

Whitehorse, Yukon**Monday, October 29, 2007 -- 1:00 p.m.**

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

Prayers

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

TRIBUTES**In remembrance of James Roderick Tait**

Mr. McRobb: It's an honour to rise today to pay tribute to a remarkable Yukoner and pioneer of our agricultural history, and to a man who was so much an integral part of our territory's farming history. James Roderick Myles Tait was born in Calgary, Alberta, on October 23, 1928.

Raised during the Great Depression, the premature death of his father forced him to end his schooling and take over operation of the family farm. At age 20, he met his wife-to-be, Enid. Five years later, they married and raised a family of their own.

After farming for another decade, his sense of adventure brought him to the Yukon, where he became foreman at the Pine Creek Experimental Farm, five kilometres west of Haines Junction.

A few years later, Enid and their five children joined him at the farm, arriving on New Year's Day 1965, a bitter, cold winter day when the mercury was coincidentally at 65 below Fahrenheit.

Unfortunately, Ottawa's decision makers did not share Rod's love of farming and the boundless confidence that it could be done successfully and profitably north of 60. After six years at the farm, funds were slashed, leaving only Rod and one loyal helper out of a once-proud number of 30 employees.

Further funding cuts forced Rod into interim employment with Parks Canada before he found full-time work at the Haines Junction weigh scale, while double-shifting in the mid-night sun on his own farm, his true vocation and passion.

With cattle purchased from the defunct experimental farm, a land lease and a six-acre market garden application, Rod successfully pursued his dream of growing the finest beef, oats, hay and vegetables in the region.

He leaves a legacy of more than 200 titled acres of farmland, more cleared land, and the reputation of growing the best and most exotic potatoes in the north. His expertise was formally recognized with the presentation of the Yukon Farmer of the Year award in 2000.

Despite his occupational success, his core accomplishment was family. His children and others in the community benefited from his willingness to share his wealth of knowledge. As a father, he poured vast amounts of love, energy and patience into his children's most formative years. Skiing, hockey, fishing and hunting trips and playing chess were a few of his favourite pastimes. In honour of his dedicated efforts toward family and

community, Rod and Enid were chosen Mr. and Mrs. Yukon in 1996.

Rod demonstrated a curiosity about life, a hunger for knowledge, a passion for the outdoors, a sense that anything is possible through hard work and perseverance and a never-ending commitment to the community. Saturday's huge overflow crowd at the Haines Junction Convention Centre was testimony to his many contributions. Hundreds of friends from across our territory showed their appreciation for Rod and his family by attending his celebration of life. On behalf of the Assembly, I commend the family and each community volunteer for contributing to such an exemplary memorial service. You did us proud.

Rod passed away suddenly on October 15 at home in his sweetheart's arms. Survived by his loving wife, younger brother David, five children and 12 grandchildren, his many fine qualities are sure to live on for generations to come.

Mr. Speaker, with your indulgence, I invite all members of the Assembly to join me in welcoming several members of his family and friends to the gallery today.

*Applause***In recognition of Autism Awareness Month**

Hon. Mr. Cathers: I rise in the House today to ask members to join me in recognizing October as Autism Awareness Month. Children, adults, and families in the Yukon are affected by autism spectrum disorder, also known as autism. ASD is a neurological disorder that causes developmental disability. It affects the way the brain functions, resulting in difficulties with communications, social interactions, and unusual patterns of behaviour, activities and interests.

Today, there are approximately 200,000 Canadians living with some form of ASD, and this figure does not account for the family members and caregivers whose lives are also affected by autism. It is estimated that one child in every 65 Canadian children born today will develop ASD.

In recognizing October as Autism Awareness Month, Mr. Speaker, we must also recognize the professionals, parents and caregivers who have worked so hard in the Yukon to ensure that services are available to families and children.

I am pleased to note that this government was involved in the creation of the Yukon ASD guide to services, along with the Child Development Centre, the Council of Yukon First Nations, the Yukon Association for Community Living and Autism Yukon. This guide provides valuable information on services for parents, individuals and service providers in the Yukon. We have heard from parents that the services provided by the Yukon government for children with autism are making a difference. Early intervention for children leads to lifelong gains. We are committed to helping these children achieve their full potential.

We are also pleased to support the valuable work of Autism Yukon in raising awareness of autism. Autism Yukon plays an important role in supporting families and providing information and education to families and service providers during Autism Awareness Month and throughout the year. New research is constantly emerging in this field, and we need to

keep abreast of current research results in order to provide the most effective treatment for children with ASD.

Mr. Speaker, our government increased support for autism last mandate to better assist children and families, and I am pleased to note that some more support will be provided in the 2008-09 fiscal year to children with other disabilities by dramatically enhancing services to children and their families with extreme disabilities. Mr. Speaker, we applaud the parents, caregivers and professionals, and children and adults with ASD.

Thank you.

In recognition of World Polio Day

Hon. Mr. Cathers: Last Thursday, health officials around the world celebrated the birth of Dr. Jonas Salk, which has now become known as World Polio Day.

I would like to take the time today to ask my colleagues in this House to acknowledge the day itself and to recognize that, despite the best efforts of medical and health professionals around the world, this disease has not yet been eradicated. In 1988, Rotary International began a campaign to erase polio from the world. Today we are very close, but there are still countries where the push is needed.

I would like to take this opportunity to recognize the commitment of one of Yukon's citizens, Mr. Ramesh Ferris, who will leave next April on a cross-Canada journey aimed at raising funds to help with polio eradication in Afghanistan, India, Nigeria and Pakistan, as well as to fund education on polio and the need for continued immunization and for polio rehabilitation for survivors who need surgery and mobility aids. Mr. Ferris is himself a survivor of polio and as he undertakes his Cycle to Walk campaign from Victoria, B.C. to Cape Spear, Newfoundland, many Yukon hearts will be with him.

On behalf of Yukoners, I thank Mr. Ferris and the volunteers supporting him for their dedication toward eradicating polio and the raising of awareness of the importance of all immunizations. I'm pleased that the Department of Health and Social Services is able to provide \$15,000 to support him in his trek, and Tourism Yukon will assist by providing him with air transport for him and his hand-cycle and an assortment of outer wear.

For many people today, "polio" is not even a word we recognize. For many parents, it is simply another immunization that their children receive today as part of the universal vaccination program. For those old enough to remember, polio can strike terror -- and polio is just a plane ride away, Mr. Speaker.

We can do our part to continue the work, and we must do our part to continue the work to eradicate this scourge. We support Mr. Ferris on his journey and ask all members of this House to do the same.

Mr. Mitchell: I, too, rise today on behalf of the Official Opposition to pay tribute to World Polio Day. In the Yukon, we have a number of citizens who have been affected by polio. In the early 1950s, there was an outbreak of polio in the Yukon, and some families sent their children out of the territory for a period of time, as this disease mainly was seen as

affecting children. In some cases, children were left paralyzed to some greater or lesser extent, and that is permanent.

As the minister remarked in his address, Ramesh Ferris, a Whitehorse resident, is living with the everyday difficulties of having polio. Mr. Ferris was born in India. He contracted polio at the age of six months old. His mother, unable to give her son the medical support that he needed, made the difficult choice to put him up for adoption. Mr. Ferris was adopted and raised in a very well-known Yukon family from the age of two.

Mr. Ferris is engaged in a courageous project called Cycle to Walk, and it will be launched on April 12, 2008. Ramesh, using a hand-and-arm cycle, will travel from Whitehorse, Yukon, starting at the foot of the street of his childhood home, which was where he took his first steps in public. He will travel from Yukon to Cape Spear, Newfoundland, via Alaska and Washington. This project is to raise money in an effort to eradicate polio around the world. The Cycle to Walk campaign objectives are polio eradication, polio education, and polio rehabilitation.

With the monies raised from this campaign, 75 percent will go to Rotary International's PolioPlus programs, five percent will go to the Cycle to Walk Society to continue education regarding the ongoing need for polio immunization in Canada and around the world, and 20 percent will go to the Rotary Polio Survivors & Associates, a Rotary action group dedicated to the humanitarian assistance of polio survivors, including the provision of surgery and mobility aids.

To sponsor or donate in any way, you can contact Ramesh at 668-5826, or e-mail ramesh@cycletowalk.com or donate at any Bank of Montreal in Canada.

On a personal note, Mr. Speaker, my father contracted polio in a 1916 epidemic. It seems to be from a completely different era; nevertheless, this was part of my life growing up.

My father was isolated with other children in a polio ward. They could do no more than wait to see who would live and who would die at that time. There was no real treatment. Some lived; many died, including the neighbour in the apartment building my dad had contracted it from, as best he knew.

When Dad came home he was in a wheelchair and unable to walk. It was a very long struggle as he learned to walk again and continued to deal with life's challenges with this additional burden. Now in his late years, he's struggling again with the remnants of this disease with post-polio syndrome, which comes back all too frequently to haunt people in their later years.

This disease is fully preventable. We all know about the work done by Jonas Salk to develop the initial inoculations earlier in the mid-20th century and then, in the early 1950s, the oral polio vaccine that was developed by Dr. Albert Sabin.

When I was a young university student, I worked in the laboratory with several of Dr. Sabin's former colleagues doing research, and there was the picture of this great doctor sitting in the office. I cannot believe that, since that was so many years ago -- just about 40 years ago -- we're still dealing with this disease today. It's mostly occurring in the poorest areas of the world, and all too often because of ignorance or misinforma-

tion, it is related to various kinds of warfare and other difficulties people perpetrate on each other.

In this day and age, no one should have to grow up dealing with the difficulties that Ramesh Ferris has had to overcome or that my dad overcame, or that so many people are dealing with. It's inexcusable that this carries forward.

We wish Ramesh well in his challenging endeavour to raise awareness, and we push for the eradication of polio worldwide. I want to thank the Minister of Health and Social Services for the contribution his department is making to this campaign.

Thank you.

Mr. Hardy: On behalf of the NDP caucus, I would like to also recognize World Polio Day and, more so, recognize the people who walk the walk or, in this case, take a journey to raise awareness in bringing people who are more fortunate in not having this disease to the forefront to put up monies to eradicate this illness.

This should have been dealt with a long, long time ago. The cure was there and the means to deal with it have been there for a long time. Unfortunately it still raises its head around the world and, regrettably, in a lot of areas -- mostly Third World countries -- we still see polio surfacing.

I take my hat off to Mr. Ferris and the work he is doing and the commitment and sacrifices being made by him and the people around him to raise consciousness of this disease and to try to deal with it and, maybe once and for all, remove it from the face of this earth so that other people will not be afflicted by it.

Mr. Ferris, you are the inspiration for us -- not just regarding polio, but regarding all the other illnesses that could be eradicated on this planet if we would only put our mind to it and not to war.

Speaker: Are there further tributes?

Introduction of visitors.

Returns or documents for tabling.

Reports of committees.

Are there any petitions?

Are there any bills to be introduced?

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 38: Introduction and First Reading

Hon. Mr. Hart: I move that Bill No. 38, entitled *Act to Amend the Employment Standards Act*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Minister of Community Services that Bill No. 38, entitled *Act to Amend the Employment Standards Act*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Motion for introduction and first reading of Bill No. 38 agreed to

Bill No. 35: Introduction and First Reading

Hon. Mr. Lang: I move that Bill No. 35, entitled *Act to Amend the Subdivision Act*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources that Bill No. 35, entitled *Act to Amend the Subdivision Act*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Motion for introduction and first reading of Bill No. 35 agreed to

Speaker: Are there any further bills for introduction?

Notices of motion.

NOTICES OF MOTION

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Canada to give due consideration to build in Yukon the world-class, cutting-edge Arctic research station that was announced in the Speech from the Throne on October 16, 2007, in conjunction with the Government of Yukon's establishment of a cold climate research centre of excellence for the north at Yukon College and its community campuses.

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

THAT this House urges the Minister of Finance to use whatever portion of the Yukon government's \$100-million financial surplus is necessary to ensure:

(1) that social assistance rates will be raised significantly to reflect the increase in the cost of living since the last time the rates were adjusted without triggering unwarranted increase in rental cost for those on the lower rungs of the economic ladder;

(2) that Yukoners afflicted with fetal alcohol spectrum disorder will finally receive the level of housing and support services they require;

(3) that safe, clean housing is available for all Yukon people who need it, regardless of their ability to pay; and

(4) that the Yukon youth who need a safe place to live will have access to emergency shelter and support programs this winter.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Minister of Environment to immediately release the interim state of the environment reports from 2003 and 2004, which have been in the minister's possession for more than a year, and to table the 2005 state of the environment report as he is required to do during the 2007 fall sitting of the Legislative Assembly.

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

THAT this House urges the minister responsible for the Yukon Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board to

(1) immediately table amendments to the *Workers' Compensation Act* that enshrine the nine issues that both stakeholder groups and the Yukon Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board directors jointly identified as priorities in April of 2007; and

(2) bring forward a legislative response to the remainder of the recommendations that arose from the extensive consultation on amendments to the act.

I give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Yukon government to review the staffing complement at the Whitehorse Correctional Centre with a particular view to medical services to ensure that:

(1) inmates have access to full-time nursing staff on a regular basis to facilitate their appointments to appropriate medical treatment;

(2) all medications are dispensed and managed by properly qualified staff; and

(3) all correctional staff at the centre have first aid training that meets the requirements of a large institution dealing with possible emergencies.

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

THAT this House urges the Yukon government to exercise caution in its approach to the moose tick infestation affecting wild elk in the territory by exploring all other reasonable means of controlling the infestation before considering any large-scale cull of the animals affected.

I give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Yukon government to end its silence on the results of the *Children's Act* review without further delay by making its position clear on recommendations that have been discussed at various consultations and to come forward with legislation that responds to the needs of Yukon children, especially First Nation children, who are the majority of children in the care of this government.

Speaker: Are there any further notices of motion?

Is there a statement by a minister?

This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Homeless youth

Mr. Mitchell: I would like to address this question to the Minister of Health and Social Services. As many members may be aware, on Friday night many Yukoners took to the street in support of the many youth who are deemed to be at risk in Whitehorse. The group included young people, members of the Whitehorse Youth Coalition, various NGOs, the Mayor of Whitehorse and several MLAs from this Assembly. Noticeably absent was the minister.

Mr. Speaker, it is often said that a society is judged by how it treats its less fortunate. Youth who are on the street for whatever reason are at risk. These young people are at a crossroad in their lives. It is our collective responsibility to address the social malaise, and we must do it now, not study it for six months or 12 months. We must act and act now.

My question for the minister is simply: what action plan will his department implement now to address this escalating problem?

Hon. Mr. Cathers: I appreciate the member's concern for this issue. I want to advise him here that this issue, as the member may recall, has been discussed previously in this Assembly. There was a proposal brought forward by the Whitehorse Youth Coalition, a specific proposal for running a youth shelter. However, there are concerns from the Council of Yukon First Nations, Kwanlin Dun First Nation, and by NGOs that provide services in related areas. They did not feel that the proposal was adequate and they made that very clear to the proponents, to my department and to me. We respected that and, over the course of the summer, officials have been working with the Council of Yukon First Nations, with KDFN and with NGOs that provide services in related areas.

There is a plan that is underway and I hope to make an announcement on it in the next few weeks, but I can assure the member opposite that, in fact, we will have a higher level of security than has ever been in place in the Yukon before to ensure that no youth is homeless or on the streets, and it will be in place this winter.

Mr. Mitchell: I am somewhat encouraged by the minister's comments; however, on Thursday I gave notice of a motion for the need of such a shelter. I'm not going to read it; there isn't time now; it's in the Blues. It was not the first time I raised this issue. I raised it on December 12, 2006, also with a motion -- Motion No. 68 -- again urging this government to act.

Nothing has been done by government in almost a year. We're sitting on close to a \$100-million surplus. We can address this problem now or we can deal with it for the next 30, 40 or 50 years through the justice system and all sorts of other measures, but we should address it this winter for children now.

We have the resources. Do we have the will?

I would say: don't force our children to be in unsafe situations or, in some cases, to trade their bodies for shelter. Can the minister give us more details on what he plans to do for a safe place this winter?

Hon. Mr. Cathers: I will reiterate my comments to the member that officials have been working with the Council of Yukon First Nations and Kwanlin Dun First Nation and NGOs that have a long-standing relationship with the government in providing services. We're working out the details of a plan, subject to reaching a mutually acceptable agreement on the plan.

I look forward to making an announcement very shortly. I'm very optimistic in this area and appreciate the contribution that all have provided in this area, and the contribution and perspective of the Whitehorse Youth Coalition.

Again, I have to emphasize to the member that we're doing due diligence. The issue is one of ensuring that, when this area is addressed, the plan is the right one and the solution is the right one. We respect the input of the Council of Yukon First Nations, the Kwanlin Dun First Nation and NGOs that provide services to youth and in related areas. We appreciate the input of those who deliver those services on the ground.

Mr. Mitchell: Again, I will say to the minister, it's encouraging, but the youth who are on the street want to know when. The youth who were at the meeting a week prior to Thursday wanted to know if it would be open in November.

Their questions are very basic: will there be a place for us to go in November? Will there be a place for us to go in December?

When this issue of youth homelessness was raised at the last of the public meetings on the Premier's tour, this minister said that the existing programs should be addressing it, but theoretically, there is a group of youth who are slipping through the cracks, and emergency shelter is not the best solution, added the minister. Ideally, we don't want to deal with it through an emergency shelter. There are housing programs in place -- resources like family and children's services and group homes.

In theory, the structure should be addressing the issue. I would say that the practice has departed from the theory. Again, I will ask the minister if he can give us some more concrete information, other than telling us that he's consulting, as to what sort of place would be in place this winter for children who are now at risk.

Hon. Mr. Cathers: The Leader of the Official Opposition was repeating some of the comments I made, taken out of context. I think I can provide him some clarity in that area so that he better understands what I was referring to.

There is already a long-standing structure in place within the Department of Health and Social Services through family and children's services support for children. Between that and the social assistance program -- yes, as I said earlier, theoretically, there should not be gaps in that. However, the very fact that officials have been diligently working, at my direction, with Kwanlin Dun First Nation, Council of Yukon First Nations, and non-government organizations that have a long-standing service relationship with the Yukon government, points out that, in fact, we recognize that individuals may be slipping through gaps in the system.

As we did previously with funding the Outreach van, this government, once again, is demonstrating our commitment to ensuring that we do not rely on theory, but we work with the service providers, with the people who see these individuals on the ground, to ensure that there are no cracks in the system that people are slipping through, that the appropriate steps are taken to ensure that service is provided far beyond what has ever been provided by any previous government in this territory.

Question re: Social assistance rates

Mr. Mitchell: While we have this minister on his feet, I will ask him another question. It is on a related area.

