operating grant to licensed childcare centres by 25 percent, but we are also going to continue to study it to see if there's a better long-term solution.

There is nothing saying that they can't say, "We'll increase the subsidy to parents by \$100 per month, but we are not convinced that is the be-all and end-all, so we'll still continue to study and see if there aren't better long-term solutions."

As we continue to talk about studying things, I am beginning to think we should all be buying shares in consulting companies, because this government does love to study. Meanwhile, daycare operators are losing valuable employees who can make better wages elsewhere in the job market, and parents are finding it increasingly difficult to afford daycare. We think that is irresponsible, Mr. Speaker, to study something endlessly while people continue to struggle.

We have had some discussion earlier today about building a new correctional centre, and the Premier frequently says -- and I heard the Justice minister echo it today -- that they don't just want to build a warehouse. I have to ask, how many people have been warehoused over the past four and one-half years? Hundreds and hundreds of Yukoners. These are our neighbours; these are people who live within our society who, one way or another, have fallen on the wrong side of the law. They have been warehoused; they have been warehoused in an aging, crumbling facility. It was not established with the idea in mind of providing good rehabilitation, good programs, things that will lead to cutting down on the recidivism rate and will improve the likelihood that when people are released from the Whitehorse Correctional Centre -- because they are there at the most for two years less a day -- that they will re-enter our society and be more productive members and perhaps not have to visit the new centre again -- whether we call it a jail, a correctional centre or a healing facility. We know that, from time to time, society is forced to remove some people from the general population and hold them aside as a combination of punishment for things that they have done that we consider to be wrong, as a period of time when we hope to teach them to do better, and to protect society in the interim from the possibility of other bad actions.

We have heard a bunch of slogans; we have heard political rhetoric; but there just doesn't seem to be an ability to get things going. There is \$3.24 million set aside for planning and design, yet the minister has admitted that she does not yet know for sure where the building is going to be built. We are not certain how you can design this facility if you have not yet -- with

all of the consulting that has been done -- actually established the final location for the facility.

Perhaps the minister will be able to tell us here in the House in her budget reply what locations, other than the existing location, are under consideration, because that would be something worth discussing.

There is no funding to build the new health facility in Dawson City, and I imagine that the MLA for Klondike has some explaining to his constituents to do to explain how he has let this project slip away. I guess he doesn't have quite as much influence with the Premier and the Minister of Health and Social Services as his predecessor did, since it seems to be the Premier and the Minister of Health and Social Services who make all the spending decisions.

There is \$6.9 million for Watson Lake to continue working on the new health centre there, and that is in addition to the \$3 million that has already been spent, but there is nothing for Dawson. I might point out that originally there were two facilities planned and I believe the first budget item we saw was \$10.4 million to build two facilities: one in Watson Lake, one in Dawson. Now we are going to spend almost that entire amount to get one in Watson Lake. That doesn't look like very good management of the monies; it doesn't look like very good fiscal prudence to have an almost 100-percent increase from initial projections to what hopefully will be the final amount. Lord only know what that amount will be when we are done with supplementary budgets and when the building is finally opened and the Health and Social Services minister -- if indeed it's the same Health and Social Services minister, because, counting an acting minister, we are on our third one since this project was announced -- finally cuts the ribbon.

There is no new funding in this budget to deal with concerns raised by the Auditor General in her recent report on the Department of Highways and Public Works, a report that, on behalf of the Public Accounts Committee, I tabled earlier this afternoon. The Finance minister repeatedly remarks on the qualified audits that have been received by former governments.

I will speak more to this a little later, but these qualified audits were technical reasons why there were comments made regarding the allowance for leave liability for employees. This government has now received an audit of a department that describes serious inadequacies of control and fiscal management regarding major construction contracts. I have cited one, but there were others, including the school in Carmacks. There have been many examples. In fact I think that almost every example that they looked at has gone overbudget.

Major construction projects, as well as the maintenance of Yukon's highways -- the department officials, during the PAC hearings, indicated that they had to choose. We asked why they hadn't done the audits and the follow-up -- done the paperwork so to speak, that the Auditor General suggests should be done and that our own guidelines say must be done. The department officials indicated they had to choose between spending their budgets, addressing the Auditor General's concerns or fulfilling their departmental obligations. I believe one of the officials said, "Which would you have us do? Would you have us not

maintain the roads while we're doing the paperwork?" Well, that's not their fault. They can only do what they're funded to do. So where's the new money that they indicated they need to do their jobs properly?

No funding for any new school planning, be it in Copper Ridge or the area west of the Alaska Highway, where so much housing has gone up over the past four or five years, nor for a potential replacement for F.H. Collins Secondary School. Now, we've been criticized on this side for suggesting -- and it's a suggestion I might say that we've heard from our constituents. I know I am not the only one hearing it. I know that the Hon. Minister of Tourism and Culture, when she visits with her constituents, has heard it too. They say, "Look, there are more houses going up. There are already children being bused to other schools; we live up here, we would like our kids to be able to walk or ride a bike to school and not have five- and six-year olds being bused to more distant schools.

We've been criticized for being irresponsible, saying we just want to spend money without studying whether there's a genuine need. We recognize that if we jigger around enough with the catchment areas, we may be able to put off for a few years building a new school. Yet we also know that there's potential housing over the coming couple of decades for up to 10,000 people being planned now by the City of Whitehorse, together with the Government of Yukon, on the lower bench in Porter Creek. The anticipation is there that we need more housing. We heard this morning on the radio there was a contractor again saying, "That's it for the urban lots." Contractors are so frustrated that they are going into the residential lot draw themselves for the one lot that you and I could get, Mr. Speaker, if we chose to build a new house. Indeed, I did so three years ago. Contractors are going into that general draw so that they can get at least one lot, build a house, knowing that they're going to have to live in it for a year or two before they can sell it, and sell the existing house, not because they necessarily don't want to live in the house they're living in, but because they know there won't be any lots left for them when it goes to the contractors draw in order for them to keep their crews working.

We know that there's a labour shortage for skilled labour, not just in Yukon, but across Canada and particularly in western Canada, particularly in Alberta, British Columbia and Yukon. There is a shortage. If there are not places for contractors to keep their skilled workers -- their plumbers, electricians and drywallers -- working, they are afraid that they will lose them. It only takes a day and a half to get to Alberta by driving or two hours and 20 minutes by airplane. They don't want to lose those workers, and they don't want to have to scale their businesses down. But through lack of planning and being able to get together with the City of Whitehorse over the past four years until the penultimate hour -- until just before an election -- to sign a cooperative agreement on land development, we were not able to see anything new proceed. Now we know that there is going to be a gap. We know that when they had the lot draw last week, out of the 53 lots that were available, there were six that were not drawn initially. We know that those will go in over-the-counter sales or they'll go within the first 10 minutes of a draw to contractors.

As far as lots within the urban areas, meaning the suburbs and areas serviced by sewer and water as opposed to country residential, the City of Whitehorse planners tell us that the best case scenario is 2010 before one can walk in and purchase a lot across the counter that is ready for us to build a house. The contractors are worried. Where are they going to build houses late this year? Where are they going to build houses in 2008? Where are they going to build houses in 2009? Again, that's another problem.

Getting back to education, if we are not going to build a school, then we are going to disappoint a lot of people. There was a study going on. I am certainly not happy with how this study was conducted. I know that initially I had constituents complaining to me, including our own family. We received our notice of the study. We live in Copper Ridge. In fact, although the land set aside for the new school is actually in Whitehorse West, in the Tourism minister's riding, it's probably only 200 or 300 metres from where we live. I got my notice on a Friday. I pick up my mail Friday evening when I get home. It told me that the deadline for providing my response to the consultation was Monday.

Now that's not very meaningful consultation.

I know, Mr. Speaker, that you live in Riverdale. I know there were documents mailed out there, but I don't know if you had more lead time than we did. The lead time was pretty brief. At the same time, I was told afterwards that it was corrected on the Web site. How many Yukoners are going to bother to punch in a long string of letters and numbers to get to the Web site to find out that the response wasn't due the day they got the document? It is not a very good way to communicate with people -- to send out a notice with a deadline of one business day and then tell people later that if they had looked at the Web site, they would have found out that it had been extended.

At the same time, I know that there are many people within Copper Ridge who never got the notice in the mail, yet other people living in other subdivisions -- living in Riverdale, living in Hidden Valley -- got a questionnaire asking about whether or not there should be a new school built in Copper Ridge. This seems like a very strange way of consulting with people -- to ask people across the city what they think but neglect to ask a lot of the people who actually live in the area where you are thinking about building something. I know that the people in Riverdale wouldn't have been very pleased if the notices had gone out to the people in Copper Ridge asking about the future of F.H. Collins, but not to the people in Riverdale. These are problems that need to be addressed.

Again we are told that the responsible thing is to study it. I would point out that the first promises for building a new school in Copper Ridge occurred during a by-election in 2005 when the Yukon Party candidate said that this was something that the government would do, and campaigned on it. Then there was a lot of discussion in the House -- and I was an observer in the gallery at the time. My former colleague, the former Member for Porter Creek South and the former leader of the Liberal Party, had to ask these questions. Eventually, after a lot of pushing and after we actually ATIPP'd the department, we found out that there were indeed plans, plans for \$6.9 mil-

lion to build an elementary school -- a K-through-7 school in Copper Ridge and there was a justification given in the plans, done by the department, that this was because there was a perceived need for a new school, the numbers were growing and they couldn't accommodate all of the students. Then the government said, "Yes, indeed, we are planning it." We asked, "Where is the money?" We were told by the then Education minister, when we asked if there would be money in the upcoming budget, that "I'm not going to pre-announce a budget item." Now there's a refreshing change, Mr. Speaker -- a minister standing up and saying, "I am not going to pre-announce a budget item." Of course that member is now sitting on the opposition benches.

Nevertheless, the member said, "If we said we are going to do something, we'll do it." Well, the document that we ATIPP'd said \$75,000 for planning a new school in Copper Ridge, and lo and behold, when last year's budget came out, there wasn't \$75,000 to plan a new school in Copper Ridge. It's why we question some of these announcements in the budget speech that don't show any funding attached, because really, they only have the ink on the page to tell us that they are going to happen, and not when.

There is no funding for the trap exchange program that has been promoted by my colleague, the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin. There is a need to replace the old style of traps with the new, humane traps that are now approved. It's very expensive for individual trappers. People who trap, people who work on the land, do not make big livings. These are people who don't have government jobs; they don't have the security that you and I have -- at least between elections, Mr. Speaker -- when there is a paycheck coming in. It is very difficult when they have to take money out of their pockets as a result of things that have been legislated by others, and it impacts on their ability to earn their living. We'd like to see that come in. It's too bad it wasn't in this budget.

The substance abuse action plan was a \$2-million line item in Executive Council Office. It is no longer there now, but I understand just from some questions that I asked earlier today that the money has now been disbursed within the departments.

The rate stabilization fund -- there has been some public discussion of it recently -- the RSF. There was a temporary three-month extension that the minister announced. It was to be extended for three months while the government studied it. God knows, I hope they can conduct this study a little more effectively and a little quicker than the study to address child-care rates, the study of where we should build new schools and the study of the correctional centre, because they have only given themselves three months.

There is no money in the budget to continue the RSF past that period of time. We are forced to assume that the government plans to kill this program -- or terminate it; I shouldn't say "kill", excuse me, Mr. Speaker -- or end this program. Unfortunately, the people on fixed incomes, such as pensioners or people on lower incomes, will be in a real economic bind when their power bills shoot up later this year if that is the result. This will be a particular concern if it is not going to be in place

for the winter season. There is all this new money from Ottawa and nothing for these priority areas.

Another area that I would like to address in terms of the budget is climate change. We think that, for all the rhetoric we have heard about climate change -- and there has been a great deal of rhetoric from the Yukon Party government and certainly from the Yukon Party team during the last election -- it has not been matched by action or dollars in this year's budget. There is \$145,000 for the climate change action plan, which is a plan that will not even be ready until 2008, since it says that it is a 15-month project. The example I give is that that is less than two-hundredths of one percent of the budget for climate change. Just to put that into perspective, the Department of Environment is spending more money this year on new office furniture and computer systems than it is spending on climate change -- some \$182,000 for furniture and computers.

I recognize that there are other items in the budget that will potentially impact climate change, but I am talking about things that have been specifically described as climate change items. Unfortunately, it has now become a buzzword. The government is now beginning to describe climate change rationale for many sundry projects that it may bring forward, such as the cold climate innovation cluster, which may well be a worthwhile project. We have yet to see the private sector buy into it moving forward, and it needs the private sector.

