

Whitehorse, Yukon**Thursday, March 20, 2008 -- 1:00 p.m.**

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

Prayers

INTRODUCTION OF PAGES

Speaker: It gives me great pleasure to announce that the following students will be serving this House as legislative pages for the 2008 spring sitting. They are Annina Altherr, Aven Knutson, Taylor McIsaac, and Drew Spicer from F.H. Collins Secondary School, and Keely Boyko, Angellina Burns, Kelly Panchyshyn, and Tessa Vibe from Vanier Catholic Secondary School. Today we have with us Tessa Vibe and Keely Boyko. I ask the members to welcome them to the House at this time.

Applause

Withdrawal of motions

Speaker: The Chair wishes to inform the House of changes that have been made to the Order Paper. The following motions have been removed from the Order Paper at the request of the members in whose name the motions stand: Motion No. 224 and Motion for the Production of Papers No. 6 standing in the name of the Leader of the Official Opposition; Motion No. 17 and Motion No. 175 standing in the name of the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin; Motion No. 19 and Motion No. 176 standing in the name of the Member for Mayo-Tatchun.

Also, the following motions have been removed from the Order Paper because they are outdated: Motion No. 31, Motion No. 174 and Motion No. 266 standing in the name of the Leader of the Official Opposition; Motion No. 185 and Motion No. 255 standing in the name of the Leader of the Third Party; Motion No. 52 standing in the name of the Member for Mayo-Tatchun; Motion No. 79 standing in the name of the Member for Mount Lorne; Motion Nos. 99 and 100 standing in the name of the Member for Porter Creek South; and Motion No. 164 standing in the name of the Member for Kluane;

Finally, Motion No. 199, standing in the name of the Member for Porter Creek South, has been removed from the Order Paper as the action requested in the motion has been fulfilled.

DAILY ROUTINE

Speaker: We will now proceed with the Order Paper.

TRIBUTES**In recognition of International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination**

Hon. Ms. Horne: Mr. Speaker, on March 21, I encourage all Yukoners to celebrate the day designated by the United Nations as the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. The United Nations declared this day because on March 21, 1960, in Sharpeville, South Africa, police opened fire on a peaceful demonstration against the apartheid pass laws, killing 69 people. A sober reminder like this

and other forms of racial discrimination requires us to ensure that we are ever vigilant to maintain and enhance human rights. This is a day observed around the world to focus attention on the problems of racial discrimination and the need to promote harmony. This yearly celebration reminds us all that the elimination of racial discrimination must begin in our homes, our schools and our communities. As Yukoners, we must embrace a racial and cultural diversity.

It is our responsibility to ensure that our children learn that racism is not all right and that it is our cultural diversity that makes us unique, interesting and special. I strongly encourage parents, teachers and all Yukoners to take time on March 21 to talk to a child about how we can take action against racism to help create a society based on equality, dignity and justice for all.

Mr. Inverarity: I rise today to pay tribute also to March 21, the internationally recognized Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. The United Nations General Assembly designated this day in 1966 to mark the tragic events that took place on March 21, 1960, in Sharpeville, South Africa, when 69 peaceful demonstrators were killed during protest against apartheid.

Canada was one of the first countries to support the United Nations initiative and launched its first annual campaign against racial discrimination in 1989. In the struggle to eliminate racism, we must confront it in all forms -- overt and systemic. Canada is a multicultural society and, although great advances have been made to eliminate racism, the problem still exists.

We must continue our efforts to fight racial discrimination wherever it appears. We must continue to help our youth with both early intervention and education to recognize and understand that racism is wrong. The Government of Canada launched a campaign in 2008 called, "Racism. Stop It". It is a national video competition challenging young Canadians ages 12 to 18 to create a video that shares their thoughts on the elimination of racism in Canada.

In Canada, we are free to say, "I do not accept a racist joke, a sexist remark or bullying behaviour." We need to be responsible as Canadians, and as individuals we need to accept that our freedom also gives us the responsibility to stand and say, "No, I will not accept; I will not condone."

I urge all Yukoners to take responsibility for our freedoms and to take a stand against racism, sexism and bullying. Let us, each and every day, bring an end to racism in our society.

On that note, I'd also like to congratulate the Yukon Human Rights Commission on getting their new office space. It's now accessible to everyone. The previous location had some difficulties for people who had disabilities, and I congratulate them on their new digs.

Mr. Cardiff: I rise on behalf of the NDP caucus today to pay tribute to the United Nations International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. When this day was proclaimed in 1966, the General Assembly of the United Nations

called on the international community to redouble its efforts to eliminate all forms of racial discrimination.

Now, while Canada prides itself on its multicultural policies, statistics continue to show that aboriginal peoples experience a disproportionate amount of poverty, unemployment, poor health, incarceration and suicide. This disparity along racial lines is true in the Yukon, just as it is true across Canada. We are not alone in Canada or the Yukon in needing to tackle this issue. Our neighbour, America, has struggled with racial discrimination throughout its history and we can be inspired by the recent public debate in that country around this issue.

In the words of presidential candidate Barack Obama, "Race is an issue that I believe this nation cannot afford to ignore right now. If we walk away now, if we simply retreat into our respective corners, we will never be able to come together and solve challenges like health care, or education, or the need to find good jobs for all." Here in the Yukon, we need to confront our own issues, our own racism and prejudices in order to ensure our well-intentioned policies actually work. As leaders in the Yukon community, we need to ensure that what we do here in the Legislative Assembly is really beneficial to each and every member of our society. We are all one people. We are all one community.

Speaker: Are there any further tributes?

In recognition of journée internationale de la Francophonie

Hon. Mr. Hart: Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to speak on behalf of the House for the journée internationale de la Francophonie. En tant que ministre responsable des services en français, je prends la parole, en ce jour, pour souligner la journée internationale de la Francophonie. Aujourd'hui, dans le monde, deux cent millions de personnes s'expriment en français, dont neuf millions au Canada. La journée internationale de la Francophonie célèbre la langue française et la diversité culturelle des populations francophones. Au nom du gouvernement du Yukon, je souhaite rendre hommage aux francophones du monde entier, à ceux du Canada et à ceux du Yukon.

La langue française est enracinée au Yukon depuis plus de 150 années. Elle fait partie de notre histoire, de notre culture et de notre identité. En 2008, nous fêtons le 21^e anniversaire de la *Loi sur les langues* du Yukon par laquelle le gouvernement du Yukon s'engage à offrir des services en français à la population franco-yukonnaise. Je suis fier de dire que notre gouvernement travaille à l'amélioration des services en français en étroite collaboration avec la communauté franco-yukonnaise. Je suis fier de dire qu'ici, au Yukon, il fait bon vivre et grandir en français. J'invite tous les Yukonnais et toutes les Yukonaises à se joindre à moi pour fêter la journée internationale de la Francophonie. Je vous remercie.

Mr. Speaker, as minister responsible for French language services, I rise today to pay tribute to the journée internationale de la Francophonie. Today around the world, 200 million people speak French and nine million in Canada. The journée internationale de la Francophonie celebrates the French language and the cultural diversity of French-speaking populations

worldwide. On behalf of the Government of Yukon, I rise in this House today to pay tribute to all francophones in Canada, in Yukon and around the world.

The French language has been deeply rooted in the Yukon for over 150 years. It is part of our history, our culture and our identity. In 2008, we celebrate the 20th anniversary of the *Languages Act* through which the Government of Yukon offers French services to French-speaking Yukoners. Here in the Yukon, it gives me great pride to say that our government has been working closely with the French community to improve French language services. It gives me great pride to say that, here in the Yukon, we can grow up and live in French, and we can also learn as an adult. I invite all Yukoners to join us to celebrate the journée internationale de la Francophonie. Thank you very much.

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

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Elias: I ask that all members join me in recognizing Chief Joe Linklater, who is present in the gallery today.
Applause

Speaker: Are there any further introductions of visitors?

Are there any returns or documents for tabling?
Are there any reports of committees?
Are there any petitions?
Are there bills to be introduced?

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 9: Introduction and First Reading

Hon. Mr. Fentie: I move that Bill No. 9, entitled *Third Appropriation Act, 2007-08*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Hon. Premier that Bill No. 9, entitled *Third Appropriation Act, 2007-08*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Motion for introduction and first reading of Bill No. 9 agreed to

Bill No. 10: Introduction and First Reading

Hon. Mr. Fentie: I move that Bill No. 10, entitled *Interim Supply Appropriation Act, 2008-09*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Hon. Premier that Bill No. 10, entitled *Interim Supply Appropriation Act, 2008-09*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Motion for introduction and first reading of Bill No. 10 agreed to

Bill No. 11: Introduction and First Reading

Hon. Mr. Fentie: I move that Bill No. 11, entitled *First Appropriation Act, 2008-09*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Hon. Premier that Bill No. 11, entitled *First Appropriation Act, 2008-09*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Motion for introduction and first reading of Bill No. 11 agreed to

Bill No. 53: Introduction and First Reading

Hon. Mr. Fentie: I move that Bill No. 53, entitled *Act to Amend the Tobacco Tax Act*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Hon. Premier that Bill No. 53, entitled *Act to Amend the Tobacco Tax Act*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Motion for introduction and first reading of Bill No. 53 agreed to

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

NOTICES OF MOTION

Mr. Mitchell: I give notice of the following motion:
THAT this House urges the Yukon government to

- (1) expedite implementation of proposed social assistance reforms; and
- (2) accelerate the process to have new social assistance rates in place to benefit those Yukoners in need before the end of this sitting.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to work cooperatively with the Whitehorse Youth Coalition and other stakeholders, and after consulting with First Nations, the general public and all non-governmental organizations who currently provide services to youth, to implement a permanent youth shelter in the City of Whitehorse.

Mr. McRobb: Mr. Speaker, I will say it is a pleasure to be back.

I give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Yukon government to recognize the merit of bills introduced in this House by opposition private members by indicating it will support Bill No. 102, *Act to Amend the Human Rights Act* and Bill No. 103, the *Apology Act*, both standing in the name of the Member for Porter Creek South.

Mr. Elias: I give notice of the following motion:
THAT this House urges the Yukon government to address the health concerns of northern residents as a preventive measure to rule out bacterial infection as the cancer-causing agent in the community of Old Crow by

- (1) testing the residents of Old Crow for the presence of cancer causing bacterium that has been found in other Arctic communities;
- (2) performing a study on the occurrence of *Helicobacter pylori* bacterium infection among the residents of Old Crow; and

(3) providing appropriate health and safety measures to ensure that Old Crow residents are free from cancer-causing bacteria.

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

THAT this House urges the Yukon government to take the findings of the education reform project final report back to the Yukon public and use the feedback received to draft amendments to the *Education Act* for presentation to the Legislative Assembly by the fall sitting of 2008.

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

THAT this House urges the Yukon government to recognize the merit of bills introduced in this House by opposition private members by indicating it will support Bill No. 106, the *Net Metering Act*, standing in the name of the Member for Kluane.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Yukon government to conduct public consultations on the *Human Rights Act* and bring forward amendments in the 2008 Fall sitting that

- (1) ensure the *Human Rights Act* is more consistent with other jurisdictions in Canada;
- (2) extend the timeline for filing human rights complaints; and
- (3) make the existing legislation, that is now 21 years old, more relevant when it comes to protecting an individual's human rights.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to introduce legislation during this sitting of the Legislature to allow for appointment of an independent child advocate to represent the interests of children in any legal or administrative proceeding that might affect them.

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

THAT this House urges the Yukon Housing Corporation to cease and desist its efforts to take over the assets of the Whitehorse Housing Co-operative and to work in good faith with the directors of the co-operative to end the current receivership and to allow the directors to resume direct operation of the co-operative without further interference or obstruction.

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

THAT this House express its disapproval of the refusal by government members of the Public Accounts Committee to conduct public hearings into the Yukon government's investment in asset-backed commercial papers, whereby the Yukon people have been denied the opportunity to hold their government accountable for investments that have put \$36.5 million worth of public funds at risk.

I give notice of the following motion:

THAT it is the opinion of this House that the public announcement by a chair of the Public Accounts Committee and the Member for Porter Creek South of the resignations from the committee was a rash and irresponsible decision made in the heat of the moment; and

THAT this House

(a) will not entertain a motion to relieve the Member for Copperbelt from his duties as Chair of the Public Accounts Committee, and

(b) directs the Member for Copperbelt to honour his responsibilities as Chair of the Public Accounts Committee in order to fulfill the committee's important mandate of scrutinizing spending policies and practices of Yukon government departments, Crown corporations and agencies, in the best interests of all Yukon people.

I give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Premier to acknowledge the importance and complexity of managing the financial resources of the Government of the Yukon by appointing a Minister of Finance who can devote full attention to this responsibility without the additional burden of the duties associated with the office of Premier of the Yukon.

I give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House stands in solidarity with the people of Tibet in their ongoing struggle for self-determination and calls on the Government of Canada to express to the leadership of the People's Republic of China the deep desire of the Canadian people to see a peaceful reconciliation between Chinese authorities and the Tibetan people through their representative, His Holiness the Dalai Lama, that fully respects the human rights of the Tibetan people and allows them to maintain their unique Tibetan religion, language and cultural identity.

Speaker: Are there any further notices of motion?

Is there a statement by a minister?

