

**Whitehorse, Yukon****Wednesday, November 21, 2007 -- 1:00 p.m.**

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

*Prayers***DAILY ROUTINE**

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

Tributes.

**TRIBUTES****In recognition of Restorative Justice Week**

**Hon. Ms. Horne:** National Restorative Justice Week offers us the opportunity to reflect on the efforts made to find alternative ways to deal with harm caused by crime. The annual celebration of Restorative Justice Week was originally initiated in 1996 by the Correctional Service of Canada and has since expanded throughout Canada and around the world.

Restorative justice is a process that seeks to repair the harm caused by crime by bringing together the community, victims and offenders to find solutions. Restorative justice processes recognize that offenders harm victims, communities and themselves. It is an approach that focuses on repairing and healing the harm caused by crime. It is grounded in values such as respect, inclusion, healing and compassion, and it promotes community accountability and responsibility and responds to the needs of First Nation communities.

The theme for Restorative Justice Week this year is, "Facing the questions". This is an appropriate theme as there are many questions about restorative justice. As our judicial systems develop and change, we must look at alternative ways to prevent crime and foster healthy and safe communities. Facing the questions will help us develop an informed approach to safe and healthy communities.

As a government, we are proud to be working on solutions that are based on a restorative philosophy and to be working to ensure that the positive impacts of restorative justice processes in the Yukon are being felt. Through the correctional redevelopment strategic plan, we are working to promote healing and to offer support to victims and families while holding offenders accountable and encouraging healing and reintegration.

As individuals, we all have a role in creating safe and healthy communities beginning with how we deal with conflict. What can we do as caring citizens to promote restorative justice approaches in our lives and our communities? How do we work better together for positive outcomes?

Many of us work hard to support restorative and respectful processes in our families, relationships and workplaces. It is hard work, but the results are clear -- more productive and healthier relationships, less bullying and victimization, and stronger communities.

At this time, I would like to sincerely thank the individuals in the Yukon who are involved in restorative and community justice for their hard work and dedication to seeking local solu-

tions to resolve conflict. These include members of community justice committees, community justice coordinators, government and First Nation officials, families and individuals who take part in restorative processes and our elders.

Gunilshish.

**Mr. Cardiff:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of the opposition caucuses to pay tribute to Restorative Justice Week, November 18 to 25. Restorative justice is a growing movement of volunteer partnerships with a common vision. It has many forms. Often a circle is the focus where community problems are responded to in a supportive atmosphere. A harmful act is explored and solutions arrived at with a view toward healing options for all.

Supported by family and community and made to directly face the result of his or her actions, the offender has a much greater chance of successfully changing. Restorative justice places the word "just" back into justice and puts aside the usual punitive court process. The approach is based on aboriginal values of community strength and responsibility toward both offenders and victims. It views harm to individuals as a violation of relationships. It strives to restore the relationship that was broken by committing the offence.

The theme for Restorative Justice Week this year is "Facing the questions", directed at those involved in this important work. One of the questions that participants in restorative justice face is determining for themselves whether it is a hard or soft approach to crime. For many people, taking part in a restorative justice circle is much harder than going through the usual court process. It requires facing social and psychological issues that otherwise may not be exposed, both in the offender and the victim. It requires insight and compassion that is not inherently part of the adversarial court system.

The success of restorative justice programs is not easily measured. We never know how many crimes have been prevented by the process of having the perpetrator face the victim and the situations and ideas that drive him or her to commit a crime, but we can know if the crime is committed again by that person. That proof has shown restorative justice to be a success.

The Yukon was once at the forefront of practising restorative justice, but programs are beginning to weaken through uncertain funding sources and the lack of progressive government policies. There's always room for improvement, and encouraging volunteers to train and take part in this important aspect of the justice system needs to be improved and stepped up.

We pay tribute to those professionals and the volunteers who continue to live the principles of restorative justice, both in their communities and in their daily living. We trust that sufficient financial and moral support will be available to expand this humane and productive approach to justice.

Thank you.

**Speaker:** Are there any further tributes?  
Introduction of visitors.

## INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** I rise to ask all members to welcome to the gallery a former member of this Assembly and current manager for the Yukon region of the Canadian Cancer Society, Mr. Scott Kent.

*Applause*

**Speaker:** Are there any other introductions of visitors? Returns or documents for tabling. Reports of committees.

## REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** I have for tabling the final report of the Select Committee on Anti-Smoking Legislation.

**Speaker:** Are there any further reports of committees? Are there any petitions? Are there any bills to be introduced? Are there any notices of motion?

## NOTICES OF MOTION

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

THAT this House urges the Yukon government to draft and table legislation based on the recommendations of the Select Committee on Anti-Smoking Legislation and the feedback the committee received from Yukon citizens.

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

THAT this House urges the Yukon Party government to disclose any ministerial conflicts of interest, as required by the *Conflict of Interest (Members and Ministers) Act*.

**Mr. Cardiff:** I give notice of the following motion: THAT it is the opinion of this House that restorative justice programs in the Yukon

(1) have proven to be an excellent means of solving community disputes and crimes;

(2) are culturally relevant to many Yukoners;

(3) face possible funding difficulties in the next budget cycle; and

THAT this House urges the Yukon government to recognize the value of restorative justice programs for Yukon offenders and victims by implementing long-term stable funding for all existing and future restorative justice programs in the Yukon.

**Mr. Edzerza:** I give notice of the following motion: THAT it is the opinion of this House that:

(1) profits in the pharmaceutical industry are running at roughly double those in all other manufacturing industries;

(2) since the decision by the government of Brian Mulroney to grant 20-year patent protection to brand name drugs, expenditures on prescription drugs in Canada are the fastest growing component of health care spending, rising substantially faster than the rate of inflation;

(3) one in five Canadians are underinsured for high drug costs and 3.5 million have no prescription drug coverage at all;

(4) in 2005, Canadians spent \$20.6 billion on prescription medications and only \$18 billion on doctors; and

THAT this House urges the Government of Canada to implement universal prescription drug coverage as proposed by the federal New Democratic Party as one part of a strategy to control health care costs.

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

This then brings us to Question Period.

## QUESTION PERIOD

### Question re: Government investments

**Mr. Mitchell:** I have a question for the Acting Minister of Finance. On Tuesday, November 13, 2007, the acting minister said in this House, and I quote from *Hansard*: "The Auditor General is fully cognizant of the government's investment policies and was advised in detail of the actual third party asset-backed investments and the proposed restructuring and that the Auditor General states that, in her opinion, the transactions of the government that have come to her notice have in all significant respects been in accordance with the *Financial Administration Act*."

Was the acting minister referring to additional communication she or her department officials had with the Auditor General's office, or was she referring to the letter from the Auditor General included in the public accounts for 2006-07?

**Hon. Ms. Taylor:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I certainly have been on the record on a number of occasions with respect to full disclosure on this particular matter. The Leader of the Official Opposition knows very well that the Auditor General was presented with the facts surrounding these particular investments to the completion of the year-end financial statements. Furthermore, based on that information provided to the Auditor General, the matter was fully disclosed in the audited year-end financial statements, which, I might add, received an additional clean bill of health from the Auditor General.

Again, Mr. Speaker, the government has been fully forthcoming with information regarding this matter. We will continue to work very cooperatively with the Auditor General to seek clarity, to seek finality with respect to this matter, and we certainly take great pride in the Department of Finance and the good work that they have been doing with the Auditor General's Office.

**Mr. Mitchell:** Well, Mr. Speaker, that was a fairly straightforward question. I don't think I got a straightforward answer.

I would like to suggest that the acting minister was in fact referring to the letter from the Auditor General included in the public accounts for 2006-07. The wording in the fourth paragraph bears a direct resemblance to the acting minister's responses in this House.

Mr. Speaker, we should be very clear here. The letter that I referred to covers a period of time from April 1, 2006 to March 31, 2007. The investments in question cover a period signifi-

cantly after March 31, 2007. The impression that the acting minister has left in the minds of many Yukoners is that the Auditor General was fully cognizant of this matter and was giving it her endorsement. Will the acting minister now clarify for Yukoners that her remarks of November 13, in which she attributed comments to the Auditor General, were just for a period of time up to March 31 of this year and do not include recent developments related to the \$36.5-million investment?

**Hon. Ms. Taylor:** Let me be very clear, and I'll put the facts as simply as I can for the member opposite. The Auditor General's Office was advised by financial officials in early October prior to the financial statement finalization. The investments in the third party asset-backed commercial paper occurred after year-end. Even though these investments occurred after the year-end -- that is, 2006-07 -- it was felt that generally accepted accounting principles might require its disclosure in the previous year's financial statements if not resolved prior to the completion of the audit.

In early October, the Auditor General was certainly advised of these particular events and investments. The Auditor General's advice was sought as to whether disclosure in the financial statements being audited was in fact warranted and their opinion was that it should be disclosed as part of the financial statements. In fact, it has been fully disclosed by way of notes, which are certainly an integral part of the financial statements that were tabled in the Legislature. I actually have for tabling a copy of the correspondence that was sent to the Auditor General of Canada by the Department of Finance in which notification was formally given.

**Mr. Mitchell:** The Auditor General said in her letter to me dated November 20, 2007, and tabled in this House yesterday, "In light of the significant amount of the investment, we will be reviewing this matter and reporting our findings in a separate report to the Yukon Legislative Assembly in early 2008."

The Auditor General did not say the transactions of the government that have come to her notice have in all significant respects been in accordance with the *Financial Administration Act*. She could have but, quite to the contrary, she said she was going to conduct a review. In other words, it's under investigation. When you're under investigation for anything but routine audits -- that's never good news.

Will the acting minister, now that this government is being investigated on this matter, clarify her remarks and clearly state that her previous statements, which she attributed to the Auditor General, did not and should not have exceeded March 31, 2007, despite what she is saying here today?

**Hon. Ms. Taylor:** Mr. Speaker, something that we on this side of the House will never do is politicize the good work of the Auditor General of Canada. In fact, Mr. Speaker, the government very much welcomes the assistance that the Auditor General can provide in further reviewing these particular investments.

Mr. Speaker, as members opposite fully know -- especially the Leader of the Official Opposition -- the role of the Auditor General is to review matters as they may arise in an effort to bring clarity and finality to the situation at hand. Mr. Speaker,

the government supports the Auditor General and the good work that that office provides as we have in the past five years. We will continue to work with the Auditor General's Office collaboratively and cooperatively. We will accept any decisions or any findings that are rendered.

Mr. Speaker, one thing I will not do is presume to judge what the outcome of that review is. One thing that is sure is that we work as much as we can -- as we have in the past -- to ensure that finality and clarity are brought to the situation and that full disclosure will remain the case.

#### **Question re: Electrical rates**

**Mr. McRobb:** During Question Period yesterday, the Justice minister said she wouldn't be getting around to sending a letter to the Yukon Utilities Board directing the Yukon's electrical utilities to file a joint general rate application until early next year. The board has requested this letter from the minister on more than one occasion going back to last January. I will remind her that the Yukon Utilities Board is an independent, arm's-length regulatory board.

Under statutory law, the Yukon Utilities Board is a quasi-judicial tribunal. I'm concerned that stalling for months on this board's request for direction to proceed might be interpreted as political interference.

Meanwhile, the Energy, Mines and Resources minister has promised lower electric rates will result from the next general rate application. Can the Justice minister explain why she is delaying this promised reduction in electrical prices by foot-dragging directions to the Yukon Utilities Board?

**Hon. Mr. Lang:** We're moving forward with the GRA in the new year; we're committed to doing that and we'll work with the proponents to get that done. It's a lengthy process, and we're committed to working with it, starting in January.

**Mr. McRobb:** It's becoming clear that the Energy, Mines and Resources minister is the one dealing with the Yukon Utilities Board, not the Justice minister. It's apparent these ministers cannot work together for the benefit of Yukoners.

On one hand, we have the Energy, Mines and Resources minister waxing poetic about how the efforts of the Crown utility will result in lower electricity rates to Yukoners to offset the hardship created by his cancellation of the rate stabilization fund. On the other hand, we have the Justice minister ignoring the Yukon Utilities Board recommendations for 10 months now, without moving forward to allow this public hearing to start in order to give effect to these lower rates.

If this government is so convinced electricity rates will be reduced after the next GRA, it should introduce that rate reduction now to shield consumers from higher bills brought on by winter.

Can the Justice minister explain what directions she will pass on to the Yukon Utilities Board regarding interim reductions?

**Hon. Mr. Lang:** We're committed to working with moving ahead on a GRA in the new year, and we are very optimistic we can get the job done. I'm looking forward to the review and I'm looking forward to the finality of that review.

**Mr. McRobb:** Why is the Justice minister silent on these matters? It's up to her to give direction to the independent tribunal, not the Energy, Mines and Resources minister.

It's apparent the Justice minister is again sidestepping an issue she must confront head on. While the government has some influence over the operations of the Crown-owned Yukon Energy Corporation, it does not have direct influence over the operations of the main distributor of electricity, the Yukon Electrical Company Limited. Without a jointly filed GRA, the board will have no idea what costs Yukon Electrical is incurring or what impact those will have on consumers.

It's time for this government to do the right thing by letting the independent utility regulator get on with its job. Will the Justice minister now commit to issuing this long-awaited letter of direction to the Yukon Utilities Board before the end of this month?

**Hon. Mr. Lang:** Mr. Speaker, I thought the member opposite wasn't going to politicize this question, and he has done just that. We on this side of the government have committed to go to work on the GRA in January, and the GRA will be handled independent of government, and we're looking forward to the results.

#### Question re: Uranium mining

**Mr. Edzerza:** Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the Acting Minister of Environment stated that six mineral exploration companies are actively exploring uranium properties in the Yukon. A few hours later, the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources expressed the hope that someday there will be a uranium mine in the Yukon. According to those two ministers, uranium mining could be a wonderful thing for the territory's financial bottom line. So far we haven't heard from the Minister of Health and Social Services on this issue. Is it the minister's position that the economic benefits of uranium exploration and development outweigh the proven health risks associated with this extremely dangerous mineral?

**Hon. Mr. Kenyon:** Mr. Speaker, yes, my information is that there are six mineral companies actively exploring 12 different properties.

For the member opposite's information, uranium exploration expenditures in 2007 alone are in excess of \$20 million.

The use of uranium can be in many, many different ways, of course. I appreciate that the member opposite is looking at one of them very carefully, but he ignores the fact that uranium is also used in the medical industry for medical imaging. It's used for production of power. It is friendly in the sense that there is very little carbon output. But of course there are risks with that, and there are controls necessary to be done in that.

For the member opposite again, I ask that he expand his way of looking at this and do better research. For instance, yesterday he stated in this House that British Columbia had banned uranium exploration, and in fact they have not. The only jurisdiction that has is Nova Scotia, and that was really because they don't have any.

**Mr. Edzerza:** I believe this minister has no interest whatsoever in the health issue, and I'm asking the Health and Social Services minister about --

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

#### Point of order

**Speaker:** Sit down, please.

Point of order, the Minister of Economic Development.

**Hon. Mr. Kenyon:** Saying that a minister or a member of this House has no interest in health is blatantly unfair and certainly would lead to discord in this House.

**Speaker:** On the point of order, the Member for Mount Lorne.

**Mr. Cardiff:** That's the member's opinion, that it would lead to discord. The only discord is with the member.

#### Speaker's ruling

**Speaker:** Prior to my ruling, the issue is that the Chair relies on the members for advice on the point of order -- not to take shots at each other on the point of order.

Second, there is no point of order. It is simply a dispute among members.

Member for McIntyre-Takhini, you have the floor, I believe.

**Mr. Edzerza:** The minister cannot ignore the facts. Uranium is a hazardous material. Mining uranium is a hazardous occupation. Even exploring for uranium stirs up radioactive dust that gets into human lungs and into the water supply. I don't know how much research the Minister of Health and Social Services has actually done on the dangers of uranium, but I would certainly urge him to spend a little time doing just that. Just last weekend the Yukon Medical Association unanimously called for a review of the health, environmental and social impacts of uranium mining in the Yukon.

Does the Minister of Health and Social Services intend to ignore that clear call from the territory's doctors, or will he stand up to his colleagues and say --

**Speaker:** Thank you. You're done.

**Hon. Mr. Kenyon:** Again the member opposite concentrates on one potential use of this product. Yes, it should be investigated, and we should learn more about it. Dealing with facts is always a good thing. Sometimes it's very difficult to get the opposition to understand that, but facts are what we have to make our decisions on. Uranium has many uses: some are dangerous; many are very good. There's a good movement now afoot with the use of nuclear energy, properly done and everything else. But, again, to utilize the phraseology, perhaps the member has no interest in the environmental uses of this product.

**Mr. Edzerza:** Those are the kinds of answers you expect from an Economic Development minister. This question went to the Health and Social Services minister. What will it take to get this Minister of Health and Social Services and the government to put the well-being of Yukon people ahead of the almighty dollar?

Yesterday we heard the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources minimize the deaths of thousands of Japanese citizens, repeating the old U.S. military line about the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and saving lives. Surely we have learned through the past 62 years that uranium is not a benign substance. The fact is, this government has no policies in place to

ensure that uranium exploration and mining can take place here without putting Yukon people and the environment at risk.

Will the Minister of Health and Social Services use his influence in Cabinet to persuade his colleagues to put a moratorium on uranium exploration, at least until --

**Speaker:** Thank you.

**Hon. Mr. Kenyon:** The member opposite is concentrating on one potentially deleterious use of a product and asking that we immediately ban it. There are many uses. There are many good ones and there are many bad ones. But this is what every responsible government would have to do. They would have to look at its use in medical imaging and medical technology and look at its use in nuclear energy for power production that can be done in a very environmentally friendly way with proper controls. Yes, those are some of the things we have to look at.

Looking at something in such a narrow range -- it is very disappointing that his outlook isn't more than that. I know of three cases of deaths from water poisoning, Mr. Speaker. Would the member opposite suggest that we put a moratorium on water?

#### **Question re: Garbage burning**

**Mr. Cardiff:** It's almost laughable.

#### **Speaker's statement**

**Speaker:** Sit down. It's not appropriate to make comments about a previous question. The honourable member knows that full well. Ask your question, please.

**Mr. Cardiff:** For years Yukoners have expressed concerns about the burning of garbage at rural dumps. Burning household garbage creates toxic pollutants that we breathe in the air. These toxic chemicals also get into the ground and into the water system.