I was very pleased, although somewhat surprised, to see the minister putting forward a motion -- Motion No. 170 -- urging the government to "increase social assistance rates for those in need and to provide incentives for those on social assistance who want to enter the workforce".

There is no argument from members of the opposition, Mr. Speaker. In fact all of us, I believe, on this side are prepared to give this motion a fast track through this Assembly.

I have only one question: when is the minister going to take his own advice and change the rates so that our most needy Yukoners can have a standard of living they are deserving of and one in which all Yukoners can take pride and say that this is how Yukoners treat Yukoners?

Hon. Mr. Cathers: Again, I have to emphasize to the member opposite that the member is failing to understand the issue or is failing to reflect his understanding of the issue in his comments. This issue is about rates, but it is also about how it interacts with the rest of the system.

In our platform that we were re-elected on last year, we committed to review the social assistance rates and provide incentives for those on social assistance who want to enter the workforce.

The issue is twofold: it is ensuring adequacy of rates for those who are forced to rely on social assistance and ensuring that the system genuinely gives a hand up and assists people in entering the workforce and remaining in the workforce.

Officials of the Department of Health and Social Services have been conducting, over the last number of months, the most comprehensive review of the social assistance program and structure that has ever been conducted in this territory since its inception. That work is nearing completion, and once it is complete and Cabinet has approved the results, I will be making an announcement in this area. I am very pleased with the work that officials have done and I am sure that the member and all Yukoners will be pleased by the steps that will be taken under this program that do far more than simply assist those who are compelled to rely on social assistance; it will focus on giving those individuals a hand in getting into the workforce and helping them remain in the workforce, and building resources for themselves and their families.

Mr. Mitchell: The minister suggests that we on this side are failing to understand or failing to listen. I think the only failure we've seen is the failure to act. This government has been in office for five years. This minister and his predecessors in this portfolio have been aware of this problem. It has not been for any lack of it being raised by the Official Opposition, or the third party. It is not for any lack of members of the public who are on social assistance saying they can't afford to live on the funds that are there.

So, let me see if I have this right. The minister has tabled a motion urging them to do something; the Official Opposition is saying, "Yes, do it", but I still don't hear a definitive answer from the minister as to when people on social assistance can expect to see new rates. What budget will this be in? When is it going to happen? When can they stop taking money from their food allowance to subsidize their housing allowance?

Hon. Mr. Cathers: The member is trying to suggest that there is an issue here today that is preventing people from having adequate resources for their food. And again I have to emphasize to the member that, at the director's discretion, emergency funding can be provided for anything from a furnace to a coat to food, if at any point, in any way, shape, or form there is an issue of inadequacy. However, on an operational basis, people should not be applying for emergency funding on a regular basis, so that is why we are committed to ensuring that the rates are adequate in and of themselves. But the member needs to recognize that people are being adequately supported here today and that what will be delivered at the end of the day, when this review is complete and approved by Cabinet, is the most comprehensive and significant action in

supporting those on social assistance and helping them get off social assistance and helping them get into the workforce and building their own resources that has ever occurred in the territory and will be a leading system nationwide.

Mr. Mitchell: The minister seems to ask and answer his own questions now. Frankly, I don't think it's appropriate to suggest that, if people find they can't live on \$390 a month for a single person's housing allowance and if they don't have enough money to buy clothing and don't have sufficient money to buy food, they should come back to the department as supplicants and say, "Please, please, I'm starving here; help me; provide more."

Emergency assistance they can request is the last thing in the world these people want to do. Yes, people want to have jobs; yes, people want to be self-supporting. But when people have fallen through the cracks, for God's sake, don't take away their last dignity. Don't ask them to apply for emergency extra assistance. People want the minister to, as the movie title says, "Show me the money."

While he's designing the greatest system ever, when will there be new rates for people?

Hon. Mr. Cathers: The member has certainly taken those comments in a direction, as he ought to know full well, they were not intended to suggest. I was merely taking the opportunity to emphasize to the member that the structure exists, there is the ability, if the rates are not adequately addressing someone's needs, to ensure that no one is ever going hungry, as the member seems to imply might be the case.

However, this government is committed to ensuring adequacy of rates and that the structure exists to help people into the workforce, to assist them in that area and to help them stay there. In looking at our social assistance rolls, that is something that causes us great concern -- the number of people who have left social assistance and been compelled to go back on it due to personal hardship.

We are committed to helping them build their own resources and we are committed to ensuring the Yukon social assistance program and structure is the best in the country, and that is something I will be very proud to announce in the very near future.

Question re: Social assistance rates

Mr. Hardy: We saw some interesting reports on the Premier's public meeting in Whitehorse last week. I won't dwell on his assertion that a message from his office would trump an e-mail from the Pope. However, I take serious issue with some other things said at that meeting. For example, the Premier's claim that there is plenty of affordable housing in the Yukon simply defies the facts. The Minister of Health and Social Services' comments about young people theoretically slipping through the cracks was both uninformed and insulting to young people who face a bleak winter without safe housing and support programs that they desperately need.

Given this government's massive financial surplus, what specific actions are in the works to make poverty history and end the need for food banks, soup kitchens and shelters for the homeless once and for all?

Hon. Mr. Cathers: What I have to emphasize to the member opposite is that, first of all, what this government has done from day one is not just to set the stage for economic growth. The Yukon of course is facing a very fortunate situation, in one way, of a shortage of tradespeople today, contrary to the situation when we took office five years ago when the only economy was a "U-Haul" economy heading south and everyone was leaving the territory under the watch of the Liberals and the NDP. That had been what was fostered.

Not only did we create the structure for economic success in the territory, but what we have also done is continued from day one to assist our less fortunate. We have provided support through areas such as the Outreach van. We have provided increased support to many NGOs. The member mentioned the food bank. I would remind the member that the request came to me from the Anti-Poverty Coalition that we assist them in doing an assessment of the need for and feasibility of a food bank. We resourced them in that area at their request. I look forward to reviewing the results of that report.

We have also continued the inception of the social assistance review. I pointed out to members that this is the most comprehensive review that has ever been done under this program and it will achieve the most substantive result to assist people in a genuine hand up, not just a handout.

Mr. Hardy: Well, it's very nice to see that the minister is quoting Habitat for Humanity about hand-ups and not hand-outs. I wish he would give some support in some of the other areas where there is need instead of relying on NGOs to try to carry the burden of housing. This government has a massive surplus -- \$100 million sitting in the bank. This government has no plan to break the cycle of poverty and homelessness in the Yukon. We have been asking year after year after year, and they are just finally now taking a look at it. For shame, Mr. Speaker.

One of the presentations at last week's meeting was from a woman who had dedicated years of her life to address the needs of people afflicted with fetal alcohol spectrum disorder. Her presentation included an earnest plea for treatment programs for people with FAS and FAE, as well as more support housing units for people with disabilities. This is not the first time she has made this plea to this government.

Will the Minister of Health and Social Services tell us how much of this government's cash reserves have been set aside to meet those very real and very specific needs?

Hon. Mr. Cathers: I am pleased that the member has mentioned FASSY and I would point out that this government supports FASSY far beyond what any previous government did. In fact, just this year, we provided them an increased annual contribution of some \$200,000 for the With a Little Help from My Friends program. With the additional supports that we provide them, I believe the total is \$397,000 per year. We will continue to work with them in areas to assist clients who have FASD. We will continue to work with them in these areas.

We already provide support through Options for Independence. We have already stepped forward to begin addressing this area. I appreciate the comments from the executive director of FASSY. We will continue to work with FASSY, as we've done

in the past, and will continue to invest in our five-step FASD action plan.

Mr. Hardy: In other words, "no". That's what I am hearing from this minister. I would like to remind the minister that on a per capita basis, the NDP put more into these programs than this government ever has and probably ever will.

If the minister had been listening, he would realize that the NDP caucus has tabled many, many motions calling for targeted action on poverty and homelessness in the Yukon.

It was intriguing on Thursday to hear the Minister of Health and Social Services urging his own government to do something about the need to raise social assistance rates. Talk about grandstanding. After 15 years of inaction -- and I'll say this very clearly, Mr. Speaker, because I don't like this -- the Yukon Party, Liberals and the NDP governments, 15 years of inaction, all of them guilty, the minister shouldn't have to urge his own government to do what is right. We have gotten there.

Will the minister assure the House that there will be no delay in raising social assistance rates to reflect the increase in the cost of living over the past 15 years and that this government will also put money on the table --

Speaker: Thank you.

Hon. Mr. Cathers: Again, I have to point out the member is seemingly desperately trying to defend the record of the NDP.

I would point out that the fact remains that this government has invested more on the social side of the agenda than NDP governments have. We have invested in working with the Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Society Yukon far beyond what any previous government has done and we will continue working with the Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Society Yukon and with other groups that provide services in the areas related to people with FASD, and of course others who have personal challenges, disabilities and other issues.

This government increased this year the annual contribution provided to the Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Society Yukon by \$200,000, bringing the total level to nearly \$400,000 that we provide in support to this NGO. We appreciate their work, and we will continue to work with them to ensure that our services further grow far and beyond what any previous government has done. We will work with them to support those who have these challenges.

Question re: Homeless youth

Mr. Cardiff: This past Friday evening and into Saturday morning, all three members of the NDP caucus spent time outside the Elijah Smith Building with young people who were there to point out the urgent need for an emergency youth shelter. This has been an obvious need for over a decade, and it hasn't been addressed by any party of any political stripe.

Last week, the minister made an outrageous statement that, theoretically, there's a group of youth who are slipping through the cracks. If the minister had been there on Friday night, he would have known it wasn't a theory. If he had taken the time to show up and actually spend time with those kids, he would know it's not theoretical.

That's almost as outrageous as the statement he made just moments ago in the Legislature about people on social assistance being adequately supported.

I'd like to know if the minister will apologize for his misinformed, insensitive remarks --

Speaker: Thank you. You're done.

Hon. Mr. Cathers: The only thing I will apologize for is the member's portrayal of my remarks. That is clearly, at best, a significant spin on what I said. The member ought to know full well that his characterization of my remarks is grossly inaccurate. The member ought to realize that this government has shown our support. As I indicated earlier in the House, we are working with the Council of Yukon First Nations, the Kwanlin Dun First Nation and with NGOs that have a long-standing relationship of providing services to Yukon to address the needs and ensure this winter we have a pilot program in place to address the needs of homeless youth who may be slipping through the cracks of the system.

The member is making a claim about the number of youth when he has no facts to support it. If the member has any information related to this, it would be helpful if he would provide it to us. I stress to the member that our working relationship is with the NGOs that have been providing services in this area.

We will work with the facts; we will work on the details of a proposal and a project. I emphasize to members that, subject to Cabinet approval, I do anticipate having a project in place very soon this winter to provide support, which no other government has ever provided, to ensure no youth slips through the cracks and is on the streets.

Mr. Cardiff: The minister should get his spin doctors out there on the street on Friday nights, spinning his words for the youth who were there. They were insulted, just as I was insulted, and just about anybody else was who read that in the newspaper.

The government has a \$100-million surplus. The cupboard is full, and the Premier is bragging about the Yukon's rosy economic situation. What I would like to know is what this minister is going to do now about the issue of youth who are at risk, who are trading out there and couch surfing. What is he going to do now for these youth? Is he going to get something happening now?

Hon. Mr. Cathers: Again, I have to remind the member of the facts on the record. It was this government that stepped in to provide funding to the Youth of Today Society, the Blue Feather Youth Centre, and to the Boys and Girls Club, which previous governments did not provide. I believe it's \$110,000 each in annual core funding, as well as additional supports through the Youth Directorate, and to Bringing Youth Toward Equality.

Again, I have to emphasize to the member that we have worked in this area. Just as we are the government that stepped forward to fund the Outreach van, we will be the government that will provide funding to ensure there is a project in place to ensure that there are no youths slipping through the cracks of the system -- the system that I again emphasize, theoretically ought to address the needs.

That is what previous governments relied on -- the theory. We are working with the service providers, with the NGOs, that see the youth on the street. We are working with them to ensure a project is in place that will ensure no youth ever slips through the cracks in the Yukon and that they are not on the street. We are taking the action that previous governments ignored.

Mr. Cardiff: The late Tommy Douglas said, and quite rightly, that governments will be judged by how they treat their least fortunate citizens. It's shameful that a government that's flush with cash has no time or money for youth living on the margins.

The minister should know -- it's almost November out there. It wasn't as cold as it could have been on Friday night, but it was pretty chilly, and there's no time to find a permanent solution. He's talking about a pilot project. That's a temporary solution. We need a permanent solution and we need it now.

What are the details of the minister's temporary solution and what is he going to do on a permanent basis? Because too often we see project funding, and then it runs out and there's nothing. What's the permanent solution as well?

Hon. Mr. Cathers: The member ought to realize, when he's suggesting that project funding runs out, that that is not the practice of this government in working with NGOs providing support to those in need. We have a record of continuing to increase the funding to NGOs that provide service to those who need it most.

I would point out that the member is endorsing a specific solution, a specific proposal put forward by the Whitehorse Youth Coalition in urging the government to act in that area. I again have to emphasize to the member that the Council of Yukon First Nations and Kwanlin Dun First Nation expressed concern with the proposal presented. They made it very clear to the proponents and to me and my department that they did not support the proposal presented. They had concerns and they wished to work with us to develop an alternate solution to ensure no youth fall through the cracks.

That is what we have done over the last number of months, and that solution is getting very near because all who were involved in the discussions recognize the importance of having this in place before the cold winter months set in. That work is ongoing and, as I have stated in response to several questions, I am optimistic I will be able to make an announcement later this month, pending Cabinet approval, of the solution in this area and point out that no other government addressed this area.

Question re: Paulsen case appeal

Mr. McRobb: I have some questions for the minister in charge of land applications. On Thursday I raised the fact that several land applications were on hold due to the Paulsen decision. The minister stated that that wasn't the case and blamed public servants in his department for the misinformation made public. However, as the record from Thursday shows, I witnessed a conversation between the minister and my constituent regarding his stalled land application following the October 4 meeting in Haines Junction. The minister was unequivocally clear on the status of all land applications. He said, "They are all on hold." I repeat, Mr. Speaker, he said, "They

are all on hold." It is hard to believe how this could be a simple departmental mistake when the minister presented the same story to a member of the public. Why has the minister changed his story?

Hon. Mr. Lang: It is important here that we deal in facts. The facts are that there was a communication sent out that was wrong. The communication was sent out to individuals; we addressed that communication. The land process will go ahead as it always has and will in the future.

Mr. McRobb: The minister avoided the question. The government made a major policy change and an official conveyed that new policy to land applicants by letter, e-mail and in one-on-one meetings. The new policy confirmed that applications were delayed because of the Paulsen case, but after this story became public, the minister changed course and denied that a new policy was ever in place. The Premier stomped his foot and denied that the letters even existed. Then he said, "Corrections have been sent out, and are being sent out to all individuals who received this notification." I asked the minister to inform us how many land applicants were affected as such. Now that he has had a few more days to get up to speed, what number of applicants was affected? Surely he must know, because they all will be sent follow-up letters.

Hon. Mr. Lang: I remind the member opposite that the government on this side has to deal in facts. The facts are that the communication was sent out and it was incorrect. I do not know the number, nor do I want to get involved in the numbers. The communication has been corrected, as it should be, and the applications are going forward. Any individual who had that communication will be getting a communication to correct it. That's what the government will do; that's what we're committed to do and that's what's happening at the moment.

Mr. McRobb: This story is full of holes. We're trying to find some clarity and ensure there is some accountability on this matter.

Let's recount the facts. The lands branch told people their applications were on hold due to the Paulsen decision. The minister himself told the Yukon public that all applications were on hold. The Premier first denied the letters even existed and then said it was a mistake by the officials in the lands branch. Then, and only then, did the minister change his story. Now he can't even tell us how many people were affected.

It's reasonable to assume that if this was indeed a mistake, it certainly wasn't made by the officials. Surely the minister doesn't expect anyone to believe that the policy direction on such a politically sensitive matter originated from someone in the lands branch, does he?

Will the minister now do the honourable thing and take responsibility for this matter and apologize for all the stress and confusion it has caused?

Hon. Mr. Lang: We're dealing with the facts on this side. The facts are that there was a communication sent out by the department that was incorrect. It was sent out to individuals.

The policy did not change. The policy didn't change in Cabinet. The policy today is exactly what it was three months ago. Anybody who received those communications will get a

correction and their land applications will go through the process. That's all I can say on the floor here today.

The issue has been settled. The policy has not changed an iota. People are applying for land today as they did six months ago. There is a process and a policy in place to address that policy. The member opposite can rest a little easier knowing that the correction has been made. Yukoners are being treated exactly the way they have been treated over the last period of time. The policy has not changed. The land applications will be received and will be handled as they have in the past.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BILLS

Bill No. 8: Second Reading

Clerk: Second reading, Bill No. 8, standing in the name of the Hon. Mr. Fentie.

Hon. Ms. Taylor: I move that Bill No. 8, entitled *Second Appropriation Act, 2007-08*, be now read a second time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Minister of Tourism and Culture that Bill No. 8, entitled *Second Appropriation Act, 2007-08*, be now read a second time.

Hon. Ms. Taylor: I am pleased to introduce Bill No. 8, *Second Appropriation Act, 2007-08*. This bill and accompanying supplementary estimates serve two purposes. They detail the expenditure changes that require additional legislative appropriation authority up to this period of the fiscal year and they provide the Legislature and the general public with an update on the financial position of the Yukon government.

This supplementary budget seeks authority to increase operation and maintenance expenditures by just over \$25 million and capital expenditures by \$27.6 million. This will increase the total expenditures of the government by just under \$52.7 million to approximately \$914.6 million.

Offsetting these expenditure increases, the government's revenues, transfers from Canada and other third party recoveries will increase in total by \$17 million. Revenues and recoveries are therefore estimated to increase to \$841 million.

After adjusting for expected lapses and the effect of changes in tangible capital assets, this results in a year-end forecast annual deficit of just under \$14.8 million.

The Yukon has benefited from significant trusts over the years. These include \$40 million for the northern strategy trust as well as the \$50 million for the northern housing trust received from the federal government.

As these revenues have been recorded in prior years and expenditures recorded later, it is not unexpected that there will be potential fluctuations in our annual surplus/deficit.

Having said that, I am pleased to stand before you today to advise that the government's accumulated surplus at the end of the fiscal year is forecast to be over \$531 million, and the net financial resources of the government to year-end are projected to be a very healthy \$99.5 million.

I want to emphasize the importance of having net financial resources, as opposed to having net debt. This is a tremendously important indicator of our government's financial health, as it means that the government is no longer relying on future revenues to provide current services.

As in past years, a significant component of the requested expenditure authority in a first supplementary budget comes about because departments are seeking capital and operation and maintenance revote authority from lapses in a previous year. These revotes in operation and maintenance and capital total approximately \$30 million of the budgetary appropriation authority sought. This supplementary budget also recognizes our obligation to our most valuable resource -- that is our employees.