This then brings us Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Asset-backed commercial paper investments

Mr. Mitchell: I have some questions for the Minister of Finance. I'll take the minister back a few months ago to questions I raised in this Legislature about the Yukon Party government's ill-advised investment in non-bank asset-backed commercial paper. On November 8, the Premier assured me and all other Yukoners that these investments were made within the boundaries of the *Financial Administration Act*. The Auditor General reported on February 7 of this year that that was in fact not the case. Quite the opposite -- the Premier's investments did not follow the law.

Yukoners expect that elected officials will follow the law. As the Auditor General pointed out, that has not happened under this minister's watch. There is only one thing left to do and

that is for the Premier to resign as Minister of Finance. Will he do that today?

Speaker's statement

Speaker: Order please. Before the Hon. Minister of Finance stands up, the Leader of the Official Opposition, in his preamble, suggested that the Government of Yukon broke the law. That is not in order. I would remind members that, in our political system, this Assembly passes laws but it is the courts, not this Assembly, that determines who has, or has not, broken the law. Please keep that in mind, honourable member. You have the floor, Hon. Premier.

Hon. Mr. Fentie: It certainly comes as no surprise to the government side of the House that the Member for Copperbelt continues to toil away at this issue. Frankly, Mr. Speaker, it is quite a concern, because the member opposite conveniently ignores the facts of the matter. The member says that it is this government whose investments did not meet the conditions of the *Financial Administration Act*.

That is not what the Auditor General said. The Auditor General clearly said in her report that as far back as 1990, Yukon governments, in good faith, were making investments in this area. These are the facts, Mr. Speaker, and I wish that the Member for Copperbelt would articulate those facts here in this Assembly and in the public domain, which he certainly has not been doing recently. Last, no, I'm not going to resign, so the member is just going to have to get over it and get on with some constructive debate.

Mr. Mitchell: Actually, I would refer the minister to reading the report more carefully. The Auditor General's report, in fact, cited only one government for non-compliance.

Mr. Speaker, since I first raised this concern last fall, I have been guided by two questions. The first one: did the investments conform to the *Financial Administration Act*? That was answered by the Auditor General on February 7. The investments contravened the *Financial Administration Act*.

The second question: are taxpayers out any money? And again, the answer is yes. On three separate occasions last fall, the Premier told this House that no money would be lost. Those assurances were echoed by his colleague, the Deputy Premier.

When the Auditor General was in town last month, she said that there will be loss; the question now is how much? Now, I'll take the Auditor General's word on these questions any day. The government ignored the guidance provided in the *Financial Administration Act* and lost Yukoners' money by doing so. The minister --

Speaker: Ask the question please.

Mr. Mitchell: Will he do the honourable thing and resign his portfolio?

Hon. Mr. Fentie: Mr. Speaker, the only resigning that's going on in this House in this territory is the member opposite. This is the member who said publicly that he was resigning from the Public Accounts Committee. He has quit on Yukoners. He has resigned from that committee. He has resigned from carrying out the duties vested in him by his electorate. He has resigned from the facts and he has resigned from anything

of substance. No, I am not going to resign; the member is just going to have to buck up, chin up and get over it.

Mr. Mitchell: Well, Mr. Speaker, I did the honourable thing. When the Public Accounts Committee wouldn't deal with public accounts, I resigned in protest and I'm asking the minister to do the honourable thing.

Now, I'm not sure that the minister appreciates just how angry Yukoners are about what he has done with their money. They are outraged and with good reason. The Premier has gambled away their money and, just for good measure, ignored all the guidance provided by the *Financial Administration Act* in doing so. Last fall the minister told Yukoners that he had complied with the *Financial Administration Act* -- the Auditor General says no. He told Yukoners no money has been lost; that is not the case. He also told the House on both November 7 and 8 of last year the investments were guaranteed by the banks. This also turned out to be wrong. Yukoners have lost confidence in this minister's ability to manage their money. It is time for a new minister. Will the minister do the honourable thing and resign this post?

Hon. Mr. Fentie: Well, the short answer is no, and why would this minister resign? We've taken this territory from a \$500-million fiscal capacity to \$900 million. This territory's fortunes have been turned around in the last five to six years. No, I won't resign for that. I won't resign for tabling successive budgets that are record-sized budgets for this territory, investing in quality of life, diversifying our economy, protecting our environment and indeed practising good governance. No, I won't resign from that.

Mr. Speaker, I won't resign from tabling budgets that no longer have year-end deficits but are showing year-end surpluses. No, Mr. Speaker, I won't resign from fiscal management that is providing Yukoners many more options today than they've had in the past, and I won't resign because this government, this minister, and this Department of Finance have done their job and continue to do their job on behalf of Yukoners. As far as the member's points, it is very hard to even determine if the member has a point, and he is wrong on all counts in relation to the Auditor General's report.

Question re: Asset-backed commercial paper investments

Mr. Mitchell: Let's try another minister. Last fall, the Deputy Premier made several statements about her government's \$36.5-million investment into asset-backed commercial paper. For example, on at least 10 occasions, she said the investments were backed by the banks. I, for one, did not believe they were.

According to the Auditor General, the highest financial authority in Canada, these investments were, in fact, never backed by a bank.

The minister stood in this Legislature and repeatedly said one thing, and the Auditor General has confirmed the exact opposite to be true. There was no bank guarantee.

Will the minister admit the information she repeatedly gave to this House last fall was wrong?

Hon. Mr. Fentie: Mr. Speaker, the Member for Copperbelt continues to be wrong on all counts. These particular

trusts and investments were backed when it comes to the liquidity of these notes. It was the banks that decided to not meet that guarantee of liquidity.

The member knows full well that the process that was embarked upon months ago to restructure these notes has come to the point now where there is a restructuring, there is no loss of money, there is protection under the CCAA and there is a new maturity date. All these are factual items in regard to these trusts.

Furthermore, the member is trying to suggest that we on this side of the House have not provided the information. How can the member then explain that every one of these investments, year in and year out, were tabled through Public Accounts? How can the member explain the fact that this government fully disclosed, by notation, the issue here? How can the member explain that, as far back as 1990, Yukon governments were investing in -- and I want to repeat this for the member opposite -- asset-backed commercial paper issued by trusts that were guaranteed by banks?

Since 1990, some \$1.7 billion has been invested in asset-backed commercial paper by successive Yukon governments. How does the member explain that?

Mr. Mitchell: Mr. Speaker, if the minister would do a little basic research, he would find out that the liquidity agreements that he so proudly refers to did not exist in 1990 in those trusts, did not exist in 1995, did not exist in 1996 or 1998 or 1999. It's apples and oranges, Mr. Speaker.

Now, Mr. Speaker, last fall the Deputy Premier took the Premier's briefing notes and just started reading them. She did no independent analysis of the situation; she just did what she was told, I suppose. Just about everything she said was wrong. She said the \$36.5 million of investments were guaranteed by a bank. She told Yukoners that on at least 10 occasions. It was not backed by a bank and the Auditor General confirmed that it was not.

Let's look at other statements the Deputy Premier made. On at least nine occasions, she told the House the Auditor General knew all about these investments and that the Auditor General was okay with them. Again, not correct.

Will the Deputy Premier admit that the information she gave to the House last fall was wrong?

Hon. Mr. Fentie: All information from the government side presented in this House has been correct to the extent possible that we knew it at the time. Nobody knew the contravention of the *Financial Administration Act* until recently -- the Auditor General reviewed all these investments and they go back as far as 1990. And I remind the member that the Auditor General stated, in good faith, officials all along had been making investments in these trusts.

So I think the member is confused on the matter, as confused as he was on his role on the Members' Services Board when he moved the motion to raise MLA wages and then immediately opposed it, as he said in the public. That must have been quite a discussion at Members' Services Board with this member opposing his own motion raising MLA wages. Very confusing in that regard and the member is confused on this issue.

Mr. Mitchell: We'll save for another day what was said in committee meetings.

Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Deputy Premier, if she is able to answer any or allowed to. She was quite willing to stand up in the fall and spout the party line and now the Premier won't let her answer any questions. Yukoners want to know why the Deputy Premier came into this House day after day last fall and said things that have turned out not to be correct. She had lots to say then and now she won't explain her actions.

Let's go to another example. Last fall, on at least eight occasions, the Deputy Premier said her government was following the *Financial Administration Act*. Again, not correct, according to the Auditor General. The Auditor General's investigation concluded that this Yukon Party government did not follow these acts on more than one occasion. It's the only government that she cited. The Deputy Premier stood in here day after day and boldly proclaimed that they were following the act when, in fact, the opposite was the case.

Will the Deputy Premier admit that the information she gave to the House was wrong and will she now admit the government was not in compliance?

Hon. Mr. Fentie: The Deputy Premier and Acting Minister of Finance did a masterful job in my absence. We on the government side recognize that and so does the Yukon public.

The member has just said that he doesn't make statements about what is discussed in committee. How can the member explain to the Yukon public through that camera why then, in the public domain, he contradicted the very motion that he moved at committee, in stating to the public that he opposed it and he fought hard against it, but he didn't win. He fought himself; he moved the motion, not only on raising MLA wages, but making them retroactive. It's that member who speaks outside of committee and it's that member who is incorrect when he provides information to the public domain -- as incorrect on that matter as he is on this matter, Mr. Speaker.

Question re: Asset-backed commercial paper investments

Mr. Hardy: My question is for the Minister of Finance -- surprise, surprise. Earlier this week the senior official in the minister's department assured the media that Yukon's finances were in good shape. No doubt, that is the message that the minister was anxious to get out just before introducing the budget, and we'll be hearing about that in a few minutes. So my question is this: how can the minister claim that government's finances are in good shape when nearly three percent of its money will be locked up for years to come because of a reckless investment in asset-backed commercial papers?

Hon. Mr. Fentie: I can make the claim and the government can make the claim that our finances are in good shape because they are. That's the answer.

Mr. Hardy: Not everyone understands all the fine points of these investments or the complex repayment proposals that are being kicked around on Bay Street and in the courts of Ontario. There is a lot of discussion happening out there, but Yukon people do understand that the *Financial Administration*

Act was breached; that is clear. They understand that \$36.5 million is in a black hole somewhere instead of going out into the Yukon economy in the form of programs and services for Yukon people. They do want to know how much will be lost.

Will the minister tell us what capital projects will be delayed or what government services will be scaled back because a sizable chunk of taxpayers' money was used for speculation instead of being invested in Yukon people?

Hon. Mr. Fentie: Mr. Speaker, speaking of speculation, the member's question is entirely speculative. Mr. Speaker, here are the facts. In the restructuring process as concluded to date, these trusts, these notes, these particular investments are now under protection. The court is involved here. Secondly, through Purdy Crawford, an appointed designate to go through the restructuring plan, there has been an overall restructuring of these notes put into place.

To suggest that the Yukon has lost money is ridiculous. In fact, quite the contrary: Yukon has made money -- approximately \$20 million to date. As the restructuring plan lays out, this still has to be supported by 50 percent plus one of all involved before it becomes valid, and secondly it must then be sanctioned by the court, once again, before it can proceed. Yukon's investments are broken down in this manner: class A1 notes, \$19,147,350; class A2 notes, \$13,802,000; class B notes, \$2,445,000; class C, \$1,000,095. This totals \$36.5 million. Mr. Speaker, it is all intact and interest earned.

Mr. Hardy: Mr. Speaker, this minister is very good at playing rope-a-dope. I think his hero was Mohammed Ali. The fact remains his own officials admit there is no guarantee that this money will be repaid in full including interest. That's what the officials have said. The minister himself has said that you can't trust the banks. What Yukoners want to know is, can they trust this minister, Mr. Speaker? If he wasn't paying attention when these questionable investments were being made, why should they have confidence in him now? If this money -- or a significant part of it -- is gone, who is going to lose out? Will it be the social assistance recipients who are hoping that there will be something for them? Will it be non-government organizations? Will it be the Yukon contractors and workers? Who is going to pay for the minister's gamble on the asset-backed commercial paper?

Hon. Mr. Fentie: Once again, Mr. Speaker, pure speculation. I can tell that we are going to go around this little dance here for quite awhile in this sitting. The opposition is going to try all kinds of angles to discredit the government when in fact they are discrediting themselves. If the Official Opposition had their way, they would fill the Whitehorse Correctional Centre full of Finance officials who, in good faith since 1990, were making these investments. That is what they'd do. The third party, who takes a different tack, is still pointing the finger at hard-working officials who understood, all through this at the time, that there was not a contravention of the *Financial Administration Act*. Unfortunately recent rulings by the Auditor General state otherwise. We accept and respect the Auditor General's position, but we are not going to allow the opposition to misrepresent the facts as they are today. The government will continue to present them, and as we go for-

ward I think everyone will find that the many governments, many agencies, many corporations involved in this are all working collectively with the banks to ensure that these notes will mature as laid out in the new plan.

Question re: Asset-backed commercial paper investments

Mr. Hardy: Well, better buckle up. It's going to be a very, very bumpy ride for the next 30 days, there's no question about that.

I want to go back to the Minister of Finance. The Auditor General said the *Financial Administration Act* had been broken. The minister said that was just her opinion. The Justice department agreed with the Auditor General including her assessment that there was no wilful intent to breach the act. I agree with that statement as well. Why did the government members on the Public Accounts Committee refuse to hold public hearings on what went wrong and how to prevent a similar problem in the future, because that is where these questions should be asked at this present time?