One of the toxins released in burning garbage is the dioxin TCDD -- 2,3,7,8-tetrachlorodibenzo-p-dioxin -- the most lethal human-made poison. Only radioactive waste is more toxic.

During budget debate a few days ago, I was pleased to hear the Minister of Community Services say they are working on some proposals to end burning at rural dumps. Will the minister give his assurance that the practice of burning garbage at Yukon landfills will be ended once and for all by next summer?

**Hon. Mr. Hart:** I indicated an RFP would be going out to do a study of what is the most effective way to deal with our garbage throughout the Yukon, not just in the member's riding. When that study comes in, we will abide by the recommendations of that study and put the necessary recommendations into play.

Whether that will nullify the burning of garbage in all cases, I'm not sure. I'm not a scientist, but I expect this report will give us that information and we'll go from there.

**Mr. Cardiff:** Toxins released by burning household garbage create a whole mess of health problems. There are proven links to cancer, birth defects, autism, respiratory problems and other health hazards. Burning garbage also releases greenhouse gases that contribute to climate change.

Will the minister commit to providing adequate funding in next year's budget to hire full-time landfill attendants wherever needed to ensure that no garbage is being burned?

**Hon. Mr. Hart:** As I indicated previously on this question, we as a department are going to request for proposals to go out to assess our garbage throughout the Yukon and how we can best deal with this situation. When those recommendations come in, we will review those recommendations and we will apply the necessary resources where needed and allocate them appropriately.

**Mr. Cardiff:** For years, burning at the mile 9 dump was a serious concern for residents in my riding. Now, that situation has improved considerably and I'd like to recognize the department's work on that and the community's work on that. However, there are many other landfills across the territory where burning continues. Marsh Lake, Deep Creek and Carcross have all expressed concerns about burning at their dumps. Putting a sign up saying that burning is prohibited is not enough. Limiting dump hours and installing gates with locks is not enough if people with the keys leave the gates unlocked. Hiring part-time attendants to prevent burning and divert material that can be recycled won't do the job if the government doesn't pay for enough hours of dump supervision.

In the budget next year, will the minister commit to providing enough funding for full-time attendants at rural dumps so that the territory-wide ban on burning can be strictly enforced?

**Hon. Mr. Hart:** With regard to this question, I don't know how much simpler I can make it for him. We are going out to get an assessment of all our dumps. When that assessment comes in, we will provide recommendations on how we can deal with all our rural area dumps.

We have dealt, as the member indicated, with several of the dumps that have burning facilities. With the assistance of those communities we've been reasonably successful. In some of them we haven't been -- no question about that. That's also one of the reasons we're doing it.

We currently monitor all our dump situations. We monitor our dumps for water; we monitor our dumps as required by the *Environment Act*. All our dumps have to go through YESAA on the permits. We still have to do all of that work on our current facilities right now but, in essence, we realize that improvements can be made through our dumps and we intend to do that.

#### **Question re: Justice minister, conflict of interest with YUB**

**Mr. Inverarity:** Mr. Speaker, earlier this week, the Minister of Justice declared a conflict of interest with respect to the Carmacks to Stewart Crossing transmission line project. The minister further confirmed that she has received advice from the Conflicts Commissioner on this matter. In light of this revelation, the public deserves to know the facts about the Justice minister's conflict. Will the Justice minister disclose the nature of her conflict with the transmission line and table the advice she received from the Conflicts Commissioner?

**Hon. Ms. Horne:** Mr. Speaker, I would be pleased to declare my conflict. The Minister of Justice, in accordance with

the *Public Utilities Act*, is responsible for issuing project certificates for the Carmacks to Stewart Crossing transmission line project. Stage 1 of the Carmacks to Stewart Crossing transmission line project requires a project certificate to be issued before it goes ahead. The Yukon Energy Corporation announced that it had awarded the contract for the transmission line construction to a joint venture partnership between the Northern Tutchone First Nation, Ballard Construction and Arctic Power. My brother, Roland Bailey, is the executive vice-president of Ballard Construction.

I reviewed the situation with the Yukon's Conflicts Commissioner. Both the Code of Conduct and section 7(3) of the *Legislative Assembly Act* define "family" to mean dependant relatives of the member residing in the house. It does not include the member's spouse.

**Speaker:** Thank you.

**Mr. Inverarity:** Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Justice should be setting a better example by following conflict guidelines that apply to each and every member of this House. One would expect the government minister would provide public disclosure of conflicts immediately upon realizing that a conflict of interest exists. Mr. Speaker, the minister has failed to do that. The Minister of Justice has remained silent about the conflict. This conflict was only revealed today when we questioned her directly in the House.

Why does the minister feel that she needs to be asked before she reveals these conflicts of interest?

For the record, I'd like to ask the Minister of Justice if she has any other conflicts that we should be made aware of?

**Hon. Ms. Horne:** Mr. Speaker, I am declaring this publicly today. I have not signed the certificate, and in order to avoid the perception of a conflict -- even though it is not a member of my household, nor a dependant -- I have stepped aside from the involvement in matters related to the Carmacks to Stewart Crossing transmission line.

**Mr. Inverarity:** Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Justice may not be aware that the *Conflict of Interest (Members and Ministers) Act* deals with this very clearly. The Justice minister has made public representation that she is acting on the advice of the Conflicts Commissioner. The *Conflict of Interest (Members and Ministers) Act* clearly states that under these circumstances the minister is obliged to disclose the information, and we have asked for it. I'm asking now if the Minister of Justice will comply with the *Conflict of Interest (Members and Ministers) Act* and disclose the details of her potential conflict and table the advice that she received from the Conflicts Commissioner.

**Hon. Ms. Horne:** Mr. Speaker, to avoid even the perception of a conflict, which I'm sure would be found, I have stepped aside on my own with the advice of the Conflicts Commissioner.

#### **Question re: Ambulance volunteers**

**Mr. Mitchell:** I have some questions for the minister who is taking over responsibility for our rural ambulance attendants. Earlier this year, the Minister of Health and Social Services' response to this problem was to blame the volunteers. He stated in a newspaper story that the volunteers won't negotiate.

He said that frustration and delay in significant part was caused by the two volunteer ambulance crews not coming to the table to discuss it.

Since that statement was made, the Minister of Health and Social Services was taken off this file and there has been some progress. What a coincidence. Some volunteers are back to work in Dawson. They are still off the job in Watson Lake. We are now more than four months into this mess. When is the new minister going to have it fixed?

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** It's very disappointing to see the Leader of the Official Opposition using this tactic. He ought to know full well that the statement he just made is not factual. In fact, on every occasion since volunteers chose to turn in their radios in two Yukon communities last July, when I have spoken to the public I have taken the step of ensuring that I reflected to the media the government's appreciation of the work all volunteers do and the appreciation for the strain placed on them.

As well, as I noted back in July, I indicated that the government would be responding in early fall with a proposal of how we propose to address the pressures facing volunteers. That proposal has included the very first recognition ever of remuneration for the principle of standby pay. That is being done. The member would know if he read even the government's press releases that it is the officials of Health and Social Services who are currently working on this file, on the details of the agreement prior to the transfer of EMS to Community Services.

The officials have done good work since the beginning of this, and they are continuing to do good work.

**Mr. Mitchell:** Speaking of disappointment, we don't want to hear from the minister who couldn't fix the problem; we want answers from the minister who is supposed to fix it.

So again, to the Minister of Community Services, it has been four months since workers walked off the job in frustration over this government's refusal to work with them. Some progress has been made. The government has now agreed in principle, after refusing to do so for many months, to standby pay for rural emergency medical services volunteers and to other improvements. These are positive steps.

In Watson Lake, volunteers are asking for four specific items to be addressed: two hours of standby pay for every eight hours on call, a hall with safe water, adequate parking for both ambulances in winter, a full-time paid supervisor, and the option of being directly taxed on their pay. When will the new minister have this resolved?

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** Let me point out some facts to the member opposite, which he ought to be well aware of but it is not reflected in his comments here today.

When volunteers in Dawson City and Watson Lake chose to turn in their radios, the department acted very quickly to provide interim ambulance coverage and ensure service to Yukon communities. There continues to be ambulance service.

We're also very pleased that the volunteers in Dawson City have chosen to return to providing services. We appreciate their work. I thank them for their continued commitment in this area, as well as thank the volunteers in all Yukon communities who

provide ambulance service and other emergency response services for the time they take out of their life in that area.

Again, as I pointed out to the member, we followed the timelines we had committed to in responding with a proposal. That proposal was presented to the chair of the rural volunteer crew in early fall. The proposal and the details of it are currently being handled by the staff of the Department of Health and Social Services. The details are being worked out and we hope to have that resolved prior to the transfer in December to Community Services. We're following the timelines we committed to.

As I've said before, we will not negotiate in the media. The details are being worked out in a very respectful fashion and we appreciate the work of volunteers.

Specifically with regard to the member's question about the buildings, I guess I'm out of time; I'll have to respond in the next response.

**Mr. Mitchell:** Well, Mr. Speaker, the supervisor of the volunteer ambulance workers in Watson Lake said recently that the Minister of Health and Social Services had not visited Watson Lake to address the issue and that the Premier seemed to be in no hurry to meet with them either. It's probably just as well that the Minister of Health and Social Services didn't go to Watson Lake, because he has proven that he has been unable to move this issue forward. Progress has begun to be made since it was announced that the minister was going to be removed from this file. So again, to the minister who will be taking over responsibility for this situation, the Department of Health and Social Services has hired a firm from Alberta to help resolve this issue. Sierra Systems, I believe, is the name of the company. Will the minister release any reports that he has received from this company?

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** Again, it's obvious that the Leader of the Official Opposition is sticking to his script. He is not reflecting the facts. He would be well advised in the interest of serving Yukon's public to do his homework, to read even the press releases and not to try to sensationalize an issue.

We appreciate the pressures that are placed on volunteers to provide services. We appreciate the fact that, in fact, volunteers in Dawson City have chosen to re-engage. As I said in my two previous responses to the member opposite, the details of the agreement are currently being handled, as they always have been, by the hard-working staff of the Department of Health and Social Services working with the representatives appointed by the rural volunteer ambulance crews. But we will not negotiate those matters in the media, nor in this Assembly.

Specific to the response that I did not have time for in my previous response, the issue of housing for the ambulance in Watson Lake is something that we recognize. In fact, if the member will check past issues of the newspaper, we issued a request for proposals for new space this summer. There was no response. No one provided a bid for new space, and right now, options are currently being worked on for providing improved space in the area of the shelter for the ambulance in Watson Lake. But again, I point out to the member opposite, we have always acted in a respectful manner. We are following our commitments, and it will be done.

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

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

### GOVERNMENT PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

#### MOTIONS OTHER THAN GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

##### Motion No. 240

**Clerk:** Motion No. 240, standing in the name of Mr. Nordick.

**Speaker:** It is moved by the Member for Klondike

THAT this House urges the Yukon government to continue implementing its strategy for supporting childcare and early learning, by increasing the budget for childcare by \$1 million annually over a period of five years, beginning in the 2007-08 fiscal year and ending in the 2011-12 fiscal year when annual funding for childcare totals \$10.3 million to address the following priorities:

(1) increasing the support provided to low-income families by increasing the childcare subsidy rate by 25 percent on December 1, 2007;

(2) raising the maximum family income eligibility level for the childcare subsidy to ensure that more Yukon families can benefit, effective December 1, 2007;

(3) further supporting wages for childcare workers, with the goal of reducing rates parents pay for childcare;

(4) facilitating increased training and education for childcare workers;

(5) enhancing support for children with disabilities;

(6) collaborating with First Nations, community groups, nongovernmental organizations and childcare operators to provide an integrated system that better serves the educational and cultural needs of parents and their children in all Yukon communities;

(7) creating more available spaces for children of all ages, especially for those younger than 18 months; and

(8) facilitating the development of healthy families through increased support to at-risk families.

**Mr. Nordick:** I rise today to speak to Motion No. 240. I would like to start today by thanking the many individuals whose daily lives revolve around caring for and educating our children. These individuals are the backbone of our future - the youth of this territory. I would also like to thank the minister and the officials of the Department of Health and Social Services for the work they are currently undertaking and for the accomplishments they have achieved to date.

I would like to give a brief discussion of what the Yukon Party government has accomplished so far.

In the election of 2002, we committed to ensure Yukoners have access to quality, affordable childcare services. We committed to creating an independent child's advocate counsel to act on behalf of the child, to meet the day-to-day needs of children and to investigate complaints of child welfare services. We also committed to provide a child tax credit for low-income

families and to parents who choose to remain home to raise their children. We also committed to work with childcare centres, day homes, Yukon College, and nongovernmental organizations to increase the training of childcare workers and maintain the quality of standards.

We also committed to exclude child support payments in the calculation of tenants' rent for Yukon Housing Corporation. We also committed to extend legal aid coverage for persons seeking permanent child custody orders. We also committed to continue to strengthen the enforcement of the maintenance support program for single parents to ensure children receive the support they are entitled to by law. We also committed to establish a family-centred approach to childcare that will keep families together.

In 2003, it was very evident that the childcare system was in crisis and would be unable to carry on without additional financial assistance. This government established a childcare working group to develop recommendations for a four-year plan for childcare.

At that time, knowing the problems that were caused by previous governments' neglect, a one-time-only interim funding in the amount of \$430,000 was added to the direct operating program with an additional \$215,000 being added during the supplementary budget, for a total of \$675,000 in the 2003-04 fiscal year. This funding was split with 50 percent going toward supporting wages for childcare workers and 50 percent going to support operational costs of childcare facilities, based on set-up spaces.

Mr. Speaker, when the four-year plan of the Yukon early childhood education and care was released, the Yukon Department of Health and Social Services responded by providing funding to address some of the primary issues identified. This funding included a \$675,000 increase to the direct operating grant for the 2004-05 fiscal year with an additional increase of three percent in 2005-06 and five percent in 2006-07. This additional funding was to be split in half, with half of the funding directed toward wages and half going toward operating costs. There was another \$10,000 in additional funding for the support childcare fund in 2004-05 and increases of \$5,000 in 2005-06 and 2006-07. There was also \$10,000 provided in each of the next three fiscal years beginning in 2004-05 to hold an annual stakeholders meeting; \$20,000 was provided in each of the next three fiscal years beginning in 2004-05 to go toward a public education campaign to heighten the awareness of the value of early childhood providers.

Mr. Speaker, there was also \$80,000 in 2004-05 with increases to \$100,000 in two subsequent years for the capital development fund.

In the December 2005 childcare priority survey, the Department of Health and Social Services carried out the childcare priority survey with family day homes, childcare centres and other childcare stakeholders. The results of this survey identified specific areas for additional funding for childcare: increased wages, sustainability of childcare programs, increased subsidies, review of funding structures, public awareness campaigns and increased support for childcare for special

needs. Results also confirmed that the issues noted in the four-year plan were still relevant.

Mr. Speaker, in 2006 the Yukon childcare survey was conducted for the purpose of assisting the Department of Health and Social Services child care services unit to better understand the concerns that users of licensed childcare services have with the daycare services, to address the concerns users of licensed childcare services have with the regulations governing childcare services, and how the child care services unit can improve their services to the users of licensed childcare services. Information gathered from the survey will be used for planning for changes and improvements to the current system.

Respondents were divided fairly evenly between the four types of licensed childcare: family day homes, First Nation daycare, for-profit daycare and non-profit daycare. Ten percent said the children needed additional support to address physical development or behavioural needs. Almost all said these needs were being met with the common need being speech therapy. Over 80 percent of the respondents said they chose the particular type of care they did because the overall quality of service provided was good, the hours of operation met their needs, the location of the operation was convenient and there was space available. Almost 90 percent of the respondents said they were satisfied with their present childcare arrangements. Seventy-five percent indicated satisfaction with the amount they paid for these arrangements.

Respondents' priorities for action were: increasing the wages of childcare providers, decreasing the cost for low-income families, assisting in recruitment, training and retention of childcare workers, and also increasing funding for children with special needs.

Concerns regarding quality of care and regulation issues were: children sick from being in care, limited activities or programs for children, staff working without proper qualifications or training, children not properly supervised, accident or injuries to children going unreported, children possibly being at risk of harm being in care, and children not receiving proper nutrition. These were ideas brought forward from the 2006 Yukon childcare survey of Yukon licensed childcare services questionnaire.

In its platform in 2006, the Yukon Party government committed to deliver a territory-wide childcare early learning strategy for children and parents based on the following priorities: creating more available spaces for children of all ages, especially for those younger than 18 months; we also committed to reducing rates parents pay for childcare; we also committed to increased financial support and reduced disincentives, such as taxes, to allow parents to participate in the labour force.

Mr. Speaker, we also committed to ensure that parents with children in kindergarten are not charged full-time preschool rates for childcare. We also committed to a five-year plan to address issues of concern to day home operators and childcare centres, including training, education, wages and staff. We also committed to a greater focus on early learning for preschool children and to collaborate with First Nation community groups and non-government organizations to provide an integrated system that better serves educational and



cultural needs of parents and their children in all Yukon communities.

Mr. Speaker, we also committed to continuing to strengthen the enforcement of the maintenance support program for parents, ensuring children receive the support they are entitled to by law. We also committed to eliminate the claw-back of the child tax credit from income tax. In partnership with the N.W.T. and Nunavut, we continue to emphasize the need for a national childcare agreement with Canada that reflects the needs of the north.

In May of 2007, the childcare capital fund was announced. The childcare capital fund established \$1.3 million received from the Government of Canada through the early learning and child care initiative. Objectives of this fund included to increase childcare spaces, with a focus on increased spaces for infants and children with special needs. Creation or enhancement of spaces that will result in the provision of childcare systems and better serve the educational and cultural needs of parents and their children in all Yukon communities was also an objective of this capital fund.

With this fund, the Yukon Party government partnered with Tr'ondek Hwech'in in an early childhood development program. Integrating cultures provides wonderful opportunities for reciprocated respect and growth among people with different backgrounds. Children who participate in programs at the Tr'inke Zho Daycare are learning to recognize commonalities among each other while at the same time being proud of their differences. Without cultural barriers they can develop an appreciation for, rather than a fear of, diversity. Mr. Speaker, this new facility that the Yukon Party government partnered in with Tr'ondek Hwech'in has been well-designed for incorporating traditional teaching and will provide enough space for all the different age groups enrolling, as well as providing additional opportunities for nurturing cultural development and sensitivity. For instance, it will enable older children to engage more frequently with the younger children and serve as role models.