Members will recall that back in May 2007, the Yukon government ratified a renewed collective agreement with the Public Service Alliance of Canada. This supplementary budget includes expenditure adjustments resulting from the negotiated agreement.

While ministers will be pleased to provide members of the Legislature with the complete details of each of these expenditures, I will certainly take the opportunity to provide some of the highlights within the budget.

Mr. Speaker, this supplementary budget provides additional support to the sport and culture sectors. Of course, I am very pleased to always talk about these particular contributions, as they not only add to our net economic benefit, but they also contribute to Yukon's fine quality of life.

There is an increase of \$417,000 under Yukon Sport for Life, celebrating and supporting each and every step initiative through which the Department of Community Services is undertaking to enhance athlete and coaching development, promote rural and aboriginal participation in sport, while developing high performance and elite athletes.

Members opposite will recall that, as recently as this spring, we had the opportunity to celebrate Canada Winter Games 2007, when we were able to celebrate our contributions to our athletes' development throughout the territory.

This funding will certainly enhance, as well as replace, the Best Ever program that the Department of Community Services had contributed before, during and after the games, as well.

This funding is very well sought after. Many of the stakeholders who are in receipt of this funding are very pleased. We were very pleased to be able to distribute the first round of funding not long ago.

The Department of Tourism has identified \$568,000 to undertake a number of enhancements to the suite of art programs it delivers. Specifically, broken down, it will provide \$243,000 for the Yukon arts funding program -- a funding program that has been in existence for many years in the past; however, it has not received any funding increases over the last decade.

Of course, one only has to take a look at the thriving arts and cultural community in the territory to see the net economic benefits and the social benefits that we as Yukoners receive on a daily basis.

This particular funding will go toward the long-term, stable funding of many arts organizations. This funding will ex-

pand those particular arts organizations while also enabling additional organizations to receive dollars as well.

\$150,000 has also been provided to the Dawson City Arts Society. The government has been very supportive of the DCAS, which is the acronym for that particular society. In the past DCAS has been very instrumental in the growth and development of the arts and cultural community, not just in the Klondike region, but of course Yukon-wide. DCAS, for anyone who is familiar with their operations, provides a whole suite of various programs: employment, arts and cultural programs. We are very pleased to provide them with additional dollars to continue to build capacity in their communities to continue to develop such creative opportunities for Yukoners. I would also be remiss if I didn't mention the School of Visual Arts that DCAS has been able to develop and sustain over the last number of years. Thanks to the contributions of KIAC and DCAS, we have been able to see the School of Visual Arts get off the ground, and the first enrolment of students actually took place earlier this fall. We are very pleased to be able to provide the first accredited institution for fine arts north of 60 in the country. We are very pleased to provide continued assistance to DCAS and their particular partners.

There is \$75,000 for the artist in the school program. The artist in the school program complements a number of different programs that the Department of Education provides in respective schools. This money will actually accentuate the dollars that we have in the past provided through Education and through Tourism and Culture. This funding is actually increasing from \$25,000 to \$100,000 per year, so it will enhance the delivery of arts-related programs in a number of our schools from here on out.

And last but not least there is \$100,000 for the newly created touring artist fund. This fund is going to be very well received by our cultural community. It is a funding mechanism that has been very much sought after and requested over the last number of years. As members opposite will probably recall, or we'll just have to take a look around, most of our artists have been in the marketplace so to speak. They have matured. They deliver such fine quality arts-related programming in all aspects, and this fund will be able to enable them to take and export their wares and their works to other places in the country.

We are working very closely with our Yukon Arts Advisory Council and a number of other related stakeholders on the further delivery of some of these new investments in arts programming. Mr. Speaker, investment in the sport and culture sectors is but one example of how we are striving to maintain and improve the quality of life for all Yukoners.

As members are well aware, many Yukoners experienced a significant hardship following the usual flooding this past summer. We are following through on a number of commitments to assist many affected Yukoners. In particular we are providing over \$1.1 million through the Department of Community Services for flood assistance in the Southern Lakes, Liard and Lake Laberge areas. This will offer much-needed assistance to affected residents.

As well, \$400,000 is being allotted through the Yukon Housing Corporation through the flood relief program in order to offer aid to property owners. I would certainly like to extend our heartfelt thanks to all of the hundreds of volunteers who took part in the various flood relief programs, the volunteer efforts that were put forward by hundreds of Yukoners, Yukon-wide, in support of many of the flood victims affected by the flooding, particularly in the Southern Lakes this past summer.

I was very pleased to offer my personal assistance, whether it was sandbagging or getting a much better understanding of the level of devastation that took place in our particular area of the Yukon that was very affected.

Carcross was just one of the areas. As we mentioned, it was the whole Southern Lakes network that was impacted. We are very pleased to be able to provide this funding relief. It has so far been very well-received by those impacted.

Our government is also committed to improving the health, safety and well-being of Yukoners. Specifically in the area of expanding capacity in the provision of health care, the Department of Health and Social Services has identified funding totaling over \$1.1 million to open an additional 12-bed section at Copper Ridge Place. This is actually the second time that we have contributed dollars to Copper Ridge Place to enable us to open up another 12 beds. I believe that within the last four-year period we opened up 24 beds. This second allotment of beds will be made available in the middle of November, as I seem to recall.

Copper Ridge Place is very thankful for the many volunteers and the level of commitment of the staff who work day in and day out at Copper Ridge Place for the quality care they provide on behalf of Yukon citizens.

I have on many occasions visited Copper Ridge Place over the years and I certainly take great heart in being able to listen to some of the stories that are told and retold by residents of Copper Ridge Place about their many contributions to the development of this territory. It is, after all, they to whom we are indebted. It is because of their efforts that we do have the wonderful place that we are able to call home.

In addition, over \$1.2 million is being allocated through this supplementary budget with respect to our territorial health access fund obligations -- \$899,000 in operation and maintenance and \$326,000 in capital.

Our Minister of Health and Social Services, with the good work and diligence of his department officials and staff, has provided great headway over the last recent years in being able to recruit and retain our respected health care professionals in our respective communities.

This territorial health access fund -- I only have to remind members opposite that it was because of the good work of our Premier in collaboration with the premiers from Nunavut and Northwest Territories. They were actually able to get together and stand up to the Government of Canada, demanding that per capita funding was just not going to cut it for the Yukon in terms of meeting out future health care access needs. Instead, it was supposed to look at a reflection of a formula -- that rather than per capita, it would be a base-plus formula. Thanks to the good work of our three northern premiers and their continuing

to collaborate together, we were able to garner a very healthy territorial health access fund, which we've been able to put to good use over the many years.

One only has to take a look at the number of medical bursary funds in place, whether for Yukon students attending post-secondary institutions in the rest of the country -- we are proposing many medical bursary funds to be made available to them.

I was very pleased to see that the Minister of Health and Social Services was able to announce up to eight individual students, I believe, who are actual recipients of this fund. We are pleased to see that Yukoners continue to take an interest in health and that they see fit to make the Yukon their home after completion of their post-secondary studies in the health area.

We are also allocating resources to provide assistance to youth at risk. As the Minister of Health and Social Services relayed to members opposite earlier today, there is a commitment from this government to put dollars where needed. One of those areas is to address youth at risk and homelessness on our streets. In doing so, one would only have to look at our recent contributions in support of Yukon Outreach workers, as well as the Outreach van initiative.

I want to point out, to the minister's credit, that it was through his leadership and deliberations that we made a decision to step in when the federal government was not able to continue its funding of the Yukon Outreach workers. Our government stepped in.

Likewise, it was our government that stepped in to take up the federal cutbacks, as we have over the last five years for a whole host of various programs. One only has to take a look at FASSY, the Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Society Yukon. I believe that With a Little Help from My Friends was another program that was not continued by the federal government, but it was our government that chose to step in and continue that particular program, because it's working and doing great things for women and children.

We're very pleased to provide continued support to the Yukon youth Outreach workers, as well as the Outreach van initiative.

Blood Ties Four Directions or Many Rivers Counselling and Support Services are two organizations -- along with a whole host of volunteers and many stakeholders -- that continue to do an honourable job on our behalf. I wanted to point out our government supported this particular initiative.

This initiative has been part of our Yukon substance abuse action plan. We are contributing our ongoing support to a whole host of initiatives under the various pillars, as identified under the plan.

Speaking of substance abuse, I would also like to point out that the Department of Justice, within this supplementary budget, is also providing \$107,000 in funding identified for a contribution toward the long-term public education campaign on the prevention of violence against women and children. The Women's Directorate has been certainly spearheading this initiative, working in collaboration with the departments of Justice, Health and Social Services, Education and others in work-

ing to address and prevent the effects of violence against women and children.

This is the third phase of this particular campaign, and I believe it has been very effective. Not only are we working in collaboration with our respective departments, but we also continue to work in collaboration with what we call CORE -- the Circles of Respect and Equality -- which is a compilation of about 17 or 18 various agencies and stakeholders who are very much committed to ending the cycle of abuse against women and children.

These dollars will bring it to \$215,000 for this third phase of the long-term public education campaign on violence prevention. It will be for the preparation and creation of a training manual as well as a series of Yukon-made responsive and culturally sensitive videos to be used by front-line workers who work on a daily basis to assist victims of abuse. As well, these particular mechanisms, these tools, will be used throughout our schools. They will also be used as a public education tool for the public at large.

Again, this just builds on the work that the Women's Directorate and many other departments have done to address violence over the last number of years.

Members opposite know my personal stand on this particular issue. They certainly know our government's stand on this particular issue when it comes to violence in our communities. Violence prevention is a priority of our government, and it is one of the key mandates of the Women's Directorate.

In addition to launching the long-term public education campaign on violence against women and children, we continue to work with our respective departments through the front-line agencies and front-line workers, who continue to make available counselling, treatment and support for victims of abuse.

Members will be hearing a little bit more about that later on next month, November, which is Women Abuse Prevention Month. They will be hearing about more initiatives that we will be launching in recognition of this particular time.

Our government was very pleased to be proactive in addressing violence in our communities. One only has to take a look at the amendments to the *Family Violence Prevention Act*, which certainly resulted in toughening up penalties for perpetrators and offenders. It also expanded the definition of "family violence" to include emotional abuse.

These particular legislative amendments will enhance resources to our family violence prevention unit, through the Department of Justice, and expand initiatives such as the domestic violence treatment option to communities such as Watson Lake. Whether it's through public education, front-line services or policy work, we are certainly looking to continue that good work of our officials.

Just recently our department, our Women's Directorate, took part in a new initiative that was launched about a year ago. It was a sexual assault response team, and it was a very large conference that was held just a few days ago here in Whitehorse -- again, just bringing together the many partners, the many front-line agencies and workers to collaborate and as a means to better respond to family violence in our communities,

whether that was bringing justice workers, the judiciary, the RCMP, members of our women's transition home, women's shelters and so forth. It was a great example of where healthy collaboration is taking place to address how we can better deliver and improve the delivery of services for victims of abuse.

In this budget we have committed to the Burwash Landing community to support their efforts in the development of a youth-elder activity centre. In this particular budget, the Department of Community Services has identified an \$850,000 contribution toward this project.

As well, the Department of Community Services continues its support for Habitat for Humanity. This supplementary budget includes \$63,000 to complete a lot purchase for future Habitat for Humanity projects. This will be the second building to go up under Habitat for Humanity. It's a wonderful organization that certainly is well known internationally. I was very pleased to be able to help raise some dollars for Habitat for Humanity and I am still raising dollars. I have tickets available for members opposite if they wish to purchase some raffle tickets for this particular fundraising effort.

The first house that went up was in my particular constituency, Whitehorse West. We are very pleased to see the final outcome of a house, and a family was able to move in earlier this spring. It really was a humbling experience. Again, providing affordable, secure housing for families in need is something that our government continues to support.

On the health and safety theme, I wish to take this opportunity to speak to an initiative related to government employees. The Public Service Commission has identified \$150,000 to assist all departments in completing the government-wide audit of health and safety management practices. It is imperative for a government to ensure that our employees have a healthy and safe environment in which to work.

As was earlier announced by our Minister of Health and Social Services, we are very pleased to also include dollars in this particular supplementary budget for childcare services. Our government has committed \$5 million in additional funding to childcare over the next five years.

In this particular budget, there is \$1 million for enhancements to childcare services. As well, there is \$1.3 million for the establishment of a childcare capital fund. There is a \$120,000 base funding increase for Yukon College. There is \$385,000 for vocational experiential programs as earlier announced by the Minister of Education, expanding on the many experiential learning opportunities in all our respective schools. This funding will enable many of the schools to expand their options and opportunities. Experiential learning has become a popular and effective way of learning for our students in the Yukon.

There is \$200,000 for fine arts and sports nature programs for l'École Émilie Tremblay as well as \$300,000 for a review of F.H. Collins Secondary School programs intended to examine programming needs.

In terms of childcare and education, this supplementary budget incorporates many of the priorities that were identified in our election platform a year ago and certainly builds upon the very great investments that were made by our government

in the first mandate. We're very pleased to be able to build upon that.

Mr. Speaker, a significant concern of the Yukon public is for the environment. Indeed, some polls suggest that the environment is the primary concern of Canadians -- even above concerns related to health care in some instances. Our government is certainly involved in a number of initiatives in this area, including: \$300,000 identified in the Department of Highways and Public Works to address environmental rehabilitation at the Swift River grader station; \$699,000 allocated to the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources to deal with type 2 mine sites; the department is working, as appropriate, with Canada and First Nations on issues at Mount Nansen, Clinton Creek, United Keno Hill and Faro. As well, there is \$105,000 for green home incentive rebates, as well as \$750,000 between the home repair loans and mortgage financing programs within the Yukon Housing Corporation in support of enhancements to the green home programs.

Mr. Speaker, we will certainly endeavour to address the many initiatives, as I just relayed, in terms of areas of sports and culture, health and safety, childcare and education as well as the environment. As well, this particular budget addresses a number of infrastructure-related needs in the territory. These are very significant investments of the public's dollars for the benefit of the Yukon public.

In particular, we have \$342,000 toward completion of the Tombstone interpretive centre. As the Minister of Tourism and Culture, I am very pleased to see this initiative break ground and develop. It is going to be a huge asset for this particular area of the Yukon, and certainly for the entire Yukon as a very significant destination to visit but also to live. Tombstone Territorial Park, which was designated as a territorial park not long ago, has certainly captured the desires and the eyes of many international visitors worldwide. Certainly, this fully developed interpretive centre will do much more for not only the visitor industry, but it will become a place of pride for the Tr'ondek Hwech'in and for the area residents in particular.

As well we have \$738,000 for the Whitehorse Airport parking lot expansion. As members opposite will attest to, there have been significant investments in the parking lot over the last couple of years. It is coming to completion soon. We will then be proceeding with improvements to the airport terminal building. As Minister of Tourism and Culture, I am very thrilled to see this particular initiative in the works and advancing. It has been a very significant project in terms of its investment to the visitor industry and to every Yukoner in terms of being able to maintain our status as a destination for hosting international visitors and accommodating the number of visitors and Yukoners using the airport.

I have to just point out that over the last summer we saw records breaking all across the board when it came to individuals enplaning and deplaning at the Whitehorse International Airport. It is a tremendous factor; it is a determinant in the very success of the tourism industry. It is a great success thanks to the great work of Air North, Yukon's regional airline, of the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation for all of their investments in this

particular company, to the officials and staff of Air North, and certainly to our other counterpart, Air Canada, and others.

Certainly Air North has worked very closely with the Department of Tourism and Culture and industry over many years in really marketing our destination gateway cities -- Vancouver, Calgary and Edmonton. As a result of their marketing efforts and with our collaborative marketing efforts, we are starting to see a lot of movement from this particular area of the country. In fact, we will be coming out with another aggressive marketing campaign here in some short weeks, which we will be announcing -- building upon our gateway cities' investments and, again, building upon the national marketing campaign that was launched just prior to the Canada Winter Games. It was a very successful collaborative initiative. We have seen many visitors coming to the Yukon despite the many challenges that the tourism industry has with the very strong dollar, with the higher fuel prices, with the complete confusion over the passport regulations, as I like to put it, and so forth.

There certainly are many factors, but despite all of that, Yukon continues to outperform all but one jurisdiction in this country in terms of seeing visitors stay more than one night. We're very pleased with the progress seen to date on the tourism file, and this particular initiative -- expansion of the Whitehorse Airport terminal building as well as the parking lot improvements -- will go a very long way in making this a very attractive destination.

We also have within this budget \$1 million to initiate a multi-year project to upgrade the Robert Campbell Highway. We start with an investment of over \$30 million in support of viable communities and economic growth, in terms of capitalizing on the Robert Campbell Highway as a strategic corridor, not only for tourism purposes, but also for resource purposes. We've seen a tremendous amount of renewed interest and investment by a number of different mineral exploration companies looking to possibly develop new mines in the area, whether it is Wolverine or further developments of the Tungsten and Macmillan Pass. There are a multitude of businesses that are looking to enhance their efforts in this regard. This particular initiative -- road upgrades -- will go a long way over the next number of years in facilitating this further development, but will also provide a very stable, accessible and secure road infrastructure for the enjoyment and benefit of all Yukoners.

I will now talk about the Hamilton Boulevard extension. I'm really passionate about this project, because I've been talking about it for a long time. In this budget we have \$875,000 for the extension of Hamilton Boulevard. This is a collaborative effort between the City of Whitehorse, the Government of Canada and the Yukon government. We are very pleased to see this project come together and proceed.

The Minister of Community Services and I, along with the Acting Mayor of Whitehorse, were involved in a groundbreaking event earlier this fall, in September, in commemoration of the extension of Hamilton Boulevard. All told, we will be contributing \$15 million with our pooled resources. The Yukon government will be contributing more -- the lion's share -- to the project. I believe it's \$6.5 million of the \$15 million

that the Yukon government will be designating over the next couple of years.

This work will provide an accessible and worthy piece of infrastructure in this rapidly growing residential area. I've seen that growth, having resided in the Copper Ridge area for well over 10 years. It's great to see a lot of new Yukoners making Copper Ridge and the surrounding areas their home.

This particular piece of infrastructure will provide a second access and egress route to accommodate emergency situations. I hope it will also alleviate some of the traffic pressures we've been experiencing over the last little while in terms of meeting some of the traffic increases at certain times of the day.

This project will put many Yukoners to work, in terms of brushing contracts and the actual work on the extension. I'm told we will see the lines painted down the middle of the road, ready to go. We're looking at perhaps late 2008 or early 2009. It is a work-in-progress and we're pleased to see it come to fruition.