Hon. Mr. Fentie: Hold hearings into what? Investments made in 1990? Investments made in 1991? Investments made in 1992, 1993, 1994, 1995, 1996, 1997, 1998, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2002? What's to inquire about? All this was fully disclosed. All this, by the way, was audited by the Auditor General, year in and year out and tabled in our public accounts. There was not one mention, not one note, not one comment until the banks reneged on their liquidity guarantee. That's at issue, Mr. Speaker -- an inquiry into history that has been fully disclosed -- a waste of time.

Mr. Hardy: There was no bank guarantee. When will this minister understand it? He's the Finance minister. He should understand this. This was the deviation in this whole action. There were no bank guarantees. That's where we went off the rails. What also was wrong is that the act was broken. What went wrong? It's that the minister wasn't paying attention. What went wrong was that \$36.5 million of taxpayers' money is in jeopardy because of speculative investments. The minister wants to sweep it all under the carpet as if it never happened. The people want to know and they have a right to know.

Will the minister now change his tune and advise his colleagues on the Public Accounts Committee to do the job they are being paid for and hold public hearings on this matter?

Hon. Mr. Fentie: Mr. Speaker, there are many things that the Public Accounts Committee can do and should do that are of great importance to this territory, especially when it comes to government expenditure. That is what will encourage the government members who sit on that committee. But how does the member have the audacity to suggest that something has been swept under the carpet when it has been fully disclosed, year in, year out, in every public accounts tabled in the public domain since 1990? I cannot imagine any Yukoner believing the comment that it has been swept under the carpet. It is in our public accounts, fully booked, fully disclosed, fully audited.

Mr. Hardy: Let me spell it out for the minister. \$36.5 million is more than operating surplus that successive Yukon governments kept on hand in case of an economic slowdown,

and right now a slowdown seems to be coming. Some analysts are now saying that the U.S. may be heading into a depression - - not a recession -- maybe as bad as in the 1930s. This is what we are hearing on the news now.

Our federal government surplus has shrunk dramatically and that makes the Yukon economy even more vulnerable. If transfer payments get reduced, \$36.5 million could spell a difference between a surplus and a deficit for this government to keep operating.

I just tabled a motion for a stand-alone Minister of Finance, because there has not been the attention given to this department.

Will the minister resign this portfolio if Yukon loses money on his ABCP gamble or if he has to cut services to Yukoners because that money is tied up for the foreseeable future?

Hon. Mr. Fentie: Mr. Speaker, let me try this with the Leader of the Third Party. He is trying to correlate this issue to a loss of investment in Yukon programs and services and capital projects. That is nonsense. And he even tries to correlate that the \$36.5 million that is invested -- and, by the way, under the new structuring program will be earning interest and it has a new maturity date -- used to be government surpluses.

Let me point out to the member opposite that our surplus this budget, as booked, is \$107.9 million -- triple what the member is talking about. Mr. Speaker, none of this from the opposition benches makes any sense. What it does show is that they are very presumptuous.

Question re: Asset-backed commercial paper investments

Mr. Mitchell: I have some more questions for this Minister of Finance. Since the Premier made some poor investment decisions last summer, he has been busy trying to find other people to blame for his mistakes. These are mistakes that are costing Yukoners millions of dollars in lowered and forgone interest.

He attacked the Auditor General and dismissed her findings as just her opinion. Then he went after the banks. On February 8 of this year, the Premier told a local paper that Canadian banks are untrustworthy. He said that they guaranteed the investments he made and then, "failed to meet their obligations to provide liquidity." The Auditor General has already confirmed in her report that our investments were never guaranteed by any bank. Does the minister agree with the Auditor General or does he still believe that the investments were guaranteed by the banks?

Hon. Mr. Fentie: Mr. Speaker, the member has to get it right. The guarantee was all about liquidity of the notes. That is the issue that we have with the banks, Mr. Speaker. So no matter how the member tries to approach this, he cannot remove the fact that, all along, this type of guarantee of liquidity was in fact part of these kinds of trusts going forward. The dispute here, if the member wants to define it as a dispute between this side of the House and the Official Opposition, is one of who wants to deal with the facts and who wants to create this in a manner that it isn't.

It is what it is, Mr. Speaker. It is investments that were made by the Yukon government for years -- a total of \$1.7 billion invested in trusts that were all about asset-backed commercial paper. Does the member want to try to make this what it is not?

Mr. Mitchell: Well, let me tell you what it is not, Mr. Speaker. It is a 30-day investment that was not repaid. It is a 30-day investment that is now an eight-year investment.

Mr. Speaker, the minister says that the banks can't be trusted. If he feels strongly about that, he could sue them for breach of contract. Has the minister done that? No. Instead, he has signed on to the Montreal accord. One of the conditions of signing on is giving up your right to sue the banks involved, the very banks that he says are untrustworthy.

The minister is trying to have it both ways. On the one hand he's talking tough about how untrustworthy the banks are and, on the other hand, he has already signed a deal saying that he won't sue them. It is obvious that the attacks on the bank are just another attempt to deflect from the minister's failure to adequately protect Yukoners' money. The minister wasn't minding the store and now money is missing and, of course, it is someone else's fault.

If the minister really thinks that the banks are breaking a deal, then he should sue them. Does he plan to do that or is he planning to stick with the Montreal accord and sign away our right to sue the banks?

Hon. Mr. Fentie: I think here is another demonstration of what the Member for Copperbelt is all about. He suggests that we've signed on to an accord. That's a fallacy. Nobody has signed on to an accord. In fact, it was just tabled a few days ago. I don't know where the member gets his information, but it's obviously a place where all his information comes from, because it's not factual.

Question re: Asset-backed commercial paper investments

Mr. Mitchell: The arrogance of this government knows no bounds. The Minister of Finance took \$36.5 million and invested it in a way that doesn't comply with the *Financial Administration Act*. The investment did not comply with the act. We are still out millions of dollars and we have to wait five or eight years to get any of it back because of this minister's gambler-type approach to investing.

The Premier's response so far has been to attack the Auditor General and dismiss her finding as just her opinion. He has also refused to admit that he did anything wrong. The buck stops at his desk. He bears the ultimate responsibility for what goes on in the Department of Finance and he should be accountable when things go wrong, instead of suggesting that we should fill the jail with Finance officials. It's this minister who is responsible. So will he take responsibility for his actions and resign his post?

Hon. Mr. Fentie: I know misery loves company. Given that the member is resigning from everything that he is responsible to carry out as far as his duties, I'm not going to join him in that misery -- I'm not going to resign.

The member asked, do we take responsibility? You bet -- on all matters, we take responsibility as a government. That's

why we're in our second mandate. By the way, Mr. Speaker, on this matter we did take responsibility. There is now a policy in place so there is clarity for all officials so that, as far back as 1990, with this policy that we have just implemented, no investments in this area would ever have taken place. I remind the member opposite -- \$1.7 billion to date invested in asset-backed paper that was created by trust. There was a lot of risk, obviously, considering what just happened. We have taken responsibility -- a policy implemented -- and no longer can you invest in this type of investment.

Mr. Mitchell: In November of 2007, I wrote to the Auditor General asking her to investigate the Premier's decision to invest \$36.5 million of Yukoners' tax dollars in the asset-backed commercial paper market. She responded that she would and we now have the results in front of us. The question I asked was simple: did the investments made by the Premier follow the *Financial Administration Act*, the law that governs how taxpayers' money is looked after?

The Auditor General concluded that the investments in fact violate the *Financial Administration Act*, and I believe the Minister of Finance is responsible for that. The Premier is fond of saying that the buck stops at his desk. Well, the buck landed on his desk and it's time for him to demonstrate some of that accountability. Again I will ask: will he take responsibility for the fact that our money is now tied up for eight years -- if and when we see any of it back, this minister will have long retired and be off riding three-wheel motorcycles -- and resign as the Minister of Finance?

Hon. Mr. Fentie: I feel sorry for the member opposite. I feel embarrassed, Mr. Speaker. This approach by the Leader of the Official Opposition, frankly, is ridiculous. The member opposite is trying to make what I would call an issue out of something that is far beyond his grasp, and that is unfortunate because, in this case, it is a very complicated, long-term issue. What part of "since 1990, the Yukon government has been making investments in these trusts" does the member not get? The Auditor General's review said clearly there has been no wilful motivation here, that officials have been making investments in good faith in these trusts all through that period. What part of that does the member not understand?

If the member continues to ask for my resignation, sooner or later it is going to come to the point where his resignation will be a case in fact because he is not representing his party, he is not representing his members and he is not representing his constituency. He is off on some tangent that is not factual.

Mr. Mitchell: Mr. Speaker, what is ridiculous is this Finance minister's assertion that, being at the helm of the ship when \$36.5 million of Yukon taxpayers' money has been frozen and in limbo for some six, seven or eight months, is in any way analogous to what has happened in past governments, of which we weren't part. It is this minister who holds a position of great power, and with it should come great responsibility. He has let Yukoners down and he has a duty to do the honourable thing and resign this position and get somebody more capable to take it on. The fact that he will not, and does not, shows just how out of touch he is with Yukoners on this very issue.

We are out millions of dollars because of the reckless approach this Premier took with other people's money. We may or may not -- because there are no guarantees and there will be no guarantees -- get some of it back in eight years and the interest on the new bonds will certainly be less than what it was before -- that has been admitted, probably millions less. I'll ask the minister again: will he demonstrate some accountability and resign as Minister of Finance, look to his left and his right and find someone more capable of doing the job?

Hon. Mr. Fentie: Mr. Speaker, it is a pointless argument to have with the member opposite on his view of my capability. We all know what his view is. I would be very hesitant to allow that member to become the person in charge of the Yukon's finances, considering what we hear from this member on an ongoing basis in this House.

Furthermore, Mr. Speaker, no matter how the member approaches this and no matter how many times he continues this harangue about resignations, I am not going to resign. In fact, I'm going to continue to carry on my duties, as vested in me by the Yukon public. There is good reason for this side of the House to continue on. The reason is that we have a plan and a vision for the territory and it is being carried out and that is why Yukoners are experiencing a better quality of life today. That is what we'll continue to do, Mr. Speaker.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BILLS

Bill No. 11: Second Reading

Clerk: Second reading, Bill No. 11, standing in the name of the Hon. Mr. Fentie.

Hon. Mr. Fentie: I move that Bill No. 11, entitled *First Appropriation Act, 2008-09*, be now read a second time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Hon. Premier that Bill No. 11, entitled *First Appropriation Act, 2008-09*, be now read a second time.

Budget speech

Hon. Mr. Fentie: Mr. Speaker, it is a great honour to table this budget -- our 2008-09 budget, which is the second budget of our second mandate.

The Government of Yukon's capital and operations and maintenance budget for 2008-09 is \$899.7 million. The operation and maintenance budget totals \$697 million of which \$61 million is recoverable. The capital budget totals \$202.7 million of which \$81.7 million is recoverable.

On October 10, 2006, we presented Yukoners with a renewed vision for the territory in our election platform entitled "Building Yukon's Future Together -- A Clear Vision for a Bright Future."

Our government's vision is based on four major pillars: achieving a better quality of life for Yukoners; protecting and preserving our environment and wildlife while studying, mitigating and adapting to climate change; promoting a strong,

diversified private sector economy; and practising good cooperative governance with strong fiscal management.

This budget, like its predecessor, is enabling our government to implement our election commitments to Yukoners. There is an old adage that actions speak louder than words. The 2008-09 budget is giving action to our words.

Mr. Speaker, I am happy to report that progress is being made on all fronts as we, the Yukon Party government, go about the hard work of turning our vision into reality.

Let me now touch on the first pillar of our vision for Yukon: achieving a better quality of life for Yukoners. This involves improving the health, safety and socio-economic well-being of Yukon families and their communities.

Yukon government departments and agencies are dedicated to meeting the challenges presented by this very major pillar in our election platform.

Our government is committed to providing Yukoners with the knowledge, skills, opportunities and ability to participate fully in their work and their communities and to promote life-long learning.

The Department of Education has numerous programs and initiatives contained in the 2008-09 budget that are meeting these very challenges head on.

The education reform report, a major collaborative initiative with Yukon First Nations, was released on February 8, 2008. The Department of Education will be working in partnership with the Council of Yukon First Nations and other partners in education in the development of a multi-year implementation strategy, entitled "New Horizons: Honouring our Commitment to the Future". This strategy will be built on our strengths as we continue to improve the education system for all students.

Building on the government's commitment to develop more meaningful partnerships, the Department of Education is developing a stakeholder infrastructure committee to ensure community partners have input into such important initiatives as the school growth planning process, which fosters local input into school planning; the secondary program review process, which will make recommendations regarding the future facilities development of F.H. Collins; and a leadership program development initiative and the First Nations Education Advisory Committee that is open to participation from all First Nation governments.

The special program unit within the Department of Education has produced a new publication for use in schools. The title is *Making a Difference -- Working with Students who have Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders*. The core of the manual is 12 essential elements for dealing with students affected by FASD. The manual addresses FASD and provides practical strategies for helping young people, both in the classroom and in the community.

Another successful project is the Whole Child program. It is a great example of how a school community can work together to build an exceptional environment for children. The program includes two schools and their students and families: Whitehorse Elementary and Elijah Smith Elementary.