The government has confused a lot of people, because it talks about the climate change centre of excellence, which is also not funded in this budget and it talks about the cold climate innovation cluster, which, from the way it has been publicly described so far, is a testing centre. It's an industrial centre that will test how various products, vehicles and construction materials hold up in cold climates. It may well be worthwhile and it may create jobs. I can have that debate with my friend, the Minister of Economic Development and we can talk about it, but it shouldn't be described as addressing climate change, because that's not what it's going to do.

This current speech has tried to dress up the grid extension to Carmacks as being an environmental initiative. I was at the Earth Day Celebrations yesterday up at Mount McIntyre and I talked with a great number of people who were there. Some people were for the grid extension, others were not for the grid extension. We in this party actually think that it is a good idea. We think it is a worthwhile project and we look forward to Yukon Energy Corporation proceeding with it if they are able to get all their permits and all their approvals. We think it's good to provide more reliable power to the people in Pelly Crossing and eventually in Stewart Crossing. We think that if there is going to be a mine at Minto -- and there certainly is going to be one there and there may be a second one at Carmacks Copper. We have supported the idea of these projects. I have expressed that support personally to the CEO of Sherwood Copper at public functions, because it provides jobs for people and it looks like they are taking a good approach. They are being sensitive to the environmental needs. They are working out impact and benefit agreements with the First Nations; they are being responsible corporate citizens.

But I think it's really a little awkward when we start saying that this is a climate change project because there is going to be a new mine and then the new mine will eventually, because of the burning diesel, create more gases -- so the extension as a climate change project because it will then reduce the gases that we first create. It should be described as what it is. It is an infrastructure for an industrial power customer and for other Yukoners, and that's the role of government -- to provide infrastructure. We have no problem with that. We just think it becomes questionable when we start describing something that we are doing for one purpose as being done for a different purpose.

The same could be said for the third wheel at Aishihik. In the 20-year plan, the Yukon Energy Corporation said they would get no benefit from the third wheel until 2013. That was based on looking at existing and potential mines that were coming on stream. It was based on the demand that is here now. It is not going to reduce diesel consumption until down the road. So it really is not a climate change initiative.

There are many, many other things that this government could have brought forward that would immediately allow Yukoners to address climate change. We could have brought forward the \$5 million that has been pledged to that project, although it isn't shown in this budget. There are things that could have been done instantly through the Yukon Housing Corporation to assist even more Yukoners in better insulating their homes, putting in more efficient lighting and putting in more efficient appliances -- or through the Energy Corporation for that matter.

There are things that could be done to help the City of Whitehorse further with mass transit. We saw how well mass transit worked during the Canada Winter Games. Mass transit worked well during the Canada Games, because it had a schedule that worked for the potential users. It started early in the morning and ran until 11:00 at night. It ran seven days a week. The frequency of service was adequate to get people to the games and people were told, "Take the bus, because when you get there, you're not going to be able to park." In addition, the price for volunteers was free. Now we know that nothing is actually free; we know that there is always a cost involved, but obviously there might be monies put into assisting the City of Whitehorse into reducing, if not completely eliminating, the cost of mass transit and increasing the schedule so that it could be done in a way that would allow Yukoners to make better use of it.

Addressing climate change is a partnership, where people need to take positive steps as individuals and they need governments to assist them in making those steps possible.

Yesterday my wife and I drove to Earth Day. We did so because we really didn't have much of a choice. It was Sunday and the buses don't run in Whitehorse on Sunday. There is a perfect example of wanting to take the bus, and I am quite certain that we would have taken public transit -- as I was speaking at Earth Day -- had I had the opportunity, but that opportunity was not there. Again, this level of government can assist the municipal governments in some of these activities.

We have recycling centres in the City of Whitehorse; perhaps this level of government needs to be helping other communities with getting recycling going on a more regular basis, because that has an immediate effect on our environment and on climate change.

The only really good thing that I can see in this year's budget is the fact that it was 29 pages long instead of 42 -- the budget speech last year. We did save some paper, and we were a little friendly to the environment on that.

I mentioned qualified audits, Mr. Speaker. I would like to go back to that, because we hear it again and again and again. The Minister of Finance loves to stand up and say, "A few short years ago under the Liberal government we were receiving qualified audits. The Auditor General said things were out of whack." It has become a favourite answer. In particular it is a favourite second and final supplementary answer in Question Period when no more response can be made by this side of the Legislature, and you can't really explain it during the time that is allowed in Question Period. I would like to go into this a little bit now because it was mentioned in the budget speech; it is mentioned by the Minister of Finance almost daily. Let's go over some history regarding the Auditor General's audits so we can stop hearing this same, tired refrain from the Premier when criticizing his predecessors. I would like to point out that there are many predecessors who have had qualified audits. The Yukon Party -- this Premier is proud to lead this current Yukon Party government. The Yukon Party in 1994 received a qualified audit. The Auditor General said that the government had over-expended one department by \$1.7 million, contrary to the *Financial Administration Act*.

Even more serious, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is that the Auditor General said that they made two loans, each for \$2.3 million, without the authority of an act. Again, this breaks the *Financial Administration Act*. That was a former Yukon Party government. The NDP government in 1999 was a government that the Premier was part of. He sat proudly as a backbencher in that government. Well, that government, along with the Liberal government in 2002 -- yes, both of those governments -- received qualified audits for the same reason. It was for failure to report the liability for post-employment benefits earned by its employees. Both governments made the decision to cap the amounts set aside for this liability. I think it was some \$30 million. It was basically, after making that decision, together with consulting with officials, that they ended up in an accounting disagreement with the Auditor General.

I would also like to point out that no employee ever did without. No employee did not have the funds there for their leave, because there was always enough money to cover an employee's payouts. So this brings us to the current Yukon Party government. Now, they have yet to receive a qualified audit in the annual audits of the public accounts by the Auditor General of Canada, unlike the one they received a few years ago under this Premier's former colleague.

They did, however, receive quite a scathing audit earlier this year on the management of the Department of Highways and Public Works. There is probably another one coming on the Canada Winter Games. Even Cabinet ministers who sat on

the Public Accounts Committee that reviews the audit agreed that this exposed the current government as being poor fiscal managers. I am sure that they don't want to blame that on officials. The amount of money that was wasted -- and I say "wasted" because we are looking at government construction programs that went completely beyond any semblance of their initial forecast budgets. This went far beyond anything that was outlined in previous qualified audits.

Let's list a few examples of how the Auditor General said the Yukon Party government has failed to maintain the rules or has broken the rules of proper accounting. The Yukon Party government was spending money without proper Management Board approval. That was one of the things found in this audit.

Well, I see that the Minister of Education thinks that's very funny. He's laughing; it's not funny. It's not funny, Mr. Speaker.

They were starting projects without the necessary environmental permits in place. They were sole-sourcing lease space and, as a result, the Auditor General found they were not getting good value for taxpayers' money, and the list goes on. Projects went 20 and 30 percent overbudget. We've already said that we see the health centre in Watson Lake approaching the point of being 100 percent overbudget. They didn't adequately manage the risk of projects and they did no evaluation to find out why things went so badly while this was going on. Now, this is what the Auditor General thought of the Yukon Party government's fiscal management skills. They found this to be incompetent.

As the minister chuckles on the other side -- I see he's not chuckling now. Now he's got a more serious expression, because I think he recognizes these are serious, serious issues.

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

**Mr. Mitchell:** These are -- I believe I have the floor, Mr. Speaker, but I don't mind a little bit of heckling.

The seriousness of this is because there is ministerial accountability. That's the principle that's at stake -- that we have ministerial accountability, that we don't blame things on officials. If things go wrong, the ministers stand up and say, "The buck stops here and we're going to improve it."

So after this audit, I would think that the Yukon Party government would look pretty foolish in criticizing previous governments for having accounting disagreements with the Auditor General, because the waste that the Auditor General found under this government's watch makes the previous audits look like chump change. There was no money lost under those previous issues. There is no comparison, obviously. What this government has done is much more serious in its neglect.

Now, again, I mentioned the Watson Lake Health Centre. So let's look at this project, because the Auditor General looked at it. It shows up again in this current budget, the Watson Lake Health Centre. The 2005-06 budget identified a total of \$10.4 million in construction money for two facilities: one in Dawson City and one in Watson Lake, the two largest communities outside of Whitehorse in the Yukon.

In Watson Lake that number has now grown to \$9.9 million. That's \$3 million already expended; \$5.6 million in this current budget, or \$5.5 million, excuse me, in this current



budget -- \$6.9 million -- sorry, I'm staggering with the math, Mr. Speaker. The cost has almost doubled. It really demonstrates what a poor fiscal manager this government really is.

This project has been poorly managed from the start. And I know what they'll do. The current Health minister will blame it on his predecessor -- the acting Health minister doing his short tenure there. He's probably glad that that hot potato got passed to his colleague. He said, "I'm new to this, and I'm certainly not going to defend the actions of my predecessor." I've heard that from the current Health minister too. He said, "I wasn't the minister then." Well, it's one government. Governments can't get out of being responsible for things simply by shifting chairs or moving the chairs around the deck of the *Titanic*.

The repeated use of sole-sourced contracts has only driven the cost higher in this project. These are political decisions that were made by Cabinet. The former minister said that he was using his authority under the contracting regulations to sole-source, because he has the ability to do so. Under the leadership of the MLA for Laberge, the current Health minister, we see the cost of this project continue to balloon out of control. On the other hand, as I mentioned earlier, the facility in Dawson has completely dropped off the maps. It was being planned; there were actually working drawings that had been done by an architect, then a former Health minister decided to take his high school drafting experience, I guess, and put it into effect, and he re-drew the plans and eventually they planned that one right out of existence. So if I were the MLA for Klondike, I would be trying to figure out how I was going to explain that back home in Dawson. Why is the Premier getting a health care centre and Dawson not?

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

**Mr. Mitchell:** A bridge? Well, don't get me started. That's another thing that we all know the answer to. Again, to sum up the money: current year 2007-08, \$6.9 million; 2006-07, \$1.2 -- I think it was \$1.25 roughly, and \$1.75; it adds up to \$3 million in 2005-06/2006-07.

The Premier also mentioned the athletes village in the budget speech. That's the \$3-million project that the Yukon Party government has managed into a \$35-million project. I'm sure that the Auditor General will have something interesting to say about that in her report that is due out later this fall. It will be great to see the final costs on these units, because they're probably some of the most expensive apartments in all of western Canada.

I'd like to get into the record some things about which we would like more information. We would appreciate the Finance minister providing us with some more information -- not on the last day of a budget sitting, but perhaps earlier.

The enterprise trade fund has 177 projects totalling \$1.3 million with \$600,000 being allocated for 2007-08. We will ask for it during the departmental debate, but we would ask for a detailed breakdown on that.

Regional economic development: 42 projects for a total of \$756,000 with a 2007-08 allocation of \$450,000. We'd like to see the breakdown on those 42.

Strategic industries development fund: 54 projects for a total of \$2.639 million with an allocation of \$1 million for 2007-08. Again, we would like to see the breakdown.

Along the same lines, the Finance minister over the years has traditionally provided a breakdown of spending by community. Under this Finance minister, this practice has been hit and miss at best. This is a simple document to produce. The Finance department has these figures. All they need is the political go-ahead to release them. I would ask the ministry to do so sooner rather than later. It's really tiresome for us to have to repeatedly stand up and ask for the breakdown and be given earnest promises that we will receive them and get them on the last day of the sitting.

We know that they're able to track this. We know they do track this. In the spirit of cooperation I'll ask the Finance minister to provide us with that information so that we can have a better idea of where the monies are being spent. It would be helpful for both MLAs and for the public to have this information, and traditionally in the past, Finance ministers have provided it.

Now, the Yukon Party government has an interesting habit of taking credit for things that have not yet happened, so we go to page 3 of the budget speech, for an example. The Finance minister said, "Mr. Speaker, I might add that the Department of Education is proceeding to implement another drug-deterrent program, the canines for safer schools program in Porter Creek Secondary School, thus meeting one of our platform commitments." Well, we all supported this program. I know I spoke in support of this program; I think it is worthwhile. But is there a drug dog in the school? No, there is not. The government gets high marks for good intentions on this initiative, but yet it has actually failed to deliver any results. It is standing back, sitting on its hands, while the parents within the school are, on the one hand, asking when this program can occur, and on the other hand, there has been a concern expressed by at least one parent that there may be health risks. So before the government tries to take any more credit for this initiative, let's wait to see if it actually happens. What we understand is an individual has been engaged -- an individual has a dog, but that dog may not be appropriate for that school. There has been some talk about a hypo-allergenic dog. This particular dog that is coming with the individual is not that dog. We do look forward to seeing this occur, but let's not take credit for it until it does.