We have \$800,000 plus for newly approved projects under the municipal rural infrastructure fund, including a number of items. There is \$286,000 to deal with heat loss and operational deficiencies of the Dawson City recreation centre.

There is \$234,000 in partnership with Na Cho Nyak Dun First Nation for upgrading the cemetery access road, \$150,000 for construction of a Dawson City playground, \$168,000 in partnership with the Selkirk First Nation to address the disposal of waste water.

I want to go back and note for members opposite that, once approved, total capital spending is forecast at \$240 million -- a very large investment indeed, but, as members opposite have just heard and for all members' information, there are some significant and worthy initiatives underway that this money will go toward.

Members will also note that departments have identified a number of reduced funding requirements. I would just remind members that most reductions are necessary lapses due to timing issues. As a result, the expenditures will be reflected in the 2008-09 main estimates or as revotes in the near future.

This budget speaks to a number of works-in-progress and we are pleased to build upon some of the initiatives we set out in the first mandate. We have many priorities that we set out in our election platform and that we identified a year ago.

I want to just make reference to other things on the social side. It was interesting to hear that members opposite did take issue with the social side of the ledger and that perhaps not enough emphasis has been paid to addressing the social needs of the Yukon public.

We have made many efforts to achieve a thoughtful and respectful balance between economic development while also meeting the social priorities of our public. I won't go into all of them. I've outlined some of them.

We have been working with many stakeholders over the last number of years, and we have been able to partner with many of our NGOs, First Nation governments and communities. One only has to take a look at the increased investment to our communities through the block funding agreement. Again,

it's an investment that has not taken place for more than 10 years.

These are all investments that our respective governments will certainly take into play, and they will invest to meet the priorities.

As our Premier has noted on a number of occasions -- I just want to reiterate for members opposite -- we wouldn't be in the financial situation that we are today -- a healthy net financial situation -- if it weren't for the collaborative work that our government has done with respect to other governments in the country. We certainly have worked very collaboratively with First Nation governments to make the case to the Government of Canada, to address the gaps between aboriginal and non-aboriginal Canadians.

All these efforts over the last number of years have resulted in a very healthy financial situation. We are very pleased that, for the fifth consecutive year, we have been able to garner yet another clean financial bill of health from the Auditor General of Canada. We have also been able to maintain, for the fifth consecutive year, an accumulated surplus of net financial resources available for the Yukon public.

We wouldn't have the ability to address many of these things that we are continuing to work on in collaboration and partnership with our stakeholders if it weren't for having the resources to be able to do that.

As has been outlined by many of our ministers over the last year, we are working very diligently on affordable, secure, accessible housing in the territory -- whether that be emergency shelter in the interim or the long term, or safe, affordable housing for women and children or for the homeless. We certainly are working on a variety of initiatives to address some of these needs.

I just wanted to make mention in particular that, over a number of years, in addition to all of the initiatives that I have outlined on the social side of the ledger we have also been able to continue our contributions to the healthy families initiative. This provides in-home assistance and education for new families.

The kids recreation fund is another fund for which we have almost quadrupled the amount of dollars available. It covers registration fees, equipment rentals and enables just about every child in this territory to have access to some of our wonderful pieces of recreational infrastructure and take part in sports and recreation.

Food for learning program through the Department of Education: we continue to make dollars and resources available for expanding the food for learning breakfast programs in many of our schools. I am very appreciative of the volunteer efforts put forward by many Yukoners every day in ensuring that every child who attends school receives a healthy meal every day. The food for learning program has proven to be very effective and very successful. As a volunteer of more than five years of the breakfast for learning program at Elijah Smith Elementary School, it remains a very popular program for all students and that is another example of a very worthwhile investment.

The Yukon children's drug and optical program helps low-income families with the cost of prescription drugs and eye care for children up to 18 years of age.

The Yukon child benefit is a tax-free monthly payment to help families with modest incomes with the cost of raising families in the territory. It is another program that is fully funded by Yukon with contributions coming from Canada.

As I mentioned before, investments in childcare to make childcare accessible and affordable to parents in the territory -- an expansion of the whole child project is but another example of our investment into addressing some of the challenges in our territory. This program was recently expanded to Elijah Smith Elementary School. It's a great program. Between Whitehorse Elementary and Elijah Smith, the projects work simultaneously on Wednesdays and Thursdays and provide healthy alternatives for children and their families to participate in some worthwhile activities.

Financial support for youth programs -- under the leadership of our Premier as minister responsible for the Youth Directorate, there is a whole host of youth organizations we now fund. I believe there are four or five different youth agencies in the Yukon that we are funding and that we weren't funding prior to this government.

As the Minister of Health and Social Services relayed, a comprehensive review of social assistance is well underway and is a complex and important area, one that we committed to in the last election. I know the Department of Health and Social Services officials and the minister have been working on this particular initiative over the past year. As the minister alluded to earlier today, this is perhaps the most comprehensive review ever taken by a government, regardless of their political stripe.

Enhanced investments in education, whether culturally responsive programming for First Nations -- and all children of this territory. Literacy -- our investments in literacy addressing poverty in our territory. What better way to eradicate poverty than by looking at the literacy and numeracy skills of students? Through the good work of our Minister of Education, this is a serious area and we have been able to deliver many worthy and community-responsive programs in our respective communities, and we will continue to do so.

As I mentioned, we are working on a host of housing developments to ensure that we have safe, accessible and secure housing for Yukon citizens -- those particularly in need.

We are working to address FASD -- fetal alcohol spectrum disorder. I recall that five years ago we announced our five-step action plan to address FASD with the creation of a diagnostic team of health care professionals. It's a very aggressive initiative but one that has been very well received. We are working to expand those efforts by looking to children in the schools, and so forth.

As the Minister of Health and Social Services also outlined earlier today, this government's contributions to FASSY -- the Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Society Yukon -- has enhanced a whole range of programming. More recently, however, the program, With a Little Help from My Friends, received around \$200,000, which we had to pick up from the federal govern-

ment. This program addresses substance abuse in our communities.

As I mentioned earlier, it is working on the pillars of prevention, education, enforcement, treatment, and so forth. A number of good initiatives have been adopted -- safer communities and neighbourhoods legislation, for one, and the SCAN office, which has been very successful over the last 10 months it has been in operation. Those are just very small pieces of the puzzle in terms of addressing and preventing substance abuse in our territory.

As I mentioned earlier, as well, we have ongoing investments to organizations -- Habitat for Humanity -- providing assistance in the purchase of lots for enabling more options for affordable housing for Yukon citizens, and so forth.

Earlier last week the Minister of Finance tabled two new pieces of legislation for child tax credits, which will return approximately \$1 million of taxpayers' money annually to families, by assisting parents and offsetting some of the costs of raising families as well as encouraging children's participation in programs that contribute to healthy, active lifestyles. The one child tax credit amounts to about \$2,000 per child under the age of 18, and it will provide tax relief per child, and with matching federal tax credits it is increased even more. As well, there is the Yukon child fitness tax credit, which recognizes the role that recreation and physical activity play in the days of our children. Again, this will also provide a tax credit of up to \$500 per child. This is another investment where we are matching the federal tax credits through our government's budget as well.

So, Mr. Speaker, there are a number of initiatives. Are there more? Yes. May I just remind members that we are working on a number of very good initiatives through the very good work of our officials. They work very hard, and we're very pleased and very honoured to have them work on our behalf.

Mr. Speaker, that about sums up my comments for today's second reading address, and I certainly look forward to hearing from members opposite and receiving constructive criticism of the budget and also about any initiatives that they wish to put forward. We recognize the priorities we have heard from individuals, and we sure have done just that with having just concluded our community tours. I believe about 23 meetings took place in the territory. Going out to visit with First Nation chiefs and councils, mayors and councils, and having public forums for individuals to put forth their priorities, is certainly an opportunity for all of us as Cabinet ministers and caucus members.

As members opposite may well know, we do take note of those priorities and we do work to incorporate those within our budgetary priorities when going through the budgetary exercise. I look forward to hearing from members opposite and engaging in a very meaningful and constructive debate.

Mr. Mitchell: First of all, I would like to say that it's a great privilege to be back in this Assembly again representing the people of Copperbelt and, in my position as Leader of the Official Opposition, representing all Yukoners as we work to hold the government accountable.

Copperbelt remains by far the largest riding by population in Yukon. Although people frequently use the names Copperbelt and Copper Ridge interchangeably -- and, as a result, think of Copperbelt as an urban Whitehorse riding consisting of primarily new houses -- that is far from accurate. The riding includes: large ranches on the Fish Lake Road; hotels and businesses across from the airport below Hillcrest; some very modest housing in the McLean Lake and Squatter's Row area; Paddlewheel Village; industrial, asphalt and cement operations near Ear Lake and along the Alaska Highway; country residential housing along the Alaska Highway, in Canyon Crescent and Pineridge; a large mobile-home park at Lobird; and, of course, somewhat older housing dating from the Second World War air force presence in Hillcrest -- although very desirable housing, I might point out -- along with apartment buildings; and finally, the newer homes in Granger and Copper Ridge that people are perhaps more familiar with. There is an elementary school, several hotels, several government museums and a golf course within the riding.

This riding provides tremendous choices of housing and living styles, and with such diversity comes many challenges as well. There are different views on many of the same issues within the one riding based on the different environment in the riding where people are living and the lifestyle they have chosen to pursue.

The interim report of the Yukon Electoral District Boundaries Commission has made some recommendations that will dramatically alter the riding by dividing portions of the riding into four different ridings, if that's how it goes. But until any or all recommendations are approved, and certainly until the next general election, I'll continue to represent this diverse riding and do so to the best of my ability, and raise issues on behalf of my constituents.

I'd like to start this afternoon by taking this opportunity, as the Deputy Premier did in her remarks, to make a few remarks about the terrible flooding that occurred in the Southern Lakes area of Yukon this summer and the quite remarkable response from Yukoners to the challenges faced by our neighbours.

First of all, I want to thank all the Yukon government employees in the Emergency Measures Organization of Community Services and in Highways and Public Works, as well as several other departments, for their tremendous efforts on behalf of the flood victims.

The government's response was nothing short of awesome. As an opposition member of this Assembly, I want to publicly thank the department officials and employees and the ministers responsible for their efforts -- well done.

Secondly, I want to talk a little bit about the volunteer efforts of ordinary Yukoners. When I first went out to Marsh Lake in June and saw what was happening -- I wanted to see it for myself -- I was shocked at the extent of this inexorable flood of rising waters. Hearing descriptions in the news on the radio and in the newspapers didn't do justice to the sort of inevitability of turning around after several hours and seeing the water a little bit higher than it was several hours previously.

I went back to M'Clintock Bay the next day, along with several members of our staff and one spouse, and we shovelled

sand all day that day at two different locations. The first happened to be the residence of a former Member of this Legislative Assembly, who represented Riverdale North. The second was at another neighbour's house nearby, also a long-time Yukoner.

During the first part, I had the pleasure of working side by side with the Highways and Public Works minister, who was also out there volunteering. I can tell you that, from time to time, we find this minister is left holding the bag on various issues, but it's a rare pleasure when I can get the minister to hold the bag while I get to shovel it in.

While we were there -- and we knew we were there for a good purpose -- there was a lot of camaraderie and a lot of laughs, and we certainly had some good laughs over the fact the honourable minister and I were working together as a team.

The point is that for half a day we fought the waters at the home of a long-time Yukon Party supporter and the remainder of that day we happened to be at a Liberal supporter's house. I think what became obvious to us all during that period of time is that party affiliations are pretty unimportant when you are fighting to save a friend's house. Nobody cares much about political posturing and positioning when there is imminent danger to life or property. I know in the ensuing days I volunteered in town, along with many other people and members of this Assembly, at the highways yard in Whitehorse because it seemed that the time in smaller increments was better used there.

What an amazing cross-section of Yukoners we met over those days. It really reminds me of why I made my home in the north and why we are all proud to be northerners and Yukoners. In particular I remember one day I met a young man -- a high school student -- and we were working as one of these impromptu teams that developed at various work parties. I asked him about himself and it turned out that he was working in construction. He had a job and he was off school at this point -- it was later in the month and he had completed school. He was working full-time in construction as an assistant drywaller. He had come directly from work as he wanted to help out. Later he was going to have to go to practice for a sports commitment because he is a member of one of the organized sports teams. I am not certain if it was swimming or soccer, but what a fine young man. What a great example to us all that we have young people -- and we often talk about the difficulties that young people get into. There was an excellent young man. There were a lot of other young men and women -- students from, literally, elementary school on up -- who were working sometimes with their parents and sometimes they just showed up to work. I think it is important to take notice of that.

Now, I'd like to return to the budget. The Hon. Deputy Premier has certainly talked about some of the things in the budget. There are, no doubt, many good projects within the budget. Of course, there will be others that we wished would be there that may not be addressed. It's hard to touch on them all. We don't have the opportunity for any kind of briefing before we deal with the supplementary budget so, in many cases, we are trying to read between the lines to interpret what that may

mean. The Deputy Premier has given us some detail on some of them today.

There are some overall things that I feel obliged to address. One is that we do have a continued reliance on Ottawa. Revenues from Ottawa have increased by more than 50 percent since 2003-04. The 2003-04 main estimates were \$435 million. Today, we are looking at \$657 million of direct transfers from Ottawa. In this small supplementary before us, we see another \$5 million in revenue from Ottawa, as well as millions of dollars of other recoveries from third parties. That has occurred since we last met in the spring.

In an economy that has a billion-dollar GDP, this is a huge increase. It is probably the number one reason, although not the only reason, why the economy is in better shape than it was perhaps five years ago.

These increases are the result of transfer agreements between the Yukon and Ottawa that are not solely the result of this government's actions, although they worked on them. They are the result of hard work by officials over many, many years, and by predecessor governments before this government. It is a big reason for the increased amounts of money that the government has to spend on -- hopefully -- worthwhile projects.

We also touched on before the second reason why things are certainly busy in Yukon -- something that doesn't have anything to do with any government, and that is record high mineral prices. Five years ago, the price of gold was \$260. Today, it sits at approximately \$783. Silver, copper, lead, and other metals have experienced similar increases. I know that the price of molybdenum is over \$30 a pound; a few years ago it was some \$6 a pound. That's why down in the Atlin area, they are very close to permitting the Adanac molybdenum mine, which is a project that I know was being worked on in the early 1970s when I was down there. In fact, I have the wallpaper to prove that I was an investor in an earlier predecessor company that was unable to move forward due to the prices at the time.

The Minister of Economic Development likes to look up and say, "Aha, but metal prices are the same worldwide, so why is there more going on in Yukon than elsewhere?" It is for the very simple reason that we have an abundance of riches and we are very fortunate to have that. We are an area that is very rich in mineral resources so there is going to be more activity in mineral exploration in Yukon than perhaps in some portions of British Columbia or Ontario because we have so many more areas that are highly mineralized and undeveloped in the past.

I see the Minister of Economic Development is taking notes and I look forward to his rebuttal of that later in the day.

We do continue to rely on Ottawa for close to 80 percent of our revenues. Despite years of promises to make Yukon a more self-reliant jurisdiction, that has not in fact occurred under the Yukon Party government. We continue to receive the lion's share of our revenue from Ottawa. Yes, our own-source revenues have also moved up, but we still haven't gotten off that percentage relationship with Ottawa, and I think the Premier needs to remember this the next time he decides to pat himself on the back for the good job he and his government are doing with our economy. We need to also give more thought to the long-term things we decide to do with these revenues be-

cause we may not always live in a period of time when we have so much revenue available to us.

As has been mentioned during Question Period, since this sitting started we have a plain and simple, massive surplus. There is a lot of miscommunication that we hear within the public and within the news media in trying to interpret it. We hear about hundreds and hundreds of millions of dollars of surplus, but because of the way the government keeps its accounts -- the changes that were made at the request of the Auditor General over the last several years in public accounting across Canada -- the numbers sometimes appear huge when compared to years before. We have to be careful because that larger number reflects all of the assets of the government.

I know that the Deputy Premier, in her remarks, spoke to two of the schools -- one in her riding and one in my riding -- in terms of programs that are going on there. Those schools appear within the surplus as an asset of the government and I dare say we are not going to go out and sell them. It is a little different from a private company that may dispose of assets.

The closest we can come to it is what is now called net financial resources, and that is some \$99.5 million. If we think of that as the cash surplus, so to speak -- and even that is a bit of a simplification -- it's probably the largest surplus of any time at any point in Yukon history. I don't recall another period of time the number has been that large. Again, it is largely the result of the massive transfers of funding that have been coming from the rest of Canada.

Back in the fall of 2006, the Premier campaigned on a promise to hit the ground running. Basically he said he would spend the first term getting everything up to speed and then we would see action in the second term. A lot of projects were promised in the first term but never came to fruition -- such as a new correctional centre, possibly new schools, the bridge in the Klondike over the Yukon River in Dawson. We heard that we would see these things in the second term. People believed the Premier and expected him to keep his word.

This first annual budget and the supplementary spending before us demonstrate that some of those promises are starting to unravel. In some areas, instead of hitting the ground running, he has kind of hit the ground crawling. There has been a lot of planning. We heard about more planning today from the Health and Social Services minister but there is not a lot of action in some areas.

This 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 have not been addressed.

There are some things I would like to mention today. The decision recently to transfer the responsibility of emergency medical services to another minister would appear to speak volumes about the Premier's confidence or lack thereof in the minister who is temporarily still in charge -- the Minister of Health and Social Services.

This issue has been badly fumbled over the past year by the current minister. It involves working with people -- something that the minister, with his command-and-control approach, has unfortunately proven he is not so good at.

In fact, in recent comments, he was heard basically criticizing the employees for the problems and saying, "Well, if the rural employees in Watson Lake and Dawson would pick up their radios and go back to work, then we will solve it; then we will provide some stand-by funding that they were asking for."

Now this hot potato is being moved to another minister; however, the problems remain. This has dragged on now for some five months and has been very poorly handled.

Moving this issue out of the hands of the current minister demonstrates that at least the Premier recognizes he can't handle it. It would have been nice to see emergency personnel able to access the health profession education bursary to receive additional training. That's something that could have been done, and we've suggested that it should be done. It would assist paramedics to upgrade their skills and improve the level of service they can provide to the public. Access to the bursary -- which I know a number of the primary-care paramedics have mentioned in terms of being able to take their advanced care paramedic training in Alberta, for example -- would be very much appreciated.

We do it in other areas. Again, when we on this side of the House first suggested this in November 2005, the then-acting minister, the Minister of Economic Development, said it wouldn't work; it was a nice idea but it takes seven years to grow a doctor. In fact, it is being done now for doctors and other health care professionals, so the government has changed its mind on that approach and that's why we raise these things. Sometimes the government doesn't like the suggestions but sometimes they go back later, change some wording and change how they do it, and then announce it and, lo and behold, it becomes a good program because it's their announcement.