Mr. Speaker, literacy of course is of fundamental importance to learning, and the Department of Education has a num-

ber of initiatives in this regard. The Wilson reading program and training system specifically addresses the learning style of students with a language-based disability and builds on the very successful outcome of the reading recovery program from earlier years. The Wilson reading certification program includes course work as well as supervised work with students. A certified Wilson trainer observes lessons and provides feedback to teachers.

The Department of Education held a free literacy camp last summer as a pilot project for 20 grade two and three students attending Selkirk Elementary School, Grey Mountain Primary School and Christ the King Elementary School. Activities included reading, art, music and physical education. The plan is to extend this opportunity to more children in future years.

Mr. Speaker, the public libraries branch of Community Services is also implementing a number of initiatives to improve its services to promote literacy in Yukon. The public libraries branch partners with the Yukon Literacy Coalition to provide books to young children in rural Yukon for their first five years and promotes literacy and early reading skills with funding from local partners and even the Dolly Parton Foundation.

In another partnership with the Yukon Literacy Coalition, public libraries branch promotes family literacy and reading throughout Yukon communities. It also engages in a multi-partner initiative each May that offers a week-long Yukon Writers Festival promoting Canadian literature and literacy with author readings throughout the Yukon and special events here in Whitehorse.

The Whitehorse Public Library has expanded its service to include separate programs for babies, toddlers, and pre-schoolers, in order to promote pre-literacy and social skills, setting the environment for lifelong reading enjoyment. The public libraries branch is introducing an electronic database subscriptions program that will enhance library resources by providing public access to subscription databases, including information on automobile repair, encyclopaedias and reference sources, history, book reviews and homework support for students.

Yukon libraries have something for everyone, young and old, and all ages in-between.

The First Nation programs and partnerships unit of the Department of Education's public school branch, in conjunction with First Nations, has expanded the First Nation curriculum with resources and with the completion of four new titles in the North Wind book series -- three more are now in production.

Four grade 5 First Nation modules have been developed in languages, moieties, citizenship and traditional ways of governance. These modules give students an understanding of Yukon First Nation governance in a pre-contact setting and are currently being piloted in eight different schools. All four First Nation modules will be implemented in every Yukon grade 5 classroom during the 2008-09 school year. B.C.'s First Peoples 12 course will also be offered in Yukon high schools during the 2008-09 school year. This is an equivalent course to English 12 and focuses on aboriginal literature.

In keeping with the Yukon's cultural diversity, the École Émilie Tremblay School has introduced a new experiential learning program for high school grades that allows young francophone Yukoners to become engaged and feel a sense of belonging while remaining true to their heritage.

Mr. Speaker, further in education, information technology continues to play an ever-important role in lifelong learning. A new information and communication technology -- ICT -- curriculum has been launched for Yukon students in grades 8 through to 10. The curriculum will help ensure that students at the secondary level have a common learning experience with ICT, including information on the proper and ethical use of ICT and media awareness resources, focusing on on-line safety and cyberbullying. Video conferencing services have also been expanded to classrooms across the territory in the areas of program delivery, shared classes between rural and urban schools and professional development opportunities and meetings.

As part of its commitment to lifelong learning, the Department of Education is providing \$104,000 in this budget to index the student financial assistance grant. In 2007-08, 1,066 students received the grant to further their education in 144 post-secondary institutions throughout North America. I call that great progress in our education system, Mr. Speaker.

"Educating today for jobs tomorrow" is another important election platform commitment that our government is addressing. Today in Yukon there is an increasingly critical demand for both skilled and entry level workers.

Our government is undertaking a number of initiatives to address this serious labour force shortage. To this end, the Department of Education is taking the lead role in an interdepartmental steering committee to oversee the development of a labour market framework to address labour market shortages over the next 10 years.

The labour market framework will be based on four major components: national and international recruitment to attract more workers to live here in the Yukon; retention initiatives to make Yukon an attractive and welcoming place to live and to work; training and development to promote lifelong learning, foster partnerships and expand training and employment opportunities; and, lastly, collection of relevant labour market information that will assist public policy, education training, business planning and personal career decision making. Mr. Speaker, once the framework has been developed, we will consult with stakeholders and Yukoners to ensure that we have a Yukon-made labour market strategy.

Further, Education has made three major changes in the student training employment program, which we call STEP. These changes will benefit students and potentially help in easing our labour market shortages. Firstly, the wage rates have been increased to \$14.40 per hour for first-year students, \$15.27 per hour for second-year students and \$16.20 per hour for third-year students.

Secondly, the program has been expanded to include fourth year and/or graduating students, with a wage rate of \$17.19 per hour. If students know that they may access STEP after graduation, it should help attract more of them back here to the Yukon where subsequent careers may be established.

Thirdly, Mr. Speaker, STEP has been expanded to allow for up to 16 weeks of support, up from the previous 12 weeks. This last measure will provide students with an opportunity to earn more over the summer and better offset their post-secondary costs.

Our government is encouraging Yukoners of all ages to participate in the labour force to meet the high demand for workers at all levels. One such program is the targeted older worker initiative. Projects are being designed to improve the employability of participants from 55 to 64 years of age, and may assist them through activities such as prior learning assessment, skills upgrading and experience in new fields of work. Mr. Speaker, three communities will begin an intake in April 2008.

In November 2007, our government announced that it intended to add a critical impact worker category to the Yukon nominee program as a means of assisting local businesses in addressing the labour market shortages.

The program is intended to fast-track immigrants once they have a job offer from an employer. The program has received much attention from the business community and, to date, well over 100 applications have been received.

At the same time, the Department of Education is currently developing a Yukon immigration portal. The website will provide information for people who want to immigrate to Yukon or learn more about our beautiful territory. It also provides information about the immigration process, as well as the Yukon nominee program itself. The English version will be launched on April 1, 2008, to be followed by the French version.

Mr. Speaker, Yukon College is also playing a key role in addressing the territory's skilled labour shortage. The college will deliver a licensed practical nurse program, known as LPN, and brokered through Bow Valley College.

This program includes curricula, curriculum support and instructor orientation. There will be two two-year intakes of 12 students with the first intake beginning September 2008. Currently, there is indeed a great need for LPNs in Yukon.

Funding of 368,457 operation and maintenance dollars and 186,780 capital dollars are being provided to implement this very important initiative.

Yukon College is heavily involved in trades training. One such program involves renovating a lab-classroom facility at the college and purchasing up-to-date tools and equipment to deliver a six-month pre-employment course in the heating trades to supply new entry-level trades workers to Yukon employers.

This facility will then be used to provide a housing maintenance program, as well as future heating pre-employment programs.

\$300,000 in capital funding is being provided to implement this program. Yukon College is also building upon previous trades program revitalization projects funded from the post-secondary infrastructure trust. Capital funding of \$117,400 is being provided for the following: the expansion of the multi-use building at Yukon College to provide a permanent space for the pipe trades; improving connectivity in the trades classrooms and shops at the Ayamdigut campus; upgrading and re-

rofitting the trades and mobile trailers; and acquisition of travelling toolkits for off-site course delivery.

Mr. Speaker, all of these education and training initiatives will help provide Yukoners with a better quality of life. Under the leadership of our Minister of Education, you have seen, through this recent dissertation, the emphasis of priority this government places on education.

Another area important to quality of life is our health care system and our social safety net. The Department of Health and Social Services is working very hard to deal with the pressures throughout the system. An additional \$1.948 million is being provided in 2008-09 under the territorial health access fund, known as THAF, to support numerous initiatives aimed at reducing reliance on the health care system, strengthening community level access to services and building self-reliant capacity to deliver services in the territory. This year's increase will bring total THAF funding to approximately \$6.670 million supporting over 12 projects which include: advancing the health human resource strategy; improving emergency planning and risk management; implementing a nurse information line service; enhanced dental health services in Yukon communities; improving supports to community mental health; early identification of mental health concerns; improved supports to increase tuberculosis patient outcomes; implementation of advance directives; expanded telehealth services; development of a palliative care program; increased health promotion activities related to reduction of tobacco use; new health promotion initiatives related to injury prevention, healthy living nutrition; and advancing policy work on health information, privacy and electronic records issues.

The THAF is a result of our government working with our two sister territories in 2004 in a pan-northern approach to successfully negotiate a \$150 million fund over five years for the three territories to support health reform, help improve access to services and support the high cost of medical travel in the north.

The Department of Health and Social Services is introducing a new initiative in the 2008-09 budget entitled "Family Support Services to Children with Disabilities". New programming will coordinate, expand and enhance services, such as therapies and other services, to ensure that children with disabilities can fulfill their full potential.

The Yukon program is built on best practices from across this country. It will provide coordinated access to services and early interventions, support for integration and community life, expanded behavioural therapies and increased staff and professional training. Most importantly, this program will help parents take care of their children and involve them in choosing the therapies and support that best meet the needs of their child.

Mr. Speaker, \$418,000 is being provided to implement this new initiative. Our government is continuing to address the need for care facilities in both Whitehorse and rural Yukon. The 2008-09 budget is providing \$1.47 million more for Copper Ridge Place. Also, Mr. Speaker, \$6.95 million is made available for the Watson Lake Health Centre.

The Department of Health and Social Services is working hard to both attract and train health care professionals. The

number of Yukon general practitioners has increased by seven from 56 to 63 in recent times. The health and human resource strategy includes goals to support entry-level professional health education as well as to support Yukoners to obtain professional health education themselves. To that end, our government has established additional nursing bursaries, medical education bursaries, health profession education bursaries, family physician incentive programs and increased the support provided to each recipient. Of 12 nurses who have received bursaries to support their studies, seven have already returned to work here in Yukon. This program builds self-reliant capacity in the communities and strengthens community-level access to health care.

The Department of Health and Social Services has also introduced a nurse mentorship program. Experienced nurses are providing their expertise to other nurses in clinical settings. Community Nursing mentored seven nurses in 2006, an additional six in 2007, and Continuing Care is currently mentoring three more.

Mr. Speaker, our government has made major improvements in upgrading our emergency medical services.

Paramedics are health care providers who work outside of the hospital or clinical environment to stabilize and transport patients with acute illness or injury. They are trained to perform emergency medical interventions in the absence of a doctor.

The redefinition of the paramedic role as health care providers has changed the focus of educational programs to include critical thinking, interpersonal communication, team leadership skills and computer hardware and software skills. In order to match the newly established requirements by the Canadian Medical Association, emergency medical service workers were required to undergo training to increase their skill set, and the prerequisites for future job postings had to be changed to reflect this new requirement. Mr. Speaker, about 15 paramedics have now been trained to national standards, and soon all paramedics will be at the highest national standard.

The Department of Health and Social Services has introduced other measures to improve the health of Yukoners. The chronic disease management program is focusing on building on the success of the Yukon Diabetes Collaborative. The collaborative is a group of health professionals who are helping patients manage diabetes and ensuring that patients receive the best possible diabetes care. Through education, training and support, this program helps caregivers provide best practice care for patients with diabetes, which improves health outcomes. Future work will include expanding this successful approach to enhance multidisciplinary collaboration of health professionals with the goal of improving patient outcomes.

Education is important when it comes to healthy eating, Mr. Speaker. A community dietician is working to educate parents and children about healthy living and healthy eating. Initiatives include healthy living calendars, a healthy snack cupboard project, "drop the pop" campaign and specific campaigns targeted at the athletes participating in the Arctic Winter Games and Polar Games. Other initiatives include workshops, informational campaigns such as Nutrition Month and the es-

tablishment of school- or community-based programs, such as community gardens and kitchens.

Mr. Speaker, community mental health is another focus of attention. A mental health worker is based in Dawson City and counsels rural residents throughout the northern and western territory. This worker increases detection, assessment and treatment of rural Yukoners with mental health problems by providing direct service, education training, consulting with professionals and promoting mental health in the general public.

The Department of Health and Social Services is also very active on the social side of the ledger. For example, \$1.526 million is being provided under the pioneer utility grant to help seniors offset the cost of utilities. The current PUG rate is \$890.28 and this will be increased to \$911.65 in September. The number of eligible recipients is also increasing.

During the 2006 election campaign, our government made childcare funding a priority. Mr. Speaker, \$6.3 million has been provided in this budget to meet those commitments.

This reflects the annual increase over five years that was previously announced, which has already increased funding for childcare subsidies, increased the number of parents eligible for subsidies, and increases to childcare funding and family day home operators to increase wages.

Other enhancements will include training and more programming with an increased educational and cultural component, as well as more services to facilitate healthy family development and indeed, programming for higher risk families through initiatives such as the healthy families program.

In November 2007, our government announced its intention to implement social assistance reforms, resulting from the most comprehensive review of social assistance since the program's inception. The reform package includes a substantial increase to social assistance rates and an incentive package to encourage social assistance recipients to enter the workforce. We also announced new programming and support for persons with disabilities.

Because self-governing First Nations and Canada also deliver social assistance and are directly impacted by the proposed changes, our government is required to undertake consultations with both governments. That consultation has been completed and our government can now proceed with the proposed changes as planned. These changes are in addition to the previously announced increase to the Yukon child benefit for low-income families and increases to the childcare subsidy program.