Port studies and rail studies: these are two initiatives that are mentioned, but yet again not funded in this particular budget speech. The rail study cost us some \$3 million, and is yet to produce any results that we are able to see that are tangible. The port study, while costing less, has produced the same results; namely, next to nothing. The Premier has been desperately wooing his new Alaskan counterpart to visit him here in Whitehorse to talk about the rail project. Unfortunately, the Governor of Alaska, Governor Palin, hasn't been returning his calls. She has told the Alaskan media that the project was not on the front burner in Alaska. This was a priority of the Premier's favourite ex-governor, Mr. Murkowski. The relationship and the project seem to have gone off the tracks; this rail pro-

ject seems off the tracks now that there is a new governor in place.

This is typical of this Premier. We get grandiose announcements and great discussions. I remember the talk a few years ago about the bridge in Dawson. Then, when these things crash and burn, they are not spoken of again. It's like we're talking about some poor departed relative; we don't talk about them.

While the government was busy studying ports, Sherwood Copper, a real mine, was getting a deal in place to use the existing port in Skagway. This is another project where hundreds of thousands of dollars had been spent, but the results of the study have never been made public. We think that's a waste of taxpayers' money. Make them public and show us that they were justified.

I see that my friend the Minister of Economic Development is smiling, because he thinks that it's humorous to spend this money and then keep it secret, but we on this side don't think it's humorous on this side.

Mr. Speaker, I have spent some time here today reviewing many aspects of this \$862-million budget that we have before us today. As I noted, there are many worthwhile programs within this budget, as there are in any budget. Unfortunately, there are also many areas -- and we pointed out just a few -- that are sorely lacking. Examples are the lack of seriously making progress on assisting Yukoners to address climate change, assisting people who are struggling to make ends meet while living on social assistance, providing real assistance to child care providers and parents to make this important service affordable to more people or like moving ahead to finally build a new Whitehorse Correctional Centre and not keep warehousing people in an old, decrepit building. Another example is coming to terms with the need for new school facilities in Whitehorse. For these reasons, I cannot support this budget. I will be voting against it.

**Hon. Ms. Taylor:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is indeed my honour and privilege to support the budget that we are currently debating. I am going to start on a rather positive note. That is, after all, why we are here -- to speak about the budget and provide comment from our own perspective. I certainly appreciate what other members have to say about the budget. That is, after all, our jobs -- why we are here and why we were elected.

First of all, I would like to extend a grand thank you to all the volunteers who participated in the 2007 Canada Winter Games. I don't have to go on at great length, but the 4,000 and more volunteers who contributed their time are very much appreciated. It is very indicative of the level of commitment to this community -- and when I say the community, I mean the entire territory. I think our volunteer spirit will be our everlasting legacy to the Yukon. I think that in speaking with many residents and visitors over the last number of years, one of the greatest things prevalent among the visitors is the commitment made by the volunteers and the warmth of the northern hospitality that Yukoners are famous for providing day in and day out.

I don't have to go on at great length, but the Canada Winter Games really afforded the Yukon an opportunity unlike any other opportunity before. This was the greatest sport and cultural event that was ever held north of 60. Yukoners did us very proud, not only on the sport level but also on the cultural front. We were very pleased to be able to partner with a number of different organizations. Through the arts and cultural community, we were able to help further build capacity in each of our respective communities toward building cultural components for the Canada Winter Games.

I just want to add that Culture Quest, which was one of the programs that we were able to create about four years ago -- bring in and build on -- is continuing this year and it will be continued for years to come. It was designed to help build programming to be staged during the Canada Winter Games. I am pleased to boast that over 80 percent of the acts showcased during the cultural festival were a direct product from Culture Quest. Congratulations to the Yukon Arts Centre and congratulations to all the cultural performers across the north for doing such an outstanding and fabulous job, whether during the opening or closing ceremonies, prior, during or after the games.

I will speak at greater length about the Department of Tourism and Culture, but I did want to go back to a few of the areas that are perhaps of specific interest to my constituents of Whitehorse West. I will then go on further to my respective two departments as well, if we have time.

I am very pleased to see that there is \$90,000 for the Whole Child project in the budget housed in the Department of Education. Last fall, we were very pleased to be able to announce the extension of this great program from Whitehorse Elementary School to Elijah Smith Elementary School. This is a really fantastic program that has certainly offered many recreational opportunities, such as swimming, open gym night, open computer lab and craft sessions. What was identified every Wednesday night at Whitehorse Elementary School will now be made available every Thursday night at Elijah Smith Elementary School. I think that is an incredible attraction to that particular school and, of course, it is outlined in our platform. We are very pleased to be able to work with our other respective communities and see where there are other further opportunities for expanding that program.

It is kind of unfortunate that the member opposite, the Leader of the Official Opposition, didn't make mention of it, but there is \$5 million within this budget for the extension of Hamilton Boulevard which, frankly, is the number one issue in my constituency. This has been a project that has certainly been a priority on my plate for the last four and one-half years and will continue until I see the actual extension come to fruition. Together with the City of Whitehorse and the federal government, we are very pleased to make commitments for this particular project going ahead. It is estimated to be about \$15 million, of which Yukon government has committed up to \$6.5 million, the City of Whitehorse has committed \$3.5 million and the federal government has committed the remainder -- \$5 million, I believe it is.

This is a tremendous opportunity to serve the growing population that we have seen in our area -- that is, those people

who reside along Hamilton Boulevard. It would certainly help to alleviate the traffic pressures that we receive every day and, more importantly, it will provide that second access out in cases of emergencies such as forest fires or other traffic-related emergencies. So I am very pleased to see the \$5 million incorporated into this budget and it will be used very wisely.

The safer communities initiatives, as members opposite will recall -- we did implement legislation that was supported by all respective parties in the Legislature about a year ago. It was to create the safer communities and neighbourhoods legislation. We are very pleased to see the office actually opening and a phone number is now in place so that officials can take those calls of inquiry from residents all over the territory to investigate activities that are of a dire concern to Yukoners -- illegal activities such as producing or selling illicit drugs, solvent abuse, or the unlawful sale and consumption of alcohol in our neighbourhoods.

This is a very interesting piece of legislation. It has only been enacted in two other jurisdictions in the country, but so far I think that it has been very well received by Yukoners, and I think that this is but one tool in our tool kit for addressing crime in our communities.

Alongside the safer communities and neighbourhoods office we are also pleased to introduce -- I believe it is just under \$500,000 for an RCMP street crime reduction team. Again, this is going to be an incredible initiative. It's an eight-person team that will exclusively focus on street crime, crime hotspots, prolific alcohol and drug offenders, and we are very pleased to be able to provide this funding per year, for each of the next years, for this particular initiative. It is one of the many initiatives that we have been raising and addressing -- drug and alcohol abuse in our territory.

As well, we are very pleased to be able to provide continued funding for other initiatives. Mr. Speaker, there were some comments made that perhaps we're not doing enough. Again, within this budget, there are dollars allocated for a community court, for example -- part of our substance abuse action plan. Community court is actually working in partnership with all levels of government, the RCMP, the legal professions, the Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Society, Legal Aid Society, CAIRS, Council of Yukon First Nations, and so forth. It is a very innovative approach to addressing the root causes of crime in our territory. It is a therapeutic court that will make provisions available for offenders with FASD, mental illness, those who have addictions, whether it be substance abuse or alcohol. Again, it's a very creative approach and one on which we are very pleased to be able to partner with the federal government.

In addition, we are also pleased to provide dollars in this budget for the continuation of the Outreach van. As members opposite will recall, we announced funding late last fall for the extension of the nights that the Outreach van would be out on the streets, from two nights a week to six nights a week. Again, this particular initiative serves many Yukoners in many ways, and we are very pleased to be able to see its continuation. We are also pleased to continue with a public education series; one particular initiative I recall, about a year ago, was the crystal meth education series. It was a series of workshops and infor-

mation sessions about the drug crystal meth. They were held and they targeted youth. They also targeted helping professionals, whether they were nurses or front-line health workers or legal and justice professionals. I know that certainly, as of a few months ago, there were well over 300 Yukoners who had been educated so far through the series about the particular harms of crystal meth in our territory, what to look out for and what to do.

As was just recently debated, there is what I have come to know as the dogs for drug-free schools program. There is money allotted through the Department of Education for this very important initiative. Thanks to the leadership of the Porter Creek Secondary School Council, we are very pleased to be able to work in partnership with them in taking the lead to provide the resources necessary to make this initiative come to fruition. There is certainly not enough that we can do to help prevent, address and combat alcohol and drug abuse in our schools in particular. Again, this is a very creative and innovative solution. It is another tool among the many tools in our tool kit to address crime in the communities. Undoubtedly there will be some bumps along the way, but it is critical that we come together and work out any glitches in the programs and ensure that we see some good things happen along the way.

There are many other initiatives under the substance abuse action plan that each of our departments will be carrying through with. I would also be remiss if I didn't mention safer communities and make reference to the priority housing policies that were just recently adopted through the Yukon Housing Corporation. This has been an initiative that has been identified as a priority, particularly in our Yukon Advisory Council on Women's Issues. That was to identify policy that specifically recognizes the need to prioritize and formally address housing requirements of victims of violence, as well as other categories. We are very pleased to see changes for assessing housing needs for this particular category, as well as others, whether it be seniors relocating from rural Yukon, addressing homeless or evicted households, mobility challenged households and others.

It's a very progressive policy I think. I had a great briefing by Yukon Housing Corporation. Certainly the Women's Directorate has been very instrumental in working with the Yukon Housing Corporation and the board of directors and our Advisory Council on Women's Issues to ensure that these policies would move forward in a collaborative but a most responsive basis, instead of being reactive.

This is prioritizing housing being made available for those who are in need the most. I would certainly urge members to become acquainted with these new policies, because I think it's an initiative that we've talked about for quite awhile and are pleased to see it actually happening.

On the other front -- health care -- there has been a lot of discussion thus far here today about there not being perhaps emphasis on health care. I would have to say that, to the contrary, there's a significant emphasis on health care reflected in this budget. When we talk about taking care of all individuals, I certainly look to our seniors and our elder population in the Yukon. We know that the Yukon is becoming an increasingly favourable place to reside. It's helping boost our population.

People are staying here; they're choosing to live here longer and, as a result, we have to respond to those needs increasingly.

In this budget there's approximately \$1.8 million identified for a seniors facility in Haines Junction. We're very pleased to see this funding made available and to respond to the constituency of Haines Junction for this particular facility or housing development. There are monies being made available for the continuation of the creation and construction of the Watson Lake multi-level health care facility. There certainly is a need in that particular community, as well as other communities including Dawson City.

The members opposite make reference to the lack of emphasis of health care. I just point to the opposite by looking at these tangible results in each of our respective communities, as well as a 48-unit seniors housing complex being made available at Yukon College. I actually had the opportunity to take a tour with several seniors and elders of the facility that was made available just before the Canada Winter Games started. It was very interesting to hear and see the reaction on the faces of some of these individuals.

At first there perhaps was some hesitation as to what to expect, but once we had taken a very comprehensive tour made available by the corporation, I believe they were very looking forward to perhaps looking at making that their particular future residence. They were thrilled with the quality of the residence, and they certainly took a different look at perhaps living in an area that hasn't been necessarily deemed for seniors -- and that is right on the Yukon College campus.

Again, we are making great strides to address many of the concerns and many of the needs and health care requirements that have been identified in our communities.

Of course the pioneer utility grant continues. As members opposite may recall, it was our government that increased the pioneer utility grant to address the rising price of home-heating fuel by 35 percent. We were also able to index it against inflation. Again, these are all concrete initiatives to make it more affordable for seniors and elders to live in the Yukon.

There has been some discussion about childcare, and childcare certainly appeared very prominently within our election platform. I think it is no secret that there certainly are a number of concerns with respect to childcare in our territory. I certainly heard it at the doorsteps that I visited during the election as well as recently. Our commitments are to provide another five-year plan working in partnership with the childcare community to address many of the issues that have been raised and continue to be raised -- issues surrounding space, availability of space and issues surrounding the wages of our workers. There are issues regarding addressing affordability of childcare made available in our communities, and working with organizations, working with operators, working with First Nations, communities directly to provide quality, affordable and accessible childcare.