In this case, we now know the government has reversed course and has decided it will pay a per diem to volunteers; however, we don't think that funding is in this budget. We haven't heard it mentioned. We still have to await the results of another study by Outside experts, but we live in hope.

A couple of other measures I've heard EMS employees would like to see put in place is the hiring of a full-time training officer, or training officers, and the establishment of an EMS governing board, similar to what's in place in other jurisdictions. We'll have to see if those recommendations come out of this study. One of the common complaints I have received from the line personnel, the people who are currently employed -- and I'm speaking in this case of the full-time employees in Whitehorse as opposed to the suggestions for the per diems made by the volunteer employees -- is the lack of training opportunities, so it is time for government to act on this.

This budget, near as I can tell -- and I'm sure that members opposite will correct me if I'm wrong -- also contains no funding to fulfill another Yukon Party government promise, which was to build a centrally located ambulance response facility for Whitehorse residents. This new emergency medical services facility, which was announced in the platform of the governing party, was to be located somewhere in the vicinity of the intersection of Hamilton Boulevard and the Alaska Highway. As we approach the one-year mark of this government's mandate, the promise to build this new facility seems to have fallen off the

radar. The purpose of the new facility would be to reduce response times, because it's very slow to have to respond right from Riverdale, from the hospital, across the bridge, through downtown Whitehorse -- which every time we turn around has additional lights -- and I recognize that with lights and siren running, the emergency vehicles can go through those lights; nevertheless, every intersection is a potential collision point. It's a long way to go just to get up to the Alaska Highway and respond to an accident on the highway or up into the far extent of the areas where the Member for Whitehorse West and I live. It's a long run time. The government seems content to let this drag on, and we look forward to hearing more about when that can be expected to occur.

I'm not going to talk about education reform in a lot of detail, except to say that we believe the report should be released, and it should be released now -- not two days after a sitting ends as was the case with the Hold Fast report, which we kept calling for but we didn't get it. We didn't have an opportunity to debate that in a timely manner in this Legislative Assembly. It was a draft until one or two days after the spring sitting rose, and then suddenly, miraculously, it wasn't a draft any longer, although I'm not certain that any words in it had changed.

Without getting into debates about protocols and executive committees, taxpayers have shelled out some \$1.5 million for it. The public deserves to see what is in the report. The minister had it since August. There is no need to continue to delay releasing it. We're aware that a copy was obtained by one of the media outlets and then shared with other outlets and eventually with the opposition parties. We're not comfortable addressing information from a leaked document. We want to see the document in this Assembly in an official form, as it should be.

I want to make some comments, speaking of my friend opposite who is occasionally left holding the bag -- the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources. It must be fun working for the Ministry of Energy, Mines and Resources these days because he tells officials in the lands branch that he wants them to slow down applications for land, slow down subdivision applications, slow down all kinds of rural applications. So letters go out to people applying for land, telling them to expect delays and e-mails go out citing the recent Paulsen decision -- and now it is probably not a bad idea. Make sure you do it right. Make sure you consult in the ways that are currently the law of the territory. Then it all changes when the Premier gets involved.

You see, holding up land is not something that he wants to be known for. Unfortunately, because of this government's poor efforts of consulting with First Nations, that's where we've come to. So the Premier decides that we can't let this go on -- it will make us look bad. We said we'd get land out, so let's just blame the officials. Let's just deny that we ever approved any of these extensions.

This is where it gets messy for the Yukon Party because the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources has already told people -- told people in front of witnesses -- that their applications will be delayed. In a public meeting he told people that all applications were delayed, on hold. "Oh well", says the Premier. "We'll just deny it ever happened and then we'll blame it

on the public servants." So now we have a new story from the minister. He's more than happy to go along with his boss and blame it on the public servants. I don't think it will look very good to be blaming others. The minister probably told the Premier that doesn't look very good, and the Premier would have replied, "Yes, but it's better than us wearing it."

Why not just assume the responsibility at the ministerial level -- where the buck stops -- instead of blaming officials? The minister has blamed officials without actually using the words. He has just said that errors were made and letters went out -- as if there is some kind of spontaneous mailing organization somewhere in the bowels of government that mails letters out with various ideas that nobody has approved. If it is approved by government, government should accept responsibility, and if they say, "We made a mistake," then we can move on. That's what should be done.

Climate change -- where should we start on climate change? We have asked questions about it in the past. We intend to keep asking questions about it throughout this sitting. Simply put, the action to date doesn't match the rhetoric. This year, in the Department of Environment, the government spent more money for office furniture -- \$182,000 -- than on climate change. I noticed that the Deputy Premier started having to cite areas from other departments that she would like to attribute to addressing issues of climate change and the environment. It would be nice to actually see the Department of Environment budget the funding to do it.

Again, that's not what happened. There is more money in the current budget for office furniture, equipment, systems and space, so we will have to update our amounts. In any case, this is a real concern, and Yukoners are not happy with it.

The minister mentioned polls, that they read the polls, and apparently that's what decides what they are going to talk about next. Well, they shouldn't have had to read the polls to know that the environment and climate change is a worldwide concern. The anecdotal evidence has certainly been here in Yukon, from the advancement of the beetle kill, to the incursion of non-native species, to the melting of permafrost in different areas of the Yukon, to the draining of lakes in the Old Crow area -- like Zelma Lake, which we saw this summer, due to permafrost that is melting underneath, making it unstable ground -- to perhaps even the flooding that we all witnessed this year.

Instead we have \$145,000 in this year's budget for an action plan on climate change. That is less than the government spends on sending the Minister of Economic Development to China. There is \$145,000 for the climate change action plan -- a plan that will not even be ready until 2008. That is less than two-hundredths of one percent of the entire budget being spent on climate change. It is funny in a pathetic kind of way how the government tries to gloss over the fact that there is almost nothing for climate change in its spending plans. This spring it tried to dress up the grid extension from Carmacks and call it an environmental initiative. There will be some positive environmental effects, but we should recognize that this is an infrastructure program. It is an infrastructure program for an industrial power customer for one portion and, yes, it is an infra-

structure program for Yukoners in Pelly Crossing and eventually Stewart Crossing as well. That will have positive environmental impacts, but let's not kid ourselves; if we went back and looked at where we were, first we would see an increase in emissions because mining is starting up again, and then we would see a reduction in a portion of those when we complete the grid extension. It is infrastructure; we can't just say it is a climate change initiative. Similarly, the third wheel at Aishihik is an infrastructure project.

The state of the environment report -- in five years the Yukon Party government has never tabled one. They are breaking the *Environment Act* year after year by not doing so. The Premier says, "Don't worry; be happy. It is just a benign legality." Whatever that means. It is okay. We can ignore some laws and he will let us know which ones. Then he says we are not going to release any report until we get it right. We want to be sure that it is accurate. The Yukon's *Environment Act* requires a state of the environment report to be completed once every three years with interim reports in the intervening years. There is a reason for that. State of the environment reporting provides early warning and analysis of potential problems for the environment. It allows the public to monitor progress toward the achievement of the objectives of the *Environment Act* and provides baseline information for environmental planning assessment and regulation. Under the Yukon Party government, it provides none of this, because it hasn't been released.

The government knows it will shine a light on its performance and it therefore has not released the report. I guess we are making some progress because at least the current Environment minister says he believes in climate change. The former Yukon Party Environment minister opposed Kyoto and didn't believe in man-made causes of climate change. He said that many times on the floor of this House and outside this House.

I want to turn to other things for awhile because we will, of course, be criticized by the government for being negative. It's our role to hold the government accountable. If we think there should be a state of the environment report tabled, it's not negative to say so. It's probably negative that we need to say so, because it should just be happening.

It's not negative to point it out; it's our job. When the members opposite sat in opposition, they certainly weren't shy about pointing out things they thought were not being done to their satisfaction and the satisfaction of Yukoners. That's the way it works.

The government has redefined opposition now because they'd like to be both the government and the opposition, and they've said the opposition should do it a different way. They'd like to tell the opposition how they should do their job.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Mr. Mitchell: No, we're not here to play patty cake. We'll leave that to others.

Mr. Speaker, I respect the way in which you say it, but you occasionally warn us, if you feel we're going too far, that there might be discord or controversy in this House. I understand the personalizing of debate and I respect your rulings, but we are here in effect because we disagree, so we do have to get these points out. We will make them.

We will also bring forward other constructive ideas, as we did with the medical bursaries, as we are trying to do with suggestions on how to improve the emergency medical services, as we will and have with climate change, as we will with legislation that we'll soon be tabling in terms of net metering, which can help with that in the long term as well as help to reduce the inevitable rising cost -- we've already seen some of this as the rate relief has been reduced and Yukoners are paying more this winter for their heating costs. We already know there are also rising costs for heating fuel oils.

I want to talk about some of the things we can support.

The minister, when she was on her feet, talked about Hamilton Boulevard and said that this has long been important to her and to her riding. I want to point out that I have asked about this during every sitting since I was elected -- in fact, to the point where I had to debate with my own caucus to get the question to make the list, because they were tired of hearing it, but my constituents were tired of having only one way in and out of a big portion of the riding.

The minister pointed out the sometimes frustrating morning commute. At certain times of the day you either have to leave early or leave late, but if you leave right in the middle, you are right into it. It is inconvenient, but this is more than a road to eliminate the inconvenience of morning traffic jams. It will reduce response times for ambulances to Copper Ridge and Granger, going in the other direction, because there will be yet another route to get up there. It will also alleviate the frightening prospect of an accident on the current route, in the vicinity of the traffic circle -- the roundabout -- which could completely prevent emergency vehicles -- be they fire trucks or ambulances -- from gaining the upper portions of the subdivision.

It is certainly a safety issue. It will also provide a second exit during possible forest fires or other emergency situations, so we are glad, as is the majority of my constituents. Although, I am reminded by some of my constituents, but not all, that there are some who have not wanted to see more roads go through. I respect their concerns, but I think it will benefit the majority.

The new money for the Carmacks sewer plant under the CRIF program is going to be welcome news to the residents of Carmacks and to the people who live in my colleague's riding, Mayo-Tatchun. They will welcome the funding to continue to complete this project.

Flood payments for residents of Marsh Lake will certainly be welcome news to the residents. We thank the government for moving expeditiously to provide a relief program. I suspect there is going to be more that will need to be done over the long term, because we don't yet know the extent to which mould and mildew may affect the residences out there, as that dampness that permeated the basements and the buildings does its bad work. We also don't know about some of the future failures, perhaps, of in-ground septic systems and changes in the foundation wall. Heaving could occur if the supersaturated ground freezes when the water is not sufficiently drained away. There will be a need for more money, and we will ask for the government to do more. I am certain they will be responsive.

I would like to see the government look at some longer term solutions to what may be higher lake levels annually, semi-annually or once per decade. There has been some discussion with climate change that there will be increasing snow packs in the winter and that leads to greater runoff in the spring, that there is a residual effect from the water staying high for so long this year, and so we may see a high level again next year or the year after. This may mean that we need some newly engineered structures to prevent flooding of low-lying areas or assistance to individual neighbourhoods and homeowners for more permanent levees at individual residences or sections. We look forward to hearing about some of this long-term planning. We hope that the Minister of Community Services will have some information for us in that area so that we don't have to spend our summers filling sandbags.

The fitness tax credit is part of the tax measures that have been tabled in the current sitting. I'm certainly glad to see it. It was an idea that we had in our 2006 election platform. Our proposal was an actual \$250 refund of expenses incurred fully per child whereas, as it has been explained in the government's news release, the current tax credit -- although it sounds large -- will in effect only be a maximum of \$35.20 per child. So perhaps a new bicycle helmet or hockey helmet -- as long as it's not too fancy a helmet. But we know that parents are struggling to pay the costs of recreation for their kids and that in the long term -- I think the Minister of Health and Social Services would agree with this -- fitness and recreation programs have a preventive benefit that will save many millions of dollars in terms of treating health issues such as juvenile diabetes and other health issues that occur and that may be assisted with better fitness among our young people. So we'd like to see more. With \$100 million sitting in the bank, maybe the government will increase that when we debate that bill later in the month.

This budget contains additional monies to implement the new collective agreement with the Yukon Employees Union and the three-percent increase for the 2007 calendar year and three percent for the next two years. There is a big chunk of money in the budget for that and we are happy to see that.

What's missing? There was \$50 million in affordable housing funds that came from the Government of Canada to Yukon. What has happened to it? Some \$32.5 million was transferred directly to Yukon First Nations and we look forward to seeing the progress they make in implementing better and more affordable housing and a better quality of housing for their constituents.

The other \$17.5 million seems to be just sitting in the surplus and doesn't reappear. I know it is there. It exists for the Yukon Housing Corporation, but what the government has planned for it or has already spent, we do not know. We do want to know because Yukoners who are struggling to find affordable housing need to know. We hear about this quite frequently. We know that the cost of housing in Yukon, as in all areas, has risen dramatically over the last several years. We have seen it in British Columbia; we see the average price well over half a million dollars for a house in Vancouver; we have seen it in Calgary and Edmonton; we have seen it in Toronto;

and it has happened here as well. There was some affordable housing money that went into the first of the new housing that was being built in Falcon Ridge. Some of those units were subsidized by money from Yukon Housing Corporation to help offset the costs, and when those houses first came out, they were in the high \$160,000 to low \$170,000 range, which is still not affordable for many people. Now the latest housing to come out of there is over \$200,000. Again, not affordable for many Yukoners; we want to see more done.

We know that the government has provided money and has provided two lots over the last two years to Habitat for Humanity. I know from having gone to some of the public education meetings and presentations during the week for homelessness and anti-poverty that that is much appreciated. I know that the Member for Whitehorse Centre who has played an important role in Habitat for Humanity appreciates it, but we are talking there about one house and now a second duplex, which will assist two families. We need to do more. We need to see how that \$17.5 million is going to be used to make housing affordable for more people because, as has been pointed out, some of the most affordable housing in downtown Whitehorse is being razed and new, more expensive housing is going up. I disagree with the Member for Whitehorse Centre because I don't think that is necessarily a bad thing. Some of that housing stock was pretty deplorable.

Some of that was pretty deplorable and people were living under horrible conditions. It is good to see the stock improved but, at the time we're doing it, that's being done by the private sector. The private sector is going to build housing that gives them the best return on their investment. It is the role of government to ensure that nobody is homeless or living in substandard conditions.

The Whitehorse Correctional Centre -- formerly known as the jail, but we don't tend to call it that much any more. Nevertheless, it is interesting to see that the \$3 million for the design and planning of the new Whitehorse Correctional Centre is still in the budget. I look forward to hearing from the Minister of Justice whether in fact that money will be spent during this fiscal year, or whether that money will lapse and we'll have to be revoting it in the next fiscal year or the year after, and the delays will continue in building a new facility.

Now, instead of moving ahead, this government -- we're now through four years of the first mandate and one year of the second -- continues to apply band-aids to the current building. Now, since I was a student in high school and reading George Orwell -- I thought I'd change the references for my friend, the Minister of Economic Development, because we've had enough Alice in Wonderland -- I don't know whether anybody has heard quite this much newspeak -- and that was the term Orwell used in 1984 for describing something in unique ways. I see that, under Justice, we have something call interim space plan renovations for \$507,000. Well, oldspeak would be to fix something that is falling down around us before it falls on our head, which it almost did once before. That's what an interim space plan renovation is. It is \$507,000 to try to keep that decrepit facility from moving forward for three more years while

this government studies the new Whitehorse Correctional Centre facility.

On the same page, I see under "management services," \$256,000 for office furniture, equipment, systems and space. There we go again; we are going to spend half as much money again -- \$250,000 -- on new furniture and equipment on the management side, and \$507,000 on a decrepit Whitehorse Correctional Centre.

If the Yukon Party government actually moves ahead with construction of this new facility, they will have cost Yukoners some \$15 million by delaying construction for five or six years, because a new building will likely come in at closer to \$40 million or more, instead of the \$25 million that was booked or budgeted to complete the jail back in 2002 -- plus the renovations. As the Member for Kluane rightly points out, the renovations are on top of that, so who knows whether it will approach \$20 million in extra money.

The Yukon Party made a political decision to cancel the project. Inmates and staff can continue to work in an unsafe environment that is not amenable to rehabilitation programs. It is overcrowded. I know that when I was there this summer doing a tour of the facility with my colleague from Porter Creek South -- I believe the minister was also there that day -- we saw missing floor tiles and a lack of any kind of mouldings around the floor. We saw broken windows. It is not a good place. That means it's not a good place not only for the inmates who are simply Yukoners who have fallen on the wrong side of the law and will eventually be back among us -- hopefully they will be better off because of programming so that they don't have to be continually sent back to that facility -- but it's also not a good place for the employees and the staff and officials who are working there.

This government doesn't seem to care. Lately, they don't even bother to schedule nurses to attend to the residents at the Whitehorse Correctional Centre. We have the guards now administering medications. There is still no funding to actually build a jail. The Premier has frequently said that he doesn't want to build just a warehouse. I have to begin to ask again: how many people have been warehoused for the last four and a half years?

I think it's a bunch of slogans and political rhetoric; there doesn't seem to be the ability to get things going; they've been studied for several years and then, in a back-to-the-future response, the announcement was made that the facility would be built at its original location on the original pad, using the original designs with some modifications by the original architects.

There has been a small increase in this budget to improve our childcare system. We haven't seen additional funding directly for parents of children in daycare; no new direct support for the daycare providers, although there were announcements made; no new incentives to assist people in improving their qualifications and making this a career choice rather than a waypoint between careers.

This government criticized us during the election campaign a year ago for citing specific targets, such as increasing the childcare direct operating grant to licensed childcare centres and family day homes by 25 percent, and increasing the subsi-

dies to parents by \$100 per month, and raising the income cut-off to qualify by 25 percent. They said it was irresponsible; they said they wanted to continue to study this.

I think we should all be buying shares in consulting companies, because this government does love to study. In the meantime, 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, and that's what is irresponsible: studying something continually while people continuously struggle or suffer.

There's no new funding to build a new health facility in Dawson City, but what there is, as I look at the Health and Social Services budget, is that once again there is \$100,000 for a continuing care, multi-level care facility for Dawson City. I take it this is a planning do-over. We did have a set of plans that were drafted and at one point there was talk in a throne speech of \$5.2 million to build it. I remember there being \$3 million in one budget before it disappeared.

Then tens of thousands of dollars -- perhaps an equivalent amount to this \$100,000 -- were spent in 2004-05 by the Yukon Party government, planning to build that facility. An architect did a design and then the project was dropped. What happened?