The major legislative initiative the Department of Health and Social Services has undertaken is the new child and family services act. This act addresses the legal frameworks that impact all children in the Yukon, and there has been extensive consultation with the public and all groups that have an interest in children's legislation. Extensive involvement and discussion specifically with Yukon First Nations has resulted in new legislation that reflects a fresh approach to collaborative relationships. The new legislation better defines a role for First Nations and the extended family in the care of their children and allows for greater involvement in the decisions that affect their chil-

dren and families. The legislation reflects best practices in child protection, adoption and in supporting families to care for their children. This legislation better reflects First Nations' cultural values and processes, such as recognizing custom adoptions. It will be tabled during this sitting.

Dealing with alcohol and drug abuse was a major commitment in our 2006 election platform, and our government has continued to initiate measures under the Yukon substance abuse action plan. One such initiative being undertaken by the Department of Justice is the community development project. Investment in this area of \$142,000 is being provided in the 2008-09 budget to fund a community justice coordinator who will work with communities to facilitate the development and planning in community meetings that identify the particular factors that contribute to substance abuse in their community.

The Community Wellness Court is another initiative established under the Yukon substance abuse action plan to provide court-monitored treatment for offenders with drug or alcohol addictions, symptoms of FASD or mental health issues.

Mr. Speaker, \$245,000 is being allocated in this budget to fund the Journey Far carver program. This program provides instruction in advanced carving and in marketing the product, paving the way for successful self-employment. In many cases, those involved in this program were, at one time, youth at risk.

The program provides training in work and life skills to address barriers such as substance abuse, family dysfunction and employability skills that participants may face.

Three Sundog wood carvers were invited to showcase their work in Ottawa recently on Yukon Day. This was held on February 10, 2008, as part of the Winterlude celebrations hosted by the National Capital Commission.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased and proud to say they were a big attraction at Ottawa's Winterlude.

Two other key initiatives under the substance abuse action plan have also been very successful; namely, the *Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act* we call SCAN and the RCMP street crime reduction team.

SCAN has received 139 complaints respecting 108 properties since the office opened in late 2006. This has resulted in activity being voluntarily ceased at 20 locations, while an additional 17 tenants were formally evicted. This legislation is assisting neighbourhoods to reclaim their streets from the hands of drug dealers and users.

The eight-person RCMP street crime reduction team has been equally successful, resulting in 119 drug and alcohol charges being laid by late August of 2007.

We said we would get tough on this particular area of abuse and crime and, Mr. Speaker, we have demonstrated how tough this government will be.

Mr. Speaker, \$5.592 million is being provided in the 2008-09 budget to continue to work on the replacement of the Whitehorse Correctional Centre. These funds will be used to advance this work, including completion of schematic design and development of the implementation phase workplan. Site preparation will begin and, at that point, some tenders will be awarded.

While work on the new correctional facility is progressing, the Department of Justice is also continuing to work on the implementation of its correctional redevelopment strategic plan. A new offender program model has been developed and will be implemented, as well as new programs for inmates.

The Department of Justice is striving to meet its goal of becoming the best corrections system in Canada.

Another major undertaking, Mr. Speaker, is the development of a new Yukon corrections act that is being modernized to support a correctional system that promotes healing, accountability and offenders taking responsibility for their actions. The consultation team is working with its partners from the Council of Yukon First Nations and the Kaska First Nation to consult with Yukoners and give them a voice in creating the new corrections act. Consultations began in November 2007 and will continue until the fall of 2008, when it is planned to table the legislation in the Yukon Legislative Assembly.

The Department of Justice is working with two Yukon First Nations on two initiatives that are being undertaken under the auspices of the northern strategy fund. The first involves the Kwanlin Dun First Nation conducting a therapeutic community resource feasibility study. This project connects to the correctional redevelopment strategic plan, as well as the planning for the new Correctional Centre. Kwanlin Dun First Nation and our government will undertake a \$150,000 study, of which \$100,000 will be invested during this fiscal year. This initiative will assess the feasibility of developing a land-based therapeutic camp as a resource to Whitehorse Correctional Centre clients and others.

Mr. Speaker, the second northern strategy initiative involves the Carcross-Tagish First Nation, in partnership with the Department of Justice and the Southern Lakes Justice Committee, in undertaking a three-year pilot project to provide a solid research and policy development foundation on which to redefine the way in which justice is administered in the community of Carcross. The project is being designed to provide the community with a blueprint for the administration of justice in Carcross that can be applied to all other communities in Yukon. The investment for this project over the next three years is \$479,000, with \$151,000 being allocated in 2008-09.

Further in building quality of life, the Executive Council Office, through the Youth Directorate, will be launching a public education awareness campaign aimed at youth and delaying the use of alcohol. This education campaign is one of several action items identified in the Yukon substance abuse action plan and is designed to reduce addictions in our communities. The goal of the campaign is to inform youth and their parents or guardians about the dangers and increased risk of addiction from drinking alcohol at an early age.

There are a number of ongoing funding initiatives for Yukon youth through the Youth Directorate that will continue through 2008-09. They are as follows: \$200,000 for youth programs -- these programs are in communities funded through a contribution to Crime Prevention Yukon; \$330,000 for investing in three Whitehorse youth groups -- Bringing Youth Toward Equality, Youth of Today Society, and the Whitehorse Boys and Girls Club; \$25,000 to fund the francophone youth

group Comité Espoir Jeunesse; and \$102,000 for the youth investment fund.

Mr. Speaker, the mandate of the Women's Directorate is to advance the social, legal and economic equality of women in the north. This year, the directorate is focused on aboriginal women's equality and increasing affordable housing options for single parents with children to expand on the momentum of the National Aboriginal Women's Summit held in Corner Brook, Newfoundland, in June of 2007. Under the leadership of the minister responsible, the Women's Directorate and the Yukon Advisory Council on Women's Issues co-hosted two Yukon aboriginal women's summits at the Watson Lake Community Hall on November 16 and 17, 2007, and here in Whitehorse on November 22 and 24, 2007.

The goals of the summits were to communicate the outcomes of the National Aboriginal Women's Summit to Yukon aboriginal women, which was presented by Beverly Jacobs, president of the Native Women's Association of Canada, and to determine Yukon aboriginal women's priorities to further aboriginal women's equality in the north. These were, Mr. Speaker, without a doubt, historic summits, bringing together over 200 aboriginal women, ministers and chiefs for focused discussions on leadership development, wellness and education. The strongest message from the summits was a call for action. We are now strategically working in collaboration with the Council of Yukon First Nations and departments in Yukon government to determine the next steps to advance aboriginal women's equality to meet that call for action.

The Women's Directorate of Yukon, in conjunction with the Yukon Housing Corporation, is undertaking a major new initiative to develop a housing complex of up to 30 units to address the primary needs of single parents -- particularly those of single mothers with children who make up the majority of the Yukon Housing waiting list.

Access to affordable housing helps to reduce the incidence of violence against women, which is a key priority of our government and is a key factor in advancing the equality of women and girls here in Yukon, as it contributes to the economic well-being of families and children. With this initiative, we will be working to fill the largest gap in housing that currently exists -- that being secure and affordable housing for single-parent families in need and victims of violence. We are answering that call to action. The Yukon Housing Corporation, Mr. Speaker, has also allocated \$960,000 in this year's budget to proceed with this initiative.

Mr. Speaker, the Women's Directorate, in partnership with the Council of Yukon First Nations, is also undertaking another new initiative -- a feasibility study for an emergency shelter for women here in Whitehorse. The study will provide options for an appropriate shelter model for homeless women and would develop some key strategies for increasing our understanding of the scope of this issue here in Yukon. The study will take special consideration of the needs of aboriginal women through culturally sensitive programming and design.

As part of the government's long-term public education campaign on violence against women and children, the Women's Directorate and the Department of Justice will be

releasing two educational videos with an accompanying training manual. The educational videos are rooted in a rich Yukon context, speaking to the particular factors that influence the higher rates of violence against women and children in the north. This initiative builds upon the work undertaken over the last three years to address violence against women and children in partnership with 17 organizations and departments who are known as Circles of Respect and Equality, or CORE. Mr. Speaker, this is another example of meeting that call to action.

Mr. Speaker, our government established a women's equality fund in 2007 in response to the need for more sustained fiscal resources identified by a number of women's organizations.

The Women's Directorate administers the \$175,000 fund that provides three-year funding for innovation, community-based projects. The women's equality fund has four objectives: supporting direct services and programs for women; advancing women's equality through research and policy development; supporting education and social action on women's equality issues; and supporting the development capacity of women's organizations to effectively enhance women's equality. Mr. Speaker, this is another example of meeting that call to action.

To date, seven organizations have received funding under this new initiative: the Liard Aboriginal Women's Society, the Whitehorse Aboriginal Women's Circle, Les EssentiElles, Yukon Women in Trades and Technology, the Victoria Faulkner Women's Centre, the Yukon Status of Women Council and the Yukon Human Rights Commission.

The Women's Directorate, in partnership with the Department of Justice and Health and Social Services, is also conducting a Yukon women and substance abuse research project.

A survey was distributed to over 300 Government of Yukon employees with the objective to help identify best practices in the treatment of girls and women with substance abuse problems and to analyze existing policies, programs and services to inform possible future improvements. In addition, the research project will assist in the identification of any training and development needs related to working with girls and women who may be experiencing substance abuse. The data gathered from the survey will inform recommendations and next steps on best practices in this area of dealing with women and addictions. This is another example of meeting that call to action.

The Yukon Housing Corporation has allocated \$400,000 to construct three additional suites on the lower floor of the new Haines Junction seniors housing building. Provision will also be made to provide a common area for seniors to meet in the community.

The corporation is providing \$1 million in the 2008-09 fiscal year for the 2007 flood relief initiative. To date, 58 homeowners have applied for flood relief assistance. The corporation anticipates the majority of repairs and upgrades will be undertaken in 2008-09.

Mr. Speaker, \$249,000 was allocated in 2007-08 and a further \$514,000 in 2008-09 to enable the Housing Corporation to implement six new energy initiatives, including grants and loans that were introduced last year. Applications for Yukon

Housing Corporation's home repair program are up, Mr. Speaker, by 20 percent. The Department of Community Services plays a key role in helping Yukoners achieve a better quality of life through the provision of improved community services and infrastructure.

In this area, in the fall of 2007 sitting, the Legislature approved amendments to the *Municipal Finance and Community Grants Act* that provide an increase to comprehensive municipal grant funding in each of the next five years beginning April 1, 2008.

Comprehensive municipal grant contributions to Yukon communities will increase, Mr. Speaker, April 1, 2008 from \$12.538 million to \$13.346 million.

This represents an increase of some \$808,000 over last year's allocation. This is another demonstration of meeting the needs of Yukon communities. This initiative, Mr. Speaker, by 2012, will have increased the municipal grant to \$16.578 million.

Mr. Speaker, as a consequence of the fall community tour in 2007, our government established a one-time rural infrastructure fund to meet immediate capital needs in rural Yukon communities.

The department has received proposals and priorities from rural communities to deal with municipal responsibilities such as potable water, waste water, solid waste, and emergency management and response.

The fund has been distributed as follows: the community of Faro will receive \$229,000; Haines Junction will receive \$130,000; Mayo, \$100,000; Watson Lake, \$458,000; Teslin, \$100,000. And for the unincorporated communities, Mr. Speaker, there is a total of \$483,000.

In total, the fund is \$1.5 million. This fund is intended to do exactly as we have said: meet the immediate infrastructure needs in Yukon communities, and I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, this is another demonstration of our government taking action on building a better quality of life for Yukoners.

But we do not stop there. We are also committed to strengthening municipal governance in the territory.

To this end, consultations are now occurring on proposed amendments to the *Municipal Act* that may: increase the term of office and period of disqualification for council members; allow councils to invest in securities rated in the highest rating category by one recognized security rating institution; strengthen municipal accounting procedures and permit municipal governments cost-recovery programs; respond to concerns regarding the referendum process; and address other housekeeping amendments to improve administration of the legislation and municipal governance here in the Yukon.

The Department of Community Services, Mr. Speaker, also in collaboration with the Department of Health and Social Services, has modernized the volunteer emergency response services in Yukon.

These services now include volunteer medical emergency services, volunteer fire programs, volunteer emergency management services and volunteer search and rescue services.

In 2007-08, four new primary care paramedics were hired to augment and relieve the strain on the volunteer emergency

medical service in both communities of Dawson City and Watson Lake. There are also additional plans in place to hire more training and support staff to help all our emergency response programs.

Mr. Speaker, in 2008-09, Community Services will review the feasibility of expanding the 9-1-1 service to more Yukon communities. We want to make the system easier to operate and more efficient for both the operators and the emergency responders. Our government is also reviewing emergency response facilities in the communities and developing plans for improvements where required. Both Dawson City and Watson Lake need an improved ambulance facility, including offices and training rooms. At the same time, the department is working on developing equipment standards for the emergency medical services program. Ambulances that are about 20 years old are no longer adequate and have to be replaced with modern, reliable equipment. In the last five years, our government added new fire trucks and ambulances to its fleet. In 2008-09 provision is being made to purchase two more new ambulances and one fire tanker for Yukon communities.

Mr. Speaker, moving Emergency Medical Services from the Department of Health and Social Services to protective services branch in the Department of Community Services late last year has created a good opportunity for integration of emergency response programs into one branch that now includes EMO, wildland fire, structural fire, search and rescue and Emergency Medical Services. Mr. Speaker, we said we'd modernize and integrate and we have done that -- the delivery, as I have just mentioned.