Finally, a large, well-designed facility will assist with the promotion of family involvement and is, in our estimation, an important component of quality childcare programs, not to mention a valued element in collective cultures. The centre is built on land in the north end of Dawson and will include the development and construction of playgrounds.

Providing much-needed programs for the effective delivery of management of Tr'ondek Hwech'in in the early childhood development program is a benefit of this partnership. Providing more needed space in the community is also a benefit of this partnership. Providing space for community children and youth programming is also a benefit. Providing a much-needed community play and recreation area in the north end of Dawson is also a benefit of this partnership.

Addressing the long-term need to retain and enhance the culture and Han language, as set out in the *Tr'ondek Hwech'in Final Agreement*, will result from this partnership. It will also provide an opportunity for parents and children in the community to develop a much better cross-cultural understanding and acceptance. It will also allow parents and families more ability to engage in the formal economy, providing access to early

childhood development programs. It will promote lifelong learning and an increased educational attainment level.

We will also provide funding through the childcare CAP fund to assist with the purchase and upgrade of playground equipment and toys. Family day homes receive \$1,000. Childcare centres with 25 spaces or less receive \$5,000. Childcare centres with 25 spaces or more receive \$10,000.

Speaking about playgrounds, the government also partnered with Tr'ondek Hwech'in to provide \$150,000 for a new playground beside the new partnership in the daycare in the north end of Dawson City.

We announced that we will increase funding to childcare by \$5 million over the next five years, with priority areas being staff wages and decreasing the cost of childcare for low-income families.

This announcement was made in May of this year. To add to the list of advancements made by this government, we also announced a 30-percent increase to the wage portion of the direct operating program retroactive to April 1. This was announced in August of this year.

Moving to an hourly wage model will provide a clearer understanding about the amount the government contributes to the wages of childcare operators and workers. This will reflect the actual hours worked up to 160 hours per month and will allow for increased accountability as it is hoped that the increased wages will encourage more individuals to pursue a career in early childhood development. Once again, in September of this year we announced amendments to the *Income Tax Act* to introduce two new childcare credits, effective for the 2007 income tax year.

In closing, this November the Yukon Party government increased childcare funding to assist low-income families. Subsidy rates will increase by an average of 25 percent. Infant and special-needs children will see an increase from \$500 a month to \$625 a month.

Childcare will increase from \$450 to \$565. An example and scenario that will be as a result of this funding: the current subsidy for a parent with one infant in childcare, with an annual income of approximately \$25,000, is \$6,000 per year or \$500 per month; the new subsidy will be \$7,500 per year or \$625 per month. That means that parents will go from paying \$2,500 a year to \$1,250 per year -- so from \$209 a month to \$105 a month. Subsidies paid by the department currently are \$3,500 a year. It will be increased to \$6,250 a year.

Currently, \$291 a month is paid by the department, which will be increased to \$520 a month. Another example is a single parent with one infant, one toddler, one school-aged child, with an annual net income of \$40,000 -- currently the subsidy available is \$1,175 a month; the new subsidy would be \$1,465 a month. The amounts paid by parents are currently \$416 a month. The new subsidy will be \$208 per month.

The department pays \$759 a month currently, which will be increased to \$1,257 per month. The net effect of the amendments to the childcare subsidy program is a 67-percent increase to the subsidy amount paid by the department in this scenario. The previous scenario I suggested was an increase of 78 per-

cent to the subsidy amount paid by the Department of Health and Social Services.

Another example is a two-parent family with one infant and one preschool child, with an annual income of \$40,000. The current subsidy is \$950 a month; the new subsidy would be \$1,150 a month. The amount the parents pay is currently \$416 a month; the new subsidy will be leave \$200 a month the parent will have to pay.

The department currently pays \$6,400 a year; the new subsidy the department will pay will be \$11,300 a year. This is for a two-parent family with one infant and one preschool child, with an annual net income of \$40,000.

The net effect of this amendment to the childcare subsidy program is a 77-percent increase to the subsidy amount paid by the department.

Once again, the three examples range from a 78-percent increase, 67-percent increase and a 77-percent increase in subsidy paid by the department to these families.

We are enhancing support for low-income families, and we will help people on social assistance enter the workforce.

Thank you.

**Mr. Fairclough:** I'd like to respond to this motion as it was presented by the Member for Klondike. We on this side of the House do support many of the initiatives that are outlined in this motion.

The Member for Klondike is urging his own government to continue to implement a strategy. We already know that the government is doing this and he's asking them to continue to do it, even though he may have had doubts that they may be changing their mind in there. We thank the member for bringing that forward and we will be supporting this, although we do have some questions in regard to some issues he raised.

In his first priority he said that one of the priorities is to increase the support provided to low-income families by increasing the childcare subsidy rate by 25 percent on December 1, 2007. We certainly support that. I wonder where the idea came from. We have raised this issue in the House in the past. We have talked about it in motions and it is certainly an issue that has been out there and brought forward to government, so I'm glad they were acting on it and we certainly support that.

His second priority was raising the maximum family income eligibility level for the childcare subsidy to ensure that more families can benefit from it, effective December 1, 2007. That is natural to follow up on the first priority. We on this side of the House also support that.

He goes on to list yet another in his motion, "(3) further supporting wages for childcare workers, with the goal of reducing rates parents pay for childcare."

I'm sure that the member opposite, the mover of this motion, has heard that issue come from this side of the House. We have mentioned it many times in our speeches and in our replies to budget speeches and so on, time and time again. We're glad again that the government side is open to ideas coming from the Official Opposition. The childcare workers in the Yukon have also mentioned this, and it is now reflected in a motion from the member opposite, and we do support that.

Point (4) states: "facilitating increased training and education for childcare workers." We support this point that the member opposite put in his motion too, and it just goes along with the motion that we tabled in the past in regard to increasing training for childcare workers. As a matter of fact, I think we've gone beyond that. It is good to see at least that the government side is looking into this and urging the government to continue to implement some of these.

"(5) enhancing support for children with disabilities." We support this point in the motion too, Mr. Speaker.

"(6) collaborating with First Nations, community groups, nongovernmental organizations and childcare operators to provide an integrated system that better serves the educational and cultural needs of parents and their children in all Yukon communities." It would be nice if the mover of the motion could clearly spell out exactly how they are going to do this and how they are going to implement (6) in this motion.

If anything, in all eight of the points that have been listed, this is the area in which we would like to know exactly what the government is going to do and how they are going to do that.

We feel, on this side of the House in the Official Opposition, that they have failed many times in working with communities and community groups and accurately reflecting the needs and wants of the communities and putting them into government action.

So, if anything, maybe the mover of the motion could elaborate quite extensively on the sixth point so that everyone can be very clear on how he sees his government continuing to implement the strategy, particularly on this point.

The other two points -- creating more available spaces for children of all ages, especially those younger than 18 months -- are a given, too. We all recognize that it's very tough to get into a daycare or a day home. I have a friend who approached me and she had phoned everywhere around Whitehorse. She was trying to get back into work and she wanted to see her young child in a day home, but that was very difficult to do. It just so happens that she was successful on the very last call she made and it was in a daycare that was very, very close to her place, too. Mr. Chair, of course, we do support that.

The last point: "(8) facilitating the development of healthy families through the increased support to at-risk families." I don't know how many times this point has been mentioned, even by the government side. When speeches have been made -- the budget speeches in the spring -- it has been said repeatedly by many members of this side of the House that we, too, do support that.

We do not wish to speak long on the motion brought forward by the Member for Klondike. We do support it and will be giving our support from the Official Opposition.

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** It's a pleasure to rise in the Assembly today in support of the motion tabled by my colleague, the Member for Klondike. I enjoyed the -- I believe it was a comedy routine that the Member for Mayo-Tatchun just presented here, at least some portions of it.

**Unparliamentary language**

**Speaker:** That's an inappropriate comment from the Minister of Health and Social Services. He knows that full well and shouldn't do it again. The minister has the floor.

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I respect your ruling. I did find, though, that some of the comments made by the Member for Mayo-Tatchun were certainly humorous in nature, if I may say that, in their lack of association with the facts.

The member attempted to claim that the Liberals laid out a plan for investing in childcare and that we simply followed their plan. Now, the member, I'm sure, has read a nice little document entitled, *Building Yukon's Future Together: A Clear Vision for a Bright Future*. In case he hasn't, it's still on-line; it was the Yukon Party's 2006 election platform. In that platform, we committed to building on the investment that we had put into childcare in the last mandate, which, as you should be aware, Mr. Speaker, included a 40-percent increase to the direct operating grant.

The commitments we made included delivering a territory-wide childcare and early learning strategy for children and parents based on the following priorities: creating more available spaces for children of all ages, especially for those younger than 18 months; reducing the rates parents pay for childcare; increasing financial support and reducing disincentives such as taxes to allow parents to participate in the labour force; ensuring that parents with children in kindergarten are not charged full-time preschool rates for their children; a new five-year plan to address issues of concern to day home operators and childcare centres, including training, education and wages for staff; a greater focus on early learning for preschool children; and collaborating with First Nations, community groups and non-government organizations to provide an integrated system that better serves the educational and cultural needs of parents and their children in all Yukon communities.

To that end, this government has delivered on what we committed to, as this is reflected in the member's motion and, of course, in announcements that we made earlier this month as well as earlier in the 2007-08 fiscal year. This government has followed through with our commitments to invest in childcare. We have made the commitment to increase the budget for childcare by \$1 million annually over a period of five years, beginning in the 2007-08 fiscal year and ending in the 2011-12 fiscal year, when annual funding for childcare totals \$10.3 million.

Now, the Member for Mayo-Tatchun, on behalf of his caucus, attempted to claim credit for the increase and claim it was their idea first. But I have to remind the member, as I reminded his leader earlier in this session, that there's a big discrepancy in numbers -- a vast, vast difference in numbers -- between what this government has committed to invest and what the Official Opposition Liberals promised to invest. We have committed to \$5 million, an increase in \$5 million by the end of a five-year period to the childcare budget. They committed to \$2.5 million. Mr. Speaker, anyone with a calculator can tell the

difference between \$5 million and \$2.5 million, and it is double. This government has invested; they only promised.

Through the member's motion, he urges that we increase the support provided to low-income families by increasing the childcare subsidy rate by 25 percent, effective December 1 of this year, and I am pleased to note as we announced earlier that, in fact, we are doing that and to thank him for his motion supporting that. As well, we're raising the maximum family income eligibility level for the childcare subsidy to ensure that more Yukon families can benefit, effective December 1, 2007.

Earlier this year, we provided an increased support to childcare operators for wages for childcare workers, with the goal of reducing rates parents pay for childcare. As committed to in the announcement and as noted in this motion, we will be working further in investing in this area in future fiscal years.

Facilitating increased training and education for childcare workers is something we have committed to and will continue to allocate funding for.

I'm pleased the Official Opposition is supporting this, but they have to recognize the facts, as anyone with a calculator can, that what this government has committed and what the Member for Klondike urges in his motion are exactly double what the Official Opposition Liberals promised in their previous commitment. I know the temptation to try to claim credit for things, but the members would better serve the Yukon public if they had the forthrightness to acknowledge that this government has gone beyond what they promised and has done so during the last mandate and are continuing to do so today, for the good of Yukoners and families. A key part of increasing the subsidy for low-income families supports our commitment to assisting those on social assistance to enter the workforce because, based on the review done by officials of Health and Social Services in reviewing social assistance rates and the structure, they have identified that the cost of childcare is one of the significant challenges facing low-income families. We are pleased to provide this investment to assist them in being in the labour force, in providing for their families to help them build their own personal resources, rather than relying on social assistance.

This increased investment in childcare -- the increased childcare subsidy for low-income families -- will assist them in entering the workforce if they are not already in it and, when they are in the workforce, it will assist those families with low income in remaining in the workforce and continuing to build a future for themselves and for their children.

Mr. Speaker, examples of this increase include Yukon parents who are currently receiving the subsidy; they will see an average increase of 70 percent in the amount of assistance they receive from government through that subsidy. For example, a single parent with an infant in care and a net salary of \$25,000 will see his or her subsidy increase from \$3,500 per year to \$6,250 per year -- an increase of 78 percent. A single mother with a net income of \$40,000 and three children -- an infant, a toddler, and a school-aged child -- will receive \$15,080 per year in childcare subsidies, up from a previous level of \$9,100, which represents a 67-percent increase. These subsidies, of course, support low-income families, not just single parents.

Another example of how families would benefit includes a family of four, with two parents and two children -- one infant and one preschool child -- with a net income of \$40,000; they would receive \$11,300 per year in support -- an increase of 77 percent from the previous level of \$6,400.

In addition, more families will be eligible to receive the subsidy with the changes and, of course, this is all part of an investment by this government -- increased investment in the area of childcare of \$1 million over a five-year period, bringing the level from \$5.3 million, where it stood during the 2006-07 fiscal year -- that being the annual funding level for all childcare services -- to a new level at the end of that five-year period of \$10.3 million per fiscal year.

I can see why the members are trying to claim credit for it, but the members know we are the ones who delivered. It was through the hard work of officials and through the investment of this government that these changes are being achieved.

Again I thank the Member for Klondike for bringing this issue up in the House.

Another area is collaborating with First Nations, community groups, non-government organizations and childcare operators to provide an integrated system that better serves the educational and cultural needs of parents and their children in all Yukon communities. One example of this includes the support that we provided earlier this year to the Tr'ondek Hwech'in First Nation in the riding of the Member for Klondike, to assist them with the cost of constructing their new daycare centre. The Member for Klondike was instrumental in bringing this issue to our attention and working with his constituents and the First Nation in that community to bring this issue to our attention. We have been pleased to partner with them in that area, and that is also coupled with investment of the Tr'ondek Hwech'in First Nation in building that new building to provide services to their citizens and other residents of the area.

The Member for Klondike has also noted in his motion the support for creating more available spaces for children of all ages, especially for those younger than 18 months. That includes partnerships such as the partnership money provided to the Tr'ondek Hwech'in First Nation I just referred to under the childcare capital fund. It also includes support through other areas of funding within the department for the creation of spaces, as well as applications to that childcare capital fund.

We were also pleased to utilize that childcare capital fund to provide \$225,000 for the purchase of toys and other equipment for all childcare centres and day homes. Based on the size of the home, they were provided with an allocation to assist them in purchasing toys and other such things.

The eighth item that the member mentions in his motion is facilitating the development of healthy families through increased support to at-risk families. One way that we do that, of course, is through the healthy families program, which is currently operating out of Whitehorse. We will be able to begin expanding it -- through funding provided under here -- to other areas of the Yukon. The first area we actually will be expanding that program to is Dawson City in the member's riding of Klondike. We will be providing that program by expanding the healthy families program in that community.

So, Mr. Speaker, I sincerely appreciate the member bringing this forward, and I'm glad to hear that the members are jumping on board this train now that it has left the station. Again, as I indicated, this is, of course, a part of a process that this government began back in the last mandate by providing funding through what was then the four-year plan. This followed a presentation that was made to the Premier and the previous Minister of Health and Social Services by the Yukon Childcare Association and Society of Yukon Family Day Homes where they stated that the childcare system was in crisis at that time, which of course was immediately following the watch of the then Liberal government.

The then Liberal government and the previous NDP government had failed to address this area. Despite making grandiose promises on this issue locally and at the federal level, they did not address this area. This was shown in the most glaring example by the former federal Liberal government's record of promising -- for 13 years -- an investment in childcare before they actually delivered on that election commitment that they first made in the red book of 1993.

Contrary to that record -- in stark contrast -- this government is doing exactly what we said we would do. We have provided the funding; we have invested to ensure that the Yukon's childcare system remains one of the two best funded systems in the country to provide the support to parents, particularly those with low incomes, to ensure that they are able to enter the workforce and continue to build a future for themselves and for their families.

In the last mandate, as I indicated, we increased the budget by 40 percent for the direct operating grant program, as well as through the development of a four-year plan, and set out a mission statement of values and vision for childcare with five strategic issues, including improving programs and enhancing work environments in Yukon, increasing support for families; providing professional standards, quality and accountability; sustainability in funding of quality programs, and increased communication and public awareness.

In the 2004-05 fiscal year, that increase included a \$675,000 top-up to the base amount of the direct operating program, with subsequent increases in 2005-06 of three percent and five percent, respectively. Fifty percent of that amount was targeted to increased wages and the remaining amount was targeted to support operational costs of childcare facilities. As well, \$10,000 was added to the supported childcare fund in that fiscal year, with additional increases of \$5,000 in each of the next two years.

In December 2005, the department carried out a childcare priority survey with family day homes, childcare centres and other childcare stakeholders with the objectives of identifying an order of priority. The top areas for investment in childcare were providing input to government on where additional federal funding should be allocated, and confirming that the issues identified in the four-year plan were still valid and were still the main issues of priority.

The results of the survey identified specific areas for additional funding for childcare, including increased wages, the sustainability of childcare programs, increased subsidy, a re-

view of the funding structure, a public awareness campaign and increased support of childcare for special-needs children.

As the member has noted in his motion, these priorities are still valid today and are being supported through the investment this government is providing.

I understand I am running out of my allotted speaking time, but another couple of areas I'd like to touch on before concluding is noting that, in March 2006, a childcare services user questionnaire was sent out to parents by the Bureau of Statistics to better understand the concerns users of licensed childcare have with daycare services and to understand the concerns users of licensed childcare services have with the regulations governing childcare services, as well as how the child care services unit could improve services and plan for changes or improvements to the current system.

In November 2006, a childcare regulation review survey was sent to all childcare operators, with the results compiled in February of the next year and under review by the Yukon Childcare Board.

I believe I'm running very short on time, Mr. Speaker, so I would conclude by thanking the Member for Klondike for bringing this issue forward to the House's attention. It's a pleasure to stand up in support of this motion, supporting the government's announcement of an annual increase to childcare of \$1 million per year, beginning this fiscal year and concluding in the 2011-12 fiscal year, and the subsidy changes that, effective December 1, will support Yukoners with low incomes in accessing childcare services. The increase to their subsidy will amount to an average of 70 percent.

**Mr. Mitchell:** I'm pleased to rise today in support of Motion No. 240 from the Member for Klondike, and thank him for bringing forward his motion. I would say that early childhood development and childcare are very important topics for the future of the Yukon. We on this side have spent a lot of time pushing these issues for early childhood development and childcare needs over the past two years.

I would say that much of this motion really addresses undertakings that this government has already publicly made, things that are effectively a done deal. So while I do agree and would like to lend support to the importance of the topic, I don't think there is much benefit in using too much of this House's time today in debating decisions that have already been made and announced.

Having been an advocate for increased funding to support childcare workers, daycares and day homes and parents who have children in daycare, I will again reiterate that I'm pleased that the government has finally acted on these issues.

Now, I listen carefully to the Member for Lake Laberge, and I would just note that we can debate the approach or the numbers, and we can argue over who said what when. I don't think there is much benefit in doing so, and there is no doubt that the recent announcements from the minister will be appreciated by families and daycare providers and are helpful.

I would just point out a couple of things, that the minister should have more of an open-door policy so that his colleague from Klondike wouldn't have to bring these motions forward

and he would just be able to walk down the hallway and find out it's being done. As far as the minister's assertions that we've jumped on the train late and so forth, while simultaneously saying nobody should take credit -- I think we should just point out that it's pressure from both opposition parties on this side of the House over the first five years of their mandate that has brought them to the point of actually doing something. Without that pressure from the Official Opposition and third party caucuses, we're not sure that it ever would have happened.

Now, most of the items, certainly the first five, have been announced by government, and I don't see that there is much point in speaking to them. But (6), "collaborating with First Nations, community groups, non-governmental organizations and childcare operators to provide an integrated system that better serves the educational and cultural needs of parents and their children in all Yukon communities" -- now, my colleague, the Member for Mayo-Tatchun, has already spoken to this. I think it's important that we have this open discussion and that we collaborate with First Nations and consult. It would be nice to have seen the word "consultation," not just "collaboration," since it has specific meaning under the final agreements.

I'd like to broaden it a little, and in the little time that I'll use today I want to speak to how I feel what has been announced is just a starting point for childcare and early childhood development in the territory, and we can do more. We can do much more. I believe the real focus should turn to early childhood development and how we can improve the educational aspects of our children's early years. A broader, more long-term vision needs to be presented here. This really should be moved from a health issue to an educational one.

While I understand the historical funding reasons why daycare and day homes have received their funding through Health and Social Services, I feel that it is in many ways the wrong department. As long as we continue to look at this as a social services issue, we will focus primarily on providing a safe place for our children to be when their parents cannot be looking after them. That is certainly a priority, but it is not the only priority.

We need to focus on having better educated care providers and being able to provide them with appropriate compensation for the important task they are undertaking. We are entrusting them with the care and education of our most precious resource -- our children. I mean, just yesterday we were speaking in tribute on National Child Day. The childcare providers need to be seen as more than just caregivers. Their jobs are much more than this, and this is what I believe we should be concentrating on.

We don't want just childcare, we want quality childcare. We need to concentrate on the safety of our children, but we need to also have quality programs, we need adequately trained staff and, of course, we need the adequate pay and benefits to attract and keep qualified and quality people in this field. They really are a type of teacher and should be almost educated in the same manner -- and perhaps paid in the same manner -- as we do with our other educators.

We're not suggesting that the government take over this area. The providers are doing a good job with the limited re-

sources that have been traditionally provided to them, but we can be there to aid parents in affording the quality care that they want for their children. I've asked this question before and I will ask it again: why would we pay someone \$65,000, \$75,000, \$85,000 a year to teach our children when they are five years old, but then pay someone \$13, \$15, or perhaps \$18 per hour at the most, to teach the very same children when they are three and four years old?

Every study that one reads indicates that children are at their most impressionable stage in those preschool years. Why don't we acknowledge this, as is done in other countries, and insist on having the most qualified, best educated people involved in the care of our children from the outset? I think this is the discussion we need to have over the long term.

We need to be asking whether a system that developed ad hoc over the past two decades or so, a system that was initially developed as primarily organized babysitting but which has since evolved into much more, is the system that meets and will meet our needs in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

If our children are to grow up into the healthy and productive adults we want them to be, well-educated, ready to compete in an increasingly competitive work environment, I believe these are the questions we need to be asking and answering.

I know there are other members who wish to speak, so I won't use all my time here today. I just wanted to get these few things on the record.

Again, I thank the Member for Klondike for bringing the issue forward, albeit we didn't necessarily need to have a full debate on this today.

**Mr. Edzerza:** I'm not sure if the word "no-brainer" is unparliamentary, but if it isn't, then the word fits well with Motion No. 240, brought forward by the Member for Klondike.

Who in their right mind would vote down increased support to make a child's life better? It's a necessity in life.

I am pleased to rise in response to this motion on behalf of the New Democratic Party caucus. Before I comment on the substance of Motion No. 240, I would just like to mention how strange it is to see a government private member once again urging his own government to do something the minister responsible has already announced he is doing. It's like carrying coal to Newcastle. Maybe the members opposite need the exercise, but Newcastle doesn't need any more coal.

However, if the government side chooses to spend the afternoon patting itself on the back, then so be it.

As to the substance of this motion, I wouldn't need much time to deal with that. In fact, I wouldn't even bother with general debate or go straight to line-by-line consideration.

"(1) increasing the support provided to low-income families by increasing the childcare subsidy rate by 25 percent on December 1, 2007." The NDP caucus has been pushing for exactly that for ages. Of course we support it.

"(2) raising the maximum family income eligibility level for the childcare subsidy..." Of course we support that as well.

"(3) further supporting wages for childcare workers..." -- absolutely. That's something else our caucus has been fighting

for, for years. Make it a reality and make it substantial. The government has lots of money. My goodness, Mr. Speaker, this motion is starting to sound more and more like the NDP platform in the last election and the one before that.

"(4) facilitating increased training and education for childcare workers." Mainstream NDP policy -- of course we support it.

"(5) enhancing support for children with disabilities." Agreed -- let's get on with it.

(6) -- collaborating with partners on an integrated system that meets the needs of parents with a child -- of course. Let's hope the government really means it this time when it comes to the collaborating and consulting.

"(7) creating more available spaces for children of all ages..." Yes, of course. What has this government been waiting for?

(8) -- increasing support for at-risk families. Yes, the NDP caucus supports that too.

To conclude, Mr. Speaker, our caucus agrees with this motion. We feel that government action is long past due and there's no need to waste any more time in getting on with the job. Our caucus will be voting in favour. In fact, we are ready for you to put the question.

**Hon. Ms. Horne:** I rise today, and I'm pleased to support Motion No. 240, brought forward by the Member for Klondike. This increase will have a huge impact on families struggling to make ends meet. The increase will vary for individual families to determine the subsidy rate, and it depends on a number of variables, including net family income, number of people who reside in the family, the number and ages of the children and where in the Yukon these families live.

There are different rural and urban subsidy rates. Because of family income, number and ages of children, that subsidy will vary. Families with fewer or older children will receive only a partial subsidy, but all will receive more. In addition, an increase in the allowable net salary will increase the number of families eligible for partial subsidy.

This is another step in this government's commitment to provide quality childcare in the Yukon for all Yukon children. I'm extremely pleased with the efforts that this government has made to increase support for the childcare system in the Yukon over the past several years.

In August of this year, the government provided funding to operators to assist them with staffing costs and in the recruitment and retention of daycare workers. In May we provided \$300,000 to the Tr'ondek Hwech'in First Nation to improve and expand childcare services in Dawson City. By 2011, the childcare program in the Yukon will benefit from a total investment of \$10.3 million annually. This money will be used throughout the Yukon to benefit parents, children, childcare operators and staff.

Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased this government remains committed to ensuring quality childcare for all Yukon children and will continue to work with the childcare community and the Yukon Child Care Board to build healthy families and improve the quality of life for all Yukoners.

Under this government in the last many months, the Yukon labour markets have been very strong, meaning that families are employed and wages are rising. Generally that's very good news for Yukon.

The well-being of children starts with families who have adequate incomes and good housing and decent childcare. We think we are taking a fairly serious stab at this problem in helping Yukon families deal with some of these issues.

Thank you.

**Hon. Mr. Rouble:** It is my honour and pleasure to rise in the Assembly today and enter into debate on the motion brought forward by the Member for Klondike.

It's a very different world we live in today from say 20 or 40 or 60 years ago. It is now commonplace to have dual-income families where both parents are working, often out of necessity and also by choice. We also live in a situation where we have many people who are single-parent families who must work in an employment situation to bring in their paycheque in order to raise the family.

We are now in a situation where daycare and childcare are much more important issues than they were in times gone by. Now, for most people, daycare is the norm.

In the beautiful Southern Lakes, I also have many constituents out there who have made other choices about their personal lifestyle and how they are going to live and raise the family. But I think that in the majority of our larger centres, and indeed, here in Whitehorse, and also in many of our other rural communities, the issue of daycare is very important. Indeed, daycare is important in the Southern Lakes for some families.

It is an important issue and it is one that we as a community need to respond to.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in the last election, the Yukon Party put forward a commitment that we would deliver a territory-wide childcare and early learning strategy for children and parents based on the principles of creating more spaces for children of all ages -- especially for those younger than 18 months and that we would work to reduce the rates parents pay for childcare. We would increase funding support and reduce disincentives such as taxes to allow parents to participate in the labour force. We would ensure that parents with children in kindergarten are not charged full-time preschool rates for their childcare and that a new five-year plan to address issues of concern to day home operators and childcare centres, including: training, education and wages for staff. There would be a greater focus on early learning for preschool children and that we would collaborate with First Nations, community groups and nongovernmental organizations to provide an integrated system for better serving the educational and cultural needs of parents and their children in all Yukon communities.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am very proud of the work that this government has done to create such a financial situation where we are in a position to be able to make these investments. It is through the hard work of the various different ministries involved that we are able to progress and live up to the commit-

ments that were made and, indeed, to accomplish the commitments that were made in the platform during the election.

Mr. Speaker, this motion has some very key points to it. It looks to increase the support provided to low-income families. I hear support from all Members of the Legislative Assembly for this. It seeks to raise the maximum family income eligibility level. So, Mr. Speaker, that is recognizing that money earned today doesn't go as far as it might have in the past. There have been levels of inflation, and we now need to increase that amount to make sure that those who are need of the support can actually receive it.

I heard support from all members of the Assembly for this today. For the supporting of wages for childcare workers -- I think we all understand that paying the wages for these childcare employees is the responsibility of their employer. It isn't the government that sets these wages. That is something that the employers do, but through our contributions to these various organizations -- whether it be through the direct operating grant or through other mechanisms -- we have worked with them to ensure that they are paying their staff what they need to in order to provide that type of service.

Also, this motion goes on to facilitate increased training and education for childcare workers. I'm glad to hear that we're all in support of that. It's going to enhance support for children with disabilities. It appears this House is unanimous in its support for that. It also calls upon the government to collaborate with First Nations, community groups, non-government organizations and childcare operators. I'm very pleased to see that there has been a considerable amount of progress made on that issue, both in the previous term of this government and now ongoing. This was an issue that was brought up by one of the previous speakers and, really, I would like to just direct him to the working group that was put forward in the fall of 2002, I believe, to take a look at the issue of childcare.

The working group had representatives from the Yukon Child Care Board, from Health and Social Services, from front-line early childhood educators, from parents, from the minister's office, from the Society of Yukon Family Day Homes, from the child care services unit of Health and Social Services, from private daycare operators, from not-for-profit daycare operators, and from rural early childhood education and First Nation daycare operations.

We have a long history of putting together these working groups and working with our various partners and stakeholders on these issues and to seriously listen to their issues, their concerns and their solutions, and then putting them into practice.

We have a significant history of doing just that.

Also, Mr. Chair, I've heard support from members of the opposition parties for creating more available spaces for children of all ages, especially for those younger than 18 months, facilitating and developing healthy families through increased support to at-risk families.

I'm very proud of the accomplishments of this government, and I'm very proud to see that it's able to live up to the commitments that were made to Yukon people and to live up to the needs that Yukoners have. This is a great step. I encourage all members to show their support for this initiative. I think we're

going to hear that. I think we've heard support from all members of the different parties now, and I'm very relieved to see that it hasn't turned into one of those types of motion debates in which we get focused on some of the minutia about it and go off on a tangent and amend for the sake of amending. It's positive to see that we're all working together in this Assembly, including the member opposite, who is nodding his head vehemently in agreement.

That being said, Mr. Speaker, I would commend this motion to the Assembly and ask that we all rise and support it.

**Hon. Mr. Lang:** Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of the Member for Klondike's Motion No. 240 on childcare. Always, as we stand in the House and represent our constituents, the question of childcare is one of the major concerns that the citizens of our ridings have, whether we have kids directly involved in childcare ourselves or if our friends or other family members do. It always has been a bit of an issue. In the busy world we live in today, how do we maximize our time with our children and also minimize any threat they would have if we're not available as a family member to work with the child through raising them and doing the things we all do in our busy world.

Certainly we can support this. I listen to the members opposite and, of course, they have the luxury of being critics. That's a luxury that the opposition has. We also have a responsibility not only to deliver programs but to manage the public treasury to maximize the benefits for all Yukoners.

When we talk about childcare, it has to fit into many parts of the budget and many parts of the operation of the government on a daily basis.

Certainly, when we first came to power in 2003, the childcare issue was a big issue at the time. The minister and the government at the time, inheriting this situation from the previous Liberal government, understood that something had to be done to backstop some of the situations that had arisen over many years. The Minister of Health and Social Services of the day put together a working group to work with the stakeholders to come up with a three- or five-year plan that the childcare industry could work with and that would benefit the community as a whole, and put together extra dollars to get education.

Of course, there were space issues and wage issues and all the issues that are out there, as we've talked about this afternoon. A very impressive group of people was put together through the agency. He put together the Yukon Child Care Board, Health and Social Services, and front-line early childhood educators. He looked at the parent representatives. The minister's executive assistant right from the minister's office was involved, so there was representation from there. Also involved were the Yukon Childcare Association, the Society of Yukon Family Day Homes, Yukon First Nations Health Commission, child care services unit with Health and Social Services, family day home providers, Yukon Child Care Board, private daycare, non-profit daycare, rural early childhood educators, and First Nation daycares.

This certainly was an impressive number of agencies that worked hands-on in the childcare field. Of course, through their

good work, they touched base with 250 stakeholders and came up with a workable plan.

Now, that workable plan was a go-forward plan. It was a commitment of our government -- I'm giving some foundation and some history here so that we know where we've coming from in order to know where we're going to. The government of the day, which was the Yukon Party government, made a commitment through the Department of Health and Social Services to move forward with a commitment and funding, and we did that. The minister of the day resourced the providers and went to work to improve the situation that we found when we inherited the government from the last Liberal government. We fast-tracked that and put it in place in 2003. In 2004, we made the commitment and we moved forward. At that point, we certainly talked to the providers and said that this contract, or this agreement, is going to be flexible, because we're not stopping here in respect to moving forward with other resources and other plans on how we could better the situation in day homes and increase space. Also, there was a worry about how the resources would flow down to the workers. How would this increased volume of funds that came from the government reflect on day home workers' paycheques? Of course, we did just that, Mr. Speaker. Through the last three or four years of our mandate, we've come up with a new program for day homes. We've beefed up the resources, and we're looking at a \$10-million commitment over a period of time. We're looking at qualifications, earnings, what our government or what the government of the day would do with low-income individuals and single family units. Also, at what earning level would it be appropriate to draw the line so that people could qualify to become part of this childcare program?

We looked at all of that -- the department looked at all that and worked with the stakeholders. I have to compliment the department in the sense that, once we were re-elected a year ago, we put our childcare priorities in place and we moved forward to get this out as fast as we could to maximize the benefits to the general population, as well as to make sure that we got it right. Sometimes in government it looks like things are going slow -- or going slower -- but what we have to do as a government is make sure that we cover all of our bases. Again, Mr. Speaker, this would not be possible without the resources we have as a government.

I remind the members opposite that I understand the dilemma that the Liberal government of the day found themselves in because, Mr. Chair, they were running on an operating loan. They had no resources. They were limited to the decision-making process by a lack of funds. That was definitely a burden that had to be faced by that government of the day.

So a lot of these things came about because of the diligent work our Minister of Finance did and the Finance department did to resource this government -- the government of the day -- over the last six years to the point where we can make decisions like this. The Liberal government of the day, Mr. Speaker, didn't have the flexibility of making a \$10-million commitment. Where were they going to get the \$10 million from? They didn't have the wherewithal or the expertise or the understanding of finance that the government of the day has --



obviously, or they would have done more in their short term in office.

That short term in office meant the decisions we made in 2003 that could have been made in 2000-01 weren't made, because they were hamstrung because of their lack of expertise in managing the public treasury. So those are facts. That's behind us; that was five years ago.

Today, we're talking about childcare and we're talking about resourcing it to the tune of \$10 million over this next period of time. Now, this motion certainly highlights what we do as a community, as a society in the territory. This is a commitment to childcare, education and care in the territory, but also it speaks volumes to what this government does on the social ledger and the priority we give it to make sure that at the end of the day all members of our society are recognized and also the resources flow evenly throughout the community to answer many of these concerns.

Without the resources we have today, we would not have the flexibility to do what we're doing on the social ledger. So, it's very important that we all realize that the Yukon's economy -- as the Minister of Justice talked about the pressure now, because over the last four years the jobs, the optimism and the creativity of the private individuals to create that work is all out there. You only have to listen to the announcements every day -- another luxurious condominium going up somewhere. All this is invested private money in our community because of the confidence out there in this government, in the Yukon and also the future of the Yukon.

What does this do? The childcare, education and care thing is part of that.

Quality of life -- people have options. There are resources in place to handle the childhood question. We made a commitment here today. The Minister of Health and Social Services made a commitment to look at a five-year program to make sure people have the confidence that there is the commitment over a period of time to resolve some of the issues that have been issues for a very long time.

The Leader of the Official Opposition has the luxury of being in opposition. They don't have to balance the books like we do as the government -- the challenges of managing the public purse and the responsibility for doing that. That is borne by the government and the government of the day. You only have to see the results of solid management over the last five years to see where we're at today.

The surplus budgets, the audits from the Auditor General, the pension funds in the hospital and the college -- all addressed by this government. There is the improved wage structure with our public servants -- all that has been negotiated by the government of the day.