Let me quote from a November 24, 2005, *Whitehorse Star* article: "The original building design had been created after consultation with the community. The design focused on providing the facilities on a main level for the seniors," said the architect. 'The minister redirected the efforts so that they didn't correspond to what Dawson seniors or health care workers wanted,' said the architect." Now the seniors favoured a design that would allow them to be autonomous from the hospital and still maintain some degree of independence, he said. The original building plan was quite efficient, the architect said, adding, "The minister, for reasons known only to himself, decided that it should be a two-storey building with an elevator. A number of changes didn't conform to what people had said they wanted."

A former minister initially told the Legislature he had only requested an increase in the size of the rooms. However, under the continued questioning by the former MLA for Porter Creek South, he revealed that he had also requested a boost in the number of ambulance bays, changing the view from the dining room windows and moving the boiler away from sleeping areas. I'm quoting the former member: "My involvement was to request that the facility be enlarged to encompass these types of undertakings. I believe they are very legitimate, bona fide requests," he said.

All these things are things that seniors said they didn't want, said the architect.

So it went. I'm not going to go on. I have lots more I could read from that. I think it was a complete mess up. The architect said, "I don't think that's fair to a lot of the hard-working and fairly well-meaning bureaucrats who are professionals in their field and are being given political direction that I don't think they believe in." He said this minister's interference doesn't stop in Dawson. He said, "'Watson Lake's multi-level care facility was just as bad. Watson Lake was in many ways worse,' said the architect. "He dictated what it should look like."

We hope that the Yukon Party and this current Health and Social Services minister will do a better job this time around and that he doesn't get out his drafting kit, his protractor and compass and start redesigning another facility.

As I mentioned, the health care facility in Watson Lake is still not completed. It is years behind schedule and millions of dollars overbudget -- so much for good fiscal management. The Auditor General made references to this on these and other projects when she did her audit on the Department of Highways and Public Works. Perhaps the minister will be able to give us an update on this fiasco when he replies to the supplementary budget in his remarks.

I will just point out for the record that 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. In Watson Lake that number has now grown to some \$9.9 million. The cost has almost doubled and it really demonstrates what a poor fiscal manager this Yukon Party government can be. They are so used to the increasing transfers from the Government of Canada that they can just sort of lose \$5 million here and \$5 million there. It has been managed poorly from the start.

Repeated use of sole-source contracts only drives the cost of this and other projects higher. That was something that the Auditor General pointed out in her report. These are political decisions made by Cabinet to sole source. The athletes village -- again, sole sourced and much higher costs than initially anticipated.

Under the leadership of the Member for Lake Laberge -- the Minister of Health and Social Services -- the costs of the Watson Lake project have gone from 2007-08 up to \$6.9 million; 2006-07, another \$1.2 million; 2005-06, up \$1.7 million. When you add it all up, it is getting pretty expensive.

We haven't seen any funding specifically to deal with concerns raised by the Auditor General in her recent report on the Department of Highways and Public Works. This government received an audit of a department that described serious inadequacies of control and fiscal management regarding major construction contracts and the maintenance of Yukon's highways. The department officials during the Public Accounts Committee hearings indicated that they had had to choose between spending their budgets addressing the Auditor General's concerns or fulfilling their departmental obligations.

We want to know where the new money is that the officials indicated they need to do their jobs properly. If it's in this supplementary budget, we would like to hear it. We don't see it there yet but, again, we haven't been briefed, so perhaps it is hidden somewhere and we haven't noticed it.

We haven't seen funding for any planning in the Department of Education for the potential replacement of F.H. Collins Secondary School. We know that the Hold Fast report -- the some \$75,000 study -- basically said not to do anything, to just keep studying. But it did point out that there were some needs to look at this long term, dealing with an aging facility at F.H. Collins. We see some funds for some upgrades: industrial arts wing ventilation upgrades for \$283,000 at F.H. Collins, and some fire alarm systems and some reviews of secondary programs. But we are still wondering when the government is go-

ing to do the long-range planning, because all these capital projects -- the aging secondary school, the decrepit correctional centre -- eventually are going to add up to a number that is going to make this surplus look not so large if we keep putting these things off. We certainly hope we are not going to hear, "Don't worry. We are going to do it in a third mandate. Just elect us one more time."

We haven't seen funding for the trap exchange program that has been promoted by my colleague, the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin, to deal with the need to change the standard for the traps that are used.

The rate stabilization fund -- there is no money in the budget to continue the RSF. The Yukon Party government decided to axe this fund this spring. On July 1, Yukoners' power bills went up 15 percent. They will go up another 15 percent when the program is completely phased out next July. Yukoners are going to see a 30-percent increase over the course of a year on their bills, and they can thank this government for it.

For the average Yukoner, that is \$450,000 a year. For residential customers, the maximum amount during the first phase will now be \$18.58 per month for customers using 1,000 kilowatt hours or more -- that is from the Yukon Energy Corporation Web page. That will leave people on fixed incomes, like pensioners, and people with low incomes in a real economic bind when their power bills continue to go up this winter and when they go up again next summer.

Now, the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources has said, "Don't worry. We'll look toward the Yukon Utilities Board recommending a rate reduction." Well, we have no way of knowing if that will happen. We don't know what the recommendations will be from the Utilities Board regarding rates. He should have waited until he saw that, and then if the Utilities Board recommended a reduction, he could have phased these out. Then he says that when we extend the grid and we get this additional revenue from an industrial customer, that will offset it. Again, we don't know. It would have eventually phased itself out, if that is the case -- as the Member for Klwane reminds me. It wouldn't have been necessary to do it up front. But it is this year that people on fixed incomes will pay the higher amount.

There was some discussion in recent days and earlier today about a youth shelter. Again, the minister points out that First Nation representatives and First Nation organizations had some concerns about the two studies that were done by the member organizations of the Whitehorse Youth Coalition. I can appreciate that if there was not sufficient consultation done reflecting the First Nation concerns, that needs to be done. In the notice of motion that I tabled last Thursday, I made specific reference to "in consultation with First Nations". Again, I'm very concerned when there is talk of maybe some people falling through the cracks.

I know that the 15 or 20 young people who have come out to the two public meetings and demonstrations that I've attended recently -- well, the public meeting last summer, the public meeting a week ago and a demonstration last Friday night on the streets of Whitehorse -- are real people, and they reflect only a percentage because most of the young people are

probably not going to come out and speak up publicly. They feel awkward about doing so, they feel shy, or they may be concerned that what they are talking about -- and this brings up an important issue. There was talk of youth homelessness, and then the minister's department has indicated that they want to get an accurate count of homeless youth and they hope to have that count by next spring. That's the message that has gone back to the Whitehorse Youth Coalition.

It's not necessarily homelessness in the traditional sense we envision if we're looking at Toronto or Vancouver or Victoria. People in Victoria may be outside on the streets all winter long, because the weather is milder than ours. It's not that kind of homelessness. We know that at minus 30 degrees, we're not seeing the kids out all night on the streets, because it's not tolerable. They are somewhere, but they're not necessarily in a safe place.

A lot of times they are loathe to be identified. They may have a home, but they are out on a Wednesday or Thursday and then, come Friday, their parents may be drinking or abusing substances; fighting is going on in the home and it's not a safe place. They flee the home, and that's when they start couch surfing. That's when they start asking friends if they can stay at their parents' place; that's when they look for other relatives.

We know, because we've been told, that some of these young people have been taken advantage of, that older people have taken advantage of them in some pretty awful ways, including making suggestions to them of trading sexual favours for a place to stay. That should never happen.

We can't count these people like we count caribou, from a satellite photo or an aircraft. These are human beings; these are kids; and the number on the street may be different one day from another.

The social assistance rates -- the minister says we will have the best system anywhere in Canada. I believe we should have. I think every jurisdiction would want that and that's a laudable goal, but why, for five years, has there been a total refusal to increase rates, and now only this year we're told that recently this massive new review is occurring. We were promised in the spring that there would be this big review. What happened in the first four years when there was no review? It was simply intransigence?

It's wrong; we can afford to do better and we have to do better. It has been suggested that we want to get people off social assistance and into the workforce -- sure -- people want to be working; we want to see more people working, but not everyone on social assistance is capable of holding down a job that's sufficient to support their family.

We have single parents who have two, three or four children and, based on their job skills, they can't get a job. There are jobs out there; we know that. We see all the food service places and big box stores advertising, but they can't necessarily afford to support their families based on the wages that would be paid to them. There has to be something else done. In this review being done, we certainly would urge the minister to be expeditious in providing better funding early this winter as people's bills go up and as they have to look at unacceptable housing alternatives. We also want to suggest that for those

people who are capable of getting back into the workforce, we don't reduce their benefits on a dollar-for-dollar basis right away or they simply won't make that transition and they will find themselves back on social assistance.

This is an update on the mains estimate from the spring and there are some things I would like to follow up on. The Government of Yukon announced in the spring that it was going to contribute \$10 million to the new power line from Carmacks to Pelly Crossing. That was the contribution that they were going to make toward Yukon Energy Corporation's project. That money was not included in the main estimates in the spring and it is not in the budget before us, so perhaps when the Premier or Deputy Premier responds he or she can outline when this money will actually be voted because we are getting into a period of time -- similarly we heard an announcement recently of some \$31.5 million to be spent on the Robert Campbell Highway, but these are announcements. There is no budgetary reflection of these amounts. What is beginning to happen is the government is announcing larger and larger projects and then they get announced again the following year, and perhaps by the third year we see something in the budget. Right now they are just announcements because we don't see any votes to approve any funding.

On April 13, 2007, the government announced its commitment to provide \$850,000 toward the development of a new youth-elder activity centre in cooperation with the Kluane First Nation at Burwash Landing. The money wasn't actually in the budget, but I'm pleased to see it is included in this document before us. Sometimes we do see these things when they come back, and when we do we're glad to see them.

A couple of things we haven't heard a lot of talk on lately include the port study and the rail study. We don't seem to hear much from the government on these two studies lately. They seem to be up on the shelf of forgotten ideas. Millions of dollars were spent with no results. We haven't seen interest at all from the private sector, just money spent with consultants on reports and then reports are put on the shelf. The rail study cost \$3 million and it has produced no results to speak of to date, and the port study, while costing less, has produced the same -- namely, nothing.

The Premier's new Alaskan counterpart, the new Governor of Alaska, Governor Palin, visited here this spring. She said the project was not on the front burner in Alaska. This was a priority of the Premier's favourite ex-governor, Governor Murkowski.

Now the relationship and the project seem to have tilted off the tracks with the new governor in place. While the government was busy studying ports, Sherwood Copper was out getting an actual deal in place to use the existing port in Skagway. This is another project where hundreds of thousands of dollars were spent and the results of the study -- the study that Sherwood Copper has done -- have not necessarily been made public, but what has happened here is a questionable use of taxpayers' money.

This government has spent a lot of time this past year, since being re-elected, sitting on their collective hands. We didn't see education reform moving forward; it moved forward

at a snail's pace, and we still haven't seen the results of the study, nor do we have any idea what the government plans to do with it and which recommendations they will or won't be bringing forward.

We still see, as I've said, inactivity on the social assistance rates; inactivity on childcare subsidies; a lack of a Dawson City health centre -- although once again, there is money to plan another one. For the fifth year, we don't have a new correctional centre, and it will be at least three more years before we can. The budget before us has some good things in it, but many things that we would like to see are not in it and I do disagree with some of the statements I've heard from the Finance minister lately when he has said, "We focused on the economy in our first term, and now we're going to look at the social side of the ledger." I don't think that he should be taking a first-I'll-eat-my-peas-and-then-I'll-eat-my-carrots approach. You have to do these things simultaneously. If, as the government points out, the economy was slower several years ago, that is all the more reason to be looking at the needs of those people who didn't have jobs and were struggling. I don't think people on social assistance, youth who are on the streets, people who are living in a deteriorating correctional centre with a lack of programming resulting from a lack of space, should be asked to sit there and wait while we fix the economy. We have to do these things hand in hand. If we do have more money available, we should be doing even more to prepare for future times when we may not be so fortunate. At the least, we shouldn't say, "We don't have time to worry about social programs until after we fix all the economic programs."

With that, there are things that I am happy about; there are things in here that will help out in our schools and things will help out in our communities. I am happy to finally see progress on an actual right-of-way being created for Hamilton Boulevard. There are some good things, as the minister has pointed out, like the 12-bed pod opening up that was first promised more than a year ago and then again last spring -- first in May of the year before and then again last spring in the 2007 debate. I want this government to look forward because, as I pointed out in May 2006, we do have an aging population of people who are staying on in Yukon and people are in fact bringing their parents back to live with them, and 12 additional beds in Copper Ridge are not going to be sufficient.

We look forward to hearing what is happening with the Thomson Centre and when that facility will finally reopen. I did a count recently, and just on my block, just on one block of North Star Drive, I was able to identify nine families that were three generational families -- nine families that had grandparents, parents and grandchildren living in one house. That is a good thing.

I see the Member for Whitehorse West nodding because I am sure she has run into this as well. It is a positive thing that brings us back to an earlier era when families lived together and grandparents could be there to see their grandchildren grow up and help to foster them, but those aging people who are in their 70s, 80s and, in some cases, into their early 90s are Yukoners. If there are nine on my block, then 12 beds in Copper Ridge Place are not going to be sufficient. We need to do the

planning now. We know how long it takes to build a capital facility in this territory. We have seen how long it has taken, looking at the Whitehorse Correctional Centre; we have seen how long the multi-level centres in Watson Lake and Dawson City have taken; we have seen how long it took until we could get funding approved to do a facility in Haines Junction. We need to be planning now because those 12 beds will be filled before this year has gone.

There are more people lined up behind them. Someday it will be us, Mr. Speaker. I know probably the majority of people sitting in this Assembly expect to make this community and territory their lifelong home, and we need those facilities. We're going to see a changing demographic here in Yukon, and we have to plan for it now.

With that, I know there are other members who want to speak. I thank the minister for the good things that are in the budget and again urge her and her colleagues to move expeditiously on other matters and make use of ideas from all sides of this House when they come forward. I look forward to hearing others respond.

Hon. Mr. Lang: I'd like to respond this afternoon to the supplementary budget we see before us today. When I listen to the opposition's idea for resource management, I find it interesting. When we look back 60 short months ago, when the government was elected, the Finance minister -- the Premier -- was very clear. At one of our first meetings, after he was privy to the internal territorial finances, he said that we have to improve the bottom line of the territory if the territory is going to work.

The previous government had many challenges in operating and managing the budget of the territory, and we as a government inherited some of the shortfalls resulting from the decisions the government of the day made. Two of the decisions were the challenges we had regarding the Mayo-Dawson power line and the Dawson situation, which were very expensive decisions the previous Liberal government had left the taxpayers of the Yukon encumbered with.

We as a government have the obligation, in representing all the territory, to resolve these issues and move forward. The Premier, being the individual he is, and also the Finance minister, had the task of going about managing the finances of this territory.

So in conjunction with taking the lead from our Finance minister and our Premier discussing issues with our northern partners, our northern neighbours -- Nunavut and the Northwest Territories -- he led the charge in Ottawa to talk about the finances of the territory. It was 60 months ago that the dialogue started. The dialogue started with what we are looking at as a territory or as north of 60, when in fact we were looking at per capita funding -- whether it was medicare or any of the programs put out there for Canada from the federal government. It was per capita.

Well, if you were to look at our health care budgets of the day and look at the growth that was happening, you would see that the per capita didn't work for the territory or for any of the territories north of 60. Why should we as a territory -- the

Leader of the Official Opposition talks about these transfer payments -- not have comparable health care? Is that what the member talks about? Is that what he's saying? That we should not have the same facilities and the same access to medicare that all Canadians do? I don't think so. This side of the House, in conjunction with our Finance minister, said that was not tolerable. We as Yukoners, north of 60, have the same rights as any Canadian in the union.

The member opposite talks about how to manage the resources of the territory, and of course we have to again look back in history and see how well his party did manage the economy of the Yukon. We were running on a line of credit when this government took over, Mr. Speaker -- they tend to forget that. Today, we have a healthy bottom line because we're managing the economy in a proper way. Now, whether it is environment, education or development, community services, energy, mines and resources, justice -- all of these things take a certain part of the budget to manage.

Today we have a very healthy bottom line. What does that do? We can talk about a new corrections facility up the hill; we can talk about extended care homes in Watson Lake, Dawson City and Haines Junction. All of that is feasible because this government has done its homework. This government has taken a look at the issues out there and has addressed them.

When we were re-elected a year ago -- by the way, we were the first government in the territory that was re-elected in 17 years, which spoke volumes of the trust that Yukoners put in us to go forward with the plans we put before them during that election to move this territory in a positive way.

The member opposite talks about resource issues. Somehow I feel we on this side of the House either consult too much or don't consult at all. There's no fine line for the members opposite on consultation. We talk about the youth in crisis; again, we get the same conversations from the members opposite on how we as a government are consulting too much.

Our budgets are balanced and progressive. As this government moves forward, we will look at all sorts of mechanisms, whether it's an extended care unit in Dawson City or finishing the one in Watson Lake or opening the one in Haines Junction, or very positively looking at some facility in Teslin so the elders and seniors can extend their time in that community for a longer period. That takes pressure off the facilities in Whitehorse. Those kinds of budget decisions are priorities for this side of the House.

The members opposite talk about management of the economy of the territory and how the management has somehow fallen off the tracks because all these things didn't materialize overnight. Look back at the past five years -- 60 months; look at where we came from and where we are, never mind the infrastructure we put together with these very aggressive budgets.

Look at what we as a government, as Yukoners, have today in our treasury to do the things we talk about in this House. We now have flexibility; we can now make decisions. You can't make those kinds of decisions, like when we were under the last Liberal government, when you are running on a line of credit, hoping that somehow you're going to get money in the

future. No, we went to work, put the resources together with these many budgets, and we have the flexibility today to make some very solid decisions for Yukon. That's what we're elected to do in this House -- to make those moves.

Look at a department like Highways and Public Works. The member opposite brings up the Auditor General as if it's some fearful operation and that, all of a sudden, the Auditor General arrived to audit the departments. We work with the Auditor General. That's how we manage departments; that's how we manage the budget. The budget is part and parcel of how we spend our money in our departments. The Auditor General gives an independent overview of how they perceive the departments are working within the government. The government, as far as the overall budget is concerned -- and if you can believe the press -- is in a comparable shape to Alberta with the resources we have in the bank.

The member opposite is talking about where the money in the budget is for the railroad and the port facility. Well, good news, Mr. Speaker -- Economic Development, in partnership with Sherwood Copper, shipped out \$16-million worth of product the other day; \$16-million worth of ore left the Skagway harbour. That's all about good management and controlling budgets. Sherwood Copper today will generate employment for 150 people on a continuing basis. They're expanding their facility and the Selkirk First Nation is going to generate the royalties from that mine because it's on selected category A land.

So, there is a flow of revenue to that First Nation that will be substantial. That's a success story. He talks about the environment -- I don't know how he gets this idea that the economy or the environment is at some kind of risk, because we utilize the whole government to address the environment issue -- which we do. It is not all housed in Environment. A lot of the adaptation and a lot of the work can be done in other departments. It's our job to run the budgets internally, in the budget envelope, to address those issues. Those are issues that impact every Yukoner.

The power line is a partnership. It's a partnership between industry, the Government of Yukon and the Yukon Energy Corporation. The expansion from Carmacks to Pelly is not only going to take Pelly off diesel, but it's going to take a producing mine off diesel, which will eliminate tonnes and tonnes of carbon on a yearly basis. That's how this government is moving forward on the environment.

Is that housed in the Department of Environment? No, that is being done through a partnership. When we look at the expansion from Pelly to Stewart, we are looking at another partnership with industry, the Yukon Energy Corporation, and the government, to eventually tie the Mayo-Dawson grid to the southern grid and encourage the expansion of hydro potential in the territory with the investment in the Mayo dam to upgrade and modernize the hydro facility there.

The third wheel in Aishihik that the member opposite said is not going to facilitate anything in the environment will, in fact, make the diesel plants in town fairly redundant, Mr. Speaker. The backup that we have today is diesel, if the member opposite hasn't noticed that. Anybody who lives in River-

dale will understand that if we can mitigate the need for diesel over the long term, it will improve the general life of the people in Riverdale. Plus, again, it is another investment in the environment.

All of a sudden we have hydro, hydro for backup. So, when the member opposite talks about how he would manage the economy of the Yukon, I think if you were to look at this supplementary budget and the departments that are in it and where we are going, I think we have done a fairly good job of managing the territory.

We have the resources now, as I laid out approximately, of \$90 million -- bottom line very solid -- and we have some flexibility now to address the ongoing needs of Yukoners, and that is what we have doing over the last five years.

In the Department of Highways and Public Works alone, the size of our transportation grid and the money and resources that we, in budgets, put into it, cover things like the bridges. Part of the Department of Highways and Public Works is to re-address the bridge situation in the territory and we are doing that. There is now a contractor on-site on the Marsh Lake-Lewes River bridge setting up scaffolding to get started on a new decking program next year -- modernization of the bridge. The Johnsons Crossing bridge is finished, Mr. Speaker.

There is a commitment by this government to look at the bridge in Teslin to re-deck it and light it for the safety of the community. Those are the kinds of things we are going to invest in as a Yukon government and certainly we will look at the highway system. We are investing \$31 million to upgrade the Robert Campbell Highway. That highway has been neglected over a long period of time and now with all of the mining communities and the community of Ross River and Faro and, of course, Watson Lake, we are committing \$31 million to jump-start that and get that into a position where that road is as good as any road in the territory. That is going to take an investment and that is going to take some time, but this government is committed to doing that and we are moving forward. The North Canol Road from Ross River north gets heavy traffic because of the situation we have in the mining community on the Northwest Territories border. We are going to look at the grubbing out of the road there so the safety situation can be addressed.

We are going to take a look between Carmacks and Faro at some BST programs. I think 36 kilometres will be done this year. Those are the kinds of commitments a government makes in managing its resources.

The criticism comes from the opposition, because they're not charged with managing the economy. They are charged with being critics. Our job here is to be honest and forthright in the House and to manage the economy to the best of our ability within the budget we have. Those are the things we're committed to doing for Yukoners.

Take our budget today and compare it to the budget during the short time the Liberals were government -- for less than three years, or whatever time they had -- we went from there, which was managing our economy through a line of credit -- which is one way to manage an economy -- to the point where

we have a solid bottom line and we are investing. We're not paying interest; we're actually receiving interest.

Yukoners are getting a good bang for their buck. We stand up to the federal government and demand our fair share of the national dream, the national finances of this country. It's not like the member opposite says: all of a sudden the federal government decided they were going to increase our transfer payments to cover our medical costs.

Our Minister of Finance had to go to Ottawa and negotiate that. All that is done in a very progressive way to get our jurisdiction, the Yukon, north of 60 -- and the federal government's Speech from the Throne is all about the north. There was half an hour on the north. Why? The north is two-thirds of Canada. Two-thirds of the land mass of Canada is northern Canada, north of 60. There should be some priority put on that piece of real estate.

The government in Ottawa -- I will give them kudos on this -- has realized there is some benefit in looking at infrastructure in the north and bringing north of 60 into the Canadian family.

By doing that, we in Yukon, as we open up other facilities like mining, forestry and other things that we are tasked to do as managers of this great territory and of the budgets, will become less and less dependent on those transfer payments that the member opposite talks about, and more and more self-sufficient. Having this supplementary budget and the other budgets that we have put together is a start. Over the next four years we will, as managers of the economy and the government of this territory, have the economy of the Yukon in a position where our social side of the ledger will be taken care of and the economic side and the future of the territory will be in good hands in 48 months.

I recommend that the House supports this supplementary budget and moves on with the workplan we put forward to this House and to Yukoners to make this place a better place to live and do business in and to retire in.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Edzerza: I must admit that it is rather inviting to be back in the House, making the government accountable for the dollars being spent on various programs within the territory.

One has to question whether or not this government spending is too far to the right as opposed to making the spending a little more equal among the citizens of the territory. Not all the people in this territory are business people. There are a lot of people in the territory who are just average citizens who strive to make a living.

There are also a lot of individuals in the territory who are suffering from historical traumas.

Having said that, I will start by saying that the Premier made comments to the effect that he has fixed the economy. If this is true, it is time to get serious about the social agenda. It would be an answer to our prayers if the government would commit 30 to 35 percent of the entire budget toward social programming.

Mr. Speaker, one must ask if there is a correlation between a healthy economy and a healthy community. Of course there

is. There is no question that a society needs to have mentally, spiritually, emotionally and physically well-adapted people. I know that over the years there has been a lot of talk about the shortage of tradespeople in the territory; and Mr. Speaker, that is where the social agenda comes into play. The economy would go nowhere without a healthy community. It takes healthy people to be able to push progress forward.

As we look at all the money that is being spent toward roads -- for example, the government has talked about spending \$30 million over a certain number of years to improve the Robert Campbell Highway -- I don't think it is coincidence that this big project is taking place in the Premier's riding; I think it is a part of the agenda, I guess. When we look at that \$30 million and what it could do, and how many people it could support with regard to land-based treatments, wouldn't it be nice to see \$30 million put toward land-based treatment in this territory?

You can build all the roads you want, but if you haven't got healthy people to operate the equipment there is going to be an issue. Lots of big paycheques, a lot more money for alcohol and drugs. It is as critical to look at a healthy community as it is to look at a healthy economy.

When we talk about all the different initiatives the Acting Premier stated today -- additional support for sport and culture, \$417,000; and Women's Directorate, only \$43,000? I find that unbelievable. This looks impressive on paper, but when you tally up all these figures, it takes about eight of them to make up for the \$3 million that the government gave to Alaska for a feasibility study that went nowhere. You might as well have thrown that down the toilet and flushed it because it didn't do one bit of good for the economy or for the Yukon. The Women's Directorate could have used \$3 million very easily.

I heard the Acting Premier say that violence against women and children is a priority. Prove it. Where's the money that supports that statement? There is none.

One can talk all one wants about how they're looking after the social fabric of the Yukon Territory, but the figures just don't add up. Violence against women and children is getting out of hand in this territory. As a matter of fact, I think it was just a day or two after a candlelight walk that a woman was sexually assaulted in Riverdale.

When we talk about looking into the social fabric, we have to understand that the land-based treatment centre is directly linked to the justice system, to child welfare and all the problems encountered there, so by looking after the land-based treatment area, the government has the opportunity to support several different programs.

I believe that one of the most requested things from the people in this territory during my last five years in politics was to have a land-based treatment centre in the territory. I certainly hope that someday it does become a reality.

One of the real downers in this area is the simple fact that people have to leave the territory for treatment. Families just won't do it; the parents won't just up and leave to go and get treatment. I've heard comments in here and through the news media and other outlets that part of the problem with the youth at risk is that their family lives are not that good. Again, that

supports how important it is to look at a treatment facility in this territory.

I think over the years it has become quite obvious that large, large sums of money in the government lapse every year because projects don't get completed. For example, the Whitehorse Correctional Centre facility: in my humble opinion, that construction should have started a year ago and we are still talking about doing consultation and planning. There are renovations continuing at the old facility.

During my reign in government, I believed wholeheartedly that the renovation process was over and done with, but I guess apparently it isn't.

One has to ask just how many more times you can renovate in an old facility like the Whitehorse Correctional Centre. You may be able to renovate the building, but one thing you won't renovate is the morale among the staff. I sincerely believe that the morale within the whole Justice department is at an all-time low. That's part of what I mean when I talk about having a healthy community.

Every year, we see capital projects going over budget because of a lack of proper planning. We can cite a couple of examples, I can imagine, like the multi-level health facility in Watson Lake. I ask the government: does anyone on that side of the House have any idea when this project will be completed? It appears that someone has closed the vault there and no one knows the combination in order to get that project completed.

Another one I can cite as an example would be the Thomson Centre. When will this building be completed and what will the final price tag be? This trajectory of spending seems to have no end to it. One has to ask: can the Yukon sustain that amount of spending?

I know the Yukon appears to be a bit healthy right now financially. I think it is because of all the work that all governments have done over all the years. It's not just from one government.

I know that places like Wolverine and Minto mines never just started. The process of becoming a mine has been in the works for many years. A lot of exploration dollars from all governments went into those different initiatives. As the Minister of Highways and Public Works stated, it is good to see that there is some ore being extracted and being shipped. I still caution the government. A lot of what I hear from my constituents is that we don't develop the Yukon at any cost. There is a cost to it. The environment is something that will never be repaired, in my opinion, once it's damaged. I would like to see what Anvil mine and that area would look like after restoration. How would you ever get rid of that big tailings pond that runs down the middle of the valley? Keno is another example of a very beautiful valley that has been totally demolished. You will never restore that valley; it's ruined forever. How do we know what effect all the chemicals in those tailings ponds are having on the animals in the region? How do we know? We probably never will. So the economy that the government talks about so much is necessary, but it's also necessary to be very aware of the costs to the environment and to the different geological regions.

There are several examples that the Acting Premier cited today of monies going to good use. The question I have is: why wasn't there more? There should have been a lot more money going into social programs.

When we look at where some of this money is going -- for example, in the O&M, there was an increase of \$25 million: \$64,000 was for the Ombudsman's office; \$997,000 for the Executive Council Office; \$2.8 million for Community Services; \$290,000 for Economic Development; \$1.5 million for Energy, Mines and Resources; \$3.7 million for Highways and Public Works; \$1.5 million for Justice; \$1.3 million for the Public Service Commission; and \$916,000 for Tourism and Culture. When you look at all that money, it is big, big dollars. It's all for the economic side of the agenda.

It would be nice to see that \$3.7 million going into a treatment centre, but that is the way it's going to be run with this government, and I sincerely hope that somewhere down the line a lot of citizens in the general public will start being heard. On the street talk on the radio the other morning, I didn't hear one person saying we have to have an oil well in the Yukon or that we had to have a manufacturing plant. The most repeated thing was the social side of the agenda. The lack of affordable housing was mentioned by several people. I think an elderly lady summed it well when she said there are a lot of people in downtown Whitehorse who cannot afford the high-priced condominiums being built in the middle of the city.

I will end by saying that I heard a comment here earlier that the Yukon's financial state is comparable to Alberta's. I think that was highly exaggerated. I know the economy is doing not too badly in the Yukon but it's not anywhere near what Alberta's is. I certainly hope that in the next main budget that comes out, there are some really serious dollars put toward the social side of the agenda.

Thank you.

Hon. Mr. Kenyon: One of the things that I've always sort of enjoyed with this job, so to speak -- people ask me what the attraction is, and my standard answer is -- just when you've seen the most bizarre thing, you go to work the next day and you see something that is even more bizarre.

It is quite interesting that what we just heard the Member for McIntyre-Takhini complaining about was the previous lack of progress in the Justice portfolio -- which, I think, has most of us still scratching our heads -- and to complain with a list of departments and dollar values that are "all to the economic side of the agenda." Actually, they are the negotiated salary increases for the government employees -- good employees, all, and I wouldn't argue against that.

The one thing I do commend the Member for McIntyre-Takhini for is staying with the issues. The issues are very real and they deserve our metered and considered support and look.

What I certainly heard earlier in the debate was the return to making things personal, and that always bothers me and it always bothers me a lot. One of the things that we shouldn't be doing in this House is bringing it to a personal level, and that's difficult to deal with. Without going into an awful lot of detail

on that one -- I think most people who heard previous speeches know what I'm talking about.

To go after an individual minister for creating a stronger emergency medical service and emergency medical organization as being dumped -- although I think that was a phrase used by one of our local advertising supplements. In fact, I think it was his idea, in my recollection, and I think it's a very good one -- to look at bringing emergency medical services back together.

Look at the issue. Look at the proposal and comment on the proposal. Don't go after the individual. That gets us really nowhere.

To make some comments on some of these things and to comment and correct some of these things -- because what we've heard is, I think, or at least I hope, a very metered misunderstanding of what the issues really are. For instance, the Member for McIntyre-Takhini commented that \$3 million was given to Alaska for the rail study. Well, he's \$650,000 off -- it was \$2.35 million -- and we didn't give it to Alaska. It was our contribution to a joint study, which was housed in Whitehorse, primarily collated and done by residents of Whitehorse, and much more than the percentage that we put in was done by Yukon companies -- a very, very good study in combination with the rail study.

I think the study proved a lot of different things. The whole idea of that study was to bring everything together and to give a business plan or a business case toward future decisions. To say then that, in fact, there were no results from it really does ignore the fact that the first of many shipments of copper and gold ore -- \$16 million last week alone -- is a good example of the fact that we are going to be seeing much more out of that, and it gives options and abilities and business cases to various companies to look at how to develop their business case in mine development.

Rail is environmentally friendly, and before the Official Opposition wants to jump into that, I'll remind them of their Member of Parliament's speech in the House of Commons referring to how environmentally friendly rail is.

I agree, and that is certainly one of the things -- it moves more product; it moves it at a cheaper cost, and it widens tourism opportunities and the re-supply of Alaska and the Yukon. It is container traffic. I can go on and on, but that report is a public document and it's available on the Economic Development Web site. That, and the port study, which the Leader of the Official Opposition was not happy with, I would suggest has been much better than his party's previous proposal and spending of hundreds of thousands of dollars for options on a building on the Alaska coast, which we never bought and never used. We got a lot out of that, didn't we? We have to put that into perspective and look at it. With a little bit of levity at that point in time, Mr. Speaker, the Official Opposition was chanting patty cake. I know it really is a comment on a children's rhyme and not about previous leaders.

When we look back at the environment report that the member commented on -- I can't even remember who commented on that -- and said that the Yukon Party never tabled an environment report. The reality is that we did. We tabled the

2002 report, which had been written under the Liberal government and never hit my desk until two years later.

These reports are based on compiling data. This is not a scientific group that goes out and creates the data. They collect data. The problem is that there was a comment within that report that a huge amount of greenhouse gas emissions came out of the two gas wells at the Kotaneelee. Frankly, I just didn't believe that and, after many machinations, I decided to get to the bottom of this. It turns out that that report came out of Ottawa, written by someone who had never been to the Yukon, and he was two decimal points off. It was .047, not 4.7 percent of the greenhouse gas emissions.

So we have to be cautious of where we glean this data from. We have to take it with the intent that really that was set up with. Yes, it's a valuable report. Yes, there is value in doing this, but it's two years out of date before it hits the table. The Member for Vuntut Gwitchin is hitting the table. Yes, but we could have been reacting two years prior, and that's what this government is trying to do; we are trying to work within that data while the reports are coming down the pike.

Don't get hung up on the report that's two years out of date; get hung up on what the reality is.

Other comments were made about it taking seven years to grow a doctor. I don't think the Member for Copperbelt has any better data. Actually, it would be six years if the doctor came out of McMaster University. It still is a long-term strategy, and we think on this side that the medical bursaries are a very good approach to that. It's a start. To get hung up or try to say that that's the big thing and you finally did it -- isn't that great? No. It's only one very small part of a large piece. I don't know the statistics right now, but about a year ago we had probably a significantly higher number of doctors per capita in the Yukon than anywhere else in Canada, substantially higher. The problem is that everything from lifestyle to hours worked to facilities available -- I mean, the list goes on and on and on. It is absolutely amazing that when people try to simplify this problem into one or two small parts, it's a bit scary. One member mentioned that he had worked in a medical research lab and yet, moments later, said we could cure juvenile diabetes with fitness. I suspect there are a lot of physicians and nurses in the Yukon that are still scratching their heads over that one. It's not something that fitness is going to have a meaningful dialogue with.

The athletes village -- I'm sort of jumping around here, but I was trying to make notes of some of the inaccuracies in here saying that that was overbudget and how terrible it was. The reality is that it came in about \$225 per square foot, one of the best projects of any sort like that in the north. We were very pleased to house the officials -- not politicians, but people who really know what they're doing. I realize that most politicians, according to the members opposite, have no idea what they're doing. The officials who really did know what they were doing were horrified that we were able to bring that in under the pressure that we did, even without all of the pressure that we did, at \$225 per square foot. That included the paved parking lot and the electrified parking spaces. That included the elevators, the security system for the seniors, and everything being green

home standard, which is basically R2000 on steroids. It greatly exceeded all those things. We consulted groups working with the handicapped on the type of carpeting that would be wheelchair compatible and on positions of light switches. Every bathroom is handicap accessible. I can go on and on and on about what went into that place.

Basically, all we got all the way through from much of the opposition, not all, and again from our local advertising supplement, was that it was a bunch of trailers nailed together -- I defy anyone to go up there and find one of these trailers right now -- and that nobody would want to live in it.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I am here to tell you that 51 percent of the seniors who moved into that building moved out of the downtown core. It didn't work out really well for some of the opposition on that one. It is a good place to be; it is a model. We had many people who wanted to get into that and many people who still want to get into it. It is something that we will certainly be looking at here and throughout the north because Nunavut and Northwest Territories were fascinated with the type of construction. It generated a good relationship between a local window company and ATCO, which built them.

I remember in one debate somebody saying how much more expensive it was because it was built during the winter. It was, but it was built in a warehouse so somehow I don't remember it snowing too badly in that warehouse, but anyway that was one argument that we got -- but 51 percent of the seniors who moved in left the downtown core. We provided 48 more affordable housing units. They are the first affordable housing units or social housing units that are rent-geared-to-income units in many, many years, over many different political striped governments.

We are in the process now of creating another 21, or something like that, and there will certainly be much more information as people realize what is going on there. Nothing unusual, but we are continuing to provide this.