Supporting sport and recreation is another platform commitment of our government that the Department of Community Services is mandated to carry out. The department, along with Health and Social Services and the Public Health Agency of Canada have signed a two-year agreement to provide funding to the Recreation and Parks Association of Yukon to promote and support program development in the areas of physical activity and healthy eating in all Yukon communities.

Mr. Speaker, \$93,000 was invested in 2007-08 for program delivery, which included Active Yukon Schools, rural active living coordination, the World Record Walk in communities, On The Right Path walking program, healthy workplaces and active script. In 2008-09, the program will have new components under the title, "Health on the Move". There is also the continuation of the sport and aboriginal bilateral agreement with Canadian Heritage and Sport and Recreation. This is a continuation of our government's sport bilateral initiative that ran from 2003-04 to 2006-07. The initiative will now continue in 2009-10 with investment from Sport Canada for enhanced athlete and coaching development, professional coach salaries, rural travel assistance for sport and more support for our elite athletes.

Mr. Speaker, our government is providing \$417,000 annually in 2008-09 and 2009-10 while Canada is contributing \$262,000 annually for the period of 2007-08 to 2009-10.

The Yukon will be sending its biggest team ever to the North American Indigenous Games this year with over 160 athletes, coaches and support staff in attendance in Cowichan,

B.C. The games will be held from August 2 to 10 with over 4,500 junior athletes, aged 19 and under, in attendance. Yukon will be participating in nine sports with over 50 percent of Team Yukon coming from the communities.

Mr. Speaker, quality of life includes promoting arts and culture. According to recent statistics, Yukon enjoys the highest per capita investment for arts and culture in the country. This equates to over \$400 per person and that demonstrates the value our government has placed on this sector. The Department of Tourism and Culture, under the leadership of our minister, has indeed been very effective in fulfilling this very commitment.

Funding for Yukon museums, interpretive and First Nation cultural and heritage centres has increased from \$546,000 under the former Liberal government to \$1.3 million in 2007-08, a demonstration of our commitment to the arts and cultural community in Yukon. The department currently provides \$963,000 in operation and maintenance funding and \$350,000 is available through capital programs. This increase reflects the addition of nine cultural and heritage institutions, for a total of 17 receiving investment support, along with support for existing museums.

In 2006-07, \$200,000 in additional capital was provided for the development of the special projects capital assistance program. This is for museums with specialized projects, such as artifact inventory and cataloguing, museum joint marketing and revenue generation projects. In 2007-08, in response to increased operation and other expenses, \$90,000 of funding was transferred, making the total O&M increase to \$240,000. Investment for the Yukon Arts Centre is being increased by \$75,000, for a total amount of \$724,000 annually. This increase builds upon an additional \$150,000 received from our government in 2005-06.

The Yukon Arts Centre welcomed its new executive director, Mr. Al Cushing, as we all should, on March 3, 2008. Welcome to you, Mr. Cushing. Our government looks forward to working with him and the board on the further development and promotion of the Yukon arts sector. We, once again, place a very high emphasis in this area in building a quality of life that all Yukoners expect.

Mr. Speaker, \$568,000 is an increase in arts funding announced in 2007 and supports three primary initiatives: investment to sustain the operational requirements of established arts organizations and provide more access to funds by new and emerging artists and communities; an enhancement of the Artist in the School program; and the establishment of a new touring artist fund.

In addition, increased support to the Dawson City Arts Society will assist them with their operational requirements in the work they do to advance the arts.

Another area is the northern strategy fund. It's also being utilized to promote several interesting culturally important projects. For example, the Teslin Tlingit Council is receiving \$144,000 to conduct a records diffusion project, with access to records at Yukon Archives relating to community. The project will utilize archive sources to document their stories and traditions, as well as target records documenting their land claims

settlement and self-government agreements. The project will include copies of records of all media, including written documentation, film and sound recordings, photographs, maps, microfilm, electronic records and published materials.

Both our government and the Tr'ondek Hwech'in government have accessed the northern strategy fund to provide improved access to the Forty Mile historic site, allowing for its development as a major cultural heritage attraction in the north Klondike region.

The management plan for the site was cooperatively developed by both governments and was signed off by our government and the First Nation government at a ceremony at the site in 2006. The Forty Mile historic site was created through the final land claim agreement. The site spans the mouth of the Forty Mile River, where it enters the Yukon River, north of Dawson City near the Alaska border.

The Han utilize the site as a caribou interception point and spring grayling camp. The site was also the location where the Han culture was first exposed to and changed by the full spectrum of European influences. It was the first substantive non-aboriginal settlement in Yukon, associated with the shift in commercial interest from furs to gold, as well as the establishment of the visible authority of the Canadian government.

Canadian sovereignty in the Yukon enabled regulatory control over the Klondike Gold Rush and paved the way for the creation of Yukon as a distinct territory of Canada.

George Carmack, Skookum Jim and Dawson Charlie all registered their discovery claims at Forty Mile. \$175,000 is being allocated in 2008-09, with a further \$50,000 in 2009-10, to finance this project, which will involve improvements, vehicle access from the Clinton Creek road as well as improvements within this most significant Yukon historic site.

Mr. Speaker, the second pillar of this government's vision and plan for Yukon is protecting and preserving our environment and our wildlife.

The climate change action plan will, in this area, set a clear direction for our government's response to climate change.

The action plan flows directly from the Yukon climate change strategy, which was released in the fall of 2006. It commits our government to develop an action plan within two years.

And the Department of Environment is planning for wide participation in developing solutions so we can adapt to the impacts of climate change. Yukoners will be given an opportunity to outline where they want to see actions being taken.

On February 12, 2008, over 80 delegates from around the territory and across the country attended a symposium to map out the next steps on how a research centre of excellence might operate in Yukon.

The establishment of the centre is a key component of our government's initiatives to adapt to the effects of climate change on our environment, on communities and, indeed, on Yukon people. The one-day symposium was the first major meeting at which representatives from universities, the federal and northern territorial governments, the Yukon and First Nation governments, Yukon College, and all could make recom-

mendations on how to establish and operate the proposed centre.

Those from across the country who attended included representatives from Quebec, Ontario, Saskatchewan, Alberta, and British Columbia universities, federal, Nunavut and Northwest Territories departments, and the Canadian Polar Commission, and representatives from the International Polar Year.

On February 29, 2008, our government renewed our Alaska-Yukon Intergovernmental Accord, which for the first time, Mr. Speaker, includes climate change.

And following the signing of the accord, the Yukon delegation met with the Alaska Climate Change Cabinet Subcommittee that Governor Palin established last September to address preparation and implementation of Alaska's climate change strategy.

There is a shared interest in working together on this initiative, especially in the areas of adaptation where issues are common in terms of those that we face in both jurisdictions.

Mr. Speaker, the Department of Environment is allocating \$153,000 in 2008-09 to continue a three-year project with the Yukon River Inter-tribal Watershed Council. This is to determine climate change impacts along the Yukon River.

Our government is also providing \$200,000 in 2008-09 to continue a five-year project to research and develop climate change adaptation for Yukon communities. This initiative includes the participation of the International Polar Year, the Northern Climate ExChange, Ryerson University, the University of Victoria and the University of British Columbia.

Also, Mr. Speaker, the northern strategy fund, through the Department of Economic Development, is providing \$755,900 to develop an investment-ready business plan and carry out early start projects demonstrating and marketing the cold climate innovation cluster concept.

The Department of Environment is continuing to pursue its fish, wildlife and habitat surveys. Sound decisions on land use planning and development require up-to-date information on fish and wildlife populations and the availability of suitable habitat. The Department of Environment expanded its inventory survey last year with an allocation of \$1.25 million and a further \$505,000 to be invested this year. This investment allows for the collection of information on the status of Yukon's wildlife, its populations and habitat.

The preservation and protection of the Porcupine caribou herd remains of paramount concern to our government. We were unsuccessful last year in obtaining an updated modern count because of bad weather and the migration pattern of the herd. We will try again this year. At our recent meeting in Anchorage with Governor Palin, the State of Alaska expressed an interest in participating in our harvest management strategy for conservation and protection of the herd. Our government continues to provide \$50,000 to the Vuntut Gwitchin to support its efforts related to ANWR and the impacts on the Porcupine caribou herd. The Department of Environment has also established a program to inform and educate residents and visitors on the steps that they can take to make sure wildlife are not in conflict with recreational activities or property owners.

In keeping with commitments made under the Kwanlin Dun and Carcross-Tagish First Nations final agreements, our government has established the Southern Lakes Wildlife Committee. The committee is comprised of members from six First Nations, the Yukon government, the B.C. government, and the Canadian Wildlife Service.

The department is maintaining its parks officer program, which has been successful in encouraging families to return to our campgrounds and day-use areas to enjoy the Yukon's natural and pristine environment.

Another initiative, Mr. Speaker, is the Tombstone visitor reception centre. It is being built. Construction started in 2007 in the month of July with the building framed and closed to the weather by November. Construction will be restarted in March with the completion date of July 2008. The visitor reception centre will be a state-of-the-art building with attention being given to minimizing the impact on its location. The building will serve as an economic catalyst to encourage visitors to travel in the area and to stay longer in this particular region.

The Tombstone visitor reception centre is an excellent example of collaboration between the Yukon government and the Tr'ondek Hwech'in government and Holland America.

Mr. Speaker, the Department of Environment is also allocating \$428,000 in 2008-09 to identify and assess environmental liabilities on 55 Yukon government properties that will ultimately lead to the remediation of contaminated sites on land that is administered by the Yukon government. This program was created in response to concerns raised by the Office of the Auditor General.

Our government is also committed to recycling and that is an important initiative for all. A successful pilot project through the Public Service Commission has diverted 33 tons of material from landfills in the Yukon. The Public Service Commission is also allocating \$75,000 to make the program permanent. The program employs people with disabilities through the Public Service Commission Workplace Diversity Employment Office and is working in partnership with Raven Recycling and the Challenge Community Vocational Alternatives program.

Mr. Speaker, the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources delivers on a broad range of energy efficiency and renewable energy programs through the Energy Solutions Centre, including the Christmas light exchange, the vehicle emissions clinic, the appliance rebate program and district heating in Watson Lake.

Mr. Speaker, in meeting this pillar's very important commitment, there are a number of examples, as mentioned, in this government delivering on that pillar and plan for the Yukon.

The third pillar -- an important one to Yukoners -- is promoting a strong and diversified private sector economy. I am pleased to say that's exactly what is happening in today's Yukon: a strong and growing diversified private sector economy. In a statement released by Statistics Canada on February 27, 2008, on intentions for private and public investment, capital intentions for 2008 show the Yukon with an expected 15.1-percent increase over preliminary actual 2007 figures. There was a 13.2-percent increase in capital expenditures from the actual 2006 figure to the preliminary actual 2007 figure. The

Yukon's anticipated 15.1-percent increase is the fourth highest in Canada in growth expectations for 2008. This is another example of delivering on our commitments.

Total capital spending intentions in the Yukon for 2008 are \$739.4 million. This is made up of \$551.6 million in construction expenditures and \$187.8 million in machinery and equipment expenditures. While capital spending by the Yukon government is decreasing, capital spending in the private sector is increasing. This is the result we sought when we began office in 2002, and we are delivering. This is a very positive sign for Yukon's private-sector economy.

The value of exploration and mining activity in 2007 is expected to reach \$140 million, easily surpassing the banner year the territory enjoyed in 2006. Today, Yukon is number one in Canada in terms of percentage growth for total exploration expenditures -- another shining example of this government's plan. In the past seven years, exploration activity levels in the Yukon have increased more than tenfold, 10 times the amount from previous investments -- back in 2000 under a former Liberal government -- to the \$140 million estimated for 2007. Under the leadership of our Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources, the department, as managers of the land and resources for Yukon, is at the forefront of all this resource development, of all this growth in the resource sector, of all this contribution to Yukon's growing private sector economy.

Energy, Mines and Resources is currently completing consultation on the claims administration and royalty amendments to the *Quartz Mining Act* that are so important to the mining industry, as well as amendments to the *Miners Lien Act*, in conjunction with Community Services. The Yukon once again has an operating hard rock mine, Sherwood Copper's Minto mine. This mine is permitted and a new transmission line to supply power to the mine is under construction. This project will not only increase hydro capacity for Yukon, it will reduce by thousands of tons our CO₂ emissions. Not only will it put a large customer on our hydro grid, it will take another community -- in this case, Pelly -- off its dependence on diesel and turn it to hydro for electrical needs. The department is allocating \$329,000 in 2008-09 to implement a new placer mining regime.

Placer mining has been the economic backbone of the Yukon economy since the days of the Klondike Gold Rush. The new placer mining regime will affect placer mining operations in 2008 and is designed to recognize the importance of a sustainable placer industry here in Yukon and the importance of conservation and protection of fish and fish habitat.

Mr. Speaker, risk management decision-making and adaptive management are key components of the new regime, which is science-based and incorporates experience and traditional knowledge. The existing Yukon placer authorization will be replaced by a set of separate watershed-based authorizations under the fish habitat management regime for Yukon placer mining.

The Yukon Placer Secretariat will guide the implementation of the new placer regime. The new regime will be phased in over several years, and a number of organizations and government agencies will play a significant role.

EMR is also responsible for energy, oil and gas development, forestry, agriculture, land use planning and land dispositions. The department is currently developing the Yukon's first comprehensive energy strategy. The strategy will be developed in consultation with stakeholders, the public and other orders of governments. It will address energy production and supply in the Yukon and will also address energy management, consumption and energy efficiency and conservation.

The Department of Energy, Mines and Resources held two oil and gas disposition rights processes in 2007 and has issued oil and gas exploration rights in the Eagle Plains and Peel Plateau areas valued at over \$22 million.

Our government, through the department, is also working hard to revitalize the forest industry with an emphasis on biomass energy production and modernizing Yukon's forest legislation. Over the past two years, our government has been working closely with the successor resource legislation working group to develop the framework of an appropriate forest management regime for stewardship of Yukon's forests.

The proposed regime has received input from the forest industry focus group and the forest values focus group. EMR will be seeking input from the public on the proposed new forest act with the closing date for comments by the end of April 2008.

The department is also responsible for making agricultural land available, and developed a 15-lot planned agricultural subdivision 10 kilometres east of Haines Junction. The first four lots were released by lottery in October with four more lots being released for sale in early spring 2008.

Our government has also been working jointly with the Tlingit Council to develop recreational and rural residential land in the Teslin area. The steering committee composed of land program officials from both our governments has been actively working to identify opportunities for joint development in an effort to eliminate the demand for spot land applications in the area. The steering committee is also overseeing a knowledge transfer project that will convey information to other First Nations on opportunities for land development.

Energy, Mines and Resources is working with VGFN, the North Yukon Planning Commission, and the Yukon Planning Council to develop an acceptable north Yukon land use plan to be recommended to Yukon and the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation governments by March 31, 2008, with implementation possibly by the winter of 2008.

Our government, through the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources, is working with First Nations to fully involve them in the resource sector. Examples of this include ongoing support for the Aboriginal Pipeline Coalition, successful collaboration with the Selkirk First Nation on the Minto mine development, working with First Nations in Teslin, Watson Lake, Ross River and Haines Junction to complete and implement strategic forest management plans and working cooperatively through partnerships with First Nations to develop closure plans for the abandoned type 2 mine sites such as Faro and Mount Nansen.

Moving on, Mr. Speaker, tourism is a major engine driving the future expansion of the Yukon economy. Following the success of the national marketing campaign, our government

invested \$750,000 in an initiative entitled, "Destination Yukon". This is designed to promote Yukon as a travel destination in key markets across southern Canada. Destination Yukon is promoting Yukon through multimedia advertising, Web site use and television advertising, and it is the single largest media buy since the Canada Winter Games.

Key target markets are Calgary, Edmonton, Greater Vancouver and the Greater Toronto area. This marketing initiative is giving Yukon tourism industry partners the opportunity to maximize the benefits created by the national marketing campaign and prepare for future opportunities around the 2010 Olympic Games in Vancouver.

Mr. Speaker, Destination Yukon is meant to increase awareness of Yukon as a travel destination -- a destination of choice. I direct visitors to the new www.travelyukon.com Web site, which showcases Yukon iconic features, including the midnight sun and the northern lights. The new www.travelyukon.com Web site gives consumers a one-stop shop for finding tourism information on-line. The Web site is part of the \$750,000 interactive strategy being implemented by the Department of Tourism and Culture. It is designed to convert visitor inquiries into Yukon customers for Yukon tourism operators.

The Web site's imagery has been customized to factor in a variety of travellers' profiles that have been categorized as adventure challengers, scenic outdoor travellers and cultural explorers, all with different interests when planning a vacation.

The site includes links to tourism businesses, services and products, which will allow Yukon tourism industry stakeholders and tour operators to expand their reach to Outside audiences. The economic arm of l'Association franco-yukonnaise will work in partnership with the Yukon government's French language services to develop a full French language version of the Web site.

The department invests \$5 million annually through a variety of programs and services to market tourism worldwide. The tourism cooperative marketing fund will have a continued investment of \$500,000 to support Yukon's tourism operators with their own marketing efforts.

Our minister responsible was in Berlin earlier this month from March 4 to 6 attending the world's largest tourism convention, the International Tourism Bourse -- ITB. This trade show attracts more than 180,000 visitors and it provided an excellent opportunity to meet and connect with tour operators, wholesalers, retail agents and air carrier representatives, which are all critical to the continued growth of Yukon as a travel destination.

While in Berlin, the Minister of Tourism and Culture announced a unique marketing initiative in Europe where Yukon, in collaboration with the Northwest Territories and Nunavut -- under one banner entitled "Canada's North" -- focused attention on what Canada's north has to offer in terms of the variety of tourism product options that are available. This pan-northern partnership was announced at the Canadian embassy in Berlin with over 200 representatives of the international travel trade industry and media in attendance.

Mr. Speaker, air access remains critical to the growth of Yukon's tourism industry. European visitation to Yukon has been steadily growing, with a 10-percent increase experienced in 2007. Visitors to Yukon on the twice-weekly Condor flights during the summer months have also grown steadily, with nearly 4,700 European visitors arriving last year.

In order to maintain and grow international visitation, a major expansion of the Whitehorse air terminal building will be undertaken over the next year and a half. The detail design work for a two-storey air terminal building expansion is well underway and construction is expected to be completed by November 2009.

The 2,500-square metre expansion will include additional space for security clearance of passengers and a new 230-passenger holding room that will serve as an in-transit lounge for international flights. The expansion will provide a new and larger carousel and improved oversized freight and passenger elevators. These improvements will allow the Whitehorse International Airport to continue to provide service to international traffic and to respond to the ongoing marketing efforts of the minister and the Department of Tourism and Culture to continue to attract an increased international traffic.

Another area, the Fulda Challenge Extreme Arctic Winter Adventure, helps us showcase the territory's beautiful scenery and memorable attractions in key overseas target markets. The Yukon government's investment of \$150,000 is used to partner with Fulda, a German tire manufacturer, to support broadcast and print media participation. This coverage throughout Europe generates \$3.25 million euros in estimated media-equivalency exposure for the Yukon. The Fulda Challenge is valued by private sector businesses throughout our territory. The tire company estimates that it spent \$1 million this year on equipment rentals, transportation, food and beverages, accommodation, staging of events and other services.

The department is currently discussing future partnerships with Fulda, including a new memorandum of understanding between Fulda Reifen and Yukon Tourism and Culture to market and promote the Fulda Challenge. It is also important to note that German-speaking Europeans are Yukon's largest overseas market, bringing close to 10,000 visitors to the territory each year and yielding approximately \$8.5 million in spending.

Following the success of the pilot project for the use of the old fire hall on the Whitehorse waterfront, our government will continue to partner with the Whitehorse Chamber of Commerce and the Yukon Arts Centre to provide arts programming at this venue for 2008. The further use of the old fire hall as a cultural venue will complement other Whitehorse waterfront development initiatives. These initiatives include the MacBride Museum expansion, trolley extension to Spook Creek, the refurbishment of the roundhouse and \$18 million in investment to support identified projects by the City of Whitehorse, Kwanlin Dun First Nation, the Ta'an Kwach'an Council and the Yukon government.

The Carcross waterfront will also be receiving attention through the Destination: Carcross initiative. Additional investments of \$180,000 will be used to upgrade the Carcross Visitor

Information Centre by moving the mechanical room into a new ground-level addition and installing a new potable water system.

Mr. Speaker, Yukon's highways and infrastructure are key elements in promoting Yukon's economy. The Department of Highways and Public Works is responsible for maintaining and upgrading the territory's transportation and communication systems.

The Shakwak project has been of tremendous benefit to the territory. At the recent signing of the Alaska-Yukon Intergovernmental Accord in Anchorage on February 29, 2008, our government and the State of Alaska agreed to jointly lobby the Government of the United States with respect to an extension of the Shakwak project past 2009. Shakwak project expenditures for this fiscal year include \$3 million for construction of the Slim River bridge at kilometre 1705. Design and permitting is currently in place for the construction of a new structure to replace the existing bridge with actual construction planned for 2009. There will be \$11 million for the reconstruction of the Duke River bridge at kilometre 1768. A detour bridge will be opened in the latter part of March to facilitate traffic while the Duke River bridge is being reconstructed. Several contracts have already been tendered in relation to this project. Work has commenced on the site at the steel fabrication plant and is expected to be completed by September 30, 2008.

There will be \$3 million for the removal and disposal of the existing Donjek River bridge. This is the second year of this project with \$900,000 being spent previously in 2007-08.

There will be \$4 million for Shakwak reconstruction of the Alaska Highway which extends from kilometre 1700 to kilometre 1717 located along the south shore of Kluane Lake near Sheep Mountain. In 2007-08, \$10 million was allocated for grade construction and drainage improvement, sub-base and base course construction.

There is \$5.5 million for Shakwak pavement construction from Haines Junction to Haines, Alaska, and this is a continuation of the \$6 million allocated in 2007-08 for production and placement of hot mix asphalt on the Haines Road.

There will be \$1 million for Shakwak BST application and re-vegetation from kilometre 1700 to 1717. Seeding and fertilizing the areas disturbed by reconstruction are a standard part of road construction aimed at minimizing environmental impact. Also, it must be noted that the funding for all these Shakwak projects are 100-percent recoverable from the Government of the United States.

The Canada strategic infrastructure fund also provides investment and infrastructure with Yukon providing 50 percent funding. The deck replacement for the Lewes River bridge at Marsh Lake is an example of one of these projects. This overall project is expected to be completed by the end of September 2008. The \$2.4-million project will include the construction of a new bridge deck, new guardrail, replacement of bearings and minor structural strengthening.

\$850,000 is being allocated for a short section of the north Klondike Highway at Flat Creek Hill, and work is also progressing on the rehabilitation of the existing pavement on sections of the Klondike Highway.

The budget for 2007-08 was \$2 million for various pavement and overlay from kilometre 204 to 212 of the Klondike Highway. In 2008-09, \$1.5 million is being allocated for various locations to rehabilitate the existing pavement overlay and by recycling the pavement into base course and resurfacing with BST.

Mr. Speaker, the Campbell Highway is one of Yukon's major resource roads as it provides access to a very rich resource area. Accordingly, our government is committed to providing \$31 million for the improvement and upgrade of the southern portion of the Robert Campbell Highway over the next three years. As a consequence of the anticipated increase in activity on the road, the Department of Highways and Public Works has made it a priority to upgrade this highway to maintainable standards. For this fiscal year, \$8.6 million is being allocated for reconstruction between kilometre 10 and kilometre 190. Projects planned for 2008-09 include reconstruction in the following locations: kilometre 12 to 17; kilometre 31 to 32 at Tom Creek and kilometre 107 to 114 at Tuchtua. The department is also responsible for airport infrastructure. The major expansion of the Whitehorse air terminal building has already been referenced. Phase 3 of the Whitehorse Airport parking lot is also going to continue. The improved parking lot will provide 420 stalls for public parking; also, the DC-3 will be relocated along with the reconstruction of Otter-Burns Road and the Alaska Highway intersection. These upgrades will allow safe and more efficient access to the airport with smoother traffic flows and better control of long-term parking.

Mr. Speaker, the department is also responsible for mobile communications. This infrastructure exists across our territory. Equipment at six remote sites in southeast Yukon will be replaced in 2008-09. This is to ensure the ongoing provision of mobile communications for emergency responders and Yukon government users such as conservation officers and highway maintenance workers. An allocation of \$1.696 million is being made to carry out this very important work.

Moving on, Mr. Speaker, the Department of Economic Development, through its many programs and services, is playing a critical role in the developing diversification and growth of Yukon's private sector economy.

The department is continuing to work with private and public partners to enhance business, trade and investment opportunities in Asia.

On October 9, 2007, Yukon Nevada Gold and Northwest Non-Ferrous International Investment Company Limited signed an agreement to form a new Canadian company that will explore and develop mineral resources in Yukon. This joint venture will inject a minimum of \$3 million into exploration in the territory. This translates into growth of the economy, jobs for Yukoners and opportunities for Yukon businesses.

On January 30, 2008, the Consulate General of Japan in Vancouver invited our government to host members of the Japanese business community. The event was part of our ongoing efforts to attract new investment capital that supports the continued growth of the Yukon economy. The Japanese business community is interested in small business potential and

investment opportunities in Yukon's mineral, forest and tourism sectors.

On March 3, 2008, our minister responsible for Economic Development attended the Prospectors and Developers Association of Canada Conference, known as PDAC. This conference was held in Toronto and is one of the world's most recognized mineral development conferences, hosting over 18,000 delegates and 950 exhibitors from around the world.

Our government participated in a variety of events which included hosting a breakfast meeting with key industry members to discuss current Yukon mineral investment processes and the streamlined regime; presenting information on Yukon's regulatory process at the Canada-China mineral investment forum hosted by Natural Resources Canada; presenting information about mining and mineral exploration properties, the government services available to businesses and the mineral potential in Yukon at a booth in the PDAC trade show; holding first-time and follow-up meetings with Asian mineral companies interested in pursuing investment opportunities in Yukon; and visiting with numerous Yukon-based companies also participating in PDAC in 2008.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to say all this hard work by our minister has paid off.

On March 5, 2008, North American Tungsten Corporation announced a \$19.4-million investment by Hunan Nonferrous Metals Corporation of China in the Mactung tungsten project located 230 kilometres northeast of Ross River. Mr. Speaker, the NTC chairman and CEO, Stephen Leahy, recognized the Yukon government and our minister for helping facilitate their company's introduction into the Chinese market. Mr. Speaker, growing and diversifying our private sector economy now includes major offshore investment -- another remarkable accomplishment.

The Department of Economic Development supported the efforts of the Chinese corporation to identify Yukon investment opportunities. Mr. Speaker, we have delivered.

Also, our government has developed an investment action strategy to guide the development of a diversified private sector economy while focusing on key areas of opportunity.

The department, with an allocation of \$200,000 in 2008-09, is supporting the long-term development of Yukon's economy with funding for economic infrastructure. Projects like the Alaska-Canada rail link pre-feasibility study and the port access strategy will provide the objective and quantified information required to enable public and private investors to take a serious look at developing additional infrastructure in Yukon.

The department, through its business funds and its film and sound incentive programs, has contributed to the continued growth and diversification of the business sector. To date, the department has approved the following amounts: enterprise trade fund -- 249 projects for a total amount of \$1.668 million with a capital allocation for 2008-09 of \$600,000; regional economic development -- 58 projects for a total of \$1.149 million with a 2008-09 capital allocation of \$450,000; strategic industries development fund -- 62 projects for a total of \$3.592 million with a 2008-09 capital allocation of \$1 million; film

and sound incentive programs -- 129 projects for a total of \$1.669 million with a 2008-09 capital allocation of \$760,000.

The community development fund continues to assist community groups to undertake projects that will help build Yukon's social and economic capacity, utilizing community creativity and energy. Maintaining the CDF is a commitment by our government and the community development fund improves community health and well-being and helps to strengthen local economies by creating employment and improving infrastructure. In 2008-09, our total budget for the CDF is \$3.3 million.

The Yukon Film and Sound Commission continues to actively engage and support Yukon's film and sound industry. A vision for the Yukon film industry has been developed in cooperation with the industry and outlines a strategy for moving forward to increase the number of indigenous film projects undertaken here in Yukon, as well as to comprehensively market Yukon as a location with Outside production companies and capture additional production and post-production activity from those Outside producers who choose Yukon as a shooting location. Work is now underway to develop a similar shared vision with the Yukon's sound recording industry.

One of our major 2006 election commitments was to make Yukon First Nations full partners in the economic development of the territory for the mutual benefit of all Yukoners. With Yukon First Nations setting their economic priorities and playing an active role in the development of the Yukon economy, the Department of Economic Development provides valuable assistance to the First Nations in a range of areas. The department works to support First Nation business success, from building capable institutions of governance and capacity development to opportunity identification and project selection.

Mr. Speaker, all of this is relative to our fourth pillar, practising good government. Practising good government has many facets, Mr. Speaker. It involves training, developing, recruiting, and retaining a representative professional public service working within a safe and healthy workplace. In our 2006 election platform there is a section entitled "Putting Yukoners First", which includes the following commitments: continue to provide Yukoners with the first opportunity for employment and advancement within the public service; ensure Yukon teachers are considered first for employment, subject to special or exceptional circumstances; and, give a hiring preference to Yukon post-secondary students for employment within the Yukon government.

The Public Service Commission, together with all departments, is working hard to meet these commitments. There is a three-year recruitment incentive fund that began in 2007 to address recruitment for hard-to-recruit positions within the Yukon government. The \$400,000 program for 2008-09 is the second of a three-year budget allocation and will be used to enhance existing recruitment capacities, build relationships with potential employees and improve branding and marketing initiatives.

The Public Service Commission manages a range of health and safety programs under the investing-in-public-service framework. Under the direction of the corporate health and

safety leadership committee, our government is proceeding with plans for a government-wide audit procedure, as per the 2007 Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board order that came out as a result of an investigation. Our government remains committed to a safe and healthy workplace for all employees, and \$244,000 is being allocated in the fiscal year to carry out this very important work.

Mr. Speaker, the representative public service consultant in the workplace diversity employment office manages the First Nation Training Corps program known as FNTC. This works with the departments and the First Nation governments to provide technical advice, facilitate secondments between the Yukon government and First Nation government and assist First Nation individuals through the staffing process.

In 2007, 18 FNTC positions were filled with eight of the candidates completing their term. Three of the eight are employed by the Yukon government, one by a First Nation government, two by other employers; one is receiving further training in the Yukon government and one has gone on to further education.

GradCorps is an internship program that provides recent Yukon post-secondary graduates with work experience to help them improve their employment prospects. GradCorps students must be Yukon residents, have graduated with a diploma or degree from a recognized post-secondary institution within the past two years, and have little or no previous work experience in their field of study. There are currently over 10 proposals from across government for the fourth intake, which will take place in March. Since 2005, there have been 21 GradCorps placements, and nine of those were re-hired into positions in the Yukon government.

Our government is indeed fortunate to have such a highly skilled and dedicated professional public service. Mr. Speaker, practising good government means our government's obligations to Yukon's francophone community in the *Languages Act*. The French language services directorate has increased our government's capacity to deliver French language services. The directorate has negotiated an increase of \$400,000 in the Canada-Yukon agreement for French language services since 2005-06.

The French language service directorate is preparing the Yukon government French language services plan for 2009 through to 2014. This includes plans to improve French language services in two devolved programs, the Whitehorse General Hospital in 1993 and universal health programs in 1997. The directorate will negotiate with Canadian Heritage to ensure that the Yukon government has the funding necessary to deliver useful services to our French-speaking citizens from 2009 through to 2014.

The French language services directorate is also involved with the Public Service Commission in the development of guidelines for staffing bilingual positions and for French language training for Yukon government employees. These guidelines will ensure equity and fairness for managers and employees, as well as clear processes to follow when making decisions on bilingual staffing and French language training. The French language services directorate will work with departments to

improve access to French content on the Yukon government's Web site, particularly in developing a fully bilingual mirror site for the www.travel yukon.com Web site, a first in western Canada. It should be noted that, with all these initiatives, there is full cost recovery from Canada.

Mr. Speaker, practising good government involves the effective, efficient and timely administration of government programs, services and regulatory processes. In keeping with our commitments to Yukoners, the Yukon government, the Council of Yukon First Nations and Canada will be conducting the main phases of the *Umbrella Final Agreement* mandated review of the development assessment process in 2008-09.

Aspects of this comprehensive review include the act, the regulations, roles and responsibilities of the Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Board and decision bodies, as well as related processes. This is an opportunity for the Yukon government to work with Canada, Council of Yukon First Nations, the YESA Board, First Nations in general, participants and the public to ensure the development assessment process is meeting the objectives set out in the *Umbrella Final Agreement*. Mr. Speaker, our government's contribution to the five-year review of this act is approximately \$200,000.

Our government has also been working closely with YESAB and project proponents to ensure major projects are efficiently and effectively assessed under YESAA. Major development projects that have been reviewed include the Carmacks-Stewart transmission line in 2007, the Carmacks copper mine in 2008, and the Dawson waste-water treatment system 2008.

Mr. Speaker, under YESAA, industry and development proponents are required to consider socio-economic effects with respect to their project proposals, which is often difficult to identify. The Yukon Bureau of Statistics, with support from the Executive Council Office's development assessment branch, is developing a Web portal application that will allow easy one-stop access to the Yukon government's socio-economic information in a comprehensive and usable format for the proponents, assessors, decision bodies and regulators. The socio-economic Web portal is being funded through Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, and is part of the targeted investment program and Natural Resources Canada's GeoConnections program.

So, Mr. Speaker, practising good government, from our government's perspective, involves cooperative and collaborative governance. We have made cooperative governance with other levels of government a hallmark of our administration that sets us apart from previous Yukon governments. Our consultations with municipal governments on proposed amendments to the *Municipal Act* and the increase to the comprehensive municipal grant are examples of cooperation at the municipal level.

Mr. Speaker, our 2006 election platform commits our government to work with Yukon First Nations to promote cooperative governance based on mutual respect of each other's jurisdiction; utilize the Yukon Forum to implement such major initiatives as the northern strategy, targeted investment program, northern housing trust, the *Children's Act* review, the correc-

tions action plan and education reform; re-establish the inter-governmental forum with the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development; make First Nations full partners in the economic development of the territory for the mutual benefit of all Yukoners; and assist First Nation governments in capacity development. Our government is acting on all of these commitments.

For example, our government established the governance liaison and capacity development branch of the Executive Council Office in 2007.

This branch is implementing capacity development strategies in cooperation with First Nations and supports activities to strengthen cooperative governance in Yukon.

Mr. Speaker, \$685,000 in 2008-09 from the northern strategy budget is being dedicated to support activities in the governance liaison and capacity development branch.

During 2007, the following capacity development projects were approved under the northern strategy: \$700,000 to expand the capacity of the Association of Yukon Communities to oversee training for elected officials and staff of municipal and First Nation governments that deliver municipal-type services; \$150,000 to the Carcross-Tagish First Nation to provide training to develop community peacekeepers, mediators and negotiators; \$1.05 million to the Champagne and Aishihik First Nations to develop Yukon First Nation executive leadership and management programming; \$950,000 to the Kwanlin Dun First Nation, the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation and Carcross-Tagish First Nation to assess First Nation capacity in the areas of land and resource development, develop strategies for improving capacity, and develop a long-term strategy through education and training; \$450,000 to Tr'ondek Hwech'in First Nation and the Council of Yukon First Nations to develop and deliver training for members of boards and committees and other enhancements such as one-on-one consulting; \$500,000 to the Tr'ondek Hwech'in First Nation and Champagne and Aishihik First Nations to develop a comprehensive training, certification and capacity-building program for water and waste-water system operators Yukon wide; \$2.012 million to the Selkirk First Nation to provide it with resources to strengthen governance structures in support of economic initiatives and development; \$600,000 for Tr'ondek Hwech'in First Nation and the Council of Yukon First Nations to work cooperatively with Yukon First Nations to develop effective human resource initiatives and practices.

In addition, there are a number of ongoing funding initiatives to Yukon First Nations that will continue in the 2008-09 fiscal year, including \$100,000 for the Yukon Forum and \$7.155 million in land claim funding.

On February 11 and 12, Yukon First Nations and the Yukon government delegates met with a number of senior federal ministers regarding the need to develop a timely and inclusive process for responding to issues identified in a tripartite report on the nine-year review of the implementation of Yukon treaties. The review of the Yukon First Nation final and self-government agreements, which have been in place for over 10 years, was completed last year. This was the first extensive review of the land claim agreements, and the report highlights

the need for the federal government to resolve inconsistencies in federal policies and to increase the necessary investment to ensure the spirit and the intent of the agreements are fulfilled. The review itself was an excellent example of intergovernmental cooperation involving Canada, Yukon and First Nation governments in implementing the land claims agreements.

Our cooperative governance approach continues to extend to our two sister territories, the Northwest Territories and Nunavut, which are very important jurisdictions for us collectively in the north, as we continue to work with our southern neighbours and the State of Alaska. All of this culminates at the Council of the Federation, which is a national example of cooperative governance.

As I stated earlier, we signed a new intergovernmental accord with Governor Palin of Alaska on February 29 of this year. We are very much looking forward to continuing our close working relationship with Premier Stelmach after his government's recent election in Alberta. So practising good government involves strong fiscal management.

The Department of Finance has done a stellar job in negotiating a new principles-based territorial funding formula that will promote long-term and sustained fiscal stability for the territory for the foreseeable future.

Finance has now successfully negotiated another major funding agreement with Canada. Yukon and Canada have concluded negotiations on the infrastructure framework agreement related to the Building Canada Plan. The Building Canada Plan agreement runs from 2007-08 through to March 31, 2015. The fund provides Yukon with \$182.91 million from Canada for infrastructure initiatives. The plan stipulates that initiatives will be cost shared on a 25:75 percent basis. Yukon's share is approximately \$61 million during the term of the agreement, bringing total infrastructure investment under the Building Canada Plan to just under \$244 million. Mr. Speaker, that is another example of our continuing efforts to increase Yukon's fiscal capacity.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, the 2008-09 budget is the second budget in our current five-year mandate. This budget is our second installment in meeting the commitments outlined in our 2006 election platform, *Building Yukon's Future Together: A Clear Vision for a Bright Future*.

This budget builds upon the good work of our 2007-08 budget as we progressively go about fulfilling the vision that we offered Yukoners back in 2006. Mr. Speaker, indeed, Yukon's prospects get brighter with each passing year.

Once again I want to demonstrate to the members opposite that we look forward to a constructive debate in what is another large budget, investing in quality of life, protecting our environment, diversifying and growing our economy, and in practising good governance. It also demonstrates that this government continues to live within its means. Not only are we meeting our objectives but we are maintaining a healthy net financial position for the future.

This government will not mortgage the future with needless spending of today.

I want to thank all the government officials who helped us prepare the 2008-09 budget. It is indeed the product of many

hands and I commend this budget to all members of the House for their consideration.

Motion to adjourn debate

Mr. Mitchell: Mr. Speaker, I move that debate be now adjourned.

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

Motion to adjourn debate on Bill No. 11 agreed to

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

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

Motion agreed to

Speaker: This House now stands adjourned until 1:00 p.m. Tuesday, March 25, 2008.

The House adjourned at 4:03 p.m.