Our government servants reflect that. Our departments are running well. You only have to look at this early childhood education care program. That came out of Health and Social Services. I compliment the individuals who went out to talk to those 250 stakeholders, the people who spent many evenings and days talking about issues and working with the department to come up with a doable plan and a long-term commitment by government to this challenge.

If you were to look at all our departments in the government, including the ones I'm responsible for, they're run by very highly qualified individuals who are doing a stellar job for Yukon.

Again, you have to look no farther than Main Street to see the job that this government has done to create the business atmosphere and the optimism, and all of that came out of the government of the day's direction and investment. Now, if you were to look out in the last 15 years, the government capital budget was the largest budget in the territory. What has happened in the last five years since this government took office?

As of last year, the Government of Yukon is no longer the largest investor in capital budgets in the territory. It has been taken over by the mining industry. They are spending more dollars on the ground in the territory today than the government is -- from a capital investment point of view. That is good news for the Yukon. It hasn't happened in 10, 15 years -- many years. I can't remember. I don't know the exact length of time, Mr. Speaker, but I would say to you that it has to be a minimum of 10 years that the territorial government has made the major capital expenditures out there on the street.

Now, I'm not minimizing what the government does on a daily or a yearly basis to invest in infrastructure and invest in Yukon. That is our job as government, but with that comes a certain amount of responsibility and, second, it is nice to see a new dawn rising in the sense that we have capital investors out there that are willing and confident to come into the territory and invest their money in the future of the territory. They do this by looking at what we do as a government.

This motion talks to early childhood education care. These are the things that make our society a little better than other communities.

People make decisions. They make lifestyle decisions when they make decisions to come and live in a community, and they look at this. What do we do as a community for education and care for early childhood? Well, we have a map now. Individuals come and make decisions, and those decisions will be the future of the territory.

Now, I'm not minimizing that it's important -- like the Member for McIntyre-Takhini talking about our early childhood and childcare. He asks how we can vote against that. Well, the member was a member of a government that worked very hard to jump-start this issue and bring it to where it is today. He certainly added, when he was in the caucus of the Yukon Party and a Cabinet minister, and he certainly had a voice in what we did for four years and how we had moved from here to there, and how we went from there to over there. Every move we made has been an improvement for Yukon as a whole, but certainly for early childhood education and care.

I could talk on this for days, because this is not only --

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

**Hon. Mr. Lang:** Thank you. The Minister of Justice is hanging on every word.

I know my time is limited, but I think it's very, very important to highlight where we came from in 2003 and where we're at today.

I compliment the department. I compliment the Minister of Finance and his department, and I compliment this government for giving it the direction and for resourcing this the way that it has been done today and into the future.

I'm sure the Member for McIntyre-Takhini agrees with what I've said over the last 20 minutes, and he's hanging on every word. I appreciate that, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the member, and I appreciate the input that he put into this issue for four years when he sat here on this side of the House.

I certainly recommend this motion to the House, and I look forward to it being passed here today. Our commitment to move forward is in this, and I recommend that all members read the four-year plan for Yukon early childhood education and care strategy, fall 2003, because this gives us a blueprint of where this government was going to be, five years later, and we are where we set out to be.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Hon. Mr. Hart:** I'm pleased to speak to this important motion brought forward by the Member for Klondike. Child-care plays an important role in our modern society, much more than it did in the past. Many in this House raised their children, although I would say there are some who are still raising their children. We older members have raised our children and without the benefit of government-supported childcare. Times are different. Back then, most households could get by on one salary and oftentimes the mother would remain at home to raise the children and basically nurture them and shape them into respectable young people.

Today, many families have both parents working to meet the needs of keeping a household and raising a family. Oftentimes the mother is a professional, pursuing a career. Modern society is ever changing and so too are the labels for the subsequent generations -- baby-boomers, generation X and Y. Their lifestyles and family choices are all changing as we speak.

In the 1930s and 1940s, it was not uncommon for Canadian families to have six or more children to help work with the farm. Boomers on average had four children per household, not like today. Most families have two children. A single child is also very common. So the daily care for a child today is different from a large family in the past. Most families today rely on a fee-for-service daycare so they can make a living and feel comfortable that their children are well cared for and safe.

This government understands that some parents are struggling to improve their economic situation and both parents need to work to achieve that. This means they rely on childcare for preschool-age children. The Minister of Health and Social Services has announced the increase to childcare funding to aid these families by removing some of that cost burden. In the grand scheme of things, this will help the family toward an improved quality of life.

I wholeheartedly support this approach because we support the same vision within the Department of Community Services. The department's connection to children is twofold. First, we provide sport and recreation facilities and programming throughout the territory because we believe in developing the whole child -- mind and body. Children need to run, they need

to jump and learn how their bodies work through developing coordination and skills that will serve them for the rest of their lives. They also learn how to play well with others and the advantages of teamwork and related social skills one develops by working or playing in a group.

It is my hope that these early introductions to sport and physical activities are enjoyable and fulfilling for our young people and that they remain involved in organized physical activity for the rest of their lives so they may enjoy a better quality of life without many of the preventable problems common today, such as obesity, which may lead to diabetes and similar poor-health conditions.

Our Sport for Life program is based on the principle of maintaining good physical health. It begins at an early age, and remaining active through the course of one's life will provide health benefits that allow that individual to enjoy more of all that life has to offer.

Beyond promoting the principle, we also support young people's participation in these activities through the kids recreation fund. This program is similar in principle to the childcare support provided through Health and Social Services. The kids recreation fund was established as a way of assisting kids whose families were experiencing financial hardship in order for them to actively participate in organized sport, art, cultural, social and recreational programs. This program helps parents with the cost of registration fees, special clothing, supplies and equipment. Mr. Speaker, we know parents want their children to be happy, healthy, and physically fit. The kids recreation fund is designed to help families get their children involved with activities that will assist them to reach their goals.

I said that Community Services is connected to our young people in two ways and that we believe in developing the whole child -- mind and body. Our second connection to Yukon young people is through our network of libraries. Under the same principles as the Sport for Life program -- that good physical health is a lifelong endeavour -- our library system is there to support the principle of lifelong learning.

Many children receive their first reading experience well before they enter into the K-to-12 system. Many times this is from parents, grandparents and other family members who just generally read stories to their children -- something that easily becomes an evening ritual at bedtime. These are the early stimulations that hopefully will promote the children to become strong readers who are self-motivated to learn more about things that interest them and the world that they live in. Child-care workers also inspire young people to appreciate books and the opportunity to learn more about what interests them at an early age.

Our libraries offer some of the very positive opportunities for parents so that they may participate in some of the wonderful programs that have been created for young learners. Story-time for toddlers is one of the popular programs where parents and their children can participate in storytelling and, depending on the ages involved, some crafts programming that helps develop hand-eye coordination and motor skills.

Similar to sport and recreation activities, we encourage children to become closely connected to their local library and

explore all the knowledge of the world around us in print form or via the Internet, which is available free of charge in every Yukon community library through the community access program, or CAP.

Mr. Speaker, I'm very proud of the positive and beneficial programs this government provides to our young people in both sport and recreation, and library services. We believe in developing the whole child, and, at times, it doesn't take a whole village to raise a child, but it does take caring and dedicated family members to encourage children to stretch their minds, as well as their muscles. It takes some financial ability to participate in some of these programs, and this government is providing that financial assistance to parents so children can participate and grow and develop with the stimulus and encouragement that they need to be happy, active and contributing members of our community.

Mr. Speaker, many of my colleagues today have gone over the numbers with regard to the Minister of Health and Social Services' benefits going into the program, and the members opposite discussed the issue of, yeah, well, you know, where did they get this program from, where did we hear this before? Well, I would just like to say, on that particular note, we on this side have been accused many times: "Well, you said that, but you haven't done anything." Well, Mr. Speaker, the government and the members opposite had that opportunity on the other side, and they have done nothing. So we're doing it, and it's coming forth, and we proved it.

So, on that particular note, we are putting our money where our mouth is. The money is going into this program, into the social aspect, and we are looking after our youth and, basically, the new leaders of the Yukon in the ensuing years who come after us, and we are looking forward to hopefully some of the younger children from the less, shall we say, privileged part of the community having a chance to get out there and flourish in the society, based on what has been provided to them.

Thank you.

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

**Mr. Nordick:** First, I would like to thank all members for supporting this motion. Then, I'd like to thank the Minister of Health and Social Services for also announcing that the healthy families program will be extending to Dawson City.

I do have a couple of comments about some of the comments I heard from the members opposite. I would like to start with a comment made by the Leader of the Official Opposition. He was wondering how the member who moved this motion -- namely, me -- believes my colleagues on the government side would follow through with priority (6), "collaborating with First Nations, community groups, non-government organizations, and child care operators, to provide an integrated system that better serves the educational and cultural needs of parents and children in all Yukon communities."

I actually spent a fair bit of time in my last couple speeches explaining one such initiative in partnership with First Nations in my community alone. This is one of many. This

partnership between Tr'ondek Hwech'in and Government of Yukon is a partnership that speaks exactly to this priority.

I would like to encourage the member opposite to actually listen to what I have to say. I'd like to state once again for the member opposite that this contribution will assist the First Nation in expanding its capacity to meet the growing needs for quality childcare in rural communities, which I do believe is actually stated in (6), "... community groups, non-governmental organizations and childcare operators to provide an integrated system that better serves educational and cultural needs of parents and children in all Yukon communities." This is one example.

This funding will benefit the entire Dawson community. Childcare in Dawson, as in other rural communities, is very important for working parents. I am glad to see our government recognizes a need for childcare in my rural community.

I would like to quote Chief Darren Taylor with respect to this contribution agreement: "The commitment of these resources to Tr'ondek Hwech'in childcare is a demonstration of the value First Nations, Yukoners and Canadians place on childcare. This facility will accommodate up to 60 children and employ 15 staff. The services provided will not only serve the citizens of Tr'ondek Hwech'in, but also the broader community."

Mr. Speaker, this speaks exactly to collaborating with First Nations, community groups, non-government organizations and childcare operators. This does provide an integrated system that better serves educational and cultural needs of parents and their children in all of the Yukon communities. So I hope that clarifies it for the members opposite.

The only other criticism I heard from the members opposite is that they were talking about these initiatives for some time. Well, Mr. Speaker, I can live with that criticism. We don't just talk about these issues; we actually follow through with these initiatives.

We did act on these issues. We didn't just spend time talking about them; we acted on them.

Thank you.

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

**Some Hon. Members:** Agreed.

*Motion No. 240 agreed to*

### **Motion No. 173**

**Clerk:** Motion No. 173, standing in the name of Mr. Nordick

**Speaker:** It is moved by the Member for Klondike

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to invest in the reconstruction and upgrading of the Watson Lake to Ross River section of the Robert Campbell Highway as well as the application of bitumen surface treatment, BST, to the 36 kilometre section of the Robert Campbell Highway between Faro and Carmacks.

**Mr. Nordick:** Mr. Speaker, as the Yukon travelling public knows, our road system is vital to all of us. This is why the Yukon government investment alone will reach close to \$10 million in reconstruction and rehabilitation.

Mr. Speaker, the Shakwak agreement between the United States and Canada funding is not included in this. The significant funding that has come to the Yukon contractors for the greater than 20 years that this agreement has endured will be ending in the foreseeable future. Upon the conclusion of this agreement, the Yukon government must do what it can to provide useful projects for those contractors.

As the budgeting noted earlier shows, the provision of highway infrastructure is very costly. It is for this reason that our government has lobbied the federal government to help pay for some of the costs by including Yukon highways in the national highway system. The north Klondike Highway, from its junction with the Alaska Highway to its junction with the Dempster Highway, and the Yukon portion of the Dempster Highway were added to the national highway systems as northern and remote routes in September 2005. This means that 948 kilometres represented by these routes joined the 1,079 kilometres of the Alaska Highway and south Klondike Highway considered core routes to give the Yukon a total of 2,027 kilometres within the national highway system.

It is worth noting that the remaining 272 kilometres of the Dempster Highway between the Yukon border and Inuvik added to the northern and remote routes of the Northwest Territories highways within the national highway system became eligible for national funding through the gas tax rebate and through the Canadian strategic infrastructure fund. For the present, the Robert Campbell Highway is not part of the national highway system, so construction and rehabilitation carried out on it is funded by the Yukon government. The announcement of \$31 million to be invested on improving the upgrade of the Robert Campbell Highway during the next three years is very timely.

BST on the 36 kilometres from Carmacks to Faro will add significantly to the safety and comfort of travellers on that portion of the highway. The increased number of people and activities in and around the communities of Faro and Ross River will benefit greatly from the improvements and upgrading of this highway.

Upgrading the Robert Campbell Highway will help mining companies; it will help the mining industry. One mine active in that area at the moment is American Tungsten, the former Cantung mine. This mine transports its concentrate from the mine 200 kilometres down the Nahanni Range Road to its junction with the Robert Campbell Highway at kilometre 107. From here, its concentrates are trucked to Prince Rupert for shipping overseas. Although production has only begun at the former Cantung mine, the company owns the nearby tungsten property called Mactung. The Mactung property is receiving advanced exploration and may also be in production soon. The relationship between the Cantung and Mactung properties is a demonstration of a fact that mineral exploration companies know -- the best place to find new mineral deposits is near ones that have already been found.

Transporting costs are usually a very significant portion of the exploration budget for a mineral property. Improvements to the Robert Campbell Highway could result in the restarting of some of the area mines that have ceased production -- mines

such as Ketz River mine, as an example. The area has a large number of mineral properties that have received large expenditures of money in exploration. In the area of the Cantung mine mentioned earlier, there are the Tom and Jason deposits, which are collectively known as Macmillan Pass. The Tom and Jason are medium-sized, high-grade zinc, lead, silver, barium deposits. The Tom deposit has indicated mineral reserves of 15.7 million metric tonnes, averaging seven-percent zinc, 4.61-percent lead and 49.1-percent barium. The Jason deposit has indicated mineral reserves of 14.1 million metric tonnes.

The access off the Robert Campbell Highway is to the Selwyn project, most commonly known as Howard's Pass. This is a zinc-lead district operated by the Selwyn Resources, formerly Pacifica Resources. This property is moving closer to production. A recent release gives a zinc-lead reserve calculation of 86.6 million tonnes of indicated reserves and 215.46 million metric tonnes of inferred reserves.

Near Finlayson Lake on the Robert Campbell Highway are a number of copper, lead and silver deposits. Some of these are by Fire Lake, Tintina, Eagle and Ice. The best known of these properties is the Wolverine zinc-silver project, which is wholly owned by the Yukon Zinc Corporation. This property is very near production, having passed its environmental reviews and received its water and production licences.

In an interview with CBC Radio on November 1, 2007, President and CEO of Yukon Zinc had the following to say about the investment in the Robert Campbell Highway: "Having said that, any infrastructure development in the Yukon is going to help future mine development and future resource development, so it is always welcome when it comes. Sooner or later, it will come our way. We are particularly pleased that the Yukon government announced a \$31-million upgrade to the south Robert Campbell Highway, which certainly will have been of a great benefit to us in our concentrate haul."

Up until now, I have been speaking about what are generally referred to as base metal properties. These are properties that contain minerals deposits of lead, zinc, copper and tungsten. The area, however, also contains the only known emerald property in the Yukon. The emeralds were first discovered by an Expatriate Resources exploration geologist in the fall of 1998 while doing base metal exploration. Ownership of the property changed to True North Gems in 2002. Exploration of this property has continued every year since its discovery.

In conclusion, I believe I have demonstrated that the investment of a budget of \$31 million through the years 2008 to 2011 will be very beneficial. The investments have the potential of not only improving the comfort and safety of the Yukon's travelling public, but of facilitating an increase in mining and mineral exploration and production in that area.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Fairclough:** I'd like to also respond to the motion that was put forward by the Member for Klondike. Mr. Speaker, I heard what the member had to say. I know that some of the direction proposed in this motion was given by the people during the Premier's tour around the Yukon. I know that in Carmacks, for example, it was mentioned to the government to

make the improvements to the section of road between Carmacks and Faro.

When that issue was brought up, the Premier was already on tour in Ross River and Faro, and he said that it has been brought up to him about 25 times. So I'm glad to see it reflected at least in a motion urging government to do this. The communities have been doing the same thing. This was a pre-budget tour and it is reflected in a motion brought forward by the Member for Klondike.

What I would like to see: this 36 kilometres in the motion here between Carmacks and Faro would basically complete BST work between Carmacks and Faro. There would be no more additional need to do BST, except for the normal annual maintenance on certain sections, because they only last for a certain amount of time.

We've been asking that for the last five years and I know I've brought it up with the Minister of Highways and Public Works almost every budget; after every budget speech, I've been bringing it up. I know that this is being said to the members opposite and it is reflected in the motion. My concern about this, Mr. Speaker, is that we have a motion asking government to invest in this -- and that is fine.

What I'd like to see, and maybe the mover of the motion could respond to this in his wrap-up remarks, is a commitment to have this 36-kilometre section of the Robert Campbell Highway completed in the year 2008. Now that would be an achievement, instead of piecemealing it together. I know that it is a couple million dollars -- if not more -- depending on how much work needs to be put into putting the proper base into this road.

That would make a great improvement. I asked the Minister of Tourism and Culture to lobby on behalf of the people from Carmacks, Little Salmon and Faro and Ross River to ensure this section of road is fixed so that at least the motorhomes could travel on it. Right now they refuse to go on that road simply because of the danger of driving on gravel roads and the fact that it's so muddy. It gets their vehicles dirty, and it's difficult to clean when they're continuing their route through. I think it would improve tourism. There is a beautiful lake called Little Salmon Lake, which has a couple of campgrounds on it. It isn't used as much as people would like to see it used. I think this would definitely improve tourism in and around Faro and Ross River. I know this is a huge commitment to ensure the reconstruction and upgrading between Watson Lake and Ross River, but a lot of people have come through the community from Dawson, wanting to go to Watson Lake, and they ask whether or not they should be taking the Robert Campbell Highway. Most times, the advice is no, because it's actually going to take them longer to go that route, even though it's shorter than to go through Whitehorse and down through Teslin, so we support that.

We were wondering if the government, though, has identified monies years down the road to really commit to this. The Member for Klondike mentioned the \$31 million, and I'm hoping that's not part of the money that is being tied up in this junk bond investment -- the \$36.5 million -- because that could be frozen for quite some time. I'm hoping that the member oppo-

site could really speak to that and tell us on this side of the House and the public exactly how much work is going to be done on the road between Carmacks and Faro, whether or not it's going to be completed in the summer/fall of 2008, and how much work they're expecting to have done on the section between Watson Lake and Ross River, because I think it's important.

We've talked about the private rental of vehicles, heavy equipment, and so on, through HERC -- highway equipment rental contracts -- and how well that was going. We've had a lot of trouble getting information as to the cost difference between governments doing this construction work versus going through the HERC program. Even to this day, governments cannot say there is a cost-savings by going through this program. So I think that's another issue the members opposite could comment on.

We see that governments should be improving all our highways. Last Tuesday my colleague from Porter Creek South and I went to Carmacks for the library opening. It was a Tuesday, and we left from here. The Minister of Community Services, under which department libraries fall, was also there.

While we were there, we had a little chat and the minister commented on how rough the highway was, and mentioned the big bumps he went over, and he said that anybody could be airborne upon hitting those bumps if they were going the maximum speed allowable on the highway.

We agree. There is a section there that is very bumpy. It's mostly on one side of the road. But I think the Yukon government could target those and improve them -- fix them up and not have them stay there year after year.

We do have a lot of issues that have come up in Highways and Public Works, and I will definitely be debating that.

Here's another one for the members opposite, if they're doing reconstruction work. The summer employment for the crew that does the BST and improvements to our highways and work for the department every summer is being cut back more and more. It's shorter and shorter and shorter, to the point where they can't even qualify for EI.

There was a section of road -- and I wrote to the Minister of Highways and Public Works about this -- north of Stewart Crossing, around Moose Creek, where the Department of Highways and Public Works was doing some improvements. They took out a lot of bumps. The government crew was there working and they had done a couple of kilometres of road.

I was asked to ask the Minister of Highways and Public Works, if the highways crew is already present there with all their equipment, whether or not they can do more of that road on each side of the improvements they did -- a kilometre on one side, a couple on the other. It was for the same reason that the Minister of Community Services experienced on his way to Carmacks. Those bumps were big, and you can see the black marks from the tires as vehicles hit them very hard. This is up near Moose Creek.

It didn't happen. The highways crew didn't work any more of that section of road, but they did a couple of kilometres and the rest was contracted out. The crews are concerned their employment in the summer is being shortened more and more. If

we can make some improvement there in the Department of Highways and Public Works, we would definitely support that, as many are expressing their concerns about that.

I would like to see work done on the Campbell Highway. There have been commitments by past governments to make improvements there, and lots of improvements have been made and the communities have very much appreciated that in the past. There's not much road left to do BST on between Carmacks and Faro. Once that section is done, governments could concentrate on making more safety improvements beyond the community of Faro -- for example, between Faro and Ross River where, in the past, some good work was done to take some of the corners out and the hills down for safety reasons.

What we're talking about here in this motion is the road between Watson Lake and Ross River. Even though it's not very far between Ross River and Faro, it's not mentioned in this motion. A lot of the road between Faro and Ross River could be improved.

The safety issues could be addressed, and that's not mentioned in this motion. I'm a bit concerned. Maybe the minister could explain that a bit more. If governments could really pay attention to what they committed to do over the election year, like make improvements to the north Klondike Highway, perhaps we would have a lot more satisfied people in the territory.

That's all that I wanted to mention, Mr. Speaker. I hope the mover of the motion could address some of those issues, particularly about the money and whether or not part of this \$36.5 million that's frozen out there was a commitment to do this, because we're talking about close to the same amount, \$31 million.

In short, of course, we support all the government does to make improvements to our highways. There is a lot more that government can do than what is outlined in Motion No. 173.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Hon. Mr. Lang:** In addressing Motion No. 173, brought forward by the Member for Klondike, I'd like to thank him for presenting this motion. It falls upon the Department of Highways and Public Works to do the work that we described in this motion.

The government over the last five years has done extensive work on our highway system. I remind the members opposite that we have just under 5,000 kilometres of road to maintain and upgrade. We also have bridges and culverts. We have secondary roads. I mean, we do a very extensive job when it comes to maintaining and upgrading our roads.

The member opposite talks about the road between Carmacks and Faro and about BST. That was addressed in Faro. We did commit at our public meetings that it would be looked at, and hopefully that we would put that on our business plan to go forward in the next year or two. So we have committed to do that, and we will do it, and hopefully sooner rather than later.

Those are all issues of equipment, individuals' timing and all things that arise when we do a job like BST and other things like that. There is a timing and a planning part of it. That is a mosaic. How we look at our highway system from a mainte-

nance point of view is that we try to maximize the days and times that we have in the territory because we can't do BST in December. We're limited to a lot of the work having to be done in a 190-day period of time, in the summer. We have to upgrade. BST is constantly being upgraded and, as I remind everybody in the House here, we do have an extensive highway system.

What does this do? What is this commitment on the Robert Campbell Highway? Well, the Robert Campbell Highway runs northwest. It's 500 kilometres from Watson Lake on the Alaska Highway to Carmacks on the Klondike Highway. It provides access to the valuable deposits in the central Yukon while at the same time providing an alternate route for tourist travel. It's a great corridor and its main drive was in the mid-1950s when access was requested to the mineral deposits of Little Lake and Glenlyon Range and west of Ross River. All those mineral potentials were there and the government of the day addressed the access to them by putting the Campbell road together and, over a 10-year period, built what we have today. It didn't get started until 1960. It took another 10 years to finalize what we see today.

We had the Nahanni Range Road. That in itself was another extension of 200 kilometres. That was northwest to the Cantung mining operations in Northwest Territories. We tied in Cantung, Northwest Territories, into the transportation grid of the Yukon.

Except for various route alignments, the Campbell Highway did not have any setbacks to its construction and emerged as an invaluable, yet undeterred, component of our northern transportation system. In other words, Mr. Speaker, it became a very important component, especially when we had a mine like Faro that was operating and we had a population base in Faro that utilized the Campbell Highway quite extensively, whether it was for access to the mine and moving product and equipment into the territory there. However, increased activity along the Robert Campbell Highway -- including renewed mining activities at the Yukon Zinc project at Wolverine Lake -- has moved us forward to upgrade the current highway infrastructure.

It gives me great pleasure again, Mr. Chair, to announce \$30 million in resources to upgrade and improve infrastructure on the southern Robert Campbell Highway over the next three years. So that is a \$10-million a year investment in the Campbell Highway. That infrastructure is a key priority for this government -- the Yukon government. Critical and stable infrastructure, such as highway and bridge improvements, contributes to a healthy, viable Yukon community as well as economic growth.

The Robert Campbell Highway reconstruction project will begin in the 2008 fiscal year and continue on through 2011. Work will include improvements at various locations between kilometre 10, Watson Lake Airport, and kilometre 60, north of Frances Lake bridge, as well as the Tuchtua area between kilometre 107 and 114. That is the first phase of this expenditure.

The department is currently reviewing options regarding the application of BST but is committed to upgrading the

highway necessary to support the increased traffic volume as well as the potential for increased economic growth. In other words, we aren't just looking at the mining community as a tool for use on this road. This road will be up to a standard that will cater to our tourists, our local Yukoners and our tourist industry so that it is another intricate part of our transportation infrastructure.

As a result of the anticipated increase in traffic on the road, upgrading this highway to maintainable standards has become a government priority. Again, that is repeating what I already said. We have to bring it up to a standard we can maintain, as the Highways department does, on a daily basis. I don't know how many people in the House here have utilized that corridor, but the road has become in great need of upgrading. From a transportation grid, it's marginalized because of its narrowness and all the things that come with the lack of investment over the last period of time.

Over the last 10 years, we've had an issue of economics in that area. We had a downturn in the mining community; we had the closing of the Cantung mine and, at that point, they closed the Nahanni Range Road on a seasonal basis. The Faro mine was closed and all the investment being made in exploration was marginalized because of the world metal prices. Over the last 10 years, the road hasn't gotten the attention it should have received.

This \$30 million should correct that over the next three years, and that is the start of the investment. After that \$30 million, there will have to be more resources put into place because the road is 500 kilometres long, understanding that the road between Carmacks and Faro is at an acceptable standard.

The member opposite from Carmacks was talking about the BST issue. The Member for Pelly-Nisutlin has brought that to our attention and we're going to work on the BST to bring that upgrade into place in the very near future. That investment will be made by this government.

Between Faro and Carmacks -- and the member opposite talks about Ross River and Faro -- over the last four years we've spent resources on straightening out the road. The member opposite recognizes that and I appreciate that.

We have worked on that segment of the road from a safety point of view. So, over the last four or five years, we have invested resources in that highway system. But the \$30-million commitment we are making for this coming season is a large commitment.

We are committed to the Campbell Highway and to bring it into a usable state that will benefit Yukoners from now into the future.

In conjunction with these highway upgrades, is the renewed interest and activity in the mining sector. We need to be prepared eventually for it to take place some time in the future. In other words, as this exploration moves forward -- whether it's Yukon Zinc or Ketzka Mine -- there is going to be pressure on government to get access to these investments by these corporations. Certainly, we want to be in front of that. And this way, by investing the money in the road that we've committed to do, that certainly shows the corporations our commitment, not only to the road system, but to their investments. And that's

very important that whatever money is being spent out there, eventually the day will come when -- if it goes from exploration into development and into production -- corporations are going to have to answer those questions about access.

Access for Yukon Zinc -- now that they have their access road put in, coming off the Campbell Highway. This is a very important announcement for them because they are moving ahead with their quartz licence and their water licence. So, it is in the pre-development production stage, and this kind of commitment does give their shareholders the comfort of knowing that, if and when they trigger the production phase of the development, they will have access to their investment. And that, in itself, is good news for the business community.

Of course, it's good news for us as government, because it gives us the flexibility in tourism, in selling that access road to the tourist community, and it does open the access for Yukoners to travel having that option between Carmacks, Faro-Ross River, and then, of course, Watson Lake.

So anything that we can improve our infrastructure certainly improves the lifestyle of the average Yukoner.

Mr. Speaker, as we move through this thing and talk about this motion, we talk about highways in general in the territory. I'd like to take a moment and compliment the highway crew and the work they do on a daily basis. I understand the Member for Mayo-Tatchun had some questions about the highway going between Whitehorse and Carmacks. We certainly recommend people drive defensively on our highway system. Of course, we do have speed limits for a reason. Certainly, in the wintertime, we have different highway standards than we do in the summertime, and we maintain the highways at a very high level, but everybody should be aware of the speed limit and should be very, very conscious of northern driving.

The member opposite from Carmacks obviously had trouble getting between Whitehorse and Carmacks, and I just recommend that, when he's on the highway system, he drive accordingly. The territory does the job it can. Remember, Mr. Speaker, we do have almost 5,000 kilometres of road and, in the wintertime, sometimes our department is very, very busy cleaning and maintaining the road system. But we try to work with the highway system and the weather, which is part and parcel of managing the road services in the territory.

So I recommend to everybody that, when you're using the highway system, you take speed into consideration and the road surface at the time of travel.

Mr. Speaker, it doesn't mean that if the speed limit is set at 90, you have to drive at 90. It's a recommended speed -- a maximum speed in that location. Again, we have to take into consideration the time of year and the road surface at the time. I recommend defensive driving, which would minimize any kind of pressure not only on people, but also on the road surface, considering that other people are using the highway at the same time.

We can talk about our highway system, whether it be the Dempster or the Top of the World seasonal road. Of course we are at the mercy of the ferry at Dawson, which is a limited access tool that we utilize on a 100- to 200-day basis. It certainly

marginalizes use of the Top of the World Highway as the ferry closes down for a big part of the year.

This motion talks about the Robert Campbell upgrade. This is good news for the Yukon. I am not limiting what I say in that it is good news for Faro, Ross River, Carmacks or Watson Lake. This highway system has been in place for a very long time. It has been in place for almost 50 years. It's time that we as a government invested in that infrastructure to upgrade it to modern standards so that it becomes, again, a tool for industry, Yukoners, tourism and all individuals. We need to upgrade the safety and surface of the highway, so that as the territory grows, it becomes a very important part of the infrastructure of the highway system.

But in closing, again, you could talk about the Robert Campbell Highway, and I'll have that opportunity with the member opposite when we do debate the highway department, and we can get into depth about different parts of our highway system and the resources we put in and how we maximize and manage the resources that this government has to invest in the infrastructure on a yearly basis.

Of course, we are also part of a very much larger picture, and that is Canada, and the Canadian north holds promises as a source of great resources, in addition to being a very strategic stronghold. We as Canadians must plan and invest in infrastructure, such as highways, that will be vital for development of the human and economic potential of Yukon and, of course, of the north. If you were to only look at the infrastructure we have compared to our neighbours, Northwest Territories and Nunavut, all this infrastructure was put together over the last 50 to 75 years, and it certainly benefits us today.

So any money we can spend on infrastructure today will benefit Yukon in years to come, like the infrastructure that was put in place, whether it was the Alaska Highway, Campbell Highway, Skagway highway, the Dawson-Mayo road and then the Stewart-Whitehorse, including the Top of the World and Haines Road. The Haines Road was put together because we had the pipeline. The pipeline came from Haines to Haines Junction and up to Fairbanks. The Alaska Highway was put in during the war. The Mayo-Dawson road was put together in the 1950s to access Dawson and Mayo and, of course, United Keno Hill. It eliminated the ships and the older infrastructure that we had in place. The Dempster Highway connected us to the Arctic Ocean.

That investment is doing us well today.

So, in closing, whether we evaluate it as a resource access road, an alternate tourist route, or a gateway to southern Canada, the Robert Campbell Highway serves each purpose well. And this department, the Department of Highways and Public Works, is committed to ensuring the highway continues to do so on all fronts.

Again, I certainly recommend that we pass this Motion No. 173. Again, I'd like to thank the Member for Klondike for bringing it forward. And I thank you, Mr. Speaker, for giving me the opportunity to speak to this very important motion.

**Mr. Cardiff:** I am pleased to be here this afternoon to speak to Motion No. 173. It's interesting that the motions we're

dealing with this afternoon -- it's interesting when you see motions that come from that side of the House -- how the government has to urge themselves to do things that they're already doing; they have a problem urging themselves to do something that they haven't already basically announced.

A lot of what was in the previous motion was previously announced, as well as what's in this motion here. In fact, it's so blatant that it has been announced that the minister just read the last paragraph -- within the last five minutes -- of the press release from October 11: "Canada's North holds promise as a source of great resources in addition to being a strategic stronghold."

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

**Mr. Cardiff:** I'm being asked not to read the press release again, so I won't read the press release again.

But the government, on October 11, basically committed \$30 million over three years to achieve the end goal of the motion we're here to debate, so I'm not sure why they needed to put a motion in, urging themselves to complete the commitment they made on October 11, but that's why we're here.

When it comes to the Yukon's highway system, one thing I'd like to say is that there will be some questions in Highways and Public Works when we get into budget debate about the condition of our highways and how we prioritize the spending of money on our highways. The minister knows full well that I have some issues regarding this -- and the previous minister would know this as well -- in that there's a spot in the budget in Highways and Public Works that always sees a great demand. However, it never sees an increase in the amount of resources given to that area. That is the rural roads upgrade program. It always seems to be oversubscribed. Every year there are lots of applications; there are never enough funds for everybody to get the work done on rural roads and secondary roads that really needs to be done to keep those roads in good shape for the travelling public, to keep our citizens, our children and our visitors safe on those roads.

The minister has also, at the same time, responded a number of times to issues that I've raised. There's one recent issue that the minister knows about. Unfortunately I haven't received a response from the minister. It was an issue that I raised about the condition of the road on Gentian Lane and I raised it with him in August. I've sent emails, I've sent letters and I still haven't received a response. I think the minister must be waiting for me to table photographs in the Legislature like I had to do last spring in order to get a response.

But overall, I would say that the infrastructure -- the roads and the bridges -- in the Yukon are pretty well-maintained. We see the government spending more money inspecting and upgrading bridges, and it's important to do that. It's important to keep our highways upgraded and safe for the people who live here, the tourists and all the commercial traffic.

Again, it's about setting priorities. The government is committing, through this motion and their press release, to allocate \$31 million over the next three years for the Robert Campbell Highway. I agree that it is an important, vital piece of our infrastructure. There is potential for more resource development in that area. It's likely to happen, depending on the



world metal markets, but we all know how volatile they can be, but the potential is there.

It is about priorities. There are other priorities, as well, that need to be addressed. I would like to touch briefly on some of those issues. Some of them are capital infrastructure issues and needs in this territory, and we in the third party caucus believe that the government could respond to them in a more positive and expeditious manner. One of them, which we have brought up many times as a capital issue, is the replacement of the children's receiving home.

In terms of replacing the children's receiving home, there was a commitment made in a previous budget. I am talking about priorities. Their priority is the Robert Campbell Highway for \$31 million. What I am saying is that the government needs to look at its priorities. The children's receiving home should be a priority.

It about \$31 million --

### Speaker's statement

**Speaker:** The member has had a fair amount of latitude here on speaking to this motion. It is a motion on the Campbell Highway; it is not on the children's receiving home. I would prefer the honourable member to stick to that, please.

**Mr. Cardiff:** Can I talk about infrastructure in Watson Lake? Because the Robert Campbell Highway is attached to Watson Lake. It comes from Watson Lake -- eventually all roads lead to the same place.

The motion urges the Government of Yukon to invest in the reconstruction and upgrading of the Watson Lake to Ross River section of the Robert Campbell Highway. The motion makes this a priority of the government.

There are other priorities in Ross River and Watson Lake that should also be important. Some of those would be: the completion of the Watson Lake multi-level health care facility, the provision of funds for a sewage treatment facility in Ross River.

The government has decided that this is where their spending priorities are and all I would like is an opportunity to point out that I believe that there are other priorities they need to look at when putting together their capital plans.

It is obvious that it is going to be hard for me in this debate to express those priorities that I believe could be more urgent than the priorities that the government has indicated. That said, I will once again reiterate that it is interesting that the motions we've dealt with today are both motions that have previously been announced in press releases. This Motion No. 173 was previously announced on October 11 with an announcement of \$31 million dedicated to improving and upgrading the infrastructure on the south Robert Campbell Highway over the next three years.

It's unfortunate that the Member for Klondike needs to read a motion into the record, which we have to debate here, that urges the government to do something that they basically already announced that they intend to do. Enough said.

Thank you.

**Hon. Ms. Horne:** It was about a year ago that I gave my first speech in this Assembly in reply to the Speech from the Throne. At that time, I stated that transportation links are critical to the development of economies. I believe they go hand in hand with developing tourism opportunities, as well as resource-based opportunities. For mining, such as in the case of the Red Mountain property, they are paramount.

I will work to ensure the Robert Campbell, Klondike, and Dempster highways are targeted for the next highway reconstruction initiatives of the Government of Yukon. I also said that, as a government, we are now shifting our focus to the Robert Campbell Highway. As the MLA for Faro and Ross River, the two communities most affected by this roadwork, I emphatically support this initiative.

I have been and will continue to be very vocal in my support for work on the Robert Campbell Highway. My constituents deserve to have a safe, reliable, high quality road. This is a priority.

The Robert Campbell Highway is the road between Watson Lake and Carmacks. It is about 583 kilometres long, and it provides access to two of the communities in my riding, Faro and Ross River. It also connects, via the Canol Road, these two communities to the third community in my riding, Teslin.

I would like to talk for a few minutes about the individual for whom this road is named. That gentleman's toughness and resilience is typical of the people in this region. Then I would like to talk about the importance of the road to my communities.

The Robert Campbell Highway is named for a Scottish farmer, fur trader and explorer. He was born on February 21, 1808 in Glenlyon, Scotland. He married Eleonora C. Sterling on August 5, 1859 at Norway House, Manitoba. They had three children. He died on May 9, 1894 at Murcheston Ranch near Riding Mountain, Manitoba.

After first starting as a sheep farmer for the Hudson's Bay Company in 1834, Campbell was assigned to the Mackenzie River district as clerk. In 1840, he pushed up to Frances Lake, Yukon, which he named in honour of Frances Ramsay Simpson, wife of the Hudson's Bay governor. From there, he continued overland, reaching the banks of the Pelly River, initially believed by him to be the Colville River, Alaska, discovered in 1837 by Peter Warren Dease. Campbell thus became the first white man to cross into the Yukon River watershed from the east.

In 1842, Campbell led a contingent of 10 Hudson's Bay Company employees and First Nation hunters back to Frances Lake, where he built a small trading post. The following summer, he descended the Pelly to its confluence with another substantial river, which he named the Lewes, now the Yukon River.

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Liard River was a highway into the Yukon interior for the Hudson's Bay Company traders.

It's interesting to note that my father also worked at the Hudson's Bay Company trading post in Frances Lake. He built buildings there that are still standing. This is a very important area to me.

In 1840, Campbell pushed up to Frances Lake, which he named in honour of Frances Ramsay Simpson, who, as I said before, was the wife of the Hudson's Bay Company governor. Robert Campbell established the first Hudson's Bay Company trading post in the Yukon in 1842 at Frances Lake. In 1846, he built a second post at Pelly Banks on the Pelly River. Both posts were inside Kaska territory, but also attracted Slavey mountain people, whose traditional lands were mostly in what is now called the Northwest Territories.

In 1848, Campbell and his men travelled further into the interior, paddling down the Pelly River to its confluence with the Yukon River, where they established Fort Selkirk. The Robert Campbell Highway parallels Campbell's route for much of its length and many place names date from that time -- a very important highway in the Yukon.

Even a quick review of Robert Campbell's history shows that he faced many difficulties and many challenges in order to remain in the area. He was a tough and resilient man.

### Speaker's statement

**Speaker:** I'll remind the honourable member, the same as I did with the Member for Mount Lorne, of the relevance. I appreciate the history lesson, as I appreciated the previous member's musings. However, I'd ask the honourable member to focus on the relevancy of the motion, please.

**Hon. Ms. Horne:** I was finished with my history lesson, actually.

Indeed, the Campbell Highway was initially built to help open up the area's natural resources, which it is still used for today and will be used for in the future.

The first portion of the Robert Campbell Highway, between Watson Lake and Miner's Junction, was built in the early 1960s as part of the project to complete road access to Tungsten, Northwest Territories. The portion east and north of Miner's Junction is now known as the Nahanni Range Road.

During the late 1960s and continuing to 1971, highways were built to connect Carmacks with Ross River, with a spur road to Faro to serve the new lead-zinc mine that opened in 1969.

Additional roadwork was also completed between Ross River and Miner's Junction. The completed road complements the Canol Road, providing two loops and bringing year-round access to Ross River.

Mr. Speaker, this road is a vital transportation link between the communities and my riding. Very sadly, under previous regimes, this road did not receive the attention and care it needed. I suspect this was because the Liberals and the NDP had no vision for the area. With the closure of the Faro mine, the region and its infrastructure needs were sadly ignored -- yes.

During my many visits to the Ross River and Faro areas, constituents have identified the upgrading of the Campbell Highway as their highest priority. In my meetings with constituents in Ross River, their number one concern is the condition of the Campbell Highway. We simply must address this road. I rejoice that we as a government have made this a priority.

In our platform, we committed to investing in infrastructure. We committed to plan for the major reconstruction and upgrading of the Campbell Highway. Why did we do this? It's because we believe in Faro and Ross River. I am proud to represent my riding in this Legislature and I am equally proud to represent this government to my constituents.

This road connects our towns, our communities and our people. Moreover, by investing in the road, we are demonstrating our commitment to the area and the Yukon. We are saying very clearly that, yes, you are important to the Yukon. The Town of Faro experienced the loss of its grocery store. I was delighted to hear that Faro and Ross River are talking with each other about ways to cooperate to ensure that food and other services would be available, and this is because of the Robert Campbell Highway.

More recently, the Faro service station burned, leaving the community in a difficult situation. Once again, the community rallied together and worked together to address this situation -- again, with the help of the Robert Campbell Highway.

One has to be tough and resilient to live in my riding. I am so very proud of my constituents. I want them to know that their MLA in this Yukon Party government cares about their well-being and the upgrading of the Robert Campbell Highway.

We are investing in the road that served this area because we are committed to be with you for the long term. The communities of Ross River and Faro are drawing closer together, and that would not be possible without this highway. For different reasons, Faro was without the use of their pool this year. They were able to transport their children to Ross River so that they could share Ross River's pool. This was due to the Robert Campbell Highway. I would also like to take a moment to thank our never-falling-asleep Minister Lang and his department for making that possible.

### Speaker's statement

**Speaker:** Order please. Members cannot name an individual in the House by name. Please refer to them by their portfolio or by the jurisdiction they represent.

**Hon. Ms. Horne:** Mr. Speaker, my constituents live in the riding because they want to. They have dreams and hopes. Many of them have children who also want to live, work and raise their families in my riding. The younger generation has faced the challenge of not having employment options that would allow them to remain in the area. Many of them have been forced to relocate to Whitehorse or to other jurisdictions to find work.

Mr. Speaker, due to the good work of the Premier and the Minister of Highways and Public Works -- who is never asleep at the switch -- and the rest of my Cabinet and caucus colleagues, we once again have a considerable amount of work being done in the area of mining. As you know, my riding was once the home to the Yukon's most important mine.

We are again experiencing some economic activity in the area, and we need the Robert Campbell Highway. We are making it possible for people who want to live in rural Yukon -- especially in my riding -- to be able to live there and still have

some interesting employment options. If we are going to continue to expand our economy in the area, we need a high-quality road, both to provide the minerals, supplies, personnel and services to undertake these enterprises and to transport to market the goods and resources produced.

I applaud this government for having the vision to recognize this and to commit to maintain and upgrade rural roads and mining roads throughout the territory to an acceptable standard.

I can assure all members of this House that there is a community demand. I would also like to note that we have committed to continue to utilize the heavy equipment rental contracts process to promote employment opportunities for local contractors in road construction projects near the communities.

We have talented and capable people in the rural ridings who have been struggling to stay afloat. Many of my constituents were frustrated that, when work was done in the area, it was done in such a way that the smaller contractors were unable to participate. This led to many of our small contractors packing up and moving. What capacity we have in the rural riding was forced to relocate in order to survive. How can we build a community when the small operators, who are often young and starting out, those who are cash-poor but full of ambition, drive, and enthusiasm, are forced to leave because there is no work, there is no accessibility to the community.

I thanked the Minister of Highways and Public Works earlier, but I would also like to thank him and my colleagues again. I appreciate the fact that, when I go and talk to the Premier or the minister, we get action, we get results. I appreciate the fact that I can raise the issue of chipsealing some 36 kilometres of road between Carmacks and Faro. I look forward to thanking the Minister of Highways and Public Works next summer for the completion of that work.

Let me say how much I appreciate the work this government is doing. I urge all members of this Assembly to vote for this motion.

Gunilschish.

**Mr. McRobb:** I have a few comments to briefly make. I've looked over this motion and have to question the purpose of bringing this matter forward for debate this afternoon. After all, the government already announced a large expenditure to upgrade the Robert Campbell Highway. That decision was made before the debate occurred in this Assembly.

This is a case of us debating part of that announcement after the decision was already made. So what's the point of spending the Assembly's time this afternoon debating part of a decision that was already made?

Furthermore, I have to question this in the list of priorities that face us all here. Perhaps our time would have been better spent discussing how the Government of Yukon should place its investments, especially with respect to these junk bond issues, in an economic climate of uncertainty. That would have been more relevant for debate this afternoon.

**Hon. Mr. Kenyon:** It is rather interesting to hear members opposite, who are usually upset about press releases, now complaining that they have an opportunity to go on the public record to discuss what they feel about them. I suspect the Member for Kluane is only jealous that the Campbell Highway doesn't go through his riding. We can always probably discuss that at a future time.

The Campbell Highway is one of the very few --

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

**Hon. Mr. Kenyon:** I'm just wondering who had the floor there.

It's interesting that the Campbell Highway has been one of the forgotten highways of the Yukon. It has been neglected over many years, through previous administrations. It is difficult now to admit that we really have to do something about this to link the communities along that highway and link the potential resources that are through there.

It serves as an important link through the system. It runs northwest over 500 kilometres from Watson Lake on the Alaska Highway to Carmacks on the Klondike Highway. It's very picturesque and scenic; there's a lot along that road, but it does desperately need a lot of work to bring it up to snuff.

It provides access to all of the mineral deposits of the central Yukon, while at the same time, providing an alternate route for tourist travel. Really, on some parts of it, most tourists I think would be ill-advised to give it a try, although it is certainly a good highway for much of it. It needs to be addressed; it needs to be looked at; it needs to be upgraded. This is a priority, and I recognize that the Official Opposition does have problems in making priorities -- and still realizes that making priorities is very difficult -- but this is a priority that for us is very easy. We have to get on with doing this.

The main drive for reconstruction, of course, came in the 1950s when the access was requested to the mineral deposits at Little Lake and Glenlyon Ridge, west of Ross River. The construction didn't begin though until 1960 or the early 1960s, and it took another decade to really complete the other highway.

Included in the construction at the time was the Nahanni Range Road. This was really considered to be part of the Campbell Highway, because it was done much at the same time. It extended around 250 kilometres up to the Cantung mining operations in the Northwest Territories. That road is still used. I've had casework files from constituents who, rightly so, were concerned that there was poor signage at the junction, at the border crossing from Yukon to Northwest Territories.

There were conservation officers to make sure they were hunting on the right side of the border, but of course there were no signs or any indications of where that border was. It is amazing sometimes that roads like that are used in many ways that we in the general public really don't understand. I was talking to one fellow who, just about as the snow was to fly, went up there very quickly to find a German motorcyclist, camping with some old camping gear -- sort of Canadian Tire, certainly nothing really heavy-duty -- and he was determined he was going to go up to the airstrip at Macmillan Pass and hire a plane to fly his motorcycle out.

They were unable to convince him, of course, that that wasn't exactly an airport, and the RCMP ended up pulling him out.

So there is a lot of misconception by the travelling public about what the roads are and many problems we have in that respect, and that all has to be addressed.

There has been a lot of increased activity along the Robert Campbell Highway, of course. Yukon Zinc's Wolverine project and the mining opportunities there are one challenge to construction along the Campbell Highway. Another one is that, at some point in the future, there will be access and mineral extraction out of Pacifica Resources Ltd. or, as it's now known, the Selwyn Resources project.

Interestingly enough -- at least, I think the leading thoughts at this point for the extraction of those resources down to the Robert Campbell Highway will be by rail. They have more of an interest in building a rail down to that. And that's a good thing. It's a lot less of an impact on the environment, it's cheaper, and more economical for the mine. There are also less carbon emissions, less fuel consumption, and less impact on the environment and wildlife.

It's interesting too that when we did the rail link study -- the so-called *Alaska-Canada Rail Link Feasibility Study* -- it was very easy to determine -- we thought -- that the best route would be coming down the Alaska Highway and following the Northern Pipeline Agency, or the NPA, corridor. Unfortunately, while a pipeline can go up and down, a railway can't. And we thought there were some huge challenges to bring it down through the Robert Campbell Highway. As it turns out, that's one of the best routes -- again, one of the reasons for that study to have that information "on the shelf", so to speak, for future use.

So, really, we do have to look at reconstruction and upgrading of this highway from a number of different ways, and \$30 million dedicated to improving the upgrading of the infrastructure should occur over the next three years -- or will occur over the next three years.

Infrastructure is one of the biggest things that a government can really do. It's one of the largest priorities that we have and one of the things we have to show private industry and private business is that the infrastructure is there for them to make their economic decisions and to try to see how economical anything might be along the way. That critical and stable infrastructure, highways and bridges, as some other members have mentioned, all contribute to a healthy and viable community, as well as economic growth. Any of these operations needs a good, stable knowledge that they have reasonable access to their resources and that they have the ability to do business. The infrastructure there is totally necessary.

We anticipate that construction project will begin in the 2008 fiscal year and will continue on through to 2011. As several members have mentioned, there will be a number of different improvements at various locations -- kilometre 10 around the Watson Lake Airport, kilometre 60, which, I think is around the Frances River bridge, as well as in the Tuchtua area between kilometre 107 and 114. These are some of the priority areas along that end.

We are reviewing options regarding the application of the bitumen surface treatment, or BST. But really, the main commitment is to upgrade the highway to a standard that will support the increased traffic volume, as well as the potential for increased economic growth.

This all dovetails into the rail study, which gives us an overview of what the traffic would be through that corridor by rail, which would be cheaper for fuel, with lower fuel consumption, lower greenhouse gas emission, and everything else. People forget that when we are looking at truck transport rather than rail transport, we also have to build in not only the fuel consumption and the greenhouse gas emissions, but we also have to look at the road maintenance. The large trucks -- I think some of us were here when the so-called muffin trucks were on the road every 20 minutes. On the good side, you could break down and you knew there was a truck within 20 minutes of stopping to give you a hand, and they were always very good about that. On the other hand, at the same time, they just pounded that highway and consequently the highway needed more upgrading and maintenance on everything from potholes to redoing chipseal areas and there were the effects of permafrost, and on and on, so upgrading the highway to a good maintainable standard is a definite priority.

In conjunction to these highway upgrades we have to consider the interest in activity in the mining sector and we have to prepare -- at some point these things will happen. I think that so many of these opportunities are very slow. I don't really see a problem with how slow some of these projects develop because they have to be done in a very methodical and a very metered way with a good overview of what the potential impact is on the land and how we can mitigate that impact and everything else. The fact that it develops slowly is something I personally don't have a problem with. However, the reality is that most of these projects will go and we have to be prepared for it. That is what the government is there for -- to create the infrastructure, maintain the infrastructure and make sure it is ready when industry or business needs it.

We are going to have to look at that fairly soon because you don't wave a magic wand. I know that the Official Opposition likes the magic wand philosophy, but unfortunately we don't have a magic wand and I don't know any governments that do. It will take some time to get these things done and we're working on that on a day-to-day basis.

I think that Canada's north holds an incredible promise as a source of great resources and that is something our department has been promoting in addition to being a strategic stronghold. We're in the right place at the right time. We're at the Pacific gateway. We have access to ports that are five sailing days closer to Asia than the more conventional ports in Canada and the United States.

Again, we have to have that plan and that infrastructure in place, and the Robert Campbell Highway is certainly a big part of that. We have to look at it in a variety of different ways. It is an alternative tourist route. It provides a fantastic opportunity for a circle route -- take a look at it. I have certainly been over to Faro and Ross River and down the South Canal, but I've never been down the other parts of that. I've flown over it many

times and I've seen it, but I've never been on the ground, so to speak.

We really have to be committed to ensuring that highway continues to grow and continues to serve the territory well.

When we look at some of the infrastructure that is developing, there is a huge amount of infrastructure that we haven't even begun to discover yet. That will develop as the exploration continues. When we talk to some of the investment groups that I've been working with, there are two concerns. One, of course, is the infrastructure -- the roads, rail potential and other things if we will be ready, and port access. The other thing, of course, is labour. The labour shortage is something that's worldwide. It's right across Canada and it's not an individual issue here. The solution is not going to be a magic wand. If the Official Opposition has a magic wand that works, I sure wish they would let us know about it and loan it to us, because I don't know any government that's ever had one.

We are looking at the different types of labour shortage, because that's a very definite issue even in the construction of the Robert Campbell Highway and the critical infrastructure pieces of the puzzle. We did a preliminary study on that. It was completed in August 2007. It was done in conjunction with the Whitehorse Chamber of Commerce. We will certainly continue to work with all levels of government, all orders of government and other stakeholders to explore and address the labour shortage issues, as well as a Yukon-wide coordinated strategy.

People have to keep in mind that, while we are working on these problems, every jurisdiction around us is also working on these problems. Consequently, a lot of times we run into the magic wand theory where if we paid more, we could get the people. Well, if we pay more, the guy next door will pay a little more than that and we are right back where we started. It's not necessarily a solution. It's very easy to say that money is everything. For any fans of the old show *Ally McBeal* and their Fishisms, the original Fishism from the pilot was "make lots of money" --

#### **Speaker's statement**

**Speaker:** Order please. No television quotes, please. Let's keep things relevant to the motion, please. Carry on, the member has the floor.

**Hon. Mr. Kenyon:** The relevance to that, Mr. Speaker, is that, in terms of working on infrastructure like the highway and everything else, without the labour to do it, any amount of money announced, utilized or not, won't be there. The labour is a major part of the problem.

You bring up a good point there, Mr. Speaker, and that's something that has been a challenge for our department in terms of convincing people of the pieces of the puzzle. When we're looking at infrastructure, when we're looking at a construction project, when we're looking at rail, when we're looking at developing the Robert Campbell Highway -- or Hamilton Boulevard, for that matter -- there are many pieces of the puzzle. If you don't involve Yukon Housing Corporation, if you don't have lots available, if you don't have a reasonable housing market, if you don't have food that is accessible and reasonable,

if you don't have a way of life, if you don't have all these things to offer, then these major infrastructures won't happen.

I understand your concern, Mr. Speaker, but I have to point out that, like others, I think you're falling into a syndrome that's looking at --

#### **Speaker's statement**

**Speaker:** The honourable member can't use the Chair as part of your debate. I am simply here to direct the debate and I do not appreciate being included in it. I would ask the honourable member not to include me in this. The honourable minister has the floor.

**Hon. Mr. Kenyon:** That's it.

**Hon. Ms. Taylor:** I'm very pleased to speak to this motion before us today. As has been articulated in the past, the Campbell Highway is indeed a strategic corridor in the Yukon for a number of various purposes.

As Minister of Tourism and Culture, I want to speak to some of the important aspects of this particular route as a tourism corridor and the importance this reconstruction work will provide to those who reside along that corridor and in terms of expanding the tourism opportunities for local operators and making it more accessible for the visiting public.

I think, as has been articulated, when we look at infrastructure, there are many pieces to strategic investments in infrastructure in the Yukon. In terms of being very competitive, as a competitive destination, if you choose to travel to the Yukon, it's a destination of choice, or if you choose to work in the Yukon or invest in the Yukon, any time we can improve our infrastructure here is a good thing indeed.

When one looks back over the last number of years, there have been a lot of different investments in road infrastructure and highway upgrades. I know there have been significant improvements done in terms of our bridges in the Yukon. Also, when I look at the Whitehorse Airport terminal, for example, it is yet another example of a strategic investment.

Of course, these various pieces of infrastructure all connect to one another. But my point is that by having more access to the Yukon, we do become friendlier to visitors at large, whether it means more air access into the Yukon by foreign or domestic visitors, local residents, or in terms of just having better roads and highways to come to the Yukon -- I think we've seen a lot of different improvements over the years.

As a person who was born and raised in the Yukon and, in particular, in the Town of Watson Lake, I have especially recognized a substantial number of improvements over the years to our roads, including the Campbell Highway, I might add.

While I was growing up in Watson Lake, we made many routine trips to Whitehorse. Of course, back in those days, it used to be an eight-hour trip -- up and down and around the corners -- on a dusty road. My father had to pull over many times, because I was subject to car sickness. So it wasn't always a desirable trip. However, it continues to serve the travelling public, and the history of the Alaska Highway in itself speaks volumes and continues to lure visitors to the Yukon via that highway.

Again, having spent a lot of years in Watson Lake, our family would spend a lot of time on the Campbell Highway. We would go to a lot of different camping spots along the way. Simpson Lake really comes to mind. It's a campground that's only about 75 kilometres north of Watson Lake on the Campbell Highway. It is a frequent destination of choice for the residents of Watson Lake celebrating July 1. Why it was held in Simpson Lake, I really don't know. I have some wonderful, wonderful memories of the whole town and other towns meeting and camping at Simpson Lake, to celebrate what it is to be a Yukoner, and to really just take in a piece of the territory that not necessarily everybody would have the privilege to enjoy.

Of course, we would also spend a lot of time at Frances Lake, which has become, over the years, a very popular attraction for many visitors and residents of Watson Lake. It's kind of an annual ritual to spend months on end at that lake as well as on the respective rivers.

There is great fishing along that corridor. There is wonderful hunting along that corridor. Although I don't hunt myself, I know for a fact -- from my father and through friends of ours and other family members -- that they have had a great occasion to take part in a lot of activities along the way.

In recent years, though, I've seen a lot of new investments in the highway. I've seen a lot of improvements to that particular road. It's great to see, because, as a result, there have been a lot of changes to those respective communities along the way, whether it be Ross River, Faro and certainly all the establishments and settlements along the way.

The highway remains a really attractive corridor for visitors to get off the beaten track, as many of our marketing people would like to call it. As a result, it has been a real destination for lots of visitors coming over -- in particular, German-speaking Europeans. Whether they choose to drive up the highway to come north, or whether they choose to fly in and rent a motorhome, or a pickup and camper, or even an independent vehicle, that is certainly a corridor that is really receiving increasing interest among the visitors in that neck of the woods.

As a result, we've been able to see some growth in the tourism opportunities made available from local tour operators along the corridor over recent years. I always endeavour to get along that highway once or twice a year. Actually, it's about twice a year -- once on our community tours and then another time, usually in the summer. In the last few years it has been surrounding the annual golf tournament -- or there is the local arts festival as well, which is also held in the Town of Faro.

It gives me a growing appreciation for the number of committed individuals who reside in that area. They are very proud individuals. They have been there for many years. There have been a lot of new individuals who have chosen to move to those communities along the Campbell Highway and have chosen to invest in tourism opportunities or other opportunities, I would like to say.

I have been very impressed with the calibre of tour offerings made available by operators and the infrastructure that has been made available. If anyone has ever had the opportunity to spend time in Faro, it is a very dynamic community. There are

many committed individuals. As a result, that town has really flourished. Its dynamic has changed a lot over the years from simply a mining community to a much diversified community. The mining aspect has cleanup and remediation issues, and they are working for an official closure plan, and this has been a real emphasis. They are really working to expand bed and breakfasts. Faro, in itself, has been a real Mecca of bed and breakfasts. Hoteliers also have taken advantage of some key events in that area and have very much excelled.

There is a sense of appreciation of the level of investment in that community. Every time I'm there, I always endeavour to stop in along the way to a number of different points of interest, including the Campbell Region Interpretive Centre. They have done an exemplary job of that interpretive centre over the years. They have provided history of Faro and also of the entire Campbell route. As such, it's our government that has invested in that particular venue for the first time ever.

There is also the museum's community programming, but we just recently increased their funding as well. So I think now they receive about \$38,000 from this government whereas before, under previous governments, they were receiving nothing. It's just to help build the capacity in the museum community but really to help that community tell their story better and more comprehensively about the history of where they come and what really makes them proud to be part of that community.

Likewise there are many other attractions. The Mount Mye Sheep Centre is a beautiful drive. You know, if anything, there are so many different routes that veer off from the Campbell Highway that have been really extraordinary experiences and continue to deliver to visitors and local residents as well. The Mount Mye Sheep Centre is strategically located. It is in a beautiful area and it has served as an area for many different activities over the years. It is the community of Faro making really good use of their resources at hand.

In addition, Ross River is a Kaska First Nation-based community. It is situated at the confluence of the Ross and Pelly rivers. It has served as a very important trading post over the years -- many years back. We've also seen that place evolve. The First Nations contribute to the economic and social well-being of the territory. This area has become a really strategic area of importance for them, servicing different resource activities over the years. I think it has been articulated by many members over the last little while here today the very importance of all of the different resource developments taking place.

There is Wolverine, there's Macmillan Pass -- the potential as Tungsten winds down in its capacity over the next few years. There are also many, many other developments. As a result, there is an increased demand for services, supplies and more accessible infrastructure. Again I refer to roads.

This particular investment of \$30 million over the next few years has very much been a priority of the respective communities situated along the Campbell Highway. I can't recall one community tour where the identification of new investments on this particular route has not been made. In fact, it has been at the very forefront of people's minds. We are really very pleased to actually be able to deliver and make use of local resources

and local individuals -- the employment opportunities -- and to be able to further expand our capacity in the road-building enterprise. Just being able to make this a very attractive route for visitors at large and for the travelling public and industry at large -- we couldn't be happier.

As I mentioned, there have been a number of different events held throughout the years in the communities, from different arts festivals to, for example, the Faro Crane and Sheep Viewing Festival. I don't know which members have actually had the opportunity to take part in that particular venue, but it really is a great one. The residents in the area were able to attract, I think, over 100 individuals and bring them to that area to take part in that particular festival.

I think that with the newer investments in this particular corridor, you're also going to see further growth in opportunities, whether it be tourism, mining, fishing for the locals, or hunting and so forth.

So any investments we can make to our respective scenic drives -- of which this is certainly one of several scenic drives in the Yukon -- is a very positive thing for the Yukon. And we're really pleased to be able to work to make this possible. It means a lot to the local residents, and it will certainly mean a lot to the lives of many individuals.

I had the opportunity to take part in the annual general meeting of the Wilderness Tourism Association not long ago. Again, I was just so impressed by the number of new operators in the area, whether it was on the Canol Road or around the Frances Lake region and so forth. But clearly it was just another indication that this area is becoming a very important destination to many visitors.

So, again, it's great to see that individuals are choosing to create more touring opportunities for visitors, and certainly the assets are there -- those being wildlife viewing opportunities, fishing excursions, hiking excursions, some terrific trails and old roads made accessible to local residents and visitors.

These are all part and parcel of tour offerings, and it's all about building upon product offerings. That, coupled with marketing efforts -- I think that Yukon is certainly coming of age, and we've been very pleased to see that.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to say a few words in support of this motion and, more importantly, we look forward to seeing the actual highway improvements come to fruition.

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

**Mr. Nordick:** I would like to thank all members of the Assembly who have spoken to this motion. As members and my colleagues have stated, this motion does provide a useful and needed improvement to the Robert Campbell Highway. This improvement would and will improve the community's overall ability to function. It will improve mining and exploration in the area.

Mr. Speaker, this motion urges the Government of Yukon to invest in the reconstruction and upgrading of the Watson Lake to Ross River section of the Robert Campbell Highway,

as well as application of BST to a 36-kilometre section of the Robert Campbell Highway between Faro and Carmacks.

Mr. Speaker, it is a beautiful drive. I appreciate that improving the road structure will increase tourism, the usability of the road by the mining industries and will increase exploration. This benefits the economy of the Yukon. We do, as the Yukon Party government, respect and appreciate all our communities. We have a wide range of roads that we take care of. This is one section of road that does need improvement. I drove it during community tours in my car and it was a really rough section. It has deteriorated and we do need to improve it.

Once again, I would like to thank all members for supporting this motion. I will close with that statement.

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

**Some Hon. Member:** Division.

#### Division

**Speaker:** Division has been called.

#### Bells

**Speaker:** Mr. Clerk, would you poll the House.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Mr. Nordick:** Agree.

**Mr. Mitchell:** Agree.

**Mr. McRobb:** Agree.

**Mr. Elias:** Agree.

**Mr. Fairclough:** Agree.

**Mr. Inverarity:** Agree.

**Mr. Cardiff:** Agree.

**Clerk:** Mr. Speaker, the results are 14 yea, nil nay.

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

*Motion No. 173 agreed to*

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** I move that the Speaker do now leave the Chair and that the House resolve into Committee of the Whole.

**Speaker:** It has been moved by the Government House Leader that the Speaker do now leave the Chair and that the House resolve into Committee of the Whole.

*Motion agreed to*

*Speaker leaves the Chair*

#### COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

**Chair:** I will now call Committee of the Whole to order.

**Bill No. 8 -- Second Appropriation Act, 2007-08 -- continued**

**Department of Community Services -- continued**

**Chair:** The matter before the Committee is Bill No. 8, *Second Appropriation Act, 2007-08*. We will now continue with general debate in Community Services.

**Mr. Cardiff:** I'd like to continue from where I left off the other day in Community Services. We were talking about dumps, but I'd like to return to the EMS transfer and the volunteer fire department aspect of that.

There is a concern in some communities, from what I gather -- and this is not just with volunteer fire departments but I believe it is with a number of NGOs, and it doesn't matter whether it is community justice committees or school councils. There is always a hard time getting volunteers.

I'm just wondering whether the minister and his department have anything in the works with regard to helping some of these volunteer groups -- such as volunteer fire departments and search and rescue organizations in communities -- with recruiting and retaining volunteers. It is very essential. I know that in some of the volunteer fire departments the volunteers are getting older -- just like the minister and I are. We've only got so many more years to be in the workforce or to be in the volunteer workforce.

I'm just wondering if there is a plan -- something that the department has in the works that would assist these agencies in recruiting more volunteers and helping them to retain them.

**Hon. Mr. Hart:** As I stated before, we will be going out to discuss with all the stakeholders just what their requirements are. They are looking for additional training -- what kind of training that is going to be.

I mentioned before that we are also looking at the aspect of support through administration and how that administration will come. It could come in the form of assisting them by providing, for example, a ways and means of maintaining their volunteers. I concur with the member opposite that it is a little hard -- I'm sure I wouldn't pass the physical for the volunteer fire department, but I would try to get a grab at it, seeing as how I was one once.

We are going to be out shortly. The team has been put together and we anticipate being out within the next couple of weeks.

In terms of EMS, we are actually meeting a number of the staffed positions. We are working on that and we have a call-out for those positions -- one in Watson Lake and one in Dawson City.

**Mr. Cardiff:** Could the minister clarify the last little bit there? He got a call-out for one position in Dawson and one position in Watson Lake for EMS -- I am thinking that these are the paramedics they are talking about. One in each community.

**Hon. Mr. Hart:** There are actually two in each community. They are fully qualified paramedics.

**Mr. Cardiff:** I am glad to hear that there will be more than one.

I would like to raise something else with the minister. The minister also has responsibility for motor vehicles in Community Services, I believe. We read a motion into the record the other day about high-tech drivers' licences. I know this is something that has been on the radar screen of the motor vehicles

agency in the past, and I know that it is also a pet project of the Minister of Economic Development.

The issue is about passports and the expense of getting a passport and how difficult it is sometimes. The Minister of Tourism will concur with this, as well, I'm sure. There is a need for some form of identification to cross the borders, and it has come to light recently that the American government apparently will accept some sort of high-tech driver's licence. I don't know the details of it, but I am just wondering whether the minister and his department are willing to work a little faster in order to make this a reality for Yukoners.

**Hon. Mr. Hart:** I did touch on this earlier in my pre-amble for the reading here in the House, but there is a pilot project going on right now in B.C. and Washington State. It's scheduled for completion some time in March. Once that's complete, and we have the results of that, we'll make our decision from there.

But with respect to the "enhanced driver's licence" -- as we like to call it -- a lot of it is depending upon the results of that study, as well as getting the extension from the Department of Homeland Security in the United States. As the member indicated, there is some hope that Homeland Security will accept the enhanced driver's licence.

And, of course, the results of the pilot -- both in B.C. and Washington, as well as the ones in Windsor and Detroit -- will give us an example of what we'll have to do -- what kind of driver's licence it will be. So, we're going to wait until we get the results of that, and then we can move forward to meet those expectations.

And as I mentioned earlier, it will require a substantial amount of work on our part to basically catch up with the rest of Canada in order to have an enhanced driver's licence for our people to go across the border.

**Mr. Cardiff:** Can the minister provide us with some idea of timelines? He says that they want to wait until this pilot project is complete in March. Is there any work being done in the meantime toward getting prepared? Time is of the essence on this for some people who would like to go to Skagway, Haines, Fairbanks or Juneau. It's an issue in communities along the Alaska Highway, where they are used to travelling back and forth across the border. Because of the trouble they have to get a passport, if they could resolve it this way, it would be a lot easier.

**Hon. Mr. Hart:** I did discuss this earlier, but we are in the process of doing this. We have funding that has been provided to get our data up to date. We also have issued a contract recently for the completion of the assessment, so that we are ready to move as quickly as possible. This will guide us to the steps and costs for the future.

**Mr. Cardiff:** Can he expand on that at all, as far as a timeline goes? What would the earliest possible date be when these enhanced drivers' licences would be available to Yukoners?

**Hon. Mr. Hart:** Optimistically, we are probably hoping for April 2009.

**Mr. Elias:** I don't expect the minister to have this information that I am going to be asking for at his fingertips.



However, I would be willing to accept a legislative return. The question is with regard to the water well upgrade in Old Crow. Could the minister provide me with a project description, scope of work, timelines with regard to this project, and any other briefings or information with regard to the project of upgrading the drinking water well in Old Crow?

The second question is: can the minister provide me with how many times this project has been revoked? I understand it is twice. This has been ongoing for two years now and it has been revoked twice. That is my understanding. I look forward to the minister's response to those questions.

**Hon. Mr. Hart:** I can provide the member opposite with the information he has requested.

**Mr. McRobb:** I just want to squeeze in a quick question to follow up on one I posed to the minister last spring. It was with respect to the process of importing vehicles from out of the country. I wonder if he can update us on whether there has been any streamlining in that respect. Also, can he give us any idea of what the import numbers are for vehicles -- let's say, so far this year as opposed to previous years?

We know that with the rising Canadian dollar, this is becoming something that a lot of Canadians are doing. They are purchasing cars in the United States, for example, and importing them back into the country. There have been some issues identified on the timelines required by the department for doing this and the impracticality of some of those timelines.

As well, there have been recent consumer issues identified, such as the number of lemon cars coming into the country. Can the minister identify if he is aware of these concerns and what, if anything, the department is doing?

**Hon. Mr. Hart:** With regard to purchasing of vehicles imported from the U.S., we only get involved with the actual registration of the vehicle here in the Yukon when a person goes to register. For the actual numbers -- that would be a Customs issue.

With regard to the rental cars -- same issue. We follow the rental cars and any kind of used vehicle. It is still "buyer beware" with regard to that vehicle. We follow the regulations as set by the federal government with regard to rentals.

**Chair:** Order please. Given the time, the Chair will rise and report progress.

*Speaker resumes the Chair*

**Speaker:** I will now call the House to order.

May the House have a report from Chair of Committee of the Whole?

### Chair's report

**Mr. Nordick:** Mr. Speaker, Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 8, entitled *Second Appropriation Act, 2007-08*, and directed me to report progress.

**Speaker:** You have heard the report from the Chair of Committee of the Whole. Are you agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**Speaker:** I declare the report carried.

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

*The House adjourned at 5:31 p.m.*

### The following Sessional Paper was tabled November 21, 2007:

07-1-44

Anti-Smoking Legislation, Select Committee on: Report (dated November 2007) (Cathers)

### The following document was filed November 21, 2007:

07-1-37

Short Term Investment Portfolio – October 5, 2007 Correspondence from the Department of Finance to the Auditor General of Canada (Taylor)