I would agree with the opposition of both stripes that when you start looking at the price of housing and the price of everything relating to housing going up in the Yukon, they are right. First of all, we are just now getting the mandate and getting some of the federal funding and again coming to the table in what we can do. There will be some very exciting announcements coming down in the next couple of weeks, but right now if we are really talking within the City of Whitehorse, we are talking zoning; we are talking private sector. I think anybody who has anything to do with private sector housing of any sort would be a little disturbed if we started interfering with the business that way, so we have to be very cautious in doing that.

I would recommend that the Leader of the Official Opposition look at some of the properties that might be available for development in the 500 block of Main Street, or on Sixth Avenue, or down on the waterfront area -- malls that could have residential components built into them, and on and on.

I am suspicious that he wouldn't want to interfere with the profit margins on those. Maybe someone else is going to get into that, and it will be someone else's problem.

Basically, the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources made some really good points, I think. He stole a bit of my

thunder there, which he often does. One of the challenges that we had when we came into government was, you can have the best ideas in the world, but if you can't pay for them, they are worthless. It's nice to say we should do this or we should do that, but if the money isn't there, it accomplishes nothing. Yes, it's nice to have a surplus. It's nice to have some money to play with. But I would suggest that the answer isn't to run out and spend it willy-nilly and then later on say, "Gee, we have other things we want to do. Sorry, the bank account is closed." It's the old story of, well, there are cheques still in the chequebook, so it must still be good.

We have to plan out what we want to do with that money, what our priorities are and, most importantly, what is the biggest bang for the buck. What are we going to accomplish that is going to have the most to do with what we have.

Budgeting \$17 million for the Mayo-Dawson transmission line and then having it end up costing \$42 million, which I think was the last count -- it's hard to say, the lawsuits are still flying around on that one. That is something we inherited and we are going to have to live with.

To go after, for instance, Falcon Ridge and the affordable housing program -- what we did on that was put a relatively small amount of money into a number of different homes, some in homes for sale and some in rental homes. The rental homes money was never spent. That money was returned. In fact, that is now building other units.

It did drop the price of some of those. I am sure members opposite will argue no matter what. They could drop it down to \$1.29 and they would probably still argue that it wasn't affordable. It is a mindset; I can't argue with that, but it did drop them down and I know people who have bought in that development. But you have to understand at the same time that was a bit of an impetus for a company to come in and spend \$23 million on construction in the Yukon. They bought Yukon materials; they hired Yukon tradesmen and craftsmen; they used Yukon companies. Virtually all of that was spent in the Yukon -- \$23 million and I think the whole thing cost us a couple of hundred thousand dollars to stimulate that. I think anybody in business would like that; anybody not in business; anybody who simply picks up their paycheque. If you could put that amount of money in the bank and get \$23 million back in two years, it sounds like a pretty reasonable approach to me.

The other thing that I keep hearing -- we heard it during the election and we keep hearing with twists -- is that all of this is due to mineral prices; it's all world mineral prices. Well, again, they are called world mineral prices for a reason. If you look at that, has that been a factor? Of course it has, but at the same time, why did the Yukon do 10 times the national average in increased exploration and development? Why under the previous Liberal government, who claims that this is all due to mineral prices, did it jump from \$6 million to slightly off \$200 million -- 10 times the national average? How anyone can argue that that is strictly mineral prices is definitely beyond me.

One of the things that we have really pushed this government and pushed our emphasis has been on infrastructure -- be it the very fortunate situation with the Shakwak project, be it now developing the Robert Campbell Highway or others, look-

ing along the rail of what we refer to now as the short-track solutions -- to build small parts of this that would serve one purpose and yet in the long run be part of the whole thing.

That's something we definitely have to look at. I wanted to get into the flood programs, but I realize I'm running out of time. We poured almost \$1 million into flood relief programs, yet we hear from the side opposite that we didn't do much. That's in this budget, but they'll vote against it -- and eventually, in a very short term, we will start getting more into the housing market, but they'll vote against that.

When you really do a serious analysis of what's in this budget, it's a hard one to argue with. I commend it to the House; I support it, but they'll vote against it.

Mr. Elias: It's always an honour and privilege to address this Assembly as the Vuntut Gwitchin MLA and respond to the supplementary budget speech, as it outlines additional direction and agenda for Yukoners to consider.

There are some success stories in my riding to address, and they include the Old Crow health and fitness program, the upgrading of the telehealth program, the hopefully new family and children's support services funding, and the caribou issue funding to my community.

Firstly, on the health and fitness program, this initiative has contributed in a meaningful way to the health and fitness of the children in Old Crow. To quote the nurse in charge in Old Crow, she said to me this summer that the health and fitness program is the single most important health promotion and illness prevention program for youth in Old Crow right now.

One-third of our children nationwide are overweight, and our Yukon rural communities are not immune to this fact. The rates of aboriginal children developing type 2 diabetes far exceed the national average. The attention to youth and a healthy Old Crow community continues to be a priority. It is my community's wish that the Government of Yukon fulfill the original vision of the program, which is to continue the funding indefinitely as it proves to be very successful each and every day that program continues.

On behalf of my constituents, I thank the Minister of Health and Social Services for providing the \$66,500 for this year's funding toward this important community health initiative.

Again it is my hope that the minister will continue the funding to support this program. Second, the funding for the full-time family and children services professional based in Old Crow is a resource my community hopes to see become a reality in the very near future.

Again my constituents thank the Minister of Health and Social Services for responding quickly to the request for his department to address this issue. Community members in need can hopefully very soon have immediate access to the services when required and a face of prevention will exist in the community full-time.

Mr. Speaker, the upgrading of the telehealth video conferencing technology in Old Crow, which provides health care services and education to my constituents, is recognized and appreciated. We also appreciate the work of the many past

governments that had a hand in the development and the advancement of this initiative. Many Yukon government civil servants participated in the application for and the receiving of a grant from the Canada Health Infoway program for the equipment, networking and training required for the upgrade -- and we thank them for their hard work.

From an Old Crow perspective, and what we have to deal with in our isolated community, I believe the telehealth video conferencing technology, if utilized to its full potential, can provide services to my constituents that include receiving second opinions from doctors; speaking with the nurse in charge in Whitehorse or elsewhere and getting updates and explanations on a family member's condition. Family visits at the hospital and elders' homes like McDonald Lodge and Copper Ridge Place are immeasurable -- people are able to see their family through the video teleconferencing and I just wanted to recognize that. They can receive one-on-one counselling; there is nurse conferencing; emergency services; and my constituents are able to speak to medical specialists because of our isolation.

On a related health item, I recently travelled to Vancouver, British Columbia, and had the opportunity to visit a few of my constituents and some other Yukoners in the Vancouver General Hospital. During the visit it became very apparent that a Yukon health representative or a patient advocate would provide a beneficial service to Yukoners who are required to travel to the larger southern cities to receive medical services.

Many of them down there explained to me the difficulties they encountered while in Vancouver. They varied from language barriers to navigating their way through the maze of rigid administrative procedures. One Yukoner described it as "city shock". They suggested it would be something to mention as an additional service.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, my community thanked the government for their continued support in our First Nation's efforts to save the calving grounds of the Porcupine caribou herd from industrial development. The \$50,000 provided to the Vuntut Gwitchin government this year to help with the caribou issue is also recognized and appreciated.

More needs to be done in the community -- upgrading and replacing the Old Crow emergency response systems, including the community alarm system, fire truck and possibly additional emergency training. The overhauling of the water well is an outstanding and important task yet to be completed. This was in the budget last year before I was elected and nothing was done. Again this year, I believe it's a work in progress and I will be speaking with the minister on this issue.

I raised the issue regarding the upgrading of the Old Crow community roads and drainage system during last spring's legislative sitting. I am encouraged to see that on October 19 of this year the northern strategy trust has approved \$150,000 for phase 1 -- feasibility and design to identify the comprehensive solution to the problem. It's a step in the right direction. I recognize the effort and my constituents raised this to the Premier in the fall of 2006 at the general assembly. It looks like the momentum is moving toward fixing it.

My community of Old Crow continues to work toward the construction of a multi-purpose complex that will stand the test

of time. Recent developments on this front are the passing by consensus of another general assembly resolution in 2007 committing a portion of the beneficiary dollars in the citizens' pot of money -- it's not government money -- for the planning and construction of the multi-purpose complex.

This is the fifth resolution in as many years giving direction to achieve this goal. Another resolution passed before the Yukon Legislative Assembly in a petition from my constituents demonstrating the commitment of our community citizens for this important priority.

Education -- land-based experiential learning with a holistic view of education recognizes that not everyone fits into the education system that exists today. Many of my constituents view land-based experiential learning as a very viable program to increase our children's success. Providing the opportunity with the existing system to accommodate teachers being able to go out on the land and deliver an academic curriculum alongside the local community and First Nation cultural teachings still remains our priority.

The recent Yukon First Nation focused study modules for the grade 5 pilot project is a very good step in the right direction. Together, with a land-based experiential educational pilot project that is cognizant of the Vuntut Gwitchin culture would be an ideal first step toward meeting the needs of our students and addressing the educational difficulties that many students are experiencing.

Again, partners are necessary who will commit to our goal of keeping our elders at home. We need to explore the viable options that exist and act on them soon. Keeping our elders at home and caring for them in the twilight of their lives still remains a priority. The time is right to get into the details of discussing training, infrastructure, staffing levels and the completion of a Yukon territorial government client assessment to determine the level of care required for the elders of Old Crow.

Let's make no mistake here, Mr. Speaker: the future of the Porcupine caribou herd and the Vuntut Gwitchin are the same. I reaffirm in this Legislature that the destiny of the Porcupine caribou herd is without a doubt the same destiny as that of the Vuntut Gwitchin. They are inseparable. The late Johnny Abel, a former MLA and Chief of the Vuntut Gwitchin put it this way: "I sure don't want to see our kids, 100 or 200 years from now, reading about the caribou in storybooks and about how we used to live."

The caribou give us strength and a sense of security when they are healthy. The Porcupine caribou herd has sustained our culture for thousands of years. The Environment minister's recent unilateral decision to increase hunting pressure on the herd at a time when the caribou are vulnerable is contrary to the minister's own motion in this House on Wednesday, December 13, 2006, to protect and conserve the herd.

My constituents have given me direction to be very solution-oriented and to help achieve the 1988 mandate to protect the caribou. I will do so in the following weeks, months and years in this Legislature, and during the developmental stage of the harvest management strategy.

I have met and known for a long time the excellent group of people participating and tasked to build the harvest man-

agement strategy. It is my hope that one day we will have a new porcupine caribou conservation agreement. I believe the *Porcupine Caribou Management Agreement* made on the 26th day of October, 1985, among the governments of Canada, Yukon, the Northwest Territories, the Inuvialuit Game Council, the Council of Yukon Indians and the Dene Nation and Métis Association of the Northwest Territories, is a large part of the hunting difficulties we now see on the Dempster Highway. It is outdated, in my opinion, and it needs to be reviewed and possibly renegotiated to reflect all of the northern self-governing First Nations' jurisdictions over their land, their people, and law-making authorities, and today's conservation realities.

Last month, I participated in the grassroots educational effort in Washington, D.C. to permanently protect the coastal plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge and the core calving grounds of the Porcupine caribou herd from possible oil development. The importance of protecting the calving grounds from big oil development has been well documented over the last 20 years. The importance of the area for the caribou and many other species of wildlife and migratory birds, the Gwich'in, Yukoners and humankind in general, cannot be overstated.

There has been a change in the political climate in the Congress of the United States in Washington, D.C. following the November 2006 elections, since the Democrats now hold more seats than the Republicans in the House of Representatives and the Senate. Within the House of Representatives, there are 233 Democrats versus 202 Republicans. In the Senate, there are 50 Democrats and 49 Republicans, and one independent, Joe Lieberman.

An important new development in the House of Representatives is the new bill called Bill No. H.R. 39, the *Arctic Wilderness Act*, introduced last month by Congressman Edward Markey, a Democrat from Massachusetts, and Jim Ramstad, a Republican from Minnesota.

As of a few weeks ago, the bill had 143 co-sponsors from other representatives in Congress, but it has not yet come to a vote. That decision will be made based on the political strategy required to ensure passage.

In the United States Senate, Independent Joe Lieberman of Connecticut will introduce the Arctic National Wildlife bill later this fall. The intent, again, is to protect the calving grounds of the Porcupine caribou herd. In my opinion, our best chance to permanently protect the calving grounds is to have a Democratic U.S. President -- this is our best chance to avoid a veto -- maintain a healthy majority in the United States House of Representatives and Senate, scale up our educational effort and keep our northern communities engaged so we don't become complacent, and be assertive in getting Arctic National Wildlife Refuge permanent protection legislation through the United States Congress.

We are on the offensive, and trying to advance permanent protection through the United States Congress is no easy task. It's very different to ask United States legislators to stop the drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge than to ask them to permanently protect a very small but critical piece of their lands.

Mr. Speaker, \$182,000 for office furniture versus \$145,000 toward the climate change action plan -- is this the Yukon Party vision for the environment and climate change? The fact of the matter is there is no vision; there is no action. Herschel Island is falling into the sea.

The Old Crow Flats wetland -- arguably the most biologically productive system in the Yukon that has some 2,000 lakes -- is starting to drain. Yukoners have witnessed sloughing and the eroding of riverbanks and lakeshores, and it leads to murky waters which, in turn, release methane gas into the atmosphere when the permafrost melts.

There are new species of invasive plants, animals and insects that haven't been seen here. A hummingbird was seen at the 67th parallel. There is a spruce bark beetle infestation in our southern boreal forests that grows each year. Winter ticks and other parasites are also moving north into the ungulate populations that we treasure greatly. We are seeing the treeline in the Kluane Wildlife Sanctuary in Burwash uplands move up the mountain slopes at a very rapid rate.

The flooding of the Southern Lakes this spring and summer, due to the abnormal amount of precipitation, is evidence. The Porcupine caribou herd is declining and there are diminishing salmon runs in the Klukshu and other rivers.

In light of these scientific and traditional-knowledge facts, it allows me to mention that, on Wednesday, May 2, 2007, in this Legislature during Question Period regarding the production of a long-overdue state of the environment report, the Environment minister stated, "I would suggest, Mr. Speaker, report or no report, the state of the environment in Yukon and the environment itself is in good hands."

If Yukon's environment is in such good hands, then I ask myself why the Environment minister has failed to report to Yukoners on the facts I've just stated -- and for the reasons to provide an early warning analysis of potential problems for the environment -- and also to provide baseline information for environmental planning and assessment regulations and, very importantly, allowing the public to monitor progress toward the achievement of the objectives of the *Environment Act* -- allowing the public, Mr. Speaker.

The state of the environment report does not make recommendations or set policy or present a report card on the environment. It does, however, provide Yukoners with important information to help us make the right decisions to build a sustainable economy and conserve a healthy environment.

The state of the environment report answers four basic questions: what is happening in the environment, why is it happening, why is it significant, and what are we going to do about it? In an effort to be as constructive as possible, I challenge the Minister of Environment to report to Yukoners on the state of the environment so they can be the judge if their environment is in good hands.

I have yet to witness any Yukon government commitment that takes this territory where it needs to go in terms of climate change. When I look at the science, which is now irrefutable, we have changed the chemistry of the atmosphere and, in turn, have trapped radiant heat in the atmosphere.

In our own country and in Alaska, whole communities have been moved because of melting permafrost and erosion, and others have succumbed to the sea. We as Yukoners, and this Yukon Party government, have a moral obligation to do something substantial when it comes to our environment and climate change.

I simply do not view the action from this government as wanting to make a real difference and show the rest of the country and the world that this is vitally important to Yukoners.

In closing, I just wanted to say that I look forward to this legislative sitting and wish each and every Member of the Legislative Assembly goodwill and good discussion. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Mr. Hart: I, too, would like to welcome everybody back to the Legislature. I also look forward to representing Riverdale South. I am pleased to support Bill No. 8, the *Second Appropriation Act, 2007-08*. This supplementary budget seeks authority to increase expenditures in excess of \$52 million. Expenditures are partially offset by transfers from Canada and other revenues of \$17 million. As my colleague, the Minister of Tourism, stated, the status of the government's fiscal position is very good. I'm proud to reiterate that our cumulative service at the end of the fiscal year is projected to be in excess of \$531 million. More importantly, our net financial resources are projected to be in excess of \$99 million.

This budget has approximately \$30 million in revotes from the previous year from expenditure lapse. In addition, the budget recognizes our most important valuable resource -- our employees -- and reflects the expenditures negotiated through our recent collective agreement with PSAC. As the minister responsible for the Public Service Commission, to ensure our public servants are happy with their employer, we have undertaken several initiatives to enhance our staff's opportunity for career development, flexibility in working hours, and increasing the opportunities for the disabled, First Nation peoples and Yukon students.

I'm proud to say that after a recent review of our IPS program, the feedback has been very positive and we will continue to work on improving these programs to keep the staff in their current positions and to be competitive in the market that is very competitive right now, especially in the public service.

We have just completed a staff survey developed in conjunction with other jurisdictions such as Alberta, British Columbia, Ontario and a few others. We have polled the public service on a wide range of issues related to their jobs, and the results of the study will soon be posted on the Web for the staff to review.

In general, we are above the national average in many of the categories. However, with many items in a survey there are a few areas that we will continue to be reviewing with our human resources managers to see how we can improve our work-plan and our environment to further assist and retain our employees for the long term.

The budget provides for expenditures in other departments that enhance the well-being of all Yukoners. My colleagues

have already discussed many of those items. I will try not to go over too badly with those.

I would like to focus on community services for awhile. Members opposite, as well as my colleagues, have discussed the situation with regard to the flooding that we had this summer in Tagish, Carcross, Lake Laberge and the adjacent areas, as well as Marsh Lake. I would like to take this opportunity to thank each and every one of the government's staff involved, either directly or indirectly, in assisting all the flood victims to alleviate the situation that they were in this summer. This was a very good demonstration of how the EMO comes to life when an emergency arises similar to 2004. I believe that it's very important to recognize those individuals. Many of them put in hours and hours of time, beyond their time that they actually claimed for and/or put into place.

Again, all those people are to be commended. As the Leader of the Official Opposition indicated, it came from all departments -- Department of Highways and Public Works; Health and Social Services -- all these people were coordinated through EMO to make this event happen.

I am also very happy to say that 98 percent of the residents we assisted appreciated the assistance provided to them.

I would be remiss if I didn't talk about the most important part and that is the volunteers who provided assistance without any remuneration. Basically, those are the volunteers who provided things like filling sandbags, running bobcats and providing food services. Many of the stations had food services. I would also like to thank those who helped seniors who needed assistance during this time.

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

Debate on second reading of Bill No. 8 accordingly adjourned

The House adjourned at 5:30 p.m.