Those commitments were made, and I must remind members in the Legislature that this is the very first year. I believe it has been about six months since we were re-elected to office. It's interesting to note that during the previous Liberal government there wasn't, I don't believe, one dollar more put into

childcare. In fact, it wasn't until the New Democrat government had instilled dollars -- in 1998 if I'm not mistaken. That was really the last increase until our government came along and we were able to provide a 40-percent increase to the direct operating grant.

Now, is it enough? No, I don't think it is, and I think we have all recognized that there are pressures on operators, there are pressures on parents and there are pressures all over. There is also a great opportunity to work with our childcare community, as we did in our first mandate, to address these very concerns. I think that under the Minister of Health and Social Services, the previous minister and the current minister, we were able to garner a five-year agreement. I am very confident that, given our track record, we will meet those very specific concerns.

I just wanted to talk a little bit about correctional reform. There has been a lot of discussion about a new jail and there is no question that perhaps, yes, a new facility is required. There are infrastructure requirements. No one is debating that. That is why we are very pleased in this particular budget to announce an additional \$3.2 million toward the creation of a new facility. As the Minister of Justice elaborated here today during Question Period, that \$3.2 million will be going toward the planning and the design of a tender-ready facility.

But unlike, perhaps, what the previous Liberal government certainly endeavoured to set out, we are looking at programming made available in our communities, in the City of Whitehorse, to address the root causes of crime. So instead of making the mandate to fill that jail, as members opposite would say, our intent is to try to get at the root causes of crime. I think that is why we look at the substance abuse action plan, we look at health care, and we look at childcare. We look at all of these things. Believe it or not, they are all very much interrelated.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it isn't simply about building a jail. It's about building a new system, a system that is responsive and a system that will certainly not only meet the needs of today and tomorrow, but certainly generations to come in addressing many of the root causes. So I'm very pleased to see great progress, and I congratulate the Department of Justice, I congratulate the Minister of Justice, and I congratulate all of those hundreds of stakeholders who are very much involved, have been involved and will continue to be involved -- in particular First Nations in the territory -- to partner up with the Government of Yukon to approach corrections in a holistic, in a rehabilitative manner instead of warehousing our inmate population.

Mr. Speaker, there has been a lot of discussion over the last few days about tourism and the growth in tourism and where are we heading in tourism. Mr. Speaker, I had the opportunity to take part in the annual general meeting of the Tourism Industry Association for the Yukon, as well as the Yukon First Nations Tourism Association AGM. It was a great opportunity for me to gather with 160 people who took part in the AGM over the last weekend.

Their theme was "Transforming tourism: connecting the dots". I often remind members and my colleagues throughout government that tourism isn't just about marketing. It's not just

about putting dollars into the Department of Tourism and Culture. It certainly resonates throughout all levels of government and all departments. I am very pleased to see very specific dollars being carried forward -- \$400,000 in new money identified -- for a follow-up campaign to the national marketing campaign, again to leverage the promotion of Yukon as a travel destination.

Again, we had great success during the Canada Winter Games, and we continue to garner great success well after the games with the Look Up North campaign. It has been a great campaign, which has been provided in partnership with our sister territories, and provides a substantial \$5-million national marketing campaign. It not only highlights the Yukon as a destination of choice for travel, but also as a great place to invest, as well as a wonderful place to reside. We have been garnering great feedback. In fact, as of April 14, we had almost 50,000 visits on the Look Up North Web site. We were also very pleased to be able to showcase a couple of major events in Toronto that our Premier and the other two premiers from the other northern territories took part in, as well.

Again, the media coverage that came out of that particular trip has garnered numerous print articles, radio, television spots -- whether through ROB-TV or Canada AM -- and the coverage has really placed the Yukon and the north into the national limelight again.

We are also pleased to continue our support of the tourism brand, Larger than Life, with an additional \$100,000. Again, this is to go toward the replacement of our government highway signs that can be seen along the highways throughout the territory.

It will also go toward creating of a brand tool kit that will be made available for industry as well as our Yukon government departments to provide that consistent look and feel of the Yukon brand. It will also help go toward a couple of additional photography shoots with our local photographers as well as emanate those particular places -- the wide open spaces that are so critical to the success of the brand.

There is also money in this year's budget for the construction of the Tombstone interpretive centre. We have just under \$2 million identified for this particular project. It is in the heart of the Klondike. Tombstone Park is an amazing attribute. Again, building upon the awareness of the Yukon tourism brand and certainly when one thinks of wide open spaces, Tombstone Park is but one of the areas that comes to my mind.

We are very pleased to also provide about \$400,000 in new funding for a new program called "Celebrating Yukon Parks". Again, through the Department of Environment under the watch of our Premier, this new funding will help raise the profile and public awareness of our territorial parks. This funding, \$330,000, will go toward the creation of a parks officer program to ensure that our government campgrounds are very safe, secure and family-oriented places to visit.

We are, of course, very pleased to see Condor widening its operating season. They will be operating until the very end of October this year. That brings many opportunities for our respective regions.

Of course, I would be remiss if I didn't say that we are very pleased to see the return of the White Pass and Yukon Route train to the community of Carcross. I often say that what is good for Carcross, what is good for any particular community, is really good for the entire Yukon. It's really similar to marketing in the north: what is good for Nunavut is good for us as well. I think again, raising awareness about the Yukon -- whether it is in Carcross, whether it is in Klondike, Old Crow -- is really good for the Yukon. We are really pleased to see these new promotions being made available through the private sector as well.

On interpretive signage, again we have identified -- just alone in the scenic drives initiative, a new initiative that we introduced about two years ago -- well over \$230,000 identified for interpretive signage. Again, that's an unprecedented level of funding for interpretive signage. Again, it helps build product, it helps entice those people to stay that extra day while they are visiting along the highways.

In the coming year, \$6 million will be spent on the expansion of the Whitehorse Airport terminal building. Air access is so very critical to the ongoing success of the tourism industry.

Of course, we are very pleased to be able to provide -- working towards a permanent in-transit lounge, which will provide more room to help clear customers through Customs, making more space available for border security requirements, and so forth. Over \$3.2 million is being provided to further expand parking facilities at the airport as well.

So these are very critical pieces of infrastructure that will help grow tourism in the territory.

The Yukon government was very proud to be able to sponsor the gathering of northern nations. Through our Department of Tourism and Culture, we had a contribution of \$100,000 in funding support for that particular initiative. It was an amazing and historic event. There was the culmination of all 14 First Nation governments displaying arts, crafts and pieces of their culture, history and heritage for visitors from all over the world to enjoy and learn from. It certainly garnered many questions. We are very pleased to be able to continue our working relationship with the First Nations Tourism Association. In fact, thanks to money made available through the northern strategy, about \$450,000 is being made available through the creation and development of the First Nations tourism strategy. We are very excited about this particular initiative. We will be working very closely with them over the course of the next three years in which this funding applies. We are looking forward to the growth of First Nation products and promoting those products to the world at large.

Mr. Speaker, I just wanted to elaborate on a couple of things. I am sorry I am running out of time, because I have so much more to say. We are pleased to be able to provide the Women's Directorate additional dollars in this year's budget -- just over \$1 million, which is one of the highest estimates the Women's Directorate has ever had. I would just like to jog the members' memories that it was our government that reinstated the Women's Directorate, as it had been dismantled under the previous government's watch.

This particular budget highlights a couple of very important things. We're pleased to provide \$100,000 additional monies and, in partnership with the Department of Justice, that will make a couple of hundred thousand dollars toward the long-term public education campaign on violence against women and girls. We are also pleased to provide a new funding program for women's equality work. I believe that we all have a way to go in terms of striving for women's equality, whether it is on the legal, economic or social end of the spectrum. Certainly this new program will help assist a number of different organizations from all over the territory to provide a number of areas. It will help support direct services and programs that provide advocacy and support for women. It will help advance women's equality through research and policy development. It will also enhance awareness and education on women's equality issues. Last, but not least, it will also assist the further development and capacity of women's organizations.

I think that this fund, coupled with the new funding that was made available through the federal government -- they made an announcement to enhance the women's program fund. This funding that we are making available -- we will work very closely with the respective organizations to ensure that dollars will help to be leveraged from those funds as well.

Just a mention about the financial bill of health, which has been deemed very good by the Auditor General of Canada over the last four consecutive years. That has occurred for a number of reasons. Our Premier has been able to garner additional dollars through the collegial, collaborative partnerships and with the assistance of Nunavut and Northwest Territories over the last number of years.

I just referred to \$150 million for the three territories in the territorial health access care funding -- \$40 million in the northern strategy for the Yukon alone. There are many other funds, of course, through the territorial formula financing agreement that was just approved recently. It has certainly given the Yukon government more options, more flexibility to address some of these very important issues of concern and importance to Yukoners. I think that it is important to note that we have been able to garner a great degree of respect from the Auditor General of Canada and that yes, audits such as what was done by the Auditor General of Canada on particular areas such as Highways and Public Works -- I might remind members opposite that it was the Government of Yukon that requested those particular audits be done.

I think it is really important to note that assessment and evaluation are really important components of good governance, and it was our government who requested those audits be done.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

**Some Hon. Member:** Point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

#### Point of order

**Deputy Speaker:** The Hon Member for Kluane, on a point of order.

**Mr. McRobb:** On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is traditional practice in this Assembly during

budget reply speeches at this point to allow the third party an opportunity to speak, and I guess they are just not prepared.

#### Deputy Speaker's ruling

**Deputy Speaker:** There is no point of order.

**Hon. Mr. Rouble:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, may I suggest a 10-minute recess to allow the third party to engage in the debate.

**Deputy Speaker:** There is actually no point of order presently. If the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin wishes to speak, he is welcome to.

**Mr. Elias:** I would like to begin by expressing my heartfelt thanks to the people of Old Crow for their incredible support. I am most honoured to represent and serve such an engaged riding. On behalf of my constituents, I want to thank some of my colleagues on the other side of the Legislature for recognizing the priorities I spoke about in the fall 2006 legislative sitting. Because my constituents bear the consequences of public government action and inaction each and every day, I say this with respect to my colleagues on the other side that, first, I appreciate the effort that they have made in terms of their time listening to the priorities in my community and seeking my thoughts on various issues in north Yukon. It is my hope that this dialogue continues.

The support in this budget for the community with regard to the health and fitness program, the funding for the Porcupine caribou herd, the funding for the Rampart House historic site, water delivery, sewage induction, sports and recreation are recognized and appreciated by my constituents. I don't have a breakdown community by community, but if there are any other budget items in here that affect the day to day lives of my constituents, it is appreciated.

Second, however, in identifying some of the omissions, I speak to recognize the lack of action by the government in this budget. To take perhaps the most puzzling example, the budget provided no significant new investments in combating climate change. Mr. Speaker, I still have yet to witness any Yukon commitment that takes this territory where it needs to go in terms of climate change. I must say that the budget amounts allocated to combat climate change are disappointing. I believe that we are facing the most serious threat to the well-being of our planet, and this is an important challenge we face as northerners. This government had the opportunity to act in many ways and chose not to. The government had an incredible opportunity to do something significant for the environment in climate change with the \$862-million budget and it chose not to. It's that simple.

Climate change is rapidly ruining many of our valued Yukon treasures. Herschel Island has been in the news recently, and that is an example of one. It's disrupting many Yukon lifestyles and it's disrupting our natural systems that our flora and fauna depend on, to name a few.

By this government's actions and budgetary commitments, I have an uncomfortable feeling that this prosperity in the Yukon isn't something on which we can base our hopes for the future, in terms of the environment and climate change action.

Make no mistake, Mr. Speaker. If this budget is a statement of how serious this government is taking climate change and global warming, then I have no choice but to consider this government's action on climate change simply unacceptable. This is obviously not an environmental budget. I was expecting the Environment minister to demonstrate some inspiration and leadership on this front, and there was very little. As Environment critic, I see that there is only one figure in this budget, a figure that really tells a story of how well the minister is doing on the environment, and that is the \$145,000 commitment to the development of a climate change action plan. The minister is still in the development stages on climate change action. That figure alone tells a story. It tells a story of what the minister believes about climate change and global warming and how it is affecting the Yukon. The minister can talk all he wants about wildlife surveys and databases and the amount of protected areas we have in the Yukon and how well the minister is doing on the environment front. But there is something wrong when, at the end of the day, the government still does not act on the one limiting factor that can destroy our northern environment and lifestyles as we know it, and that is climate change. If the government is truly serious about this issue, it must bring forward a consultation process that allows all climate change spending options to be debated openly and immediately. There is a word of caution, I guess. The Yukon Party will wear this history of inaction.

There are other things I would like to mention that I noticed in the budget. There is a \$20,000 transfer to the Porcupine Caribou Management Board to work toward a harvest management strategy. That is encouraging. That is one of the threats I did mention in the House earlier in the fall. So many Yukoners have been bringing up the issue of the bison hunting with regard to the north and the south zones and the months allocated to the hunters to actually harvest the bison. That is in response to the low success rates.

Also the opportunities to harvest elk were brought to my attention.

As critic for the Women's Directorate, it's very encouraging to see the minister mention just recently the violence against women materials to raise awareness in the Yukon and the \$175,000 women's equality funding program, as well as the others that she mentioned.

As Tourism and Culture critic, I will say the Tourism and Culture minister's efforts to fund the museums and focus on a domestic marketing plan is one step in the right direction. There is also the half-million dollars to the arts fund, the \$700,000 plus toward the expansion of the MacBride Museum and again I'd like to mention the \$71,000 in the budget funding for the Rampart House -- maintenance and restoration of the site.

Many public servants will be working very hard to see whether the impact of where the department is going, in terms of marketing, is going to be paying dividends and I wish everyone well there.

What I don't see is any new money for the construction of cultural centres in the representative communities throughout the Yukon. I think it's especially important to share Yukon's

history and First Nation culture and heritage, and to be able to tell a story. It's a very attractive item for tourists who come to the Yukon. I've travelled throughout many of the Yukon communities and the artifacts, the treasures that are out there, are not properly stored and housed so that they can be preserved for any long periods of time. There is still a lot of work to do. The First Nation culture is a big draw to tourists who visit the Yukon and more needs to be done.

On behalf of the students of Chief Zzeh Gittlit School in Old Crow, whose school bus is falling apart because of pothole-filled roads, and on behalf of my community members who have to endure and do ditch jumping to avoid the pooled spring melt water in my community because there is no proper drainage or road maintenance -- it is unacceptable. There was a question from the floor of the general assembly in September of last fall with regard to the road conditions. The Premier replied something to the effect that there is equipment here and I'm sure we can address that issue quickly and find funding for that. But yesterday's budget did nothing to correct the unfairness that sees millions invested in many Yukon roadways and virtually nothing in the most remote Yukon community.

More needs to be done, including partnerships for upgrading the Old Crow Mountain road to facilitate the building of a new subdivision. Community road resurfacing is desperately needed and, again, the water drainage away from the town centre.

Again, going back to the millions of dollars spent on highways and public works, many of my constituents view a temporary winter road constructed every few years in partnership as something not out of the question. My constituents want to mention that they are not asking for special treatment; they are just asking for fairness.

Mr. Speaker, my community understands that healthy community living strengthens our society and economy. That is why they communicated to me to advocate for a family and children's support services professional. They know that our rural, isolated community is vulnerable to violence and abusive situations arising in families. I will therefore be looking for funding for a full-time family and children's support services professional in my community when the Health and Social Services department comes up for debate.

I communicated to the government that my constituents' land-based experiential learning is a very viable program to increase our children's educational success, providing the opportunity within the existing system to accommodate teachers to go out on the land to deliver academic curriculum along with local community and First Nation cultural teachings. It was a priority and still is. The idea here is to harness the cultural land-based skills like living and travelling out on the land using traditional knowledge and western science, delivering a program showing students how these two sets of knowledge, skills and cultural teachings complement each other and how they can be implemented together in a wage economy in the territory. A land-based experiential educational pilot project to be conducted in my community will also be raised when the Department of Education is up for debate.

Again, partners are necessary that will commit to our goal of keeping our elders at home, in my home community of Old Crow. We believe that the time is right to get into the details of discussing the infrastructure needs and staffing levels and complete a Yukon territorial government client assessment to determine the level of care that is required for our elders in Old Crow. Again, when that department comes up, I will be looking for those budgetary line items.

I am advocating that the Government of Yukon work with the Government of Canada to take some pre-emptive measures and eliminate any burden on the trappers by initiating a trap exchange — I did do some work on this in the fall — so that the trappers don't take a loss. I can go on and on about how important the trapping industry is to the Yukon. I did some letter writing, and a letter-writing campaign did happen.

I received a letter dated February 26, 2007, with regard to this issue. The response by the minister was that there is no trap exchange program contemplated at this time. So, the Environment minister has refused to conduct a trap exchange.

In closing — I say this out of a sense of responsibility — I will continue to impress upon the government that these issues are important and are seen as priorities of my community and they are issues Yukoners want to see come to some resolution.

Over the coming days, weeks, and months, I expect more Yukoners to express their support. The people of this territory deserve to have their territorial government acknowledge the existence of the climate change threat and to have Yukon commit to action that takes this territory where it needs to go. That is why I'm in politics — to make sure that the voice of the Vuntut Gwitchin riding is heard in this Legislature, to promote inspiration and leadership, and to hopefully make a difference.

We will continue to press our case, and our resolve on these matters will not waver. In doing so, we will be relentless because the citizens of my riding and many Yukoners deserve nothing less.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Hon. Mr. Hart:** I will try to keep most of my comments to my two portfolios and, time permitting, do a wide variance with regard to the budget.

Mr. Speaker, honourable members, today it is my honour and privilege to speak to the 2007-08 budget. It is indeed an honour to be returned to this Legislature as the MLA for Riverdale South for a second mandate. In this mandate we look forward to building upon the successes of the past, building Yukon's future together, and a clear vision for a bright future. It is not only this party's election platform and promise to the Yukon, it is also a template for fostering economic growth, supporting social programming and providing the ability for Yukoners to participate in a rekindled economy, to enjoy Yukon's pristine environment which is truly larger than life, and of course to live a better quality of life.

I look forward to the remaining days of this legislative sitting to debate this important budget with my fellow elected representatives here. As this Legislature is tasked with representing and doing the work of the citizens of the Yukon, I trust my colleagues on the opposition benches will be very eager to

debate this budget in a constructive, efficient and effective manner.

As our Premier and Minister of Finance stated previously, our 2006 election platform carries on with the direction we established in 2002, and provides Yukoners with political stability and continuity based on four major pillars: achieving a better quality of life for Yukoners; protecting and preserving our environment and wildlife while studying, mitigating and adapting to climate change; promoting a strong, diversified private sector economy; and practising good, cooperative governance and strong fiscal management.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to say that the members of this government, aided by the Government of Yukon's public service, have been busy working on behalf of Yukoners to turn this vision into reality. Our public service is truly a great one. We have in our ranks thousands of highly energetic, innovative, capable people who work hard to provide public service excellence. Like governments across the country, we in the Yukon are facing significant challenges as we look to and plan for the future. These challenges are largely dictated by the changes in our demographics, Mr. Speaker -- specifically that we are all getting older -- except you, of course.

If we look to our former Clerk of the Legislative Assembly, Mr. Patrick Michael, we know what getting older means -- more golf and no work. Our government has worked hard with the Public Service Commission and, indeed, with all Government of Yukon departments, to address the upcoming surge in retirements and ensuing need to attract younger people to the public service as a career of choice. Many of us here in the Legislature have been invited to many retirements of our public sector employees, and we're going to get a lot more invitations to those events. It's becoming a very serious problem for us in the next three to four years, and a challenge that the Public Service Commission will have to address. We are trying to do that by ensuring that we have a succession program in place to enable line staff to take over some of the management positions.

In 2005, our government introduced the Investing in Public Service -- Serving Yukon People initiative. Because we have been re-elected, I am pleased to say that our government is again committed to our public service by investing \$1.38 million and it is demonstrating this by our continued investment in this process. This investment will be spent to continue implementing the goals in the corporate human resources plan, and we have invested in a range of programs dealing with professional and technical development, knowledge transfer between employees, workplace health and safety, orientation, recruitment, modernization, work and life balance, employee recognition, and an accommodation for employees with varying disabilities. The investing in public service initiative is a clear statement of the value this government places on employees and human resource planning in the Yukon public service. We will prepare for change through made-in-Yukon succession planning and career development initiatives to retain and recruit professional public servants. Some highlights of the investing in public service initiative include the new employee development assessment program, which provides funding for



overlapping positions and development of employees as part of the succession planning. This is a very important program, as it enables us to hire the incumbent positions while we still have the mentoring capability of those who are here prior to their retirement.

It's a very important program. We have instituted it already on two or three occasions, and it has proven to be very valuable. We will have the position being staffed and, while it's being staffed, we have the previous incumbent in place to assist that individual in the transition period. It is a very important program that is being well-received by those who are assuming those new responsibilities.

There is the professional technical training program that supports professional or technical skill development and knowledge so that Yukon government employees keep pace with industry standards. Again, it is just another important program to assist our employees to maintain the technology and expertise they require to maintain the standards we ask of them.

Under the GradCorps, there is an internship program for recent Yukon post-secondary graduates. This program is well-received. We utilize students in our program and we have hired approximately six students for full-time positions as government employees. Again, it has proven to be a very cooperative program. It is very effective and meets one of our mandates to hire Yukon students.

The cooperative education program, which provides opportunities for university and co-op students to come to work for the Government of Yukon, has a supervisory success program and practical skills training. There is a pilot extension of the supervisory success program for employees in our communities. We have employee development programs and we are using the rotational assessment program to provide specialized corporate work experience for future leaders. We are also looking at making that available in the communities and providing training for the communities. We have programs scheduled for this year. For example, the Public Service Commission will be sending out a program in Watson Lake for communication. This is to explore communication skills and factors that determine the effectiveness of developing skills in listening, speaking assertively, asking respectful questions, practicing conflict resolution skills and interest-based negotiations and to learn to work through defensiveness and to Department of Education-escalate a conflict.

All employees will benefit from attending this workshop, and it is something that is again taking place in June of this year in Watson Lake. Also we are having a pension workshop in Dawson City in September. This is a two-day course to provide accurate, detailed information on the Government of Yukon's present and patriated pension plans as well as other benefits that employees are entitled to -- presently and during their retirement. This is a very important program for those who are entering into their upcoming pension years.

We are also looking at providing first aid training in communities. This is an ongoing process that is held throughout the year. We provide Yukon government employees in the communities access to standard first aid with C-level and CPR training in their communities. We make arrangements for this

through public health and safety and the Red Cross to simplify the process.

In addition, we are providing leading and learning for Yukon communities as I mentioned earlier. This is a request from the staff development branch in planning to offer their successful, supervisory success program in Yukon communities. Since many of our leadership programs are situated here in Whitehorse, it is very difficult for our community people to get into Whitehorse to attend these programs. In order to create a supportive and learning environment, the program facilitator will keep in regular contact with our communities and their participants to ensure they receive the same type of training as they do here in Whitehorse. This is a very important program to assist in keeping our public service current and up to date and enables us to advance them in their career.

In addition, we're looking at employee recognition programs in the departments. The Premier's Award of Excellence under APEX -- that's the awarding of people for excellence frameworks -- was developed by employees of the Yukon government leadership forum. We're also looking at the employee development assessment program, the mid-management training program that will facilitate knowledge transfer between those employees with knowledge and experience and the new employees.

Under the Public Service Commission, we have the First Nation Training Corps, which provides training and employment opportunities for Yukon First Nations. The emphasis here is for capacity building for the First Nations -- a very important commodity in our First Nation communities especially. In some cases we will share the costs with the First Nation, but depending upon the request from the First Nation, they may cover most of the costs if that individual is just being sent to us to train and then go right back to the First Nation. We have put additional funding into the program this year; it has been very successful to date and it has been well accepted by the First Nations. In fact, of our 51 applicants under the program, 34 have returned to their First Nation. We have hired approximately 14 or 16 of those individuals into the government.

These are but a few highlights of what our government is pleased to be putting forth for the Public Service Commission under the Investing in Public Service - Serving Yukon People initiative. As minister responsible for the Public Service Commission, I look forward to speaking to this important project in future discussions.

The Yukon is composed of many, varied and geographically dispersed communities. Despite where communities are on the map, our government has worked hard with Community Services and other relevant departments, to provide a better quality of life for their residents.

As Minister of Community Services, I am very proud to be able to say that our government has worked, and continues to work, to improve public infrastructure such as airports, sewage treatment, activity centres and other important infrastructure in Old Crow, Dawson, Carmacks, Mayo, Burwash Landing, Beaver Creek, Haines Junction, Carcross, Watson Lake and, of course, Whitehorse.

This government, as part of our commitment to practise good government, is working with communities and advisory councils in the Yukon. Mr. Speaker, I recently announced that, along with the Association of Yukon Communities, we will be initiating a review to examine the funding levels for local community governments in relation to delivering their program and service responsibilities.

The department will be doing its due diligence to review the capabilities and capacity of each community to do an assessment of what's needed and required for the community to meet its obligations.

Over the past four years, the Yukon economy has continued to recover and grow. Part of this recovery is due to outside influences, such as mineral prices and interest rates. Equally important, however, is the work that the government has done to make the Yukon a better place to live, work and enjoy. Unlike when we originally took office in 2002, U-hauls are now coming up the highway and not taking Yukoners out. I am proud to be part of the team that has helped to bring stability and certainty, increasing the prosperity of the Yukon. Our economic resurgence has created new pressures for all levels of government as we strive to meet increased service and program requests from developers, business and the public alike.

Recognizing the increased requests that all levels of government are faced with today, it is a good time to address the suitability of the funding for municipal governments, as I stated earlier. Community Services has had many responsibilities to those in the Yukon, and they include protected services, which administers all aspects of public safety as it relates to fire protection and other aspects in our community boundary. The threat of forest fires is addressed through wildland fire management. Throughout the summer season, Yukon wildland firefighters stand at the ready to protect our communities from forest fires. They do this in conjunction with our volunteer fire departments, which provide a very important aid in standing on guard during the summer, especially, for example, in 2004.

I'm pleased to inform the members of this House that an agreement has been confirmed with Yukon First Nations for an extension to the firefighting contracts into 2008. They also coordinate the fire response so that, where and when it is safe to do so, fires are allowed to burn and to revitalize the forest in a natural manner, which contributes to a healthy, natural environment.

In our communities, volunteer firefighters are prepared to respond to fires that threaten homes and other buildings as well as the additional assistance they provide when wildfires threaten community boundaries.

Emergency Measures Organization's operations play a vital role as the coordinating body that works closely with all our communities to keep them safe and respond-ready for a crisis situation. Training and outfitting the search-and-rescue societies that respond to lost or missing persons is another important focus for the Yukon Emergency Measures Organization. It helps to coordinate with the RCMP across the Yukon on all these issues. Our search-and-rescue societies are made up of skilled and compassionate community volunteers who answer

the call when someone is lost, missing or overdue, and we are grateful for their dedication.

The investments made each year to the Joint Emergency Preparedness Program, or JEPP, and the community-based emergency planning and training projects and the emergency support equipment purchases add a great deal to the capability of our community response agencies. The JEPP program is a 50:50 funding program with the federal government that assists us to equip the response agencies and communities with the equipment and safety gear that keeps our responders safe while they perform their duties.

We have invested with JEPP to install back-up generator equipment in strategic locations, and JEPP also helps us equip the emergency response centres in communities with the apparatus they need to perform their duties.

The JEPP program is used to fund the training for our responders as well as emergency planners so that practice exercises can be conducted to test our abilities to deliver an effective emergency response reaction and team time.

Mr. Speaker, Yukoners can be proud of the many responders -- the majority of them, again, are volunteers -- who each day are standing at the ready for the call to action when a person or a community needs assistance.

Within the Department of Community Services is the consumer and safety services branch, which is responsible for consumer services, regulation and enforcement in support of a fair and effective marketplace in the Yukon. The branch enforces regulations that contribute to a competitive Yukon economy. We promote compliance with labour standards, and we provide inspection services to enhance building safety.

The branch is also responsible for accreditation and licensing of medical practitioners. Under the authority of the *Medical Professions Act*, the Yukon Medical Council is responsible for regulating the practice of medicine and medical care provided by licensed physicians in the Yukon.

The consumer services branch is also responsible for the Yukon's motor vehicles branch and assisting Yukoners with all aspects of safely operating a licensed motor vehicle. Within the government, consumer and safety services is a leading innovator in applying improved efficiencies by adopting new information technology to aid government to improve customer services to our clients, especially in rural Yukon. You may renew your motor vehicle registration on-line. It is also now possible to search for liens on motor vehicles, as well as boats and other chattels via the new personal property security registry. Similar to the public appeal and benefit of BizPal information system, the introduction of the personal property security registry has been a positive addition for a number of corporate users, as well as the general public who may be confirming liens or other liabilities prior to making a purchase.

Mr. Speaker, BizPal has been a very important program for the Yukon. We have been able to be on a leading edge of this type of e-commerce, in conjunction with our partners from B.C., Ontario and Quebec that are utilizing our people to assist them in putting their system into place. As you can imagine, it's a much more difficult task in a larger jurisdiction.

We have been the benefactors of this program on a Canada-wide basis. In fact, the Yukon members have received a special award for the work they have done on this program. We are also in the process of working with the mineral exploration branch to bring them on line. That process is currently underway.

Capital investments made in these electronic systems have a meaningful and measurable service improvement for our clients, and we are very pleased -- as are our clients -- with the results. We have also received some rave reviews from our communities and municipalities that are utilizing this service for their own issues with regard to licensing and permits.

One of the other key roles that Community Services fulfils is working with our communities and with the Association of Yukon Communities. This is undertaken largely by a community affairs branch, which is responsible for a wide range of programs and services for both the public and our local governments. Community development branch is kept busy to meet the collective goals and objectives -- delivering a substantial initiative such as the Carcross and Whitehorse waterfront development projects as well as a number of water and sewer system projects. This branch is kept busy with community meetings and other activities directly related to working with local governments on a number of important projects.

The Yukon sport and recreation unit lives within the community development branch. It has recently done us very proud with its unwavering commitment to help make the 2007 Canada Winter Games a resounding success. Working closely with the Canada Games Host Society, the sport and recreation unit went the extra mile to ensure the athletes would not be distracted by venue issues and could concentrate on their competitions.

Focusing on the sport venues and the needs of the sport-governing bodies for each sporting activity, the sport and recreation branch work to ensure that sport venues have the optimum environment for the athletes to do their best. While they could not do much to address the bitter cold in some of our outdoor venues, everything else was the best it could be for the athletes. I am extremely proud of the outstanding job that they performed.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the depth of commitment and sense of ownership and pride that all volunteers contributed to the successful hosting of the 2007 Canada Winter Games. A number of our staff were deeply involved in the planning of the games since Whitehorse was awarded the honour of hosting. During the games, and more since the closing ceremonies, I have been approached by numerous people who have expressed their very sincere compliments about how well the games were conducted and the extremely positive way that Whitehorse, the Yukon and the other two territories were portrayed to the rest of Canada. For me, these congratulatory comments are testament to the people of the north. A large part of the cultural component of the games was to show the rest of Canada who we are and what we are about. Canadians got it.

Because of the outstanding media coverage of the games and the cultural elements, the nation is now looking up north --

<http://www.lookupnorth.ca> -- with a new appreciation for who we are and what we are.

I think, as the Minister of Tourism and Culture indicated, our marketing program that was handled in conjunction with the other two territories was a very successful program and continues to be. Just yesterday I was watching the Discovery Channel and noted that there were two advertisements from up north -- one was the Yukon and one was the Northwest Territories -- and it was interesting to note that it was on the American Discovery Channel. There was great acceptance. As soon as I heard the opening lingo, I knew exactly what it was. It was very encouraging. It is something that the people who were here for the Canada Winter Games will recognize and take to heart.

The community development branch has a leadership role in working with our communities to develop the infrastructure to keep our communities operating safely. A key initiative over the past few years has been working with local governments to improve the infrastructure that serves our communities. With the Canada strategic infrastructure fund and the municipal rural infrastructure fund, some very positive improvements have been made to water and sewage systems that contribute to improved community health and a healthy environment.

Other infrastructure has also been selected to be replaced or upgraded to enhance safety and provide a community attraction. A very good example is the footbridge replacement at Carcross. The footbridge has been an icon feature for the community since it was built. As part of the \$3-million waterfront upgrade project, the footbridge is being replaced with a modern and safe structure that will serve the community and its many visitors well into the future -- a very important aspect given that White Pass plans to bring the train back into Carcross this summer. We see this as a very important component in enhancing the tourism aspect for Carcross.

The Carcross waterfront project has benefited from a very strong participation by the community's residents who have taken a large role in determining how their community will develop through this project. With a new day service to Carcross this summer, the White Pass & Yukon Railroad will be bringing more tourists to the community and the community will be working to enhance their features and interactions to stimulate new business opportunities. We are very supportive of their good work.

The Community Services 2007-08 capital budget includes nearly \$9.5 million, which is dedicated to Yukon community-based projects approved through the MRIF and/or the Canada strategic infrastructure funding process. These projects will help to ensure that important infrastructure is in place to serve the needs of Yukoners and our visitors. Furthermore, they are all very important in providing good jobs for local residents, which help to improve the local community economies.

Some of the examples of projects funded under this include funding to complete the Mayo community centre, and a small-diameter pipe water project with the Selkirk First Nation in Pelly Crossing. We will be contributing to the Takhini North water and sewer project for the City of Whitehorse. We will assist the Champagne-Aishihik First Nation project for the de-

velopment of their water and sewer project and some of their required road improvements.

Money has been earmarked to work for the Dawson City sewage system. The new sewage project in Carcross will also receive assistance. Also in Carcross, funding will be invested in the waterfront development project. Money will also be dedicated to the Whitehorse waterfront development, which is making a positive impact on the appeal, as well as the safety, along the riverfront.

In addition, road improvements are also important infrastructure projects. As we committed to during the election, we are completing the Hamilton Boulevard extension with the City of Whitehorse, and with our contribution of \$5 million. This project will benefit residents, such as the Leader of the Official Opposition, by providing a second access, egress option, and help to reduce traffic congestion with the addition of a second route. One other aspect is a second access to a very densely populated area, and to assist with a situation of emergency, in case of fire, especially.

Community Services is supporting the BST resurfacing of Two Mile Road with the Liard First Nation in south Yukon. We are also looking at work on the Taku subdivision as well as in Carcross. The FireSmart program will continue to assist in making our communities safer through the reduction of forest fuels by community groups, local governments and individuals. The FireSmart program is basically a program that assists communities -- especially rural communities -- with their interface with the actual forest itself. It is not meant to prevent forest fires; it is meant to reduce the threat of forest fires coming into their communities. The program has been in place now for many years, and we have had very good success with many of the projects undertaken under this program.

These community-based investments may not have the front-page excitement that captures the media attention. Nevertheless, we are hearing very positive things from our partners at the community level about the true value of what these projects mean to their communities.

I recall the recent opening ceremony for the new community centre in Mayo. As a past resident of Mayo and someone who spent numerous hours in the old recreation centre, I feel the new recreation centre is a superb addition to the community and will play a very important role for that community well into the future. It may not have the same atmosphere as the old Mayo curling rink. I can attest to the 40 below temperature there and the rocks making it only halfway down the ice — because it's real ice. But it didn't bother us because we were bonspieler most of the time we were in there, anyway. It was a very entertaining place to be, the old Mayo curling place, and I enjoyed it immensely.

But the new one is gorgeous — and I have to say that it is gorgeous. I was there for the opening and I find it very encouraging to have a facility like that. I will also let the members here know that the mayor has indicated to us that three new families have moved into Mayo because of that facility. It will be a positive aspect for the community, and I think they will enjoy it. It's a well-built facility, and I think it's appropriate for the size of the community, and it will serve them well. By the

way, I like the chairs in the council chambers too. They're very much more comfortable than these.

Recreation centres are our community gathering places. The people of Mayo and in the neighbouring communities can now come together in comfort for meetings, celebrations and other important community events. This new community centre will also serve the needs of elders and seniors who can now come together for activities that are important to them and everyone, especially the young people. They will now have more opportunities to get involved in the sporting activities that will help to develop strong bodies and appreciation for healthy lifestyle choices. Who knows -- the new facility in Mayo may right now be training future Canada Games and Arctic Winter Games or even, as far-fetched as it may be, Olympic medalists. I think it's a very important aspect for that community.

One of our campaign commitments under supporting sports and recreation needs was to provide assistance to youths, seniors, elders and other individuals to enable them to participate in sport and recreation in recognition of the contribution that sport and recreation made to a positive and healthy lifestyle. I think that the proof is irrefutable. Sport and recreation is alive and well in the Yukon.

A huge accomplishment of the Yukon, which involved the Government of Yukon, the Yukon private sector and one that is closely linked to the two departments which I am very proud to represent, as minister responsible for the Public Service Commission and the Department of Community Services, was of course the Canada Winter Games. Our government committed and undertook to make the Canada Winter Games a resounding success and a memorable experience for Yukoners and guests alike. I would have to say that it was a mission accomplished. Again, sport and recreation is alive and well in the Yukon and we are looking forward to the future.

Many of our other jurisdictions have forwarded official correspondence to us, providing many afterglows of their visits here to the Yukon, many of them stating that we've raised the bar for the games. In fact, I had a discussion with P.E.I. and they're a little bit worried about coming up to that same bar level.

Mr. Speaker, also at this time I would like to add a blurb for the other area for which I am responsible, which is the Bureau of French Language Services. I will try to keep it short and provide a copy to *Hansard* so that they won't have to worry about my pronunciation.

Monsieur le Président, à titre de ministre responsable de la direction des services en français, je suis heureux de m'adresser à vous en français. La direction des services en français et la communauté francophone jouent un rôle important dans la mosaïque sociale et culturelle du Yukon. Je suis honoré d'avoir été nommé ministre responsable de la direction des services en français par le Premier Ministre et je continuerai à travailler fort pour améliorer mon français et bien représenter les franco-Yukonnais.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will close on that last little bit.

**Mr. Edzerza:** I would like to start today by giving thanks to all the staff that put in so many hours and time to

develop a big budget like this, and complying with the wishes of the elected officials in government.

For those who are listening and do not know, the staff are directed by the politicians on what to support and what not to support. The government has the final say with regard to where the territory will go. For the citizens who feel ignored and rejected, it is not the doing of the staff, but rather those who have the final say -- the government.

The government wants citizens of the Yukon to imagine tomorrow, so let's make an attempt to imagine tomorrow through the eyes of those in need. What is in this budget that would make those in need jump with joy and feel as though their concerns were heard? Well, Mr. Speaker, I have looked through this budget, and I really don't see what would make, for example the homeless, really overjoyed, because there is basically nothing in here that directs any attention to the homeless people on the street.

I think if we were to walk downtown on any given day, it is quite visible that there is a need in this territory for some kind of shelter for the homeless. I know there have been attempts by different NGOs like the Salvation Army; however, that is not adequate. Not everyone has the luxury of a high-paying job. Again, we have to be considerate of every citizen in this territory. The government and those citizens at large must put out a helping hand to those who are weaker than we are. When we look through the eyes of someone who is homeless, I am quite sure they are going to walk away not caring, because this budget doesn't care. We have to look through the eyes of those who, for example, have less equality -- gender equality for example.

What about equality for women? I think \$176,000 really doesn't say much, when we can put \$500,000 into the advertising of tourism. It's very easy to see where the priority lies with this government -- selling the Yukon; that's where it lies. It does not lie with the people who live here. It's very obvious, and I really want to point that out to the citizens in this territory. I know that we've heard over and over again how the government is doing wonders and bringing in all this development. They are willing to sacrifice the Yukon. Well, there are a lot of people in this territory, including my constituents, who really don't want to sell the Yukon. What kind of consultation was there to go down south and tell everybody across the country that the doors are wide open, come and do what you like here? I don't think there was any consultation, and just because the government was elected, that doesn't mean that they were given permission to go outside this territory and basically throw the doors wide open and invite everybody into this territory. I think we have to start to realize something here. Even when you drive downtown now, as the population is, given the slight increase, there is a traffic problem. There is starting to be a traffic problem in this territory. So we have to also be concerned as citizens that we may outgrow ourselves too quickly. When we want to sell the Yukon, we must think about history. What did the gold rush do here? What kind of an impact did it have on the people? What kinds of studies has this government done to really identify what kinds of social impacts there will be on the

people in this territory with the constant advertising to bring everybody from the south to this territory?

I don't mind saying it myself. I really don't want to see this territory grow to be a population of 100,000 -- I really don't. I think we have a pristine wilderness up here that is going to disappear. There is no way you can prevent it if you keep on inviting everybody from the south to move here -- or from other countries as far as that goes.

Even in the last 20 years I see our wilderness disappearing. You can't go out in the wilderness any more without running into numerous people where at one time you could travel for days and not run into anybody. Now when you go out hunting, you have to be careful and ensure that somebody is not going to be shooting at you.

So there are negative impacts to opening this country up to a lot of advertising and promotion for people to come and explore this country for minerals. There are a lot of issues that need to be looked at. I think, quite frankly, that the government is just running wild here and doesn't have any kind of vision or control over what it is they are really inviting to this territory. We all know -- and there has been a lot of talk here about justice issues. Well, we think we have a problem with 30,000; wait until we have 100,000. That is what you get when you keep on telling people across the country that the doors of the Yukon are wide open -- come and stake your claim. It makes it sound a little bit too easy.

When we want to imagine tomorrow, I just briefly touched on equality for women. Where is the equality? I think there is very little.

I know a large number of my constituents have grave problems in this area.

I would like to have all the single mothers across the territory to try to imagine tomorrow while they're still being neglected. What is there to imagine? What is there to imagine if nothing has changed? There's absolutely nothing to look forward to. You have the same thing happening tomorrow morning. No support. All the single mothers have so many issues to deal with. My heart really goes out to them. There are a lot of single mothers in this territory. Maybe what the government should do -- especially all the men in government -- is try to imagine tomorrow if all these responsibilities were reversed. Maybe those men in government should try to think of tomorrow where they're 100 percent responsible for raising a child and the woman has disappeared out of the territory to go find a future somewhere else. Leave the men here with all the children to look after and fend for and have somebody else dictate to them what they're going to get in the budget. I think it's about time that society really started to look at the single mothers and put something in place for them. If we can throw \$3 million into a feasibility study, certainly the single mothers are worth all of that, and more.

What about the single mothers who have no help whatsoever when it comes to stress leave? Most jobs in most places have stress leave. When you get stressed out, you get some kind of relief; someone can come in and fill in for you while you take a few days off. Why doesn't the government do something like that for single mothers? Why can't the government

come in and say, "You know, this is one section of our population that has been really ignored for a long time." We have to try to imagine what it's like to have your husband gone and you being left with all the children.

The stress must be horrendous. I can't imagine myself being in that position, yet women do it every day. I've heard numerous requests for many, many years -- not only this year, but many years -- for the government to start looking at this area of need. There are a lot of things on which this has a ripple effect. For example, I know some women who have four children. They're looking after four children, trying to manage that and the household and everything else. One of them gets into trouble with the law. Again, it brings more burdens down on the mother. Now she has to start dealing with issues outside the home. So it draws her away from working with the others. This is a very serious, serious area of neglect in government. I say to the government: take a look at that. If nothing is in this budget, I would encourage them to take a very serious look at this area and see if there isn't something that can be done in the future.

Let's follow the government's direction again for citizens to imagine tomorrow. Let's try to imagine those in the correctional facility. Let's look at that through the eyes of those in the facility. What's in this budget to make those inmates feel a little bit better? They've been promised now for over five years -- maybe seven years -- that, yes, there's light at the end of the tunnel. We are going to build a facility in this mandate for sure. Well, I could imagine what they would say to you if you asked any one of them tomorrow morning, "Tell us what you think of the budget."

I already know a couple of comments that were given to me -- "It's all talk. All talk." There will be nothing done and people just try to live with that. People don't try to build up their hopes any more, because they have been diminished too many times. Just when somebody thinks that there is going to be something done, the direction changes again, so it never gets done.

Mr. Speaker, the government has been riding on the wave of pride and glory called "correctional consultations". However, sooner or later the wave turns into a breaker. I believe that wave broke and now the wave has started all over again from way out there somewhere in la-la land. Some of my constituents are really tired; they are tired of the stalling; they are tired of being told there are going to be changes tomorrow when in fact tomorrow never comes. Now I think it is time that the government really took this issue to heart and stops working the issue. It is played out; it is worked out. There is nothing left to work on. When we talk about the correctional facility, and as I heard the minister talking today, it leaves me to really wonder what is going on here. I don't think the government knows if they are going to build a correctional facility or a healing centre. There is a drastic difference here. As much as we would like to believe that we don't need secure custody, somebody has to wake up and smell the roses, because we will always need secure custody.

What is the government going to do tomorrow when their new facility opens and everybody refuses treatment? What then? Because as sure as I'm standing here today, I can guaran-

tee you 100 percent that you can't force anybody to treatment, and there is going to be a certain section of the population who are going to tell you where to go. When that happens, we'd better have someplace to deal with these individuals -- because that's reality.

That's reality because we have many, many years of abusive treatment of a race of people called First Nations in this territory and across Canada. That's why we fill these jails. I've heard many people say it's time to get over it. Well, I don't know of many people who got over the Holocaust. I'm telling you today that this treatment of First Nation people -- in the eyes of the First Nation people -- wasn't much different.

I've heard it said many times that the only difference is that we're still here to suffer at the hands of those who want to make the decisions on our behalf. It's ironic that, right to this day, First Nation people still have to be under the control of somebody else. You have to ask yourself what other race of people on this earth are governed by an act -- a specific group of people, identified group of people. Why do we have to have an *Indian Act*, as they call it? Well, it's to make sure that we never get out from underneath the control of the federal government.

Mr. Speaker, we have to really seek understanding when we talk about the justice system, because this in itself creates a criminal mind, criminal intentions, and always being under the control of somebody else. I think Canada and the territory can be thankful that First Nation people aren't a really, really rebellious kind of people. If you look at the actions that took place in the United States, for example, with all of the Afro-Americans and the abusive treatment of the Afro-American -- well, how did they handle it? They burned cities down and destroyed a massive number of major cities. Did we ever do that in Canada? Did the First Nation people ever do that? No. But the First Nation people are never, ever given recognition for that.

Instead, we keep hundreds of thousands of people employed right across Canada through corrections, through child welfare, through the Indian department. Maybe that's where it has gone today. Maybe there are just too many people employed on the backs of First Nation people, and that's why we can't get out from underneath it. But all of that is relevant to correctional reform, every bit of it. I think it's a good thing to recognize that it's not good to warehouse anybody, but it also begins to become quite annoying to hear it over, and over, and over, like we have heard from this government. It's time for action, and \$3 million doesn't constitute action to me or to the NDP.

\$3 million only sort of confirms the beliefs of a lot of people in this territory that it is a stalling tactic. Consultation is now a word that you use if you don't want to do anything. Put it out for consultation -- because there is no real, identifiable result from saying well, we'll consult on it. I think the people in this territory are absolutely fed up with being consulted. We have consulted on everything and now we are going to start over again from the beginning. All I can say is, good luck.

It's just like the smoking bylaw that the NDP introduced -- put it out for consultation. It is just another stalling tactic. People are fed up with answering questions like that for govern-

ment. In fact, they prefer to not even get involved any more, and that could be something that could be very detrimental to any government that is in place. When people are so tired of politicians that they don't want to talk any more, that could be very destructive.

When we talk about imagining tomorrow, I think the government wouldn't get a very good grade through the eyes of the inmates or the staff who are involved with the inmates. That is a whole new area in itself, Mr. Speaker -- all of the staff who have to continuously listen to broken promises. It must be very depressing to hear over and over again that you are going to get a new facility tomorrow, one that is a lot nicer to work in, one that is a lot healthier and friendlier. I think the morale of the staff is pretty well bashed to the limit.

Something drastic has got to happen pretty soon before it's too late to even salvage the staff. People don't want to work in corrections any more and I don't blame them for not wanting to go to work in that facility. It is rundown and has seen better days.

The government again wants us to imagine tomorrow. Well, let's look at this, for example. Both opposition parties have stated over and over that there are lots of band-aid approaches this year. There is a lot of piecemeal work. I don't know how the government is really thinking about this budget. When I look at, for example, \$150,000 for Tourism and Culture and \$44,000 for Justice -- these are all news releases that came out from pre-budget announcements. There is \$177,000 for filmmakers, \$145,100 for arts funding, \$395,000 for parks, \$500,000 for a tourism campaign, and \$176,000 for equality for women. Mr. Speaker, we have a list already of seven different items that don't even come near -- it is not even half -- of the \$3 million that was put into the feasibility study. That, in itself, is proof that there is a band-aid approach happening when they are trying to deal with the real issues.

I think it would be very easy to identify 17 different items with money attached to them that don't even equal \$3 million. So it looks impressive, but is it? That's the question that a lot of Yukoners need to really look at. I have to say that the safer communities and neighbourhoods program was done in the last mandate of the government. The reform consultations in justice were all done in the last mandate, and still they're on the front page of the budget again. They are just talking and talking about something that has already been in progress. It has already been funded in the last mandate. It's such a catching kind of headline that the government doesn't want to let go of it, but I think they should. I think they should let go of it and just get on with the work now. People are starting to get tired of hearing about it over and over. It's time to just do the work.

When we talk about imagining tomorrow, maybe we need to try to imagine through the eyes of the NGOs. I have experience in government, so I know the value of the NGOs, and I know how much they contribute to the well-being of the Yukon Territory. I learned to have a great amount of respect for the work that the NGOs do. They do a lot of the government's work -- things that the government is ultimately responsible for. A lot of the NGOs come forward, dig in their heels, just get to work and do their best.

How do they get rewarded? By all kinds of unnecessary stress every year -- every year, maybe two. If they're lucky, they'll get a contribution agreement of some sort that will last two years. Otherwise it's a yearly thing to expect and beg the government to continue their funding.

I know how stressful that is because I did work in such a capacity at one time, where you never know if you're going to have a job tomorrow because the funding hasn't come through yet. Bridge funding -- oh, it's a famous thing. Well, there aren't many politicians, I think, that would continue being politicians if their salary was dependent on bridge funding. So, trying to imagine tomorrow through the eyes of the NGOs is to try and get rid of that unnecessary stress.

I know that the government has multi-year funding for the rental of office spaces -- office complexes. Why can't they do that with NGOs? Take FASSY, for example: why can't they have 10-year funding so they don't have to write proposals all the time? And what about CAIRS? They work with the very people that the Justice minister is always talking about every day on the floor. But their doors are basically at the verge of being closed because, all of a sudden, all governments are trying to renege on fiduciary responsibility for First Nations.

Yet governments created that situation. They are responsible and, regardless of things happening 200 years ago, the government of the day is still responsible because they can make things better if they choose to.

All the people who went through the mission schools -- only they know what their lives were like and what they are like today and what they're going to be like tomorrow. I know I have talked to several people who are involved with doing different tasks for the government. That is one of the major concerns -- their funding is not stable. There's no stability there.

Let's try to imagine tomorrow through the eyes of the day-care workers. It is like a song that goes on and on right across Canada: our children are our future. But the big governments really don't put any action to those words. We say over and over how much we value our children. Then why is it so difficult to support daycares? Why is it so difficult to set aside -- I would even say \$25 million for daycare, to help them, to see things work at a capacity where the staff are all happy and enjoying their work. It's just a good thing that quite often people who work with children are not driven by the dollar; otherwise, you wouldn't be able to get anybody to work under those conditions.

Governments constantly ask people to go to work. Now, there is even a program of trying to get the retired people back out, but what about those working people who have to pay \$700 or \$800 a month for their child to be in daycare while they are out working?

It's a necessary thing that these individuals are trying to do for society. They are trying their best and working hard to improve the care for children while their parents are at work. Again, it's just the way it is today. Through progress, things have escalated to the point that it's almost a luxury to drive a car. The price of gas is just going to keep on going up. What are the cost-of-living increases over the last 10 years? The government has to keep up with those things. Daycare is one op-

eration that has fallen by the wayside. It's time now. We can't keep trying to imagine tomorrow. Why imagine tomorrow if there is nothing to look forward to?

There are a lot of different concerns across this territory that I won't be able to address today. When we look at a budget like this -- any budget that the government puts out -- I would say that if one could imagine tomorrow and look through the eyes of those in need and the budget is really meeting those demands, I would say we have a fairly good budget. I think part of the issue here is that there is a right-fielder trying to play on the left field. That's why they keep fumbling the ball.

They keep jumping back and forth over this line of the social fabric versus the entrepreneurial side and the business side of things. I hate to say it but, as history repeats itself over and over and over, the people at the bottom stay at the bottom. Quite frankly, through the eyes of those individuals, they always look for hope, but when they have no control whatsoever over whether a treatment facility is going to be built or if there is going to be a railroad built, they will continue to suffer.

I think there are a lot of promises being made by this government, and I certainly hope that they will come through with them. I know I will be constantly watching for the promises made by the Premier and by the Minister of Health and Social Services about going into partnerships on treatment centres with First Nations that have infrastructure in place. That promise was made by the Premier and it was made by the Health minister. I am certainly going to be looking forward to the day that happens, because it is something that will make the government stand out. I know of about five different First Nations that have infrastructure in place that is something like the Thomson Centre -- there is no action in there and there hasn't been for years, all due to a lack of support and a lack of vision.

That is what government needs to have, a good vision of how the lives of Yukoners really sincerely can be prosperous, not only from the middle, but from both the left and right.

I know it's a big challenge, but it's time for action. We also need to try to imagine tomorrow through the eyes of a lot of First Nations who want to develop economic development partnerships. That is a story for another day.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Hon. Mr. Kenyon:** It is my pleasure to rise in the House today to respond to the budget and certainly, again, to thank the citizens of Porter Creek North for returning me to the office and the Premier for returning me to this job. It has been an exciting challenge and it will continue to be an exciting challenge.

One thing for the Member for McIntyre-Takhini -- some of his comments are a bit interesting. For instance, his comment that there is always someone who will tell you where to go -- I think we both realize that. There is always somebody there to tell you where to go. Our job is to stay the course. Our job is to have a clear vision, a clear direction of where we want to go. I don't want to disappoint the Leader of the Official Opposition and not refer to Lewis Carroll: "Which way do I go from here?" asked Alice. Well, that depends a great deal on where you want to get to. Of course, Alice replies that it doesn't really matter.

The cat's response is, "Then it doesn't really matter which direction you go." We have a clear vision of what we want to do and how we want to accomplish that. I'm also a little bit concerned about the Member for McIntyre-Takhini's definite dichotomy. He is at first critical of our lack of consultation in government policies and that we need to know where Yukoners want to get to and where they want us to go. Then very soon after, in his speech, he is against any consultation and uses, as an example, the anti-smoking initiative -- that we should just get on with it and do it. Well, if we're going to get on with it and do it without consultation, how can you then be critical of the lack of consultation?

It's very much a dichotomy.

Of course, being critical of growth, as I have pointed out to many over the years, one does not need a PhD in demographics or statistics -- one doesn't even need a high school diploma -- to recognize that populations are growing worldwide. Growth is inevitable. It's simply going to happen and it's something that we have to plan for and take into account. Our election platform referenced to imagine tomorrow. I'm afraid what I'm hearing from the member opposite is to imagine yesterday. Frankly, I think that's really not the direction we should be taking.

On October 10, 2006, we did ask Yukoners to imagine tomorrow. We got a very clear and concise answer. They gave 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 that majority government and the first incumbent government to return to office since 1989.

Over the past four years, we have channelled our efforts and energy into turning the territory around into an economic powerhouse. Recent statistics speak for themselves as to how well the Yukon economy is doing. Our population is continuing to grow. That, unfortunately, is inevitable. I can understand that some people don't want any growth, but that's not something that I think we are going to avoid in the long run. Our unemployment rate is at a low -- 2.5 percent. I believe, adjusted by our Bureau of Statistics, it was at two percent. That's the lowest in Canada. We are ahead of Alberta. I have to admit that it's rather ironic and sardonic when one listens to the national CBC talking about the red hot economy of Alberta and how great they're doing in setting a national standard. Our unemployment rate is lower.

Two jurisdictions in Canada have no debt whatsoever for their citizens -- Alberta and Yukon. When you put that on a per capita basis, we're ahead of Alberta. That's part of our clear vision. You only have to look as far as local newspapers, or walk down Main Street where there are very few windows that don't have a Help Wanted sign in the window. We have a definite problem. We have problems in skilled labour and we have problems in unskilled labour. Yes, this is a national problem, but it's magnified here, I submit, because of the small population base and things do tend to be magnified a bit in that venue.

In the past five years, mining exploration in Yukon has increased ten-fold from \$8 million in 2002, when our government first took office, to over \$80 million in 2006. The future for mining in Yukon looks even brighter. During the election,



some talked about the fact that this was due to world mineral prices. The operative word there is "world" mineral prices. Why was the Yukon 10 times the national average in growth with the same prices? It is not world mineral prices.

The Yukon government has developed an investment attraction strategy to guide the development of the diversified private sector economy, while focusing on key areas of opportunity. Yukon's investment attraction vision is to build a sustainable, competitive economy with long-term performance. The last thing that this government wants is another boom-and-bust economy.

Enabling factors for success include the promotion of business, industry, research and innovation, strengthening capacity building and planning, streamlining the regulatory environment and improving economic infrastructure. While my numbers might be slightly off -- and I leave that to the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources -- statistics show that when you look at all of the various jurisdictions in the world in terms of desirability to do exploration and work, we went from somewhere in the low 70s down to I think 14 or 15 -- somewhere in that range. We have shown that we have the resources and the ability to develop them responsibly with good environmental controls.

As we attract investment in the Yukon, this does bring with it the added pressure on our labour force, and we're aware of that. The Yukon government is working on a number of initiatives cooperatively with the business community, industry, educational institutions and other governments to address the labour shortage issue. Again, we're not alone with that.

One of the strategies we are looking at is increasing the labour force participation of underemployed groups, such as youth, older workers, aboriginal people and persons with disabilities. Initiatives are in place to have these workers play a greater role in the labour market.

The Department of Education is working with the federal government to strengthen and improve the process whereby Yukon businesses can apply to invite workers under the temporary foreign worker program.

The total exploration and development expenditures for 2006-07, when tallied up, could surpass a quarter of a billion dollars. The latest Fraser Institute survey of jurisdictions in the world considered to be the most attractive for mining investment -- and I correct myself on this, Mr. Speaker. We rose to 11<sup>th</sup> place from 21<sup>st</sup> last year. When we first took office, we were rated 41<sup>st</sup> out of 70-some odd, I think.

Two mines I'd like to talk about further are the Minto mine, or Sherwood Copper, and the Wolverine project. Economic research by our Department of Economic Development estimates that the Minto mine will contribute \$454 million directly to the Yukon economy over its estimated life cycle of production. And I'm very pleased to say that that is a very conservative estimate of the life cycle -- \$454 million. Imagine tomorrow, Mr. Speaker.

Over the first five years of production, the mine is anticipated to lead to an increase of employment of 170 ongoing positions in transportation, mining, milling and support ser-

vices, contributing \$13.7 million in territorial wages and salaries. Imagine tomorrow, Mr. Speaker.

During the construction and development phase of the mine, the Yukon economy is expected to expand by \$30.8 million and provide 210 job years of employment, contributing \$16.6 million in territorial wages.

The Department of Economic Development, through the strategic industries development fund, is assisting Sherwood Cooper with optimization studies associated with the Minto feasibility study and a pre-feasibility study to determine the future economic benefits to the Yukon. The project is expected to achieve commercial production in mid-2007 and is projected to operate for at least 7.2 years. Again, Mr. Speaker, that is a very conservative estimate.

In addition to Yukon, the project will greatly benefit the Selkirk First Nation, which also has a net-smelter royalty on produce metal, access to all royalties paid to the mine, and a cooperation agreement with Minto Explorations to maximize employments and contracts associated with the mine. Imagine tomorrow, Mr. Speaker.

The Wolverine project -- Yukon Zinc -- is actively seeking financing for its project and if and when successful, expects to begin construction on the mine in 2007 and achieve full production in 2009.

In January 2007, the company released an optimized feasibility study that indicates the project is technically and economically viable.

The Department of Economic Development continues to support the project through marketing efforts with companies interested in participating in the development of the mine and has coordinated property visits of numerous high-level delegations to the Yukon and specifically to the Wolverine site last year.

At the request of the company, Yukon has introduced the project to Asian companies, and delegations from these companies have come from both Korea and China. There has been interest expressed by a number of Japanese corporations, as well.

Investment attraction work done by Yukon government in China and the memorandum of understanding with KORES, or Korea Resources Corporation, is proving timely. It allows the Yukon government to offer effective support to Yukon companies in attracting investment and securing partners for the projects from Asia. Economic Development is working with private and public partners to enhance business, trade and investment opportunities in Asia and, yes, China in particular, for strategic reasons.

Developing trade links to China and the Asian region is an important initiative. It manages Yukon's global economic risks by diversifying our trade partners. It builds trade and investment opportunities with growing economic powerhouses, and our close proximity means our products are quicker to reach Asian markets than products from other regions in North America.

Mr. Speaker, seeing the time, I move that the debate be now adjourned.

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

*Debate on second reading of Bill No. 6 accordingly adjourned*

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

**The following Sessional Papers were tabled April 23, 2007:**

07-1-19

General Election 2006: the Report of the Chief Electoral Officer of Yukon (Speaker Staffen)

07-1-20

Auditor General of Canada, Office of the: Transportation Capital Program and Property Management, Department of Highways and Public Works (dated February 2007) (Speaker Staffen)

07-1-21

Absence of Members from Sittings of the Legislative Assembly and its Committees: Report of the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly (dated April 19, 2007) (Speaker Staffen)

07-1-22

Public Accounts, Standing Committee on: First Report (dated April 2007) (Vol. 17) (Mitchell)