

**Yukon Legislative Assembly  
Whitehorse, Yukon  
Monday, November 24, 2008 — 1:00 p.m.**

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

*Prayers*

## DAILY ROUTINE

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

Tributes.

## TRIBUTES

### In recognition of Geoscience Week

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** I rise today to ask all members of the Assembly to join me in paying tribute to the 36<sup>th</sup> annual Geoscience Forum. This year, once again, the Yukon Geoscience Forum will be showcasing the latest in exploration and research. It will also include numerous industry representatives presenting information about developments over the last year. The forum opens today and closes on November 26. I encourage all members of this House and any Yukoners interested in the mineral industry or geology to attend the presentations, poster displays and tradeshow at the forum. Yukon government's own geologists will be on hand updating participants on the results from this year's field work as well as offering updates on some of the many exploration programs in the Yukon — new and ongoing.

I would like to take this time to congratulate and thank our team of geologists at the Yukon Geological Survey for their excellent work and recognize their involvement in the forum. I would also like to acknowledge the important role the survey plays in supporting the management and development of Yukon's resources and giving Yukon a competitive advantage. I also want to thank the Yukon Chamber of Mines for the hard work they have done in organizing the forum once again this year.

The Yukon Geoscience Forum is well-respected among industry, government and academia as an event that presents the latest information on exploration, development and technology associated with the minerals and oil and gas sectors of the territory. The chamber expects over 350 participants to attend from across Canada, including geologists, scientists, academics, investors, prospectors, placer miners and representatives from service and supply companies as well as mining and oil and gas companies. With the extensive roster of participants, I'm sure this will prove to be another successful year for the Geoscience Forum.

The Yukon government is pleased to support the Geoscience Forum once again. It is through research and exploration that we gain a better understanding of how to best manage the Yukon's resources. It is through opportunities such as the Geoscience Forum that we learn how this research is being applied by industry and we can continue to expand scientific and technical knowledge to remain on the cutting edge of this

industry and continue the Yukon's competitive edge in attracting development and maintaining a strong economy.

**Mr. McRobb:** I'm pleased to also rise on behalf of my colleagues in the Liberal Party and the third party in tribute to Geoscience Week. Geoscience Week has many aspects to consider, including the dedicated work by geologists, prospectors, miners and individuals in the Yukon geological survey branch. The highlight of the week is the 36<sup>th</sup> annual Geoscience Forum held again at the High Country Inn in Whitehorse. The forum is an opportunity for miners, people in the support industries and others to gather, exchange information and do business together.

Last year, the forum was overshadowed by Teck Cominco's surprise announcement it would suspend work at the Galore Creek property in northern British Columbia.

This year's forum faces the backdrop of market meltdowns, global economic uncertainty, commodity price collapse and the difficulty of obtaining capital to finance expansions or new development.

In the Yukon we must do what we can to help this important industry in its time of need. In this sitting of the Assembly, our party has supported improvements to the *Quartz Mining Act* and the *Miners Lien Act*, and we urge the government to bring forward other business that could help this industry make it through the downturn.

Mining has a long history in our territory and has been referenced as one of the three legs to our economy. We all know there are several promising deposits waiting to be developed, and there is plenty of potential for more to be discovered.

The opening and continued operation of the Minto copper mine near Carmacks earlier this year has demonstrated that mine development can be achieved in our territory. Congratulations for a job well done to everyone working at this mine and to its parent company, Sherwood Copper, which has now merged with Capstone Mining Corp. Sherwood President and CEO Stephen Quin today announced it has generated \$55.1 million of net revenue and \$29.9 million of cash flow from mining operations during the quarter ending September 30, 2008. This success is largely due to the new Minto mine.

Mr. Speaker, many of us can recall the mining glory days when mines operated at Faro, Keno Hill, Clinton Creek, Whitehorse Copper and nearby at Cassiar and Tungsten, the latter of which has resumed operations in recent years.

We as legislators should be doing all we can to encourage further activity within this important sector to encourage new mine development in time for the next upswing in commodity prices.

In closing, we extend a warm Yukon welcome to the visitors who will be attending the forum. I'm sure this will be another successful event, and we wish them all well.

### In remembrance of Phil Todd

**Mr. Cardiff:** I rise on behalf of all Members of the Legislative Assembly to pay tribute in this month of remembrance to an old soldier, Phil Todd.

Phil was born in England but when he was a young child his family immigrated to Canada, and they lived in Alberta. He

served in England and in Italy during the Second World War and suffered shrapnel wounds in 1944. He received four medals for his wartime service and his war experiences had a deep impact on his attitude toward people and toward life itself. After the war Phil trained as a heavy equipment mechanic in Alberta. He first worked along the Alaska Highway and then the Haines Road driving and maintaining equipment in all kinds of weather.

It was in the Yukon that Phil's spirit blossomed, and it was here that he stayed. He truly loved the Yukon wilderness.

After leaving his government highway job, Phil took his mechanical expertise and inventiveness into business, establishing the first truck stop in the Yukon at McCrae. Many years later, retired truck drivers passing through Whitehorse would stop to find Phil and say hello.

He and his dry sense of humour were a legend along the Alaska Highway. They remembered him fixing their trucks at all hours of the day and night without complaint and leaving food and coffee on the counter for them in the unlocked café when Phil would finally go to bed.

Phil's success at McCrae led to a trucking business, Aksala Enterprises at the Carcross Corner. But his salvaging of scrap metal, decades before recycling was expected, was his real focus until the end of his life. I've knocked on doors around the Carcross Cutoff and Mount Lorne and out at Marsh Lake for many, many years, both as a canvasser and a candidate, and I remember warmly talking about things like recycling and other important issues to Yukoners. Phil always had some words of wisdom to share, and his work in recycling, I think, has been very important. The recycling was never very economical, but he couldn't see anything being wasted. He processed a great many truckloads of scrap metal by hand.

Phil's big heart is felt and gratefully remembered by many people who benefited from his freely loaning money, supporting small enterprises that didn't quite make it, and paying their debts. He spent many years in volunteer firefighting, where he was chief for a number of years. If he could help anyone, he did, and his door was always unlocked. He was never one to turn away a stray animal, and his generosity reflected on his own childhood, which was one of economic struggle and want.

Phil belonged to the Yukon Order of Pioneers, and his powerful personality was that of a pioneer in a time and in a part of the world that called for strong-minded survivors. He very seldom took a holiday and never wanted to leave the Yukon. Work was his life, and he accepted duty to others without question. He was the image of Yukon old-timers — masculine, strong-willed, but gentle, sincere and respectful.

He was a devoted husband to his wife and father to his children.

Phil Todd saw the Yukon change and grow over the more than 60 years that he lived here with us. He was a man whose work ethic and sense of duty were freely given to helping the Yukon develop from muddy roads, rough working conditions and infrequent contact with the Outside, to the modern territory that we have today.

We are grateful for the life of this true Yukoner and I'd like all members to join me in welcoming Phil's wife, Jasna, and his son, Philip.

*Applause*

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

Introduction of visitors.

Returns or documents for tabling.

## TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

**Mr. McRobb:** I have for tabling a letter dated today addressed to the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources, from the Laberge Renewable Resources Council.

**Speaker:** Are there any further returns or documents for tabling?

Reports of committees.

Are there any petitions?

Are there any bills to be introduced?

Are there any notices of motion?

## NOTICES OF MOTION

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to immediately bring forth an economic action plan so that:

(1) the Yukon economy will not suffer unduly during the current global recession;

(2) Yukon contractors, skilled tradespeople and other workers can continue to find employment in Yukon in the coming months; and

(3) Yukoners can feel some sense of optimism about their economic future and not further restrict their spending, thus adding to the downturn.

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

THAT this House urges the Yukon government to withdraw Bill No. 59, the *Forest Resources Act*, as requested by the Laberge Renewable Resource Council, as stated in its letter dated November 24, 2008, in order to fulfill the Constitution requirements as established in part 17.2.2.2 of the *Umbrella Final Agreement*.

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

THAT this House urges the Yukon government to draft legislation that ensures that health professionals work to their full scope of competencies by:

(1) consulting with appropriate health care practitioners who may be affected by any change;

(2) reviewing current trends in other jurisdictions to assess their applicability in the Yukon; and

(3) bringing forward nurse practitioner legislation that defines and supports nurse practitioners working in the Yukon as soon as possible.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Yukon government, by consulting with all health care professional associations, to encourage, develop and support a collaborative primary health care

delivery model in order to ensure better and accelerated access to primary care in a most cost-effective manner.

**Speaker:** Are there any further notices of motion?  
Hearing none, is there a statement by a minister?  
Hearing none, this brings us to Question Period.

## QUESTION PERIOD

### Question re: Seniors housing

**Mr. Inverarity:** I would like to know what this government is doing to increase the availability of seniors housing in Yukon. It seems unreasonable to me that a Yukoner must evict his own mother so that she can qualify for seniors housing.

We need to take better care of our parents. They want a quality of life that includes community, mobility and options for living a full and vibrant life. What will this government do to increase the availability of seniors housing in Yukon?

**Hon. Mr. Kenyon:** I thank the member opposite for that question. Of course, I am not able on the floor of this House as the member opposite is, to comment on an individual case. But I would like to draw to the House's attention the addition of the affordable housing project and seniors project at the Yukon College, formerly known as the athletes village, seniors projects in Haines Junction in the beautiful Kluane, a project which is underway in Watson Lake, and other projects that we are considering adding in the future. We're very pleased to be adding these projects to the seniors housing inventory and we will continue to do what we can on this important issue.

**Mr. Inverarity:** I think we need to distinguish the difference between social housing and seniors housing. Seniors want to live in a community setting like everyone else. This should have little to do with income. They want to be around good friends, just like the rest of us, and they want to know that home care support is close by when it's needed.

They also don't want to live a lonely and sometimes isolated life. Seniors should not have to sell their assets and be kicked out of their own homes before qualifying for seniors housing. What plan does this minister have to empower seniors with a better and longer life in their golden years?

**Hon. Mr. Kenyon:** Again, the Yukon Housing Corporation Board of Directors has modified its asset policies to allow for larger assets. We do not in general — with a few exceptions — have specific seniors projects — the former athletes village, the project at Haines Junction and the proposed projects in areas such as Teslin, Watson Lake and Dawson in the future, will be specifically aimed at housing seniors.

Seniors in Whitehorse have access to several complexes that have existed for awhile. Beyond that, there is very little difference between housing based on income and good access to the good work of the Department of Health and Social Services. Support services become a little bit easier in Whitehorse than in rural communities which have a different set of problems.

We will continue to do our good work and we will continue to have the priorities that have been set by the Yukon

Housing Corporation Board of Directors, such as victims of violence, need for rural seniors or residents to have access to the hospital, et cetera.

**Mr. Inverarity:** This minister needs to develop a new concept for seniors housing — a concept where seniors housing would be a mixture of community engagement opportunities and home care support solutions.

This is a concept the Liberal government would develop to help our parents with the aging process. Services would range from unassisted living for those who can and want to be in the community with other seniors. Assisted living would also be available, as well as full-care support.

Will this minister consider such a concept?

**Hon. Mr. Kenyon:** For the member opposite, who obviously hasn't considered the range he puts out there, many of the responsibilities that he gives fall within Health and Social Services. I refer him to comments made by the Leader of the Official Opposition, the Leader of the Liberal Party, previously, who seemed to be inviting people to bring parents and friends and relatives to come and enjoy the good benefits we have for our seniors.

We're happy to welcome them; that is a major part of our changing demographic. Part of it is people staying here and part of it is people bringing in relatives, friends, parents, et cetera. That is a challenge.

Again, that has to be a coordinated effort over time, and it is certainly my intention to always give preference to long-term residents of Yukon and follow the good direction and good consideration of the Yukon Housing Corporation Board of Directors.

### Question re: Economic outlook in Yukon

**Mr. Mitchell:** It is now evident to everyone that Canada is going into a recession. The federal government is developing plans; provincial governments are preparing — what are we doing in Yukon? The Yukon Party government is merrily going on its way. The halfway point of this sitting and the budget was not called for debate until this afternoon.

Contractors are laying off people; this is real and it is now. This government needs to pull its head out of the sand and take a look around. Not everyone has a government job. Yukoners expect an action plan from their government. They expect to see existing projects move forward, new projects developed and action that will produce economic stimulus. Unfortunately they're seeing none of this.

The Finance minister's budget is already stale-dated. What actions does the Premier, the Finance minister, propose to combat the effects of the economic slowdown in Yukon?

**Hon. Mr. Fentie:** I'll ignore all the preamble, which certainly doesn't reflect the situation that Yukon is in today — economically, financially, environmentally or any way else. The member well knows the Yukon government has tabled a plan; we are working on that plan with key stakeholders as we speak. More important, we're also committed to a coordinated approach with Canada and that's relative to the issues we're all facing.

In that coordinated approach, all governments in the country — not just Yukon, but every provincial, territorial and the

federal government — have struck a common working group, and we are focused on pensions, regulatory burden on small business, the labour market, mobility and interprovincial barriers being reduced with more labour mobility involved, infrastructure investment, and of course access to capital. That's what we're doing in a coordinated fashion nationally. Here in the Yukon, we're working very closely with our key stakeholders, and of course one of our key stakeholders being the Chamber of Commerce. Here is what they said: "Stay the course. Don't panic. Maintain the stabilizing role of government in Yukon's economy." I emphasize: "maintain the stabilizing role of the Yukon government in the economy."

**Mr. Mitchell:** Well, the Premier may ignore the preamble, but he shouldn't be ignoring the questions. I think we get the answer, Mr. Speaker. This government is running on empty in the ideas department. They've been riding a worldwide wave of prosperity for so long that they cannot adjust to the fact that they must now show leadership, creativity and cooperation. This is not a time to drag out the same old rhetoric; it's not a time for months of consultations; it's a time for action.

The new correctional facility is still months away from starting construction. They dropped the ball on that. A new replacement school for F.H. Collins is still a dream within the Department of Education, while the Education minister carries on four years of conversations with his many partners. This empty Yukon Party government has to find a way to act and act now. I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, a Liberal government under our stewardship would never allow this situation to progress to this level.

When is this Premier going to tell Yukoners how his government is going to combat this major economic downturn?

**Hon. Mr. Fentie:** I'm really happy that the Leader of the Official Opposition brought up Liberal stewardship, because one of the key advantages the Yukon has today is six annual year-end surpluses and a very healthy net financial position. That gives this territory many more options than we had under Liberal stewardship where we were in an overdraft position — in essence, borrowing money to pay for wages and programs and services. That's not the case today. That's economic leadership; that's financial prudence; that's sound management; that's good government.

**Mr. Mitchell:** What we're getting now is more rear-view-mirror economic stewardship from this Premier. On the government Web site, there's a press release entitled, "Yukon Government Invests More Than \$1Million in Interpretive Signage". That kind of breathtaking ingenuity just won't cut it during hard times. Yukoners expect more than that; they deserve better than that.

Why doesn't the Finance minister take back his stale-dated budget supplement and table a new one, one that actually offers hope in these difficult times? Members of the Liberal caucus will support him tabling a new budget. We will provide our consent; we will do that to get some action going.

Will the Finance minister in fact do just that: throw out his stale-dated supplementary budget and table a new one?

**Hon. Mr. Fentie:** I'm glad to hear and it's quite refreshing that the Official Opposition, the Liberals in this House, are actually intending to support something, because they have consistently opposed what has got this territory into this healthy financial position, with one of the lowest unemployment rates in the country and lots of potential and opportunity before us.

I find it quite interesting that the Leader of the Official Opposition refers to comments of key stakeholder groups like the Yukon Chamber of Commerce as "rhetoric, tired old rhetoric." This government is engaged with the key stakeholder groups; we are working with them. We are working with other governments across the country. We have a plan and it's been a plan that we've been implementing for six years. That's why the Yukon is in a much better position today than it was in the past.

**Question re: *Landlord and Tenant Act***

**Mr. Cardiff:** In the opinion of many Yukoners, the territory's *Landlord and Tenant Act* is well past its best-before date. It is silent on many issues that are dealt with in landlord and tenant legislation in almost all other jurisdictions in Canada.

For example, it doesn't have enforceable minimum housing and health standards. As a result, many rental properties in the Yukon are unhealthy or substandard. I understand the government has completed an internal review of the act.

Can the minister tell us when he will make that review available to the Legislative Assembly? Will he table it here in the Legislative Assembly?

**Hon. Mr. Lang:** Yes, there has been a review, and it is being critiqued by the department and it will be out as soon as that critique is done.

**Mr. Cardiff:** It would be nice if the minister could give us a bit of a time frame on that.

The *Landlord and Tenant Act* lacks a formal hearing process for evictions; it lacks a mediation process for conflicts between landlords and tenants; it does not protect tenants who complain about the condition of their housing; it doesn't spell out specific penalties; it doesn't list causes for eviction; it doesn't set reasonable notification times for eviction; and it's not written in plain language that's easy to understand for both landlords and tenants.

Will the minister admit now that this act needs a major overhaul?

**Hon. Mr. Lang:** I'll wait for the critique of the act itself, and we will see what happens after that.

**Mr. Cardiff:** The minister still won't give us a time frame on when that review will be tabled. Most of us have seen or heard first-hand the horror stories of both landlords and tenants. Tenants have needlessly suffered from health, safety, mental and financial distress, because the act does not strike a fair balance between protecting the rights of tenants and the rights of landlords. The current act is flawed; it's old; it's unfair; and it's very unclear.

When will the minister hold a public consultation? He has done an internal review; when will he hold a public consulta-

tion to review — listen to the views of landlords and tenants — and amend this act?

**Hon. Mr. Lang:** I'm going to wait until the internal review is completed and critiqued by the department; then we can address some of these issues.

**Question re: Burwash Landing activity centre**

**Mr. Cardiff:** Astounding, Mr. Speaker.

Last summer Burwash Landing benefited from a summer pilot project that saw a member of the RCMP stationed full-time in the community. The initiative was much welcomed by the community members, as it helped them feel safer during the busiest season of the year.

Normally the closest RCMP are in Haines Junction. When there are accidents or emergencies and someone's safety and health are at risk, a fast response by the police is crucial. Will the Minister of Justice continue this welcomed and much-needed program in the summer of 2009?

**Hon. Ms. Horne:** The first priority of this government is to keep our communities and neighbourhoods safer, and we have delivered on that promise in Burwash. I know that the community was very receptive to the RCMP officer being there. We are looking into the matter and are having an internal review as to whether it will continue.

**Mr. Cardiff:** Mr. Speaker, Burwash is one of the few communities in Yukon that does not have a full-time RCMP presence. The community has also seen several incidents in the recent past that have involved individuals behaving violently or threateningly, that required intervention of police. It has caused the community a great deal of distress and much anxiety. Does the minister know how many such incidences have occurred in the past year? Will she take that into consideration when reviewing this?

**Hon. Ms. Horne:** As I said earlier, the safety of our communities and neighbourhoods is a priority of this government. We are well aware of the problems that are encountered in the northern communities, and we will continue to ensure the safety of the communities.

**Mr. Cardiff:** The leaders of the Kluane First Nation are trying to build a better community for all their citizens, but it requires the social infrastructure: a library; a daycare; a store — perhaps even a school someday. They want to include some of these uses in the elders and youth activity centre that they've been promised by this government. One of the offices in this new building would be made available to RCMP posted in the village.

Will the minister promise to do everything she can to help Kluane First Nation to get the funding it needs to build that elders complex?

**Hon. Mr. Lang:** Certainly, we're partnering with the Kluane First Nation to have the facility built this season. It's work in progress. We've committed \$1.6 million. I think approximately \$300,000 has been front loaded, so we're moving forward very positively and we're hoping that it will be open and operating at the end of this coming year for the Kluane First Nation.

**Question re: Liquor licences**

**Mr. Inverarity:** As part of the public consultation on the *Liquor Act* regulations, this government is looking for feedback on the idea of mandatory capital investment for new liquor licences. The idea of minimum capital investment is simply replacing the long-standing "bedroom clause" with a new economic barrier. Once this government has replaced the bedroom clause with this new investment clause, who will be able to afford new liquor licences?

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** Again, as we've discussed in previous debates, I know the emotional attachment the Liberal Party feels for their proposal and their view of the world with regard to the *Liquor Act* regulations. I would point out, as the Member for Porter Creek South continually fails to note it, that the substantial consultation on the *Liquor Act* review was roughly seven years ago. And in providing the details underneath the structure, it is appropriate to consult with the public with regard to the specific area he referred to. It is something we are asking the public. It is about avoiding having a situation where someone could pull in a trailer or build a shack, particularly in communities such as on the north Alaska Highway, where there are very few bars and where there is a very small economy.

We want to consider that issue, as well as consider the issue of investment in the community that leads to the expectation that somebody who has an investment is more likely to behave in a responsible manner than someone who has very little investment and potentially could be there only for the profits.

**Mr. Inverarity:** Mr. Speaker, this government is looking for feedback on the proposed liquor regulations. Well, here is some feedback for the minister. Don't force Yukoners to pay a million dollars for a new liquor licence. Mr. Speaker, a mandatory investment just to open a neighbourhood pub is not something that the Liberal government would do, but it is exactly what this government is planning to do. Other than existing hoteliers, who would benefit from this protectionist strategy?

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** Well, Mr. Speaker, again, I know the emotional attachment the Liberals have to this issue, but from the statement the Member for Porter Creek South made, I wonder if he was perhaps reading the consultation document sideways or upside-down, because what he stated is not factual. The consultation is occurring on draft regulation and on two specific questions: (1) whether there should be a minimum capital investment threshold, which would enable someone getting a primary liquor licence to choose to make investments in far more flexible manners than the antiquated room requirement, which has been modernized, but the detail is appropriate to provide. The detail is out for consultation at this point in time.

I know the member doesn't like it. I know the member has an emotional attachment and that they have made comments on specific files that they're now trying to reconcile. However, we will listen to Yukon citizens who are providing their input on this perspective. Unlike the Liberals, we recognize that changes to the liquor law and regulations are significant, have a signifi-

cant effect on society, and it's appropriate to let all Yukoners comment on these regulations. The Liberals oppose consultation; we're consulting.

**Mr. Inverarity:** The last time I checked, a million bucks is still a million bucks, Mr. Speaker. This issue is not about the merits of public consultation. Public consultation is a good thing. In the case of updating the Yukon's liquor laws, public input has already been sought. A minimum investment in liability insurance regulations is something this government wants to do that's new. If the public wants a minimum investment clause or a bedroom clause or any other kind of economic barrier attached to the liquor licence, then they should just ask for that.

Will this minister table the evidence he has that suggests that Yukoners want a minimum investment clause?

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** Is the Member for Porter Creek South suggesting, when he says this is a barrier, that someone should be able to set up a lemonade stand on the street on a cardboard box and hawk liquor out the side? That is the ultimate conclusion of the member's approach saying that there should be no requirement for investment — somebody could just set up a stand or a cardboard table on the street corner, or sell out of the trunk of a car, or maybe out of someone's jacket.

We are consulting with Yukoners; we will determine whether or not Yukoners believe there should be a minimum capital investment requirement and whether there should be a requirement for host liability insurance. We'll hear what Yukoners have to say.

The member would preclude that; the member is standing up and opposing consultation when the last substantive consultation on these details occurred roughly seven years ago. The members can't have it both ways; they stand up repeatedly and suggest, with legislation that has been under consultation for five years, with detailed consultation occurring throughout, that we should consult more. In this case, because of their emotional attachment to the liquor law, and when the last consultation occurred seven years ago, they suggest that we should not consult with Yukoners on the details.

We're doing the good work; the members, of course, would listen only to themselves and to their chosen friends.

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

#### Point of order

**Speaker:** Point of order.

**Mr. Hardy:** I believe, Mr. Speaker, you've ruled in the past on references made by the minister across the way in regard to only listening to their friends.

#### Speaker's ruling

**Speaker:** Yes, the member does have a point of order. Honourable minister, take that into consideration in your next comments.

The Leader of the Official Opposition has the floor.

#### Question re: Economic outlook in Yukon

**Mr. Mitchell:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yukoners are becoming concerned over the state of the country's economy. They expect Yukon's economy to be affected by what's hap-

pening in the rest of Canada. They are looking more closely at the track record of this government when it comes to being fiscally capable to manage a \$1-billion budget.

Many Yukoners have told us that they are nervous about this government's track record. They can accept the fact that there may be times when things go sideways; what concerns them is that they think this government is totally incapable of managing projects without wasting millions of dollars.

Yukoners need to believe that the Finance minister recognizes his failures and is prepared to make real changes instead of attacking previous governments with empty rhetoric. Will the Premier assure Yukoners that he will immediately take measures to address his long list of financial fumbles?

**Hon. Mr. Fentie:** Well, I can't assure Yukoners of anything of the sort, because this government does not have a long list of financial fumbles at all. In fact, this government has gone to work, as of 2002, to re-establish the Yukon's financial position to where it's at today. Don't take our word for it, Mr. Speaker — look at the public accounts. And the Auditor General has done her work there, and the public accounts are quite clear — a very healthy net financial position. That can only come from solid, sound fiscal management. That's what we've applied here in the Yukon.

As far as projects that the member refers to, this is the same member who in *Hansard* on November 19, referred to 11 departments as "rogue departments".

Is the member referring to projects that might be housed in one of those "rogue departments" as he calls them?

**Mr. Mitchell:** The public accounts showed a \$6.2 million writedown — that's what they showed.

A chief cause of a recession is the fear of a recession. It becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. When people have little or no confidence in their government, they prepare for hard times by cutting back on their spending, thus fuelling a deeper recession. When a government gets a scathing audit such as this government recently did, it is no wonder Yukoners are becoming more than a little concerned. One of the first things this Premier could do is to reassure Yukoners that he is on top of it, that after six years, he has finally seen the light and will address the financial mess that is emerging under his watch. Yukoners expect more than empty promises.

So again I ask: will the Premier assure Yukoners that he will immediately take measures to address his long list of financial bumbles?

**Hon. Mr. Fentie:** I'm not even sure why the member is asking the question, because obviously it has no answer. There's no such thing as a long list of financial bumbles, but the member also referred to what Yukoners think. The member also implied that in these times the element of fear is always problematic. I would caution the member on his approach, because that is exactly the type of approach that tends to generate those kinds of perceptions. Mr. Speaker, the reality is that we have a healthy net financial position with many more options and much more flexibility available to this territory to manage our way through the cycle.

Don't take our word for it, again, I say, Mr. Speaker. Talk to the Tourism Industry Association of the Yukon, talk to the

Yukon Chamber of Commerce, talk to the Chamber of Mines, talk to the arts community, talk to all the key stakeholder groups and they will give the member the information he seeks. The members should get out of their office once in awhile and start talking to Yukoners and listening to what Yukoners say. That would help the member opposite in representing a factual situation.

**Mr. Mitchell:** Mr. Speaker, we are hearing from Yukoners, and they are telling us that they are very disappointed in this government. This Premier just doesn't get it. The Yukon Party government did not follow the law regarding investments and as a result they had to take a \$6-million write-down —

### Unparliamentary language

**Speaker:** The terminology “not follow the law” — “breaking the law” would be the simple translation — is unacceptable language. Honourable member, don't use that terminology.

**Mr. Mitchell:** They continually are shown to be inept managers — first by the Auditor General of Canada and then by government's own audit team.

They do not budget for projects they announce, like the Watson Lake hospital or a new F.H. Collins school. They budget \$31 million on a road that sees 17 vehicles a day and ignore busier highways.

In the coming months, government will be expected to step up and take the lead. Well, a leader must enjoy the confidence of those they lead. This Premier needs to restore confidence. He must not let his pride get the best of him. He must show that he has a plan and a vision that will carry us through the rough times ahead. He must give up his obsession to blame others. Above all, he must move out of his state of denial.

I'll ask again: will the Premier assure Yukoners that he will immediately take measures to address this long list of financial stumbles?

**Hon. Mr. Fentie:** Once again, the question is moot, irrelevant and has no basis in fact. You know, Mr. Speaker, this member and his fixation on the government's investments has to be referred back to what the Auditor General actually said. Furthermore, the government hasn't lost money at all. It has made millions of dollars, contributing to that net healthy financial position, allowing us that much more flexibility and all of those options that are available to us to manage our way through the cycle.

To suggest that this government doesn't have a plan — how does the member then answer to this: why is the Yukon in a situation where it has one of the lowest unemployment rates in the country? Why did the Yukon, in the last statistical information provided, create hundreds more jobs? Why is the Yukon now fifth in the world as an attractive place to invest in the mining sector? Because of our assessment processes and our potential. Why can this member refer to a problem when we have all these successes around the territory, with hundreds of millions more dollars invested in the Yukon economy through projects stimulating the Yukon economy?

The list goes on and on; the question is moot; it's irrelevant.

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

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

### GOVERNMENT BILLS

#### Bill No. 12: Second Reading

**Clerk:** Second reading, Bill No. 12, standing in the name of the Hon. Mr. Fentie.

**Hon. Mr. Fentie:** I move that Bill No. 12, entitled *Second Appropriation Act, 2008-09*, be now read a second time.

**Speaker:** It has been moved by the Hon. Premier that Bill No. 12, entitled *Second Appropriation Act, 2008-09*, be now read a second time.

**Hon. Mr. Fentie:** I am pleased to introduce Bill No. 12, *Second Appropriation Act, 2008-09*. This bill and the accompanying supplementary estimates serve two purposes: first, they provide the Legislature and the general public with an update on the financial position of the government; and second, they detail the expenditure changes that require additional legislative appropriation authority.

Mr. Speaker, before I provide the Legislative Assembly the overview of our financial position, I would like to acknowledge the ongoing assistance and dedication of all our officials ensuring that the Yukon government continues on its prudent financial course.

As members will note, this supplementary reflects a projected annual surplus of just over \$4 million and a very healthy March 31, 2009 projected year-end and net financial resource position of \$142 million.

Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to prudent fiscal management that has resulted in a strong financial position for the Yukon government in these very difficult global economic times. The significance of this accomplishment cannot and should not be lost. Our strong financial position will provide our government flexibility as we continue to be responsive in making strategic expenditure decisions on behalf of all Yukoners. Having said that, Mr. Speaker, I want to assure all Yukoners that our government remains committed to managing and direct the Yukon government's finances responsibly, effectively, prudently, as we have done throughout our mandates.

The first supplementary for 2008-09 continues to reflect that strong fiscal management practice while providing significant investment in many areas of interest to the Yukon public. This supplementary seeks authority to increase operation and maintenance expenditures by just over \$21.2 million and capital expenditures by \$33.4 million. This will increase the total expenditures of the government by \$54.7 million to approximately \$954.4 million. This represents a significant investment in the Yukon economy and in the Yukon public.

Offsetting these expenditure increases, the government's revenues, transfers from Canada and other third party recover-

ies will increase by \$26.6 million, bringing total revenues and recoveries to \$900.6 million. After adjusting for expected lapses and the effective changes in tangible capital assets, this results in a projected annual surplus of just over \$4 million with the government's accumulated surplus at the end of this fiscal year projected to be over \$581 million.

In addition, as I've previously stated, I am happy and proud to stand before you today to advise that the net financial resources of the government projected for this year-end are at \$142 million.

I also want to emphasize the importance of having net financial resources, as opposed to net debt. This is a very significant indicator of our financial health, as it means that the government is not relying on future revenues to provide current services. In fact, our future has not been mortgaged.

This is something to be very, very proud of. Very few governments are in this position. Mr. Speaker, to the contrary — most Canadian governments are in a net debt position — not here in Yukon.

I also would like to reiterate that this supplementary estimate includes \$54.7 million of additional expenditures in several key areas of importance. While ministers will be pleased to provide members of the House with the complete details of their expenditures during general debate, I will take this opportunity to provide some of the highlights.

Let me begin with infrastructure investments. In the past years, a significant component of requested expenditure authority in a first supplementary budget comes about becomes departments are seeking capital and O&M revote authority for lapses in the previous year. The net revotes in O&M and capital are approximately \$32 million of the budgetary authority sought. A significant portion represents funding required to continue our investment in important infrastructure projects. Examples are: \$7 million identified in this supplementary related to the Canada strategic infrastructure fund — these projects bring the total of the 2008-09 budget under CSIF to \$13.8 million; \$3.226 million for the Hamilton Boulevard extension, approved under the municipal rural infrastructure fund, increasing our 2008-09 investment in this very important project to a total of \$10.6 million; \$1.756 million for the Whitehorse air-terminal expansion and parking lot improvements for a total of 2008-09 budgeting of just over \$10 million; and \$1.194 million to complete the Tombstone visitor reception centre.

Mr. Speaker, I must make the point at this juncture that all of these projects, when they commenced, were opposed in votes in this House by the Official Opposition and the third party.

This supplementary is not just about providing authority for revotes of prior year lapses. This supplementary also provides for new infrastructure investments such as \$2.6 million additional funding under the Shakwak agreement for Slims River bridge; \$500,000 for resource access roads programming; \$560,000 for maintenance on the North Canol; and \$702,000 required to address emergency washouts specifically on the Klondike and Dempster highways.

These projects do not represent the full extent of our infrastructure investment. Additional infrastructure investment will

become obvious as I continue to highlight our efforts in other areas, such as public health and safety. However, before I continue, I wish to comment on the government's commitment under the Building Canada Plan.

As members are aware, the Building Canada agreement signed between Canada and the Yukon calls for \$182.9 million contributed by Canada over a seven-year timeline. Adding Yukon's \$60-million share, this brings the total to be provided for these infrastructure investments to over \$240 million. In the coming years, we have that much more available for strategic infrastructure investment in this territory, resulting in further economic growth and well-being for Yukon.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to confirm in the Legislature, our Community Services and Highways and Public Works officials will be engaging shortly with all Yukon First Nations, municipalities, local advisory committees and the general public in the development of a long-term infrastructure plan. This process will be designed to help ensure our infrastructure investments are targeted and on a priority basis. Once approved, funding under the Building Canada plan will be allocated in future budgets and approved infrastructure projects will be underway for the benefit of the Yukon public.

The next section is public safety. As members will recall, the mandate to provide emergency medical services has been assigned to the Department of Community Services. In preparing the 2008-09 O&M main estimates, this government supported and included \$1.4 million for emergency medical service enhancements. This supplementary builds on that additional investment by providing \$898,000 for increased operational support, including investments for the review of our overall 911 service and \$1.195 million for the establishment of an emergency medical service facility in the community of Watson Lake.

Mr. Speaker, our commitment to public safety is not limited to emergency medical service enhancements. We are targeting and investing significant dollars in a number of areas, which include: \$6.224 million toward a new mobile radio system with an estimated capital cost of \$18.5 million over three years; \$1.1 million for the purchase of the new airport rescue firefighting vehicle; and \$132,000, which is an increase in this first year of a renewed five-year agreement for fire management contracts with Yukon First Nations.

Mr. Speaker, all the aforementioned demonstrate significant investments in an area that is important to the Yukon public. As far as public health, of course, it is an area of significant concern for Yukoners. I am very pleased to say a number of health initiatives are addressed in this supplementary. The Yukon Hospital Corporation is facing significant challenges with the rising cost of providing health care. The Department of Health and Social Services and the Department of Finance officials have negotiated a three-year agreement with the Yukon Hospital Corporation. This is an important step by our government to confirm our commitment to provide stable and appropriate funding for the Hospital Corporation. This supplementary includes \$3.7 million for the Hospital Corporation, including \$325,000 for O&M and \$200,000 for capital support of the creation and operation of a secure medical health unit.



In addition, this supplementary provides \$185,000 in support of Yukoners who require psychiatric mental health services outside of the territory.041a

I'm sure members will recall this government's announcement of new social assistance rates. In this supplementary they are included — \$1.4 million — as we deliver on that commitment.

During the 2007-08 fiscal year, Canada provided Yukon \$284,000 for human papilloma virus immunization. This supplementary includes immunization that will be added to the Yukon's immunization program. This responds to a recommendation from the territory advisory committee on immunization. The balance of the trust will be allocated in future years in support of an ongoing vaccination program.

Recently, the Minister of Health and Social Services announced increase in stabilized funding to be provided for a number of NGOs in the Yukon. As members are aware, non-governmental organizations provide an important service to many Yukoners and our commitment to provide increased and stable funding to these NGOs will ensure that these services continue to be provided.

These supplementary estimates provide a \$431,000 investment to Many Rivers, \$155,000 to Kaushee's Place, and another \$100,000 to the Help and Hope for Families Society. In addition, the operational fund provided to the Help and Hope Society will support a community-development-fund approved project of \$276,000 for an expansion of this very important facility in the community of Watson Lake.

Another area is corrections programming and corrections infrastructure. These are important components of our government's commitment to addressing health and safety for Yukoners. In this budget we will provide \$746,000 for the first year of a two-year initiative for the corrections action plan and implementation office and \$1,027,000 for the construction of a women's transitional living unit.

Mr. Speaker, another area of importance is the labour market and capacity building. As all members are aware, the Yukon has benefited from significant trusts from the federal government. These include \$40 million for the northern strategy trust, and \$3.829 million for the community development trust. Trusts such as these are providing our government the opportunity to undertake some significant initiatives related to capacity building, training and labour market development.

Mr. Speaker, this is another example of the work the government has done over the last six years through its plan and vision for Yukon to ensure that we have the capacity to actually create growth and develop our future. These trusts, as negotiated with the federal government, all were a priority to implement that very fact.

To date, just under \$25 million has been approved by the Yukon Forum through the first intakes of the northern strategy trust. Mr. Speaker, \$25 million is in circulation today because of those negotiations. Building on the amounts included in the 2008-09 main estimates, these estimates with respect to this trust, include a total of \$14.1 million to be appropriated. The projects are varied and too numerous to list here. Individual ministers will be pleased to provide specifics during our gen-

eral debate and line-by-line discussions. As we have achieved many successes to date, I look forward to future intakes under the northern strategy trust.

The Department of Education has also allocated funding under the community development trust, specifically \$276,000 for the first year of a two-year initiative to develop a labour market framework for the Yukon, which will see the establishment of five strategies to assist Yukoners and Yukon businesses in the areas of recruitment, employee retention, comprehensive skills and trades training, immigration and labour market information, and an additional \$109,000 for the first year of a three-year initiative to support the establishment of additional labour market and immigration officer positions. This will allow Advanced Education to increase opportunities for Yukon employers to attract foreign workers to assist with labour shortages.

Also of significance to the Yukon labour market is the increased uptake in the apprenticeship training program. This supplementary provides \$368,000 of additional investment for this very important program. This is good news for the Yukon, as we take steps to address significant gaps in our labour market.

Mr. Speaker, I would be remiss if I didn't touch on our priority of investing in Yukoners. The consistent theme underlying expenditure measures mentioned here is that our government is committed to investing in the Yukon and the Yukon public. I have touched upon our many initiatives, ranging from infrastructure investments to public health and safety initiatives and labour market enhancements.

We are responding to the concerns of Yukoners, and this government is confident that members will note the many positive aspects of our spending decisions. While it is not possible for me to detail every expenditure initiative included in this supplementary before I conclude my remarks, I would like to comment on a number of other important expenditure initiatives that speak to our commitment to the Yukon and to the Yukon public.

It is my pleasure to include in this supplementary budget \$804,000 for the Department of Education to hire additional education and learning assistants. Under the leadership of our Minister of Education, we once again have stepped up to meet the challenge in our education system. Both students and teachers will indeed benefit from this increased support. Another \$500,000 has been allocated to the Department of Tourism and Culture's Destination: Yukon marketing initiative. Once again, under the leadership of our Minister of Tourism, who is listening to Yukoners, we are making sure that we are going forward and addressing the issues. The marketing success of the Canada Winter Games taught us that the objective of Destination Yukon is to increase the awareness of Yukon as a stand-alone visitor destination and to motivate potential Canadian visitors to choose Yukon for their next vacation — another example of the government leading through vision, through planning and through an understanding of the Yukon and its future.

There is \$150,000 under the Department of Health and Social Services for a much-needed increase to Yukon's senior income supplement. Our government will increase the monthly

maximum entitlement, expand the eligibility and index the benefit based on the consumer price index. This initiative is taking care of those fixed-income earners, seniors in our territory, who need assistance and, using the income supplement, we have found the instrument to meet the challenges.

There's \$466,000 received from Canada under the public transit capital trust that is provided to the City of Whitehorse to support the purchase of a new low-emission transit bus with kneeling technology, which provides for greater accessibility for Yukoners.

There is another \$330,000 for the Department of Environment to initiate the winter tick control program to address the risk posed to Yukon wildlife. There is a \$170,000 increase to the Yukon Housing Corporation, as our government continues its support for Habitat for Humanity. \$200,000 is to be provided to the Great Northern Ski Society. \$250,000 will be provided in support of recycling depots and recycling initiatives across the territory. There will be a \$116,000 increase of funding for the government's special waste management and disposal initiatives.

The initiatives identified in this supplementary represent significant investment of the public's money on behalf of Yukon and Yukoners.

As I noted earlier, this supplementary supports increased infrastructure investment, enhanced public safety and indeed health and safety initiatives and stimuli to the Yukon labour market which is so desperately needed.

The government and I remain confident that these initiatives will continue to support the Yukon's economy during these turbulent global economic times. Furthermore, a strong fiscal framework that we have continued to nourish will provide our government the flexibility as we continue to be responsive to making strategic investments and expenditures on behalf of the Yukon public.

Yukoners can remain confident. Their finances are in good hands. The Yukon is in a very healthy financial position. It has many options available to it and in my presentation here this afternoon, I have listed but a few.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, as Minister of Finance, I am very pleased with this supplementary budget and the fiscal position that the Yukon government is in today. I commend this supplementary to the House.

As I said, ministers and their department staff have worked very hard to ensure that we achieve balance between sound fiscal management while at the same time still ensuring a prudent investment course in the social and economic fabric of the Yukon.

I'm sure the members are eager to get up to respond in second reading to the supplementary, but I think what I've demonstrated here today for this House and for the Yukon public is that the Yukon is in a very positive position. We know there are challenges ahead, but the Yukon has the tools to manage our way through this cycle.

So, Mr. Speaker, to the credit of government, its departments, its officials, and the team here in the House — the Yukon Party government team — a great deal has been done. Though there is a great deal more to do, we, through our sound

and prudent fiscal management and our overall plan for the Yukon Territory, have the means and the tools to meet those challenges in the future.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Mitchell:** Merci, monsieur le Président. Tout d'abord, je voudrais dire que cette un grand privilege pour moi d'être de retour dans cette Assemblée, représentant encore les personnes de Copperbelt et, en ma position comme chef de l'opposition officielle, représentant tout les Yukoners comme nous travaillons pour juger legislative gouvernement responsable.

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

We have just recently had a federal election and I know that many members here supported the federal candidate of their choice. I would like to congratulate the honourable Larry Bagnell, Yukon's newly re-elected member, on his well-deserved new mandate to represent all Yukoners. I would also like to congratulate the other candidates, Mr. Pasloski, Mr. Streicker and Mr. Bolton, for their hard-fought campaigns.

Like most of the member's present, I have had the pleasure of knowing each of these men for some time and I know that we elected members can appreciate what it take to put one's name for elected office in a way that most people cannot. It is never easy and it comes with both risks and opportunities when one offers to represent our fellow citizens. Although there can be only one eventual winner, there were no losers, as each of the candidates undertook to share their visions of a better Yukon with the Yukon public and seek public support. Yukon thanks you all. Merci beaucoup.

As the MLA for Copperbelt, I'd like to note that both Mr. Bagnell and Mr. Pasloski are constituents and Mr. Bolton works part of the time at the home of a constituent. So again, I commend you all for choosing to run for public office.

Copperbelt remains by far the largest riding by population in Yukon. Although people frequently use the names Copperbelt and Copper Ridge interchangeably, they are not. As a result, they think of Copperbelt as an urban Whitehorse riding consisting primarily of new houses. That's far from accurate. I'd like to remind all members of the incredible diversity that exists in the beautiful riding that I'm proud to represent.

The riding includes large ranches on the Fish Lake Road, hotels and businesses across from the airport below Hillcrest, areas of relatively modest and rural housing in the McLean Lake and Squatter's Row area, Paddlewheel Village, industrial asphalt and cement operations near Ear Lake and along the Alaska Highway, country residential housing along the Alaska Highway in Canyon Crescent and Pineridge, the large mobile home park at Lobird, and of course somewhat older housing, dating from the Second World War airforce presence in Hillcrest — very desirable housing, I might point out — along with apartment buildings and finally the newer homes in Granger and Copper Ridge that people are perhaps more familiar with.

More recently, there are new country residential subdivisions of Whitehorse Copper and Mount Sima and new country residential housing surrounding the Meadow Lakes Golf Course. There's an elementary school, two hotels, several government museums and a golf course within the riding and of course there's the Whitehorse International Airport and the McCrae industrial area. In short, it's a very diverse riding where residents pursue many different working, residential and recreational lifestyles. I think it's a wonderful riding and I know the constituents feel the same.

While I've been to many doors this fall, there are other constituents I have yet to visit. I look forward to continuing to knock on doors even in winter to hear the advice and questions on the issues directly from my constituents.

Above all else, we are elected to represent our constituents and that I see is the most fundamentally important role that we have as MLAs. I'm sure we can all agree that we get some of our best ideas from listening to our constituents.

In the current sitting, we will debate and vote on the report of the Yukon Electoral District Boundaries Commission. In the case of Copperbelt, the report has made some major recommendations that will dramatically alter the riding by dividing portions of the present riding into four different ridings. Even after we approve the recommendations of the report — with whatever changes members may agree upon — Copperbelt will remain as one riding until the next general election. Until that day arrives — despite the very large number of constituents who now live in Copperbelt — I will continue to represent all of this diverse riding, and I will do so to the best of my ability. I will continue to raise issues on behalf of my constituents.

Perhaps the greatest number of constituent calls I've had over the past summer months on any single issue have been calls from constituents who reside in Lobird about the flying rocks that rained down on the subdivision last May from the blasting accident. Residents were shocked, scared and angered that they and their families had been endangered in what they believed was such a careless way.

I raised this issue last sitting in Question Period, when the Member for Riverdale South was the minister responsible for Community Services. I also met with the former minister on several occasions on behalf of my constituents. Following the Cabinet shuffle last spring, I met with the new minister, the Member for Porter Creek Centre, again on behalf of several constituents.

I would like to thank both ministers for agreeing to hear my constituents' concerns on short notice and for taking some actions to address them. I would also like to publicly thank the minister's executive assistant, who has been very helpful in relaying concerns directly to the deputy minister and providing updates back to me on a regular basis.

At the same time, I would like to note that not all of my constituents' concerns have been addressed to their satisfaction, so I urge the minister to work harder to expedite repairs to my constituents' homes.

I understand that this is a complicated issue because the blasting was done by a private contractor and not by government employees, but from my constituents' perspective, they

did not ask for this road construction to be undertaken so close to their homes and their neighbourhood. They had no role in hiring the contractor; they were not parties to the contract. They really have no leverage in this situation, whereas the government does. It issued the contracts and has a great deal of weight in demanding there be redress for the failure of the contractor to protect the safety and well-being of my constituents.

I've tried very hard over the past six months to work quietly and in a non-partisan way behind the scenes to seek resolution of the outstanding claims of damage to their homes that I've been informed of by my constituents, but I also want to assure the minister that I will not abandon any of my constituents on this issue until they believe they have been fairly treated.

I hope the minister will continue to make his best efforts to remedy the remaining problems and not mistake my private approach on this issue as complacency or acceptance of anything less than a full resolution to my constituents' concerns. As the minister himself declared during one of our meetings, imagine how outraged the doctor or lawyer who lives in Copper Ridge would have been had this happened to them. As the minister acknowledged, these homes in Lobird are every bit as important to their owners as are any other homes across the riding.

I look forward to the minister's response on the progress of all repairs when he replies to the budget speech.

Another concern I am hearing more and more frequently, which I can only describe as a blast from the past, is about the overcrowding at the Elijah Smith Elementary School. An increasing number of residents are unable to enroll their children in their neighbourhood school. In the fall sitting of 2005, the first sitting I had the pleasure of participating in, this issue was addressed. It was first addressed by my colleague, the former Liberal leader and the former Member for Porter Creek Centre, who raised it on behalf of my constituents, since I was not yet seated in this Assembly.

At the time, the former Education minister, the Member for McIntyre-Takhini, when he was sitting on the government side, waffled over whether or not there was a need for an additional school and whether or not his government would commit to it. I think we now understand the Education minister was not able to make a commitment to a new school because he was getting mixed messages from the Premier.

Finally, the Member for Whitehorse West, now the Deputy Premier, publicly committed to the fact that a new school was surely needed and would be built in due course by her government. In fact, the Yukon Party candidate in the 2005 Copperbelt by-election committed to it during that race in her campaign material. Later, government members denied any responsibility for any commitments made by a candidate.

Well, Mr. Speaker, we know how Yukon elections are run, and we all know that candidates for the government do not get to print election brochures unvetted by the government caucus and make promises willy-nilly. That just doesn't happen.

What we got instead of a school was yet another study. What did that study conclude? It concluded that there should be — wait for it — yet another study done.

We also saw various population projections, which, at the time I believed were underestimating the growing population of young people in my riding. Guess what? The Elijah Smith Elementary School started the 2008-09 school year with an enrolment of over 330 students — an all-time high. Every nook and cranny of the existing school is in use for multiple purposes. For example, the multi-purpose room, which is supposed to be a flexible space used for assemblies, activities, et cetera, is now also designated as the music room because the school no longer has a classroom they can dedicate for that purpose.

Class sizes have crept up, teachers and other staff are complaining about the overcrowding, and despite the movement to revise the catchment area so that some subdivisions that previously had this school as in their attendance area are now attached to other schools, Elijah Smith Elementary still cannot accommodate the children within its revised catchment area who want to attend this school.

I'm being told by many parents in the newest areas of Copper Ridge that they don't want their kids bused across the Alaska Highway, through what has been known as the most dangerous intersection in Yukon, to other schools. They want their children to attend a neighbourhood school, one that they can walk or bus to in good weather. Neighbours want their kids who are playmates to be able to attend the same school. Perhaps if the Premier wasn't announcing multi-million-dollar new hospitals in his riding without any territory-wide facility needs assessment, or pouring \$36.5 million down the black hole of goofy investments in asset-backed commercial paper in contravention of Yukon's *Financial Administration Act*, we wouldn't have to deny my constituents the privilege of sending their children to a neighbourhood school.

Another issue that I'm hearing more and more frequently from Yukoners on the doorstep, on the street, in the stores and small businesses: why can't this government seem to keep the lights on? Why have we been experiencing multiple power outages across the Whitehorse-Aishihik-Faro electrical grid? No doubt, the minister responsible — the Member for Lake Laberge — will tell us that this is not his responsibility — or the Member for Porter Creek North, depending on who chooses to speak to it — but the Yukon Energy Corporation is an independent Crown corporation and the Yukon Electrical Company Limited is a private company. Those are true facts, Mr. Speaker, but Yukoners aren't buying it. They aren't interested in a baffling discussion of acronyms — YEC, YDC, YECL, YUB, RSF and so on. They just want the lights to stay on. They want to be able to cook a Thanksgiving turkey with some promise of a successful outcome on a least one day over the Thanksgiving holiday weekend.

They want to work on their computers, work in their shops, shop in their stores and not have the lights go off. They don't want to worry about having to replace expensive appliances that are damaged by hanging low voltage during brownouts that end in blackouts. They want the minister responsible for the Yukon Energy Corporation and the Yukon Development Corporation to do whatever is necessary to make this simple request happen.

There is a sad pattern here, Mr. Speaker. Good-news announcements: multi-million-dollar highway expenditures, power line extensions, seniors residences — these always have a minister's smiling face front and centre. Bad news: power blackouts, Hospital Corporation problems, incomplete health care facilities, pot-riddled roads — these are the responsibility of arm's-length corporations. They are acts of God. "It is Mother Nature," says the minister. On the one hand we see a rush to take credit; on the other hand, we see an absolution of responsibility.

Again so familiar: mining upturns are described as resulting from the hard work done by the government, not as a result of increased international demand and higher mineral prices or easy credit. Mining downturns — those are absolutely the result of macroeconomic trends like credit shortages, lack of liquidity, lack of available financing and falling commodity prices. Yukoners are beginning to see through these excuses, Mr. Deputy Speaker. They aren't buying what this Premier and this government is selling: empty promises.

Another issue that we hear weekly from constituents is the lack of fully serviced residential building lots. When there was a residential construction boom in 2006-07, the Minister of Economic Development was quick to cite increased housing starts and rising prices as proof positive of the strong economic hand of his government.

Mr. Speaker, long before I was elected to this Assembly I was adding my voice to that of others in my former profession as a licensed realtor who were telling government that we were going to run out of serviced city lots in Whitehorse if the territorial government did not get ahead of the planning curve. As we all know, or should know, it takes several years to bring any new lots or subdivisions to market — the planning process, the need to work with the municipality, the need to go through the YESAB process, the public hearings, et cetera.

Did this government listen? No, they did not. After all, there was Copper Ridge 9, Copper Ridge 10, Copper Ridge 11. How could we possibly run out of lots?

Well, we have, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have.

Hopefully next year there will be additional lots in Arkell, which will help some. But certainly mobile home lots, which may also accommodate some smaller stick-built homes, are not an adequate solution. The Porter Creek lower bench is a good three years away from being ready. Meanwhile, even in a softening real estate market, we have a shortage of building lots. Contractors are running out of work; skilled tradespeople are leaving the territory.

It took this government years to sign an MOU with the City of Whitehorse and it now seems to be used primarily to place blame on the City of Whitehorse. There is a joint responsibility here and this government has not done its job. No doubt the new Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources is excited to have inherited this file.

Health care remains a challenge in the territory. We continue to struggle to attract sufficient registered nurses and licensed practical nurses to the territory. The oft-promised final pod for 12 beds for Copper Ridge Place opened briefly last year and then closed and remained closed due to staffing short-

ages. Nurses continue to work exhausting shifts at Whitehorse General Hospital; health care professionals continue to bail out of the system by accepting work elsewhere. Why, Mr. Speaker, when we have such a fantastic territory with great sports and arts facilities, with incredible scenery, with wildlife, with wonderful people? Because we're not always providing acceptable working conditions.

We heard it from the nurses; we heard it from the ambulance attendants; we heard it from the fire chiefs; we heard it from doctors. We have to address these issues or we will continue to lose health care workers in a highly competitive market. As more and more older Yukoners decide to retire and remain in Yukon, the need will be greater, not less.

For the minister responsible for the Yukon Housing Corporation, who said I was encouraging — in previous remarks — people to bring their senior relatives home to live with them, if he looks at those remarks, I will say not that I was encouraging them, but that it's a fact. It's a fact, Mr. Deputy Speaker: people have their parents living with them. That's great; it's a way for families to live together, to help each other, to maintain a better lifestyle into their senior years, but inevitably, as I've been saying for three years now, those people eventually have the need for more supportive living.

With the planning process taking as long as it does, we need to anticipate that, and we need to move on that so that we don't end up having long waiting lists in our extended-care facilities and our seniors residences.

I look forward to hearing how the new Health minister and the other ministers are planning to address the challenges left by their predecessors. Also when it comes to Health, there is the issue of the health of our most vulnerable and precious resource — our young people. Mr. Deputy Speaker, this territory needs a youth shelter in the capital city. It is simple as that. There is a need.

One group, the Youth of Today Society, has proposed the Angel's Nest shelter. They located a suitable home; they had a plan developed; they raised money and gathered letters of support from NGOs, from First Nations, from churches, from elected officials, but they could not find a receptive ear in this government. Now, just last week, we found that with the help of five First Nations, with the help of the Anglican Church, with the help of other donors and supporters, they have secured a building.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am not an expert in the development of youth shelters as no doubt the ministers will remind me. I am not demanding that the government must adopt the Angel's Nest business plan as presented. I understand that the Health minister may have concerns with the business plan.

What I am stating is that the government must stop denying the need, and if they do not support this particular program as presented, then they should come forward with their own. They should assist the NGOs that are endeavouring so hard to get something in place for youth at risk, rather than pushing them away — come forward with their own plan — not a series of interim funding agreements with an NGO to provide for someone to be available by cellphone, in case a young person in trouble calls; not to place young people, youth at risk, into a

detox building with adults who are recovering from substance abuse. That goes against all accepted standards of care. This is not the environment into which we should be placing young people at risk.

We need a safe place with good programming and with professionals who can counsel and assist young people who have no safe place to call home or who are afraid of the homes they do have. It took years to establish a permanent shelter for women who were suffering from abuse — for Kaushee's Place to become a reality. How much longer does it need to take for this Yukon Party government to get over its ideology and recognize what numerous NGOs and health care professionals in Yukon already recognize and do the right thing on behalf of our vulnerable children? It has been said that it takes a village to raise a child. What is wrong with our village when our elected leaders refuse to accept their responsibility for our children?

This government found \$400,000 this fall to assist the city in reopening the ski hill at Mount Sima. We don't oppose that; we support it. We believe the recreational, health and fitness benefits for young people and adults are well worth the investment.

But what price are we prepared to put on our youth who are at risk? Just because these may not be our own children — if they are someone else's children — does that diminish their value in our eyes? Of course not. Let's not wait for more and more public demonstrations. Let's not wait for another tragedy. The question isn't whether we can afford to do something about this. The question should be: how can we not afford to address this issue?

I do want to address some specific areas of this supplementary budget, Bill No. 12, *Second Appropriation Act, 2008-09*. First of all, I have to say that I'm quite shocked that we are just now getting to debate this bill today — more than halfway into a 28-day sitting. This is extremely unusual, and it speaks poorly to this government's preparation for this year's fall sitting.

This budget is already stale-dated. We all know the world has been experiencing a major economic crisis with effects that even impact on the Yukon. We heard even this morning from the head of the mine association that they expect less mineral exploration and less spending next year. This year was down from last year and 2009-10 could be even quieter still.

To even a casual observer — and we would hope the Finance minister is much more attuned to world events than would be a casual observer — there has been ample warning for months and months about this downturn. Indeed, last summer's meltdown of the asset-backed commercial paper market — the summer of 2007 — which left Yukon's improperly invested \$36.5 million frozen and diminished — should have warned this Finance minister that all was not normal in the marketplace, and there would be a need to take action in Yukon. Yet this Finance minister apparently needed another month to get his homework assignment done. It's the only bill standing in the name of the Member for Watson Lake, and he didn't get it done on time. It doesn't inspire confidence. That's what we're hearing from Yukoners.

Now the minister has already provided his view — his version — of the news contained in this budget. Yes, there is an increase of \$26.4 million in the accumulated surplus projected for the end of the current fiscal year. The bulk of this, of course, can be found in a couple areas of the revenue projections — an increase of \$14.14 million in taxes and general revenues and an increase of \$12.79 million in recoveries from Canada. We know that we continue to receive increased funding from Canada, both in transfers — although that is a very minor increase in this budget — and in recoveries. Do we need it? Yes, we do. Does Yukon deserve it so that we can provide the same level of services to our citizenry as does every other jurisdiction? Yes, we do. But does it represent a fulfillment of the Yukon Party's frequent promises to diversify our economy? No. Increased funding from Canada does not accomplish greater independence and self-sufficiency unless it is invested with a purpose to achieve just that.

Increases in taxes in general revenues — since it does not represent any income tax increases — is at least a positive. At least a portion of this increase has resulted from the increases that we passed last spring and the taxes that are applied to cigarettes and tobacco, and that is not going to be a sustainable source of revenue as people continue to hopefully reduce their bad smoking habits. Another portion results from increased revenue from the Yukon Liquor Corporation.

As for the revised surplus for the year, the \$4.026 million that the Finance minister referred to during his remarks, well, Mr. Speaker, that is only two thirds of the amount that has evaporated in our bad investments — the \$6.2 million in the Yukon Party government's incredible shrinking fund. The \$4 million might be better news if it wasn't just another accounting entry, as the Premier likes to call them. What do we mean by an "accounting entry"? Are Yukon's net financial resources projected at year-end to be \$142.3 million, just an accounting entry? I'm sure the Premier would beg to disagree.

Well, the \$6.2-million adjustment to the value of the asset-backed commercial paper investments is every bit as real as the \$142.3 million of which the Premier likes to speak. No other jurisdiction that is taking writedowns tries to say that they are not real, they are just imaginary and they are all going to come back. Every public corporation and every other jurisdiction that has taken writedowns has said what they are and has described them with facts, with the truth. They have said that the amount that we invested is no longer what it once was. Apparently, that is something that this minister just can't seem to get past his lips.

Perhaps the Premier thinks that Yukoners will ignore this little faux pas, this bookkeeping entry, this misplacement of Yukon's treasury and public trust, because it appears to be a relatively small amount in comparison with the other numbers. Well, let's put it in context — \$6.2 million. That's more than half the cost of the new Tantalus School in Carmacks, the most recent school to be built in the territory. It's more than the cost of all the money the Premier admits to having squandered in the never-completed Watson Lake multi-level health care facility. It's more than the previously estimated cost of building a new health care facility in Dawson. \$6.2 million is more than it

would cost — many times more — to operate a youth shelter in Whitehorse.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, \$6.2 million would have bought a lot of improvements in Yukon, if this Premier hadn't decided to gamble in derivatives, to deal in collateral debt obligations, to invest in bad bonds that were forbidden by the *Financial Administration Act*.

Perhaps if the Premier had access to the entire \$36.5 million that he has misinvested, or even the \$30.2 million that was theoretically remaining last March 31, but which cannot be touched for years and years, we might have been able to build a large portion of the never-started new Whitehorse Correctional Centre. Perhaps we might have made great headway on a replacement for the aging F.H. Collins Secondary School or perhaps the long-needed upgrades to Whitehorse General Hospital for a secure medical unit within the hospital, the funding for which was hastily announced just weeks ago, as we commenced debate on my motion to address the Hospital Corporation's needs for a proper mental health unit — a secure unit. Perhaps that would have been done sooner if the money wasn't tied up.

There will, no doubt, be many good projects that will be delayed while we wait for the jury to come in on these bad investments in the bond markets. That's too bad for Yukoners. That's a real shame.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to point out something for Yukoners. Despite this Premier's steady messaging that he has been such a good fiscal manager, he has been running a cash deficit for years. Let's look at the budget before us today.

According to the Finance minister's information, as presented on page S-1 in the supplementary estimates, total revenues in the year 2008-09 revised vote are now estimated as \$900,632,000. Total expenditures are now estimated at \$954,435,000. This government intends to spend \$53,803,000 more this year than they are taking in — sounds like a deficit. That is after the \$6-million reduction in the previously estimated amounts for the failed Watson Lake health centre project. Can you imagine if that money was still going to be spent?

The Premier will throw all kinds of numbers out there, and he will talk about the \$581 million projected accumulated surplus at the end of the year. That number includes all the assets of the Government of Yukon — the buildings, the land, the trucks and the toilets too, Mr. Deputy Speaker. But let's make this very clear to Yukoners who may be listening: under the accounting rules that were in place under previous NDP and Liberal governments, this would have been called a "deficit". It's not called a "deficit" now, because of the move made several years ago to move to accrual accounting. This Premier is running a deficit just like Premier Duncan and Premier McDonald did while being saved each year by transfers from Ottawa being revised upward.

We have a surprise for the Premier; we don't disagree with his running an operating deficit — a cash deficit — as long as Yukon remains in a healthy net accumulated surplus position. Thanks to the increases in the formula financing transfers — negotiated, yes, under his government — with good work done by officials, as well as building on the work started by his

predecessors, in both the Liberal and NDP governments, Yukon is getting its fair share of funding from Canada to provide the programs and services that Yukoners require. Additionally, the massive infrastructure funding over the past six years including the northern strategy funding, the northern housing trust funding, the MRIF and CRIF funding and the new Building Canada Plan have added many millions of dollars to the funds that are transferred from Canada to Yukon.

We don't disagree with the government running a deficit in any given year by saving money for larger projects and then using the funds at the appropriate time. Otherwise, what would be the point of good fiscal management if one were never going to spend the money?

But now is certainly the time to keep Yukoners working by building new and needed infrastructure. Where we differ from this Premier and this government, however, is in the process employed to decide which projects are worthy of advancing and which are not. We in the Liberal Party — the Official Opposition — believe that each project should result from a proper needs study and proper consultations to determine if it is in fact a priority for Yukoners and money well spent.

That never happened in the case of the now abandoned Watson Lake multi-level care facility. It didn't happen. The seniors and other residents of Watson Lake were never asked what their vision for a facility would be. What kind of facility would they want to live in? They were asked after the building shell was built, and that's why there is now yet another facility that the Premier talks about — a seniors residential facility now on the drawing boards for Watson Lake, because that's what the people wanted.

Too bad they didn't build it right the first time. There was never a proper territory-wide health infrastructure needs assessment done for the first six years of this government's tenure. How do we know that? Well, despite our requests to see one, the current Health and Social Services minister clearly stated in this House that this work is just now being done — it's underway; it's a work in progress.

It was not done by the former Member for Klondike prior to his announcing a facility would be built in Dawson and another in Watson Lake at an estimated cost of \$5.2 million each. It wasn't done by the former acting Minister of Health and Social Services, the Member for Porter Creek North, in the months that he was in charge. It wasn't done by the Member for Lake Laberge, the current Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources, during the two or more years he was supposedly at the helm of health care.

Finally, on the fourth time out of the gate, this government has found a Health and Social Services minister who will actually take a territory-wide planning view of providing health care, but he has inherited the stillborn project in Watson Lake and also the hastily promoted new \$25-plus million Watson Lake hospital project. It appears that someone else has already pre-empted the planning process and made the decisions on the new minister's behalf.

We all know who that would be: the phantom Health and Social Services minister, the Premier, who makes all the health infrastructure decisions in Yukon.

There are some significant votes within this supplementary budget in Executive Council Office and Community Services, in Education, in Energy, Mines and Resources, in Environment and Economic Development, certainly in Health and Social Services, in Highways and Public Works, in Justice and in the Public Service Commission — although that reflects a reduced expenditure — in Tourism and Culture and in the Yukon Housing Corporation.

There are smaller but no doubt important votes in other departments — in the Women's Directorate, for example. Where are the new projects in this supplementary budget to keep Yukon contractors and their skilled employees working through the winter? Missing in action, that's where.

Why didn't this Premier, this Finance minister, take decisive action like other leaders across Canada and around the world? Yukoners are looking for action; instead they hear empty excuses from this Premier — empty, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Rather than enter into debate here with the Finance minister on the details, who no doubt will again avoid answering by blaming all his failures on his predecessors or by claiming the departmental debates are the appropriate place to seek those answers, I will refrain. I will reserve final judgement, but the Liberal caucus will indeed be looking for answers.

While I'm on my feet, I want to address some of the constant noise that we in the Liberal caucus, the Official Opposition, hear endlessly from the members opposite. They are constantly claiming that they don't know what the Liberal Party stands for. I don't think they've been paying much attention, so I'll try to educate them.

The party I joined — the party of Pat Duncan, Jack Cable, and Ken Taylor — is a party of the centre. It always has been, and it always will be. We Liberals believe in sound money management, balanced budgets, low taxes, personal responsibility and integrity. What separates us from the NDP is that we believe in a competitive market economy, not in a socialist redistribution of the wealth. What separates us from the Yukon Party is that we believe you can't have an efficient, balanced economy without a social conscience and that means looking after the less fortunate, instead of blaming them for their misfortunes.

We Liberals stand for a balanced, sustainable economy that respects our environment and minimizes the negative impacts of economic development, while understanding that some impact is inevitable with development.

We stand for progressive people-focused government that assists Yukoners in making their livings with needed infrastructure, but refuses to abandon those who have fallen by the wayside, whether from sickness or lack of educational opportunity or difficult family circumstances. Regardless of the causes, we don't write people off.

We believe in working with our self-governing First Nations to fully implement their land claims and self-government agreements in the spirit with which they were written and signed and for consulting in advance of making decisions rather than litigating after.

We stand for fighting to eliminate poverty and homelessness and ensuring that there is affordable housing for those who

need it. We stand for putting solutions in place for youth at risk, not abandoning them to couch surf and leaving them to trade their dignity for a warm place to sleep. We stand for improving education and ensuring that every single Yukoner has the opportunity to live life to his or her fullest potential.

We believe that our society is only as strong and as great as how we treat our least fortunate neighbour. We believe in the guidance of past federal Liberal leaders, like Sir Wilfred Laurier, and in the just society of Pierre Elliott Trudeau. We believe in the peacekeeping initiatives of Mike Pearson and that Canadians should be world leaders in peacekeeping, but not be afraid to fight, when necessary, to secure freedom and peace. We believe in the economic and social achievements of Jean Chrétien and Paul Martin and, yes, in the integrity and decency of Stefan Dion.

Now let's address this Yukon Party government that has shown itself incapable of managing the territory's finances. In the 2002-03 Yukon budget main estimates, our total income was \$529.2 million. In the 2008-09 main estimates, it was \$873.9 million, now revised upwardly to \$900 million. Simple arithmetic says that's a whopping 65-percent increase in just six years. What do we have to show for it?

The Yukon Party portrays itself as strong fiscal managers. They claim to be the party of restraint. They say they're the party that will build a secure long-term future for Yukon. That, ladies and gentlemen, is nothing less than a fairy tale. This Premier and this government have failed, Mr. Speaker. They have failed to build any long-term infrastructure — one school and a never-finished health centre. Lots of announcements, but where are the promised health centres and the new schools? One school in six years and it was planned before they arrived on the scene.

They have failed to move our education system forward. They've moved from not completing the *Education Act* review — which is mandated by the *Education Act* — to spending years on the education reform process, only to move on, and now they're working on New Horizons. What has all this endless review, reform and horizon-gazing done in the classrooms? Because that's where it matters. Our teachers are dedicated but they're tiring of hearing all the great plans only to hear of yet another study, another plan.

They have failed our health care system by squandering millions of dollars — at least \$5 million and counting in Watson Lake on a project that has now been halted, to create something that has not yet provided one minute of health care to one single Watson Laker. Now they publish a health study that offers Yukoners their big solution: user fees.

They have failed our young families by ignoring the need for more childcare spaces while making constant announcements about how much money they're putting into childcare. Childcare workers are still making less money than a barista does at Starbucks.

They have failed our environment by providing nothing but lip service. In six years, they spent the first few years denying the reality of climate change, then years more just creating a strategy before finally producing an action plan. They have failed young Yukoners by developing nothing but \$100,000-

plus building lots. They have failed to protect our salmon runs and the Porcupine caribou herd. They have failed to be responsible stewards of the public purse. They have failed to follow the *Financial Administration Act*. They have failed, by their reckless investments in the financial market.

We are very disappointed in the failure of this government over six years to fulfill the many promises they have promised not once, but twice, in general elections and many times in between.

More important, we are hearing from more and more Yukoners who are also disappointed and they're also frustrated and angry at this government. They will let this government know when it next goes to the electorate just how disappointed they are. They will let this government know they are tired of the accounting entries that reflect the loss of millions of dollars of their money. They are tired of the millions of dollars expended on rail studies, port studies and bridge studies while schools remain unbuilt, health facilities remain unstaffed and youth remain without shelter.

It's their voices that we on this side of the House listen to and I assure those Yukoners they are being heard.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Merci.

**Hon. Ms. Horne:** It is my pleasure to speak to this supplementary budget today. As you know, this party committed to Yukoners to achieve a better quality of life, to protect the Yukon's pristine environment, to promote a strong, diversified private sector economy and to practise good governance. We have made significant strides in each of these areas. We have used our budgets to accomplish a great deal in these areas. Our discussion today needs to be set in the context, both of what steps we have already accomplished and the next steps forward.

I will mention a few department-specific items in my comments here, but my intention is to offer a more detailed overview of the department's budget during our Committee of the Whole discussion. As I have stated previously, helping Yukoners achieve a better quality of life is this government's commitment. In looking through the budget, I see many, many areas where we are working toward that end.

For example, I see funds set aside in Community Services to improve emergency medical services. In Education, we have over \$800,000 for education and learning assistants. For communities like mine where we place a great deal of emphasis on education, I am sure these funds will further help our students achieve their goals and dreams. A good education opens up doors of opportunity.

Speaking of opportunities, we have earmarked over a quarter of a million dollars for a labour market survey. Mr. Speaker, on Friday I was at the young women exploring trades event, which I know from our conversations in the past is an initiative in which you believe. We have additional funds for apprenticeship training. This money should help not only young women, but also young men, find a career path that works for them. We are also investing in the Energy Solutions Centre to help Yukoners find ways to better utilize our resources. I see we have other investments in EMR to help address this situation as well.



The Yukon government is striving to achieve a better quality of life for its citizens by fostering healthy and safe communities through addressing drug and alcohol abuse. Fulfilling the goals of the Yukon's substance abuse action plan is a priority for us.

My colleague, the Minister of Health and Social Services, is seeking approval to further assist people on social assistance. If the opposition wanted to improve the lives of Yukoners in difficult financial situations, they could start by voting "yes" for this budget. In this budget we are looking at ways to approve the local services for youth with medical illnesses. This budget also has money for things like the Arts Centre stage and funding for the banner program in Tourism and Culture.

One of the aspects of achieving a better quality of life is our commitment to create safer communities. Here is some of the work we are doing in this area: \$25,000 in revoted funding will go toward the creation of a resource directory of substance abuse treatment and wellness programs in each Yukon community. The Department of Justice is contributing \$27,000 to the Public Service Commission's addiction management program initiative.

The success of our SCAN legislation in helping to reduce unwanted illegal activity in Yukon communities is unprecedented. One example of our efforts in this area is our safer communities and neighbourhoods legislation that was passed in May 2006. Our most recent statistics show that there have been 267 complaints about activities in 210 locations resulting in 36 evictions and 11 warnings since the SCAN office opened on November 29, 2006. The SCAN unit requires \$24,000 for the purchase of surveillance and investigative equipment so that it can effectively respond to Yukoners' complaints of ongoing illegal activity occurring in their neighbourhoods. We will also be seeking approval for additional staffing in this area.

Ongoing efforts by the RCMP in combating illegal drug dealing through the street crime reduction team have helped clean up Yukon streets. The Yukon government has committed \$486,000 to the street crime reduction team this year. The funding provides the RCMP with the personnel and resources necessary to help reduce street crime resulting from drug- and alcohol-related activity in Whitehorse. As of September 30, 2008, the team had made 102 Criminal Code arrests, executed 58 warrants, undertaken 128 curfew checks on prolific and priority offenders, taken 93 intoxicated persons into custody and laid 16 charges under the *Controlled Drugs and Substances Act*. That is work well done.

For those offenders with addiction issues who are willing to take personal responsibility for their actions, in May 2007, we opened the Community Wellness Court to provide an innovative and therapeutic way to help heal and prevent the addictions that lead to crime and recidivism.

I should note here that we committed to work in a collaborative approach, and the Community Wellness Court is one such example. It is a collaborative approach between government departments, the RCMP and non-government helping agencies, which create opportunities for offenders with addictions, fetal alcohol spectrum disorder and mental health problems to receive the treatment they need.

As of October 2008, 47 clients have made appearances before the Community Wellness Court; nine are actively engaged in the wellness process while four are being assessed for suitability. The Community Wellness Court has been in operation for over a year. I'm pleased to announce today that \$20,000 for this court, which focuses on solving the root causes of crime, has been recovered from the Government of Canada against expenses in 2007-08.

For those who are incarcerated, we are taking steps to change the way we deliver supervision and programming. The interim space plan and renovations at the Whitehorse Correctional Centre are complete. These renovations will allow for the transition of both inmates and staff to the new correctional centre in 2011 and will allow them to live and work in a more suitable environment that promotes health, hope and healing.

I would like to inform this House that this government allocated funds for the construction of the transitional women's living unit at the Whitehorse Correctional Centre. This facility will help promote health and hope for low- and medium-risk female inmates by providing them with a healthy living environment that supports healing and responsibility. It will provide a community living environment for female inmates, which will include six bedrooms with the capacity for nine inmates and a residential-style kitchen.

It will also provide a supportive environment that will allow for a more client-focused supervision approach. Inmates will have more opportunity to take responsibility for their actions and reintegration planning. These are examples of the steps this government has taken to create safer communities.

We have stepped up our enforcement efforts, and we have created an innovative way to deal with people with substance abuse issues. Creating safer communities is a work in progress. We are working on consultations for the new *Corrections Act*, which will conclude January 30, 2009. We are working to help bring wholeness to our communities. We are working to restore those who have offended to a place where they are productive and contributing members of society. We want to help Yukoners with engaging in our justice system as offenders reintegrate back into our communities and become contributing citizens.

A review of the draft act regulations was held for all Yukon First Nations in October. It is expected that the act will be ready for the spring 2009 legislative session of the Yukon Legislature. The *Corrections Act* consultation has been extended until January 30, 2009, to further allow consultation with Yukon First Nations, and \$92,000 has been revoted for this important legislation. Some of the money requested in our supplementary budget is to continue our funding of the corrections action plan implementation office. Fulfilling the requirements of the corrections action plan is a priority of this government. We are now in the final stages of planning for a new correctional centre and a new offender management and supervisory model through the corrections action plan implementation office in community and correctional services.

Funding for this office has been extended to March 31, 2010. This office will require \$569,000 to cover annual operational costs, which includes a contribution agreement with the Council of Yukon First Nations. The budget also includes

\$89,000 for a one-year position for the integrated offender management model project and an 18-month position to support the electronic information management system project. This funding is effective October 2008.

This government is partnering with Yukon First Nations by taking advantage of its northern strategy project. The Department of Justice is providing \$50,000 in a revote through a contribution agreement with the Kwanlin Dun First Nation for a therapeutic community resource feasibility plan.

In addition to changing our correctional framework, we are also looking at ways to reduce the number of offenders in the system. One of the ways we are working on doing that is by breaking the generational cycle of victimization and abuse. The Department of Justice received five years of funding from Justice Canada in 2007 to establish a program that will provide counselling for youth and children who witness domestic violence.

The Our Way of Living Safety program, or OWLS, has been developed to offer support to children and youth who have witnessed violence and those parents who are or have been involved with the Domestic Violence Treatment Option Court. This is in collaboration with the Department of Health and Social Services.

It is very important that we work with children and youth to help them cope with the trauma of domestic violence and in so doing, help reduce the risk that they will grow up to become abusers or victims themselves. Preventing violence in Yukon communities and having services in place in the unfortunate times when it does occur is very important to this government. For those who are victims, we are exploring ways to improve our services to them. Therefore, the victim services/family violence prevention unit is receiving a revote of \$26,000 for its prevention of violence against women campaign. This money will be used to complete training workshops and evaluations and is in partnership with the Women's Directorate.

This spring, we held the Moving Forward Together: Focus on Victims of Crime conference. Out of this victims strategy, is being developed a plan that will enhance our responses to needs of victims, families and communities. This government is ensuring that people involved in the justice process understand the court system. To this end the government is committing \$100,000 for legal aid, an aboriginal court worker and the Yukon Public Legal Education Association through an access-to-justice agreement with the federal government. This community-based funding is 100 percent recoverable from Canada.

In the Women's Directorate, we are requesting additional money to cover personnel costs due to a maternity leave. We are seeking one revote to complete an evaluation of a long-term public education campaign on the prevention of violence against women and a second revote to complete a northern strategy trust fund project.

These are some of the areas in which the government is working to deliver on our platform commitments. I am confident that the members opposite will support this budget. The evidence proves that we are doing good work that deserves the support of all members of this Assembly.

Günilschish. Thank you.

**Mr. Hardy:** I would like to make some comments around the supplementary budget and the budget in whole since it is all connected, and the direction this government is going in. Let's just pick up on the comments made by the previous speaker, the Minister of Justice. It is not correct that we vote against all the very good initiatives that this government has brought forward. That is really a statement — and this is not her statement by the way, Mr. Speaker; this is a statement that I often hear in this House by members opposite in referring to our voting as voting against everything. Often what we vote against is lost opportunities. We are voting against what we feel, from our perspective as different parties — we are voting against directions the government is going in that we may feel are wasteful, non-productive or not beneficial for the people of this territory, and we have a different vision. That vision definitely, from the NDP's perspective, would be going in a different direction, just as the Yukon Party sets their own direction.

We are voting against things that we feel the government should not be doing but we're not voting against the whole budget. When you have almost a billion dollars to spend, of course, there is going to be a multitude of programs that are brought forward that we can all support in this House. Unfortunately, we can't break the vote down in that manner. We have to vote for a budget or supplementary in its entirety. We make that decision on this side that we believe that a budget drafted by us would be different and therefore we feel that the government has lost opportunities that we would want to see put in place — and that is what we're really voting against.

Now, I want to start in discussing this and looking at the supplementary budget on a couple things. A couple of them are areas I have felt very passionate about over my many years in the Legislative Assembly. I say "many years", although I don't think it's overly long; I only say "many years" because there are a lot of people in here who haven't been here for as long as I have. There are a few people who have been in a little bit longer than I, so I feel like I'm a senior in the Chamber, which I never thought I'd say.

However, I believe we really need to make change in this Chamber. We have the opportunity that's very unique in Canada to make that change. We can make this place a far better area for work, I guess what the public expects of us, where we work closer together to ensure the decisions that are made in this Chamber, in the Legislative Assembly, are the best decisions for the people of the territory and reflect the values of the people of the territory — as many as you possibly can — and move the territory in a direction that would be good for future generations.

If we don't change the rules we work under, we'll always be continually in the position where you have a government and you have opposition. I have gone on about this many times over the years. I'm a person who believes that change — though I know people have a hard time making changes — is essential for us to move forward, and the Yukon is in a unique position in that we can do it quickly, we can do it well and we can be an example for other provinces and territories in Canada.

The NDP has brought forward the *Legislative Renewal Act*, which is a consultative act. It's not saying, "This is what has to be changed. That's what has to be changed." It's not that. We have brought forward something that is a consultative process to find out what areas we can change in this Legislative Assembly that would make our job more meaningful for all sides, more productive for the people of this territory and for ourselves, and end up with better results for everybody. I would hope that's what we're trying to do.

We do not have to accept the model we have inherited from Great Britain — the Westminster system — as the only model that will ever work. It is not the only model for democracy. In some ways, it is not democratic. If we truly believe in democracy, we should be willing to change and keep working toward that idealistic goal we all have and which we want other countries to adopt, and that is true democracy.

We do not necessarily have true democracy in here. It is something that, being in this Legislative Assembly for these many years, I would like to see happen before I leave it. I will never stop talking about it. I feel very strongly about it.

The *Elections Act* is the same thing. We have problems with electing people in that we use a "first past the post" system and that is recognized around the world as not a very democratic system and is hardly used around the world any more. There are many other models — we can move in that direction — that would better reflect the popular vote in this Legislative Assembly and not a minority vote. That is also part of the change within the Chamber, and I would love to see those changes happen.

The people need to see their government as more transparent. They need to see all MLAs more transparent about everything we do — about our spending; about our wages; about our benefits. We are accountable to the people of the territory. They elect us. We're not accountable to ourselves in that sense. We're accountable to them, and we have to be transparent when it comes to the public trust and public money.

I'll give you an example. Just before I go off this topic, I'll give you a little example from today of how undemocratic it is, in some ways. The person who is bringing forward a bill or who introduces a motion has unlimited time. That means that person can talk for five days or 10 days straight. There is nothing stopping them — two hours or three hours. It doesn't matter.

The person responding — invariably the Official Opposition leader — has unlimited time. That person can talk, whether it makes sense or not — and I'm not saying it doesn't — for as long as they want, and it could go on day after day. And I say "day after day" because it has happened in other Chambers, and some of the debate in this Assembly has been extremely long, and often it is hard to really pin down what's really being said. I'm not sure if it's good value for the dollar around that.

But after that, everybody has 20 minutes. I have 20 minutes. The speaker before me has 20 minutes. Everybody after me has 20 minutes. So why do two people have unlimited time and everybody else is restricted? We are all equals in here. We are supposed to all be equals. Isn't that what democracy is about — equality?

So there is something wrong with our system in allowing that to happen — whether I have the advantage to talk for as long as I want on a motion I bring forward or not, I disagree with it. There should be restrictions. And that is just one example from today. That is one change that we could make that would maybe make this Assembly more productive. I think it would be far more productive if there were limits on our time-lines, especially around the first two.

Now, there are a lot of areas that have already been touched upon by those who have unlimited time, and we can start listening — whether it's within the Finance department and the bad investments; whether it's in Highways and Public Works and contract services, whether it is in how contracting is done, sole-sourcing — I mean, the list is endless in areas around waste, projects that have been started that are not complete. Some are being boarded up as we speak and million of dollars were spent on them. Other projects were supposed to be rehabilitated, and they are still on the books; they are still not done, they are still not being utilized fully.

There are studies that have been done, which are worth millions of millions, that are now sitting on the shelf collecting dust along with another hundred other studies that have gone to the same fate. There are lost opportunities — all of those have been already touched on, I believe. They definitely were touched on in the springtime. There is no question that this government has dropped the ball in many of these areas. But I don't want to stand here and just repeat each one and name the figures. I want to talk about some essential things that a government has to do — that we in this country have come to believe in. One of course is our economy and the government's intervention in our economy. I hear people say, "The free market reigns supreme." The free market does not and should not reign supreme. When it does, and regulations are removed — when basically they're given carte blanche to do whatever they want, we find ourselves witnessing financial meltdowns and collapses of the free markets around the world.

Government has a role to play through regulations, through investment, through stimulation, through legislation, ensuring safety of the products that are put out, ensuring restrictions on the type of behaviour of investment firms, banking and all those things. We have a role to play; that's why we were elected; that's why we have public government; and that's why we have democracies.

We have to hold businesses to account, just as the public holds government to account. We all have to be accountable at some level or other. In some areas, we have to be more accountable.

Another area that the public expects of us, of course — this is still with economics — is utilizing the finances that we have from the public, from the people of Canada, because the majority of our money still to date comes from federal transfers. As a matter of fact, under this government, interestingly enough, they talk about their economic activity and what they have done for it — we actually get more money from the federal government than we ever have in the past, percentage-wise, not just on dollar value. We are more reliant upon federal transfers than we ever have been in the past. That, to me,

doesn't show a government has necessarily lived up to one of their first announcements when they were elected in 2002, that they were going to make the territory less dependent upon government transfers. It hasn't happened. It hasn't happened; we are more dependent on government transfers.

Now we have a federal government talking about deficit spending. This is interesting because it was the Prime Minister who was an economist who championed against deficit spending by governments. That is his history; that is his record. He championed it. He spoke constantly that government should not run deficits. Guess what? He is going to run a deficit. Now, I don't have a problem with that. I have a problem with the ideology that he presented and how he has switched so drastically in a very short period of time. I can't trust that. Now, if he can come out and say, "I was wrong with my position before," then fine, I'll accept that. But he doesn't say that; he is blaming it on something else. Well, frankly the whole system has problems and a lot of it came about because of lack of oversight and regulations and greed, as we all know.

Secondly, since I only have a few more minutes: social. We have a review that just came out that talks about privatization of our health care system. It talks about P3s, private/public partnerships that historically have cost us more money and have delivered less service for the people and has pointed out serious flaws in our Pharmacare.

It is indicative of where this government is going because they tasked the review committee to look at health care only from the financial perspective. That speaks volumes to how this government views health care.

We have problems with treatment centres; we have problems with shelters; we have problems with social housing — and I will use the word "social." Some people get nervous when they hear "socialist" or "social," just like I get nervous when I hear "communist" or "fascist" — those words make me a little nervous — but "socialist" I'm very comfortable with. Let's put it on the record: not a problem with me at all. As a matter of fact, the majority of countries in the world are governed by socialist governments, interestingly enough — the Scandinavian countries; there's a long list. I won't go down it; I'm running out of time.

The final one, of course, is the environment — the single biggest issue facing this world today. It's not the economic crisis. We will survive; we will get through this. I think people pull together and will recover from it. We just have to help people through that hardship.

But the environment will not recover if we don't change our ways. We change our ways and our priorities; we find ways to ensure that this planet is going to be sustainable for our future generations, for the young people who are sitting here today listening — our pages — for the children they will have down the road, for my grandchildren, great grandchildren, great-great grandchildren that I will never see. I want them to have a pristine environment. I want them to be able to drink the water, breathe the air, and grow the foods that are so necessary for survival. I want them to be able to enjoy the wilderness that we are so blessed with in the Yukon, that so many other countries don't have any more because of past practices.

We do not have to repeat that and we can lead. It all comes down very simply to having the vision, making the changes necessary, and imagining a better future for all of us if we work together and share those common values and common goals — not so much for ourselves any more but for the people coming after us, whether they're our family, friends or just the population that is reliant upon us to at least leave them something. We've been a country, we've been a people, of mass consumerism and we've taken advantage of that period. Now we have to create a new world that is just as good but less harmful so there's a future possible for all of us.

Thank you.

**Hon. Ms. Taylor:** I would like to thank the Assembly for the opportunity to say a few words in response to this supplementary budget brought forward by our Minister of Finance. I would like to start off by thanking my constituents over the last six years for the opportunity and privilege to represent their interests and issues of importance. It has been a great honour to represent the individuals who reside in areas such as Arkell, Logan and a greater portion of Copper Ridge. It also comprises Copper Ridge Place and École Émilie Tremblay.

There's a great deal that has been said here in this Assembly today and it's unfortunate we're only provided 20 minutes to respond to each of the comments that have been coming across the floor. However, I will certainly stay focused in my remarks to the issues of importance to my constituents and I will certainly delve in a bit with respect to my two departments as well.

Within my own riding — comprised in this budget is approximately \$3.2 million for the extension of Hamilton Boulevard. I just want to be very clear that it has been our government that has actually identified dollars and has actually been consulting with the respective neighbourhoods all along. This is an initiative that has been talked about at great length, I think, ever since Copper Ridge came into place — that is, ever since Granger and other respective neighbourhoods came into play.

We were very pleased to be able to identify up to \$15 million for this project. It's a very important project. It certainly provides a second access point out of the neighbourhood and into the neighbourhood. Certainly, for emergencies it is of the utmost importance. It will also help alleviate the traffic pressures we sometimes feel along that respective corridor, particularly with the significant growth that has occurred over the last number of years.

The Government of Yukon is very pleased to partner with the City of Whitehorse and the Government of Canada. I believe the Yukon government is providing up to \$6.5 million toward this particular initiative, with the remainder to be shared between the other two governments.

I also wanted to make reference to what is housed within this supplementary, which is additional monies to the Yukon Hospital Corporation that provide a recent three-year agreement that was signed off to provide a great deal of certainty to the hospital. As has been articulated over the last little while here in the Legislature, health care is of utmost importance to

Yukoners and we're very pleased to provide quality medical treatment services and a number of different programs to Yukoners. The key is to continue to provide that certainty and continue to provide resources in response to needs identified by our respective users.

The three-year agreement that was just recently signed off — the news release was issued on November 5 — provides the total hospital funding for this particular fiscal year at approximately \$32 million and, of course, that will be increasing to \$35.5 million next year and the year after to almost \$38 million. Part of that funding will also be used in part to develop a secure medical unit within the hospital — a much-needed service. This is in direct response to what has been deemed as very important to the Yukon public.

Mr. Speaker, this is a significant improvement to the degree of funding that has been afforded. As our Premier has articulated on the floor of the Legislature over the last number of years, under our government's watch health expenditures have increased by 67 percent in total — which is very significant. We also know that the costs attributed to health care are exorbitant and they continue to rise because of demographics, because of pressures, because of a whole host of reasons. Our government is very much committed to continue to deliver quality, accessible, affordable health care to all Yukoners, as we have in the past. This is but one example of providing just that.

Housed within this supplementary as well, I am very pleased to say, is the response to needs identified among social assistance recipients. There are increases, as was announced by the Minister of Health and Social Services late last year. Comprised in this budget is just over \$1.4 million in funding for social assistance increases. It is very much needed and very much appreciated by this government.

In terms of other expenditures of importance is funding identified for the Yukon seniors income supplement, as well, which will effectively double the monthly maximum entitlement afforded to Yukoners who are eligible. It goes to a maximum of \$200 a month or \$2,400 per year — gain, for those who are receiving the full supplement as it is.

It's a very welcome initiative. Of course the supplement has been available to Yukoners for many years, but has not received an increase in many years. So particularly when we look at the world economic global cycle in which we find ourselves, this will add a much-needed and welcome boost to many of our seniors and elders within the Yukon. This cost is expected to be approximately \$810,000 in total.

One other improvement of great importance to Yukon is quality education. I'm very pleased that this supplementary also reflects increases to the Department of Education, one of which includes \$864,000 that will go toward education and learning assistants within our public education system. This is in direct response to needs identified and we're very pleased to provide an appropriate level of funding that will not only assist students but will also assist the teachers in providing a nurturing and welcoming learning environment that is so absolutely critical to the health and well-being of our student population.

The other thing I would like to speak to is the recent increase to a number of non-government organizations, which includes Many Rivers funding of over \$1.38 million over the next three years. It's a significant increase to Many Rivers Counselling Services. They have provided an integral service and programming available to Yukoners that has been identified as a growing need. We recognize that and have been able to provide the necessary stable funding to this particular organization.

Over the years, the government has provided a number of great resources for stable funding to NGOs and this is but one of them. Again, this increase will bring the government's total commitment to this particular organization to about \$5 million over the next three years.

Also housed within this supplementary budget is increased funding made available to women's shelters. You know, Mr. Speaker, this government places a great degree of importance and priority upon furthering women's equality, whether it be social, economic, political or legal. It was this government that actually reinstated the Women's Directorate after the previous government had folded it under the Executive Council Office. It was our government that actually reinstated the Women's Directorate. We have also doubled the amount of resources available to the Women's Directorate to go toward a number of great initiatives, whether it's working on an aboriginal women and violence initiative, providing women's equality funding — three-year funding, long-term funding to several women's organizations for the first time ever and so forth — or also providing funding for respective groups to provide violence prevention initiatives and programs, which is very important to the territory.

Housed within the Department of Health and Social Services is a complement of this. It also provides an increase of \$434,000 over the next three years to women's organizations such as Kaushee's Place, the women's transition home and the Help and Hope women's shelter. This brings our government's total commitment to women's shelters to just over \$4 million over the next three years.

When we look to the community of Watson Lake and the Help and Hope shelter, they've done a remarkable job. I've taken time to meet with staff on a couple of occasions in recent times, and they've done a very good job in terms of expanding their programming and their mandate. Also of great importance is their work toward expanding second-stage housing for the first time ever in rural Yukon. That project is well underway right now, thanks to the community development fund, which this government also reinstated from the previous government. I believe about \$270,000 is going toward that project — a great partnership and that which will be well-utilized — providing a nurturing, learning and supportive environment for families in need.

These are but a few of the initiatives that are identified in the budget. Also there are a number of initiatives that fall within public health and safety in the Yukon. Our Premier has spoken to them — a new mobile radio system of just over \$6 million as well as the purchase of a new airport rescue fire-fighting vehicle for the City of Whitehorse and so forth.

Unfortunately, I don't have enough time to list all the initiatives, but these are certainly of great importance to Yukoners and we're very pleased to be able to come through.

I just wanted to touch upon the work within my two departments of Tourism and Culture and Department of Environment. It has been a great privilege, and I have taken great pleasure in working with the Department of Tourism and Culture over the last six years. I very much appreciated the work undertaken by the staff and by industry over the years. They've done an exemplary job. As I've articulated on the floor of the Legislature many, many times, everything we do in terms of marketing Yukon abroad is certainly industry-led, market-driven and research-based — everything that we do.

So we are certainly very pleased to be able to provide the necessary resources that provide us with the best return on investment. That means the most bums in seats, in other words. And housed within the supplementary is an additional \$500,000 for the Destination: Yukon campaign, a campaign that really builds upon the success of the national marketing campaign that was struck a year ago. This really provides that added momentum, housed within the gateway cities of Calgary, Edmonton, Vancouver and other cities in eastern Canada.

Also housed within this budget are dollars allotted for the expansion of the international airport building — certainly a very important project to the tourism industry, but certainly very important to the economic growth of Yukon as a territory.

The budget also provides additional dollars for the completion of the Tombstone interpretive centre — a key icon within the territorial park that was designated by our government earlier. It will be very well-received by the area residents and Yukoners and visitors.

There are also dollars allotted for the labour market framework through the Department of Education. We have approximately \$276,000 for the first year of a two-year initiative to develop this framework that will see the establishment of a number of strategies to assist Yukoners, and Yukon businesses — many of which support tourism — in the areas of recruitment, employee retention, skills and trades training, immigration, labour market information and so forth.

Mr. Speaker, I know that I am running out of time here so I will quickly touch upon the Department of Environment. Mr. Speaker, it has been a privilege to assume the portfolio of the Department of Environment. I have very much appreciated working with the Department of Environment over the last few months. I have learned a great deal — I have a lot more to learn. Meeting and working with key stakeholders, including our Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board, renewable resource councils, and respective First Nations, the co-management and delivery of wildlife management in the territory is of utmost importance. Continuing efforts to complete a number of management plans for new parks, established through the land claims process, and implementing existing management plans for established parks and protected areas is but one priority identified in the department.

We're working to address climate change through the four basic tenets identified in the climate change strategy: an enhanced understanding and knowledge of climate change, im-

proving our ability to adapt to climate change, reducing our greenhouse gas emissions and positioning Yukon as a key northern leader for climate change research and innovation. There are many initiatives underway in the respective departments. Unfortunately I don't have time here today to articulate on that.

As I mentioned, we are developing ecosystem monitoring programs to better understand, mitigate and address effects of climate change; contributing to the development of regional land use plans such as the north Yukon land use plan, as well as the Peel watershed that is currently underway; developing partnerships and building upon our relations with First Nations, governments in support of collaborative and cooperative resource management; and in the implementation of our obligations arising out of land claim agreements. These are just but a few of the priorities identified in the Department of Environment.

I would just like to thank the Finance minister for bringing this forward. Unfortunately I don't have a lot of time. It looks like I'm all out of time.

Thank you very much, and I would ask that all members support this budget.

**Mr. Fairclough:** I would like to respond to the budget speech, the supplementary estimates, Supplementary Estimate No. 1. I have a few comments.

As I read through the budget, I found places supporting projects in my riding. If the members go on and say that we are not in support of these projects, they're wrong. Every one of them that we've mentioned in the past, we support, although we may not support the budget in its entirety. I think the members opposite know that, but want to use it as political leverage at times. I'm pretty sure that they do the same thing out in the general public — or some of them do, not all.

There are planned projects from many, many years back that I would say government would find great difficulty in not proceeding with — great difficulty. One of those projects was actually the Carmacks school.

There are others in here that are pilot projects, and we wait to see how well those turn out because other communities would like to follow suit.

I refer to the one that has government monies in it, which is the Pelly Crossing small-diameter piped water system. I know the members opposite know this: two First Nations have worked on this and both wanted to put this type of system in place for their communities. It's a project that has gone on for far too long. It needs to have some completion and I look forward to that.

I want to talk about the communities in my riding. Some of the projects are reflected in this supplementary budget. I'm sure the communities, as well as myself, do appreciate government putting money into these projects, whether for road upgrades or whatnot.

If the government went into my riding and wanted to know about some of the major issues people talk about, probably the biggest one that would come to mind first is the condition of our roads. I heard the Minister of Highways and Public Works

saying that our roads are in great shape. Ask the people in my riding that same question and you will get a different answer. It is unfortunate that our roads have deteriorated to the conditions that they are in now.

I remember when the Yukon Party first got elected. They made commitments to Yukoners. They did not like how previous governments spent money and, as a matter of fact, this same wording was a major part of their election campaign platform. It was about the government spending trajectory. They said it was going off the charts. They said they were going to do something about that and bring some control back into how much money this government spends. What did we see in the coming years? Well, we have seen more federal government money coming to the Yukon and the Yukon spending trajectory going off the charts. That was a promise that none of the Yukon Party would like to be brought up in the public. It went off the charts.

I can also remember when the Yukon Party talked about how O&M was not good for this territory and capital was good. There were commitments by the Premier to get votes on the doorstep that they would reduce the size of government. Most recently this was brought to my attention again when knocking on doors during the federal election. This person met with the Premier and talked about the size of government. What happened since the Yukon Party was first elected until now? We've seen a massive increase in government employees and lots of government spending, and that's what we're relying on right now. We're more reliant on the federal government monies than we have been in the past. I could tell the members opposite they no longer have the support of that member.

Then we came to a point where we had to imagine things, we had to imagine a tomorrow. Now, there are some things that the Yukon Party government failed to mention in imagining tomorrow. One of them was their commitment to Yukoners to put on user fees when it comes to health care. They didn't say, "Imagine tomorrow with user fees attached." They didn't say, "Imagine tomorrow when the Yukon Party government will increase the power bills." They didn't say that either.

They didn't tell First Nations, "Imagine tomorrow, when we can spend a lot of time in court with one another." That's what is taking place now. It's consuming people's resources and time. Why? Because of an approach that the Yukon Party decided to take with them.

They didn't say, "Imagine when our government contracting system would be in such a mess." Their own internal audit revealed that, way back in May. They said they wanted to be open and transparent, yet this report came out in May, and government did nothing with it. They didn't allow the public to scrutinize it. They were probably hoping like heck that it wouldn't come to the floor of this Legislature but it did.

Imagine that. Imagine a Yukon government that doesn't like to say a whole lot when it comes to the environment. There are things that are listed in the budget and the Premier's throne speech and so on but when it really comes down to the nuts and bolts, the government has been silent on many things when it comes to the environment.

Imagine when Yukoners could be in the position of having the private sector take care of our health care system. It is promoted by the Yukon Party government and it is not one that is supported by Yukoners. I believe what happened, Mr. Speaker, with the review of our health care here in Yukon, is that the Yukon Party got caught off guard a bit from it.

The Minister of Health and Social Services was put in a position of what I call "damage control" and had to try to find their way out of this by forming a committee to deal with these issues.

When I look into the eyes as it was even presented, that was something else. I don't think the minister liked what was taking place. Imagine a tomorrow when a major part of our surplus is tied up in investments and we can't touch the money. Imagine losing part of that money. Imagine tomorrow losing part of that money — \$6.2 million gone — and this money is tied up.

I know the Minister of Community Services said in the past that the forest industry is going to thrive by 2005. That was said over and over again and nothing happened. Yukon Party has been elected for six years now and the forest industry is not thriving under the Yukon Party government; it simply isn't. Six years of however they wanted to do things to get this industry going and nothing — very little. It is not what people expected from the Yukon Party.

What about in mining? We are going to hear a lot of talk about that over the next little while and the great support that the Yukon Party government has for mining. Of course, we on this side of this House do support this industry but how far has the Yukon Party gone with this? They rode a wave of good times for a good number of years — high metal prices and people eager to get out there and explore and try to develop something. What we have had is the Minto mine opening up in the last six years. Can the Yukon Party government take credit for that? Can they take credit for that? Well, there is one hard worker that I would say deserves a lot of credit when it comes to the Minto mine and that is the Selkirk First Nation. They have been on this file for quite some time. They knew it was coming down. They selected lands around Minto and are now pulling in royalties because of that. They did the hard work.

We have a lot of potential out there when it comes to mining but under a Yukon Party government it doesn't look good. There is nothing new as far as that goes except for exploration. We appreciate those who are coming in and spending some money doing exploration work. There are people in Yukon Territory who have been looking and in the mining industry for 30 years plus, and it appears they could be successful down the road, should the public start investing in their projects. With the downturn of the economy, I know that it is making it very tough for some of these junior mining companies to really make it happen. Some people have the pull and some don't. Some want to open up new grounds like the Minto project — Sherwood Copper — by merging and having monies flow. By forward-selling their gold for the 50 years, they are able to do that at \$300 an ounce, which is a bit shocking that it would sell for that low.

There are many things that were on the go when the Yukon Party took over. The *Education Act* had to be reviewed — it is mandatory every 10 years. It didn't happen. Well, the amendments didn't happen under the Yukon Party but the review took place.

Mr. Speaker, when Faro was in operation there were a lot of people in the territory and the hotels stayed open in Whitehorse. In six years, I know the Yukon Party will say how much busier it is in the territory but the Westmark Klondike isn't able to open. They were opened up when Faro was, but it shut down in early September. The biggest industry — one of the bigger industries in the territory right now is the housing industry. If things continue the way they are, that will slow down. If government doesn't do proper planning, that will slow down too.

I've noticed in the budget before us, when it comes to land development, there is a reduction in residential land development of some \$10 million out of \$25 million that government is not able to spend.

I know the Minister of Highways and Public Works likes to take pride in the condition of our highways. One needs to go out of the community of Whitehorse and perhaps talk to others about the condition of our highways. Residents of Mayo — some of them have been around for 30-plus years in the Mayo and Keno areas — say that this is the worst they've seen the highway conditions in 30 years. Imagine that: the worst they've seen the highway conditions in 30 years. I know the Member for Klondike may just agree with me. He has to drive home; he has to go up the Klondike Highway and he has to swerve around these big potholes. That takes a lot of work. What happened to the government? Did they go broke in the Department of Highways and Public Works? The Highways department in Mayo asked for flagging to flag the holes — to at least have that. They were only able to send a dozen flags at \$10 apiece. The local highway camp foreman has to go down to the local store, buy some red paint and spread it around these holes so the drivers can see the fact they have these big holes in our highway.

Where did all the money go for that, Mr. Speaker? People are demanding the government pay attention to the roads we have. We're going to be faced with increased power bills. It hasn't been all that great for Yukoners over the last little while. We've had our fuel prices go up — gasoline. That's reflected in the price of food going up. Anybody who goes shopping for food will see a significant increase in some items. On top of all that, the government increased the power bills.

Can you imagine, Mr. Speaker, we put a transmission line to Pelly Crossing, ready for grid hookup here in Whitehorse, and on top of that, "Here is an increase in your power bill." That is not what people wanted down there, but it is definitely what is happening. Government doesn't know what to do with it. It is a commitment they made to remove the rate stabilization fund, hoping that Minto, for example, would come on line. Even that, there are signs out there that perhaps it could even shut down for the winter and go out there and purchase the copper at a lower price, even, and resell it at a higher one. If that happens, man, that is a pretty strong indication that things

are going to go downhill in the mining sector very, very quickly.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I do have a lot. I offered some suggestions to government in the past about how to make improvements in the community. Of course, I don't have time to go over that, but I'm going to ask them to please look over them and perhaps they can reflect those ideas in budgets or supplementary budgets as we deal with them. I guess I'm out of time. I thank the members opposite for taking the time to listen to what I have to say.

**Hon. Mr. Hart:** Mr. Speaker, honourable members, it is a pleasure and an honour to be in the House today representing my constituents. Today it gives me great pleasure to debate the act before us — the *Second Appropriation Act, 2008-09*. I will put in a little français for the Member for Copperbelt.

Monsieur le Président, j'ai législative grand plaisir de discuter du projet de loi au programme de l'Assemblée aujourd'hui.

It has been a few months now since I have been the Minister of Health and Social Services, and it has been quite a learning curve. It has been very interesting and very challenging in some instances. I would really like to take this opportunity and moment here in the House to thank all of the officials who worked with me through the transition period and who go to work every day to provide good quality health care and social services to all Yukoners. I think it's very important to recognize the fact that many of these individuals don't receive sometimes — shall we say — accolades for the job they do in many of the positions throughout Health and Social Services.

We see many situations that are very difficult to handle on a personal basis — very emotional, in many cases — very, very emotional. I must say, even for me, going through some of the branches and departments throughout the Department of Health and Social Services, I've seen many cases where I'm totally impressed by the dedication, not only by the staff, but by the parents of the individuals who are there and looking after and providing assistance to their sons or daughters who are in our care and who are getting the much-needed assistance to help them through life.

I must say that it was very, very encouraging to go through many of these facilities to see exactly what services we are providing to all Yukoners who need that type of assistance because of disability or being mentally challenged — whether it's through the youth and/or adult process. I will say the dedication by the staff and by the parents is to be commended. All I can say is my hat is off to them.

The Premier mentioned that the government is in a solid financial position with a projected annual surplus of over \$4 million, in our projected year-end financial position of \$142 million. This position is important to the government, and it's important to me as the minister, as it is to all ministers and to all Yukoners. Our strong financial position allows us flexibility to continue to respond to the needs of all Yukoners.

I will also get into a few details with regard to Health and Social Services. Many of the members here have already com-



mented about many of the issues with regard to the supplementary.

I would like to take a few minutes to discuss the Leader of the Official Opposition's address to the House with regard to the supplementary where he indicated that the difference between the Liberal Party and the Yukon Party was that the Liberal Party had a conscience. Excuse me — a conscience? And then he went on to give many instances of providing social assistance, dealing with the homeless, and other issues relative to the social aspect.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to go over many of the issues showing this government is very aware of its social conscience. Further, we have acted on those needs for social assistance, and I have the numbers to back up that process. The social assistance rates were increased this past July 2008. This was the first increase — first increase — since 1995, when there was a minor adjustment for a food allowance — and that minor adjustment for a food allowance was for one community only: Old Crow. Prior to that, there were no other adjustments until 1992.

The utilities went up as a result of a separate submission a few years ago, and the "territorial supplementary allowance" — as it was called at the time — was also increased. The territorial supplementary allowance went from \$125 to \$250, and also — surprisingly — it was done under this government. Lack of social conscience? I think not.

Utilities were adjusted also, I believe, in 1999 or 2000 and, again, it was a very minimal amount that was adjusted. But I think we have to demonstrate we have a conscience; we've demonstrated it, and we've proven it. We provided the assistance across the board.

In addition, I know that the previous Minister of Health and Social Services made an adjustment in social assistance with respect to those with disabilities and seniors. That was also done under this government. It wasn't done under the Liberal government — the member opposite is indicating that he has a conscience and feels that that is the difference between them and us.

He went on to discuss the great leaders of the Liberal Party — Sir Wilfred Laurier, Mr. Chrétien, Mr. Martin — all of these individuals. Well, let's not forget, Mr. Speaker, that in 1995, it was Prime Minister Chrétien who sliced the budget in the Yukon and cut our growth expenditure base by five percent, Mr. Speaker — five percent. We have yet to catch up to that process that was cut back in 1995, even to this day, even though our Premier was very successful — along with the other premiers — in getting the territorial funding formula changed and addressed so that we are back to a principal-based formula which we had prior to 1995 when the Liberal government axed us and basically threw us on a straight fixed financing with a small escalator clause that in many cases did not even match the cost of living increase.

Social conscience? Who is wrong? Who is trying to push what? I might add that the Minister of Finance at the time was none other than the Right Honourable Mr. Paul Martin. That individual was also mentioned by the Leader of the Official Opposition as providing great leadership and showing social

conscience, as he tried to point out several times. I just wanted to point that out specifically and it's just not correct. The member opposite is totally incorrect.

It's this government that has actually made the changes, actually increased social assistance for the first time since 1995. In 1995, it was a very small amount and again, for one community. So really — no increases since 1992 — we have made the changes and it's happened under this government's watch. Do we have a social conscience? I would have to say we do.

We are also further looking into the situation for social assistance and that review is yet to be completed. Depending upon the results of that, we will look at dealing with the situation further. We are doing very well in having a social conscience.

Even in this supplementary budget we have money set aside to assist the hospital with ongoing funding for a period of three years so that they can have a stabilized situation and be in a position to know what their funding is for the next three years. In addition to that, funding was provided.

Again the member opposite states that all was hastily put together. The funding was already identified in our supplementary. It was already there to deal with the mental health unit within the hospital and that process is underway.

So again on the member opposite discussing the situation, I'd just like to correct the record: it wasn't hastily put together; it was something that was thought out and was put into place in conjunction with the hospital. It's now underway.

I might also add that I have spoken with the CEO of the Hospital Corporation and he has advised me that the staff recruitment for this special unit is going along quite well. In fact, they might be in a position to fill all the positions for that unit before they even get the unit ready for the people to come in — something that's very encouraging, to say the least.

There are many items throughout the supplementary that are in there. I'll just briefly go over a few. We have \$40,000 in the Child Development Centre for the important work they do; we have \$1.2 million for the social assistance rate increases I just spoke about; we have \$224,000 authorized for the introduction of the human papilloma virus immunization program. This is a voluntary immunization program for those who wish to obtain the vaccine.

We have \$238,000 for recruiting internationally educated health professionals; \$185,000 is for out-of-territory residential treatment for children and youth with serious psychiatric or mental health issues — again this is because of the increase we've had in dealing with youth. Facilities that are not available here in the Yukon are required to treat these individuals. Thus we've had to go Outside.

We also have \$769,000 toward a new four-year agreement with the Yukon Medical Association — another situation providing some stability for physician services in the Yukon; \$2.34 million for reciprocal billing increases for patient stays at hospitals outside the Yukon due to the new rates in British Columbia and Alberta.

I will again remind members opposite and the general public that this agreement provides facilities and the use of medical

professionals outside the Yukon for Yukon residents when they're referred by their physician to either Alberta or British Columbia. In many cases, we get preferential treatment for that service. In essence, it's a very important agreement signed between the two provinces and over the years has provided all Yukoners with great medical service when required, either through a medevac or just a straight referral.

We have \$325,000 for the Hospital Corporation for the establishment of a secure medical unit at the Whitehorse General Hospital, as I mentioned before.

All these expenditures are providing enhanced health or social assistance services, and in many cases they are provided across the board and are provided to those in need.

The Leader of the Official Opposition also indicated in his address that there was a problem with childcare, that this government was not paying any attention to childcare; there were not enough spaces being provided for those in need of childcare. I would like to spend a little time going over childcare provided for by this government in the Yukon.

We provided a significant increase in direct operating grants for childcare providers for the third time since 2007. Yukon childcare operators received an increase in funding for staff wages for a third time. The increase took effect in October and was retroactive to April 1 and will affect 148 childcare workers throughout the Yukon. With the latest 30-percent increase, the government has increased its contribution to wages of childcare workers by 100 percent over the past 14 months. Is that a lack of conscience? I think not.

It's important to Yukoners and this government that our children receive quality care services, and we have provided that. This increase, as I stated, commenced in 2007. Along with the increases, we've increased the childcare subsidy rates for parents, which saw a rise of 25 percent last November. This resulted in increases from \$500 to \$625 per month for infant care and from \$450 to \$565 a month for toddler care. Again, quality childcare for all Yukoners provided by this government.

In 2007, the government committed to annual incremental increases to base funding for childcare by \$5 million to \$10.3 million by 2012. Again, this is a 100-percent increase by 2012. Childcare operators and the childcare community have identified low wages as barriers to recruiting and retaining staff. The government remains committed to ensuring quality care for all Yukon children and will continue to work with the childcare community and the Yukon Child Care Board to build healthy families and improve the quality of life for all Yukoners.

In a meeting with the Yukon Childcare Association, they mentioned that capital for new positions is not something that is at an urgent stage at the moment. Wage increases are the important factor that allows childcare workers to stay in the Yukon and to assist the local childcare providers. This government has gone a long in providing that process — a 100-percent increase in that — 100-percent increase.

I don't have enough time. The member opposite discussed Angel's Nest. I will say that I met with the group and the proponents. I did provide them with a specific letter that stated exactly what was required. I also mentioned in the House that when and if we get a new business plan from these individuals,

we would look at it. But in essence, we have services available. No one who needs a bed goes without. We have services available that will allow that to take place. We already have many of these facilities in place. For the youth, for our young adults, we have the Salvation Army, and those facilities can be utilized.

I thank you, Mr. Speaker, for your time.

**Mr. Edzerza:** It is an honour for me to stand up today and speak to the issues that I want to address. I wanted to start out by saying that when I was on the government side, I often wondered why the opposition, as a rule, voted against the budget. Being on that side of the House, I automatically felt that we had done everything that was right; however, I now understand the process much better. I now understand that the opposition really doesn't vote against the budget.

The opposition is not against spending dollars where it's needed. The opposition is not against creating jobs, or spending money that's going to create jobs, to support social agendas or education. The opposition does have some concerns with the Yukon Party agenda — not the budget. I have come to the conclusion that both sides of the House are very necessary in order to promote democracy — and rightfully so. Most governments that I know of, which had exclusive power over everybody, were called dictatorships. Well, that's not what we're about in Canada or the Yukon. For that reason, the opposition plays a very important role in holding the government accountable. There are many issues within this budget that would make one question how the government spends Yukon taxpayers' money.

One specific area that comes to mind, I guess, would be Highways and Public Works. When we have major truck routes through the Yukon and on into the Northwest Territories that are travelled extensively to transport goods to the Northwest Territories, for providing a route for all of the advertising that Yukon does to sell and promote tourism — when we have a large number of truckers, for example, talking about developing a petition to try to get improvements to a major highway in the Yukon, and the money is being spent on basically a back road in the Yukon, where the traffic is very limited, those are the kinds of things that would make the opposition ask questions, and rightfully so, because a lot of the Yukon citizens are questioning it. A lot of the issues that are brought to the floor of this Legislature by the opposition are things and issues that are brought to our attention by citizens in the Yukon Territory.

So I just wanted to put that on record, so that people who listen and who read the Blues and *Hansard* will have a better understanding that the opposition is not all just about opposing everything that is being promoted by the budgets that are presented in this House.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I know that business is a very important part of the Yukon Party agenda, because most of the MLAs are business people and they do own businesses. That is okay. It is okay to promote business; however, one must also address the social agenda, otherwise the public at large will pay consequences for not addressing it. One might ask: where is the connection to this? Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, there are connections that I would like to put on record.

Let's talk about "repairing of the spirit." That is the traditional way of saying, "We need to look after our mental health. We have to look after our emotional health. We have to look after our physical health. We have to look after our spiritual health." Instead of helping our citizens in the territory address these mental health and spiritual health issues so they could be employable, the government relaxes the immigration policies to make it easier for businesses to import foreign workers. Is that a solution? Quite frankly it is like a band-aid approach to a very serious issue, a big problem within the Yukon Territory.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I know someone from the government side will stand up and say that I am against the hiring of foreign workers, but I am not. I am merely putting on record that in my humble opinion the lifelong citizens of Yukon need the jobs. Why don't they work? That is the question we have to seek understanding of.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have always marketed and sold the Yukon as a place of alcohol and parties. The social problems of why our citizens are unemployable go back to the 1800s when the mission schools were first introduced. The destruction of the family structure of a whole race of people still causes many problems today, which contribute to people being unemployable — no intervention to correct the wrongs. Then came the gold rush, which again was marketing the Yukon as a place where alcohol flowed like a river. The influx and alienation of all the gold seekers greatly contributed to the social problems we have today in the Yukon Territory, again creating unemployable people.

Of course we can't forget the construction of the Alaska Highway. Overnight 10,000 soldiers invaded the Yukon. With them came many problems. All these soldiers, as one elder was recorded as saying, had no women of their own. The other issue was that they brought lots of alcohol with them.

I bring this to this Legislature for one reason, Mr. Deputy Speaker, so that members of this House and all citizens across the territory who are hearing me speak to this will have a better understanding of why a large number of our population does not occupy the jobs around town, such as the ones in Tim Hortons or Canadian Tire, all the fast-food restaurants and so on.

Our number one barrier has to do with addictions to alcohol and drugs.

I mentioned all this history, hoping the Yukon Party might broaden their vision and recognize the importance of providing a land-based treatment centre, for example, something that will intervene with all the social issues that plague our territory today. A lot of the First Nations have offered the infrastructure they have in place to help assist the government in dealing with the addiction problems we have in the territory.

All of these are interconnected as to a shortage of skilled labour in the Yukon, for example. There are a lot of First Nation people who would be very employable except for the addictions problem. As I stated earlier, it comes from a lot of history, historical trauma. It has never been addressed and it needs to be.

We need to have that land-based treatment centre. I know there are several First Nations in the Yukon Territory who have the infrastructure. I know my First Nation of Kwanlin Dun has

that infrastructure in place but lack the O&M dollars to get it up and running. I know the Na Cho Nyäk Dun in Mayo have a place at Ethel Lake. I know the Champagne and Aishihik First Nations have infrastructure at Aishihik Lake. Pelly Crossing also has infrastructure at Tatlain Lake.

If this government would find the political will to really become partners with First Nations, there is a golden opportunity. First Nations, I sincerely believe, want to be a part of the solution, not the problem. It would be awfully nice if this government would really focus in more on partnerships as opposed to division, because I can visualize in the future where a lack of political will to have sincere partnerships will really drive a wedge between the native and non-native people in this territory. We really can't afford that and we don't need that.

We all chose the Yukon as our home. We all have the right to be here and it would be a benefit to everyone if we all survived in harmony and not in conflict.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to talk just a little bit about some of the things in my riding. I happen to have one of the largest First Nations in the territory right in the centre of the riding I represent, which is McIntyre-Takhini. And I have first-hand knowledge of a Yukon territorial government that does not work in collaboration with my First Nation. I am a Kwanlin Dun First Nation member and I am disappointed when my First Nation leadership is forced to use the court system to hold the Yukon government accountable to the land claim and self-government agreements.

I find that very unfortunate for many reasons. For example, the Yukon government budget for one year is somewhere between \$800 million and \$900 million versus a First Nation that has \$10 million or \$12 million to provide services to the First Nation. I need not elaborate too much on the great difference in the amount of dollars that are available to the two governments.

So it is understandable why the Premier chooses to use the courts. YTG can afford it and they know the First Nations are stretching their funds and cannot afford to match dollars with the Yukon territorial government or the federal government.

Mr. Speaker, let's talk about the court cases, just to get them on the record. Kwanlin Dun First Nation has what is known as an asset construction agreement with YTG. This was agreed to through the land claims process. In the agreement it states very clearly that any project over \$3 million being constructed within Kwanlin Dun First Nation traditional territory triggers the agreement to include the Kwanlin Dun First Nation in the project.

There are projects such as the extension to Hamilton Boulevard, the airport terminal extension and improvements, the building of the new correctional facility — or treatment centre, as the government likes to refer to it — building of the new high school that is being talked about for F.H. Collins.

Every one of these projects trigger that land claim agreement, that part of the land claim agreement where it talks about asset construction. Has that happened? It hasn't, and that's why there are pending court cases today on two of them.

Will this be the pathway of the Yukon Party government, as long as they're in government? I'd like to know what it cost the Yukon government for their time spent in court. Of course,

they probably have 40 legal counsel who work for them, whereas the First Nation has to seek out someone who can represent them.

It's all about trust. Trust: it's a small word with a lot of meaning. I'm saying to the Yukon Party government today that they're very close, they're walking a thin line, of losing all correspondence with First Nations because once First Nation people feel betrayed, it is very, very difficult to get them back on track again in believing they can work cooperatively with another government.

I sincerely hope that — I have a lot more issues that I could put on the floor, but I'm running out of time. I really encourage this government to find the political will to really start honouring all of the land claim agreements right across the territory and to work in good faith with even all the ones that don't have a land claim agreement in place.

I speak from my heart when I say that I want all of us in the Yukon Territory to live in harmony and not to live in friction. Thank you.

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** I was going to offer the Liberal Party member from Porter Creek South the opportunity to speak, but apparently he doesn't want to. Perhaps he'll change his mind as time goes on.

I know the opposition is often at a loss in debating the budget. In fact, if we reflect back on the debate from this afternoon, in all the members of the opposition — both the Liberals and the NDP who spoke — one would be hard-pressed to find very many references to the budget or anything in it. There was a lot of talk about peripheral matters; there was a lot of innuendo and characterizations of the government in a negative light; but very little contribution to the debate — even negative contribution. It was simply peripheral matters. The constant criticisms, the constant negativity that we hear — again, very little to do with the budget and legislation.

There are some very positive things in the supplementary estimate. It continues the good work done in government departments across the spectrum. Of course, we in the government do appreciate the dedicated work of all officials in all of the government departments. We do not consider them — as characterized by the Leader of the Liberal Party — to be “rogue departments”. We're very dismayed when we hear that type of terminology and characterization coming forward from members opposite in their attempts to make the government look bad because it's not fair to those hard-working employees.

Now, I would like to note a couple of things before I get to the bulk of my notes. I find myself compelled to comment on some of the language coming forward from opposition members today. We've heard the Member for McIntyre-Takhini suggest that the Yukon has always been promoted as a place of alcohol and parties.

Again, that is a case of casting the good work of the employees of not only the Department of Tourism, but also other departments such as Economic Development and my department — the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources. The member is characterizing the good work of all of these people who promote the Yukon in a negative light.

The department I formerly head and that is now under the ministership of the Member for Riverdale South — the Department of Health and Social Services — is another one that does good work partnering with other departments in some cases, to promote the Yukon as a place for health professionals primarily in attempting to attract people. To see the good work of all these many officials and the industry groups that participate in marketing efforts simplified and characterized with the inaccurate statement that the Yukon's “been promoted as a place of alcohol and parties” is not only not fair to members of this government — we're used to this type of thing — but it's really not fair to the officials who are being painted with that brush.

We heard from the Liberal member for Mayo-Tatchun — a lot of imagination. He kept talking about “imagine this” and “imagine that.” That's all it was: imagination on the part of the member from the Liberal Party, the Official Opposition Member for Mayo-Tatchun.

Unfortunately, in this session, we are more than half way through and we have heard very little but imagination from both the Liberals and the NDP. There have been very few facts in their comments, as with today in their debate on the budget. After complaining that we didn't call the budget soon enough — when of course, they control their speed of debate on others matters, as we all know. The Leader of the Official Opposition was fond of complaining that we didn't call the budget and then when the budget was called he barely mentioned it in his opening remarks; he barely mentioned any area of it. The members of the opposition fail to reflect on certain areas. One that came to mind is the criticism that members have made suggesting that this government should not be investing in the Robert Campbell Highway and suggesting that we are ignoring other roads in Yukon. The Member for Kluane, the Liberal member, has stood up repeatedly on this issue and suggested that the government is not investing in the north Alaska Highway. Mr. Speaker, in this supplementary estimate on page 9-5, Department of Highways and Public Works — again, the amount listed under Transportation Division, Alaska Highway - Shakwak, is \$31,464,00 — more than the entire project for the Robert Campbell Highway in one year on the Alaska Highway. Little wonder that the members are reluctant to debate the facts. I think they believe that the facts are biased in the Yukon Party's favour, so they talk about other things.

I'm very pleased in this year, having taken over the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources — of course, I want to thank the staff of the Department of Health and Social Services. It was a great pleasure working with them in the two and a half years that I was the minister responsible. We got a lot of good things done, including things — to name but a few in the short time I have: social assistance reform — again, something that the members continuously fail to recognize that this government took a step beyond what any other government in Canada has done in changing the earned-income exemption to assist people in entering the workforce and remaining there; analyzing the historical reasons — through the good work of the department — why people ended up back on social assistance; determining that nearly 70 percent of the caseload had

been on and off of social assistance; finding out the reasons that were driving them back; determining primarily that it was related to having no personal savings once they re-entered the workforce and having a large expense, such as a car breaking down, a furnace breaking down, et cetera, and having no choice but to return to social assistance.

Under the previous structure, for a three-month period, once they entered the doors of the social assistance office, they would have every dollar they earned in the workforce clawed back. We changed that to eliminate the waiting period for the earned-income exemption and to allow them to keep \$2 out of every \$4 earned for a maximum three-year period rather than the previous structure of \$1 out of every \$4, but time-limited it to prevent misuse of the system. This is a significant step forward and the members fail to recognize it — along with other increases in areas that I have mentioned before. Of course, my colleague, the Minister of Health and Social Services, has mentioned certain areas but these include things like the increase to disabled persons within that structure and increased flexibility to provide them with support as well as changes and enhancements related to that structure but not directly within the program of the childcare subsidy and the Yukon child benefit assisting parents.

That is but one of the areas. Other areas that I was pleased to work on in that time include the health human resources strategy — again, an area previous governments didn't address. There was one bursary program in place — a small one for nurses.

We created a comprehensive program: bursaries for doctors, for Yukon students attending medical school, enhanced measures if they return to the Yukon to practice their period of residency in that two-year period in a family practice — there is a provision for \$15,000 per year in that area — provisions for other health professionals, increases to the amount provided for those seeking education as a nurse, and the family physicians incentive program for new graduates providing up to \$50,000 over a five-year period for new graduates from a Canadian medical school to attract them to the territory. That strategy and the related work paid dividends.

When I took over as Minister of Health and Social Services, the Yukon had 56 physicians in family practice. When I left, there were 63 physicians in family practice — again, good work of the department and good work of those within the medical community in these areas.

Since I'm short for time, I will not recap that area at great length, but other steps that have been taken in this fiscal year that I'm pleased occurred are the establishment of the 811 service — the Yukon health line — which has been very beneficial. As I've noted before, in the first three months of operation, there were over 2,500 calls and a noticeable reduction in emergency-room usage associated with that through people being able to be helped in their homes.

The Member for McIntyre-Takhini spent time dwelling on the area of mental health, failing to recognize that this government in my time alone as minister — and I know there were other areas that do not immediately spring to mind under my predecessor where investments were made by this government

and investments have been made since by the new minister, the Member for Riverdale South in this area — has invested in supporting those with mental health challenges. The increase to the annual budget for mental health is over \$1 million, including a second psychiatrist and clinicians based out of Whitehorse for youth services, based out of Dawson City for the northern region and based out of Haines Junction for southern and western rural areas — again, significant investments. Of course, the recent announcement, as part of the three-year funding agreement for the hospital of the funding of the secure mental health unit — much work into that process, something previous governments did not act on, although this has been an issue since the hospital was first constructed.

Increased funding to NGOs in this year, including increases in funding for women's shelters — and by the way, Mr. Speaker, in this government's time since we took office — the increases to funding for the Yukon women's shelter as a whole have been in excess of 50 percent of an increase from where it was before, as well as funding other areas such as Many Rivers, providing support in mental health issues, and the Outreach van — something that although others called for it, we were the government that acted on it.

In the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources, steps we've taken include the resource access road program — again, an area neglected by previous governments. We have created the fund of \$500,000 per year with a list of projects for the first fiscal year — this year — and open for application beginning April 1, 2009, to provide investment into secondary roads that are part of the Yukon government's public road system but which typically do not have funding allocated to them. Rather than having them compete through the rural roads program or simply be neglected, we've recognized both the obligation we have to keep these roads in good shape and the importance of ensuring that the infrastructure meets the needs of industry or else industry will not be able to operate, by providing this funding, putting it in place — \$500,000 per year. The applications, as spelled out in the policy, significantly favour those who also provide contributions from the private sector to upgrade those roads in partnership with the government.

Other steps include geoscience. We appreciate the federal funding in these areas, both the GEMS and the SINED funding. The federal government has provided funding for the Yukon Mine Training Association — millions of dollars are invested in that area, complementing what we have put into that initiative. They provide matching funding for industry to train people specifically for jobs within the mining sector that are open through a company, matching dollars provided. It is all about maximizing the benefits to Yukon citizens and ensuring they are given the opportunity to receive the training they need to participate. It has been beneficial in the case of the Minto mine, formerly known as Sherwood Copper, now known as Capstone Mining. It has particularly benefited the citizens of Pelly Crossing, who did not have the training to take on the jobs but were provided with that training, and now many of them are employed by that project and seeing the direct benefits for themselves and for their families.

In this supplementary budget, the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources is requesting \$1.765 million for operation and maintenance expenditures and \$1.233 million for capital expenditures.

The department is working on a range of initiatives across a number of different resource areas to contribute to the Yukon government's goal to build a strong and diversified economy that will benefit all Yukoners. This includes, of course, the legislation we brought forward in this sitting: the *Quartz Mining Act* amendments, the new *Forest Resources Act*, and the *Miners Lien Act*, brought forward by Community Services.

Now, it's interesting to hear one of the members — the Member for Mayo-Tatchun stood up and was critical of the government, suggesting that we could have done more to get the forest industry going. Yet this member and his party stood opposing this piece of legislation, which is supported not only by industry but by most of those who have contributed as part of the planning process — as part of the consultation process.

Now, we recognize the approach the members have taken. As I've noted, their assertions are based more on imagination than on fact in most cases, and we recognize the record of members of the Liberal Party who, as then members of the NDP government, were — in fact, one of them was the architect of the protected areas strategy, which of course had devastating consequences for the Yukon economy.

We are not going down that same flawed road. We will continue to work at providing a stable, secure structure where companies and Yukon citizens can have confidence that there is a clear set of rules, that they have the ability to access resources as long as they do so in a responsible manner through the relevant permitting processes and review processes, but that we will not govern on a whim, as previous governments have and as both opposition parties have called upon us to do. When companies play by the rules, when they go through the process and have met the requirements, they should expect — as should any citizen — that once they play by the rules they will succeed.

In forest resources, strategic forest management plans have been completed in southwest Yukon and in Teslin and the plans are now being implemented. The new legislation has been in development since 2003 and is about providing certainty to forest industries, other stakeholders, the Yukon public and to First Nations. I have talked extensively about forestry and expect to again so I will be brief in that area, instead moving on to other areas, including agriculture.

The department continues to implement the Yukon agriculture policy to ensure continued growth in the agriculture sector and we are working with Yukon farmers and Yukon citizens in identifying the needs of the agriculture industry, particularly in the areas of infrastructure, and working to move forward with them through the new Growing Forward agreement that we signed with the federal government and through the multi-year development plan of the industry.

In mineral resources, we remain committed to improving the investment climate by providing regulatory certainty and a streamlined regulatory regime. The amendments that have been tabled and passed in the *Quartz Mining Act* are about that and I

am pleased again that the members of both opposition parties had a change of heart and chose to support that legislation after opposing it in debate and after the Liberal Party called for the elimination of the free-entry system of mining, which of course anyone in industry would tell them would be devastating to the industry.

I can see that I am very short on time, Mr. Speaker, so I will comment just briefly on the connection of the Minto mine to the energy grid. That fulfills several important goals, including reducing carbon emissions, increasing the profitability provided within the system, which has enabled Yukon Energy to apply for a rate reduction and, through the \$7.2-million investment of the company in extending the main line northward toward Pelly Crossing, we are taking a step forward in connecting the electrical grid with Yukon government investment, with private sector investment and through Yukon Energy Corporation.

I believe that I am out of time, Mr. Speaker, so with that, thank you and I will sit down.

**Mr. Inverarity:** First of all, I think that I would like to thank my constituents of Porter Creek South for their overwhelming support. Over the past few months it has proven to be very busy —

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

**Mr. Inverarity:** Do I have the floor, Mr. Speaker?

I have had the opportunity to go about my riding a couple of times. It has been very busy. I will talk to that in a couple of minutes. I also had an opportunity to sit on the select committee for the human rights legislation. It proved to be a very interesting adventure. I would first of all like to thank the Minister of Justice for chairing the committee and the member of the third party for sitting on the committee with me.

I believe that the process itself was at first very difficult, but once we sort of found our legs, things started to move along a little better.

We had trouble meeting over the summer, but we managed to get together in the fall, and we toured virtually every community in the Yukon. And I have to say that at every single community we went to, we learned something new about the *Human Rights Act* and the human rights legislation.

Last week the minister tabled the final report, and I say that I'm pretty proud of the report overall. We all agreed on it unanimously — one of the rules that we were governed by and the motion that was tabled. I would say that overall it is a good working document with which the next generation of individuals who will be taking over this file can actually work on, develop a piece of legislation, then move forward to bring something back to the House that we can review and look at amending. I think it was pretty clear in the report that some work definitely needs to be done in this area.

But I digress for a minute. I just wanted to outline some of the things I was doing over the summer. As I mentioned a few minutes earlier, I did get an opportunity to go about my riding twice. I visited pretty much every residence in my riding of Porter Creek South. I came back with some really interesting tidbits of information, I guess.

I started off just asking questions about what my constituents were interested in. And I would have to pay a compliment again to the Minister of Justice because, surprisingly, the SCAN program came up. Generally speaking, it was fairly well received. It appears to be functioning well. There were some comments that perhaps a little bit more funding, a couple of other individuals, some better training for those people working within the program but overall I would have to say pretty good marks — a job well done. It's moving along.

The one recurring program, of course — I've brought this up in the House before, not to be critical, but that was that, once the individuals were moved out of a community or an area in the city or within the rural areas, there is no real format. I understand they try and track where they go, but it doesn't always work that way. So while it's good to give kudos where they're deserved, it's always good to temper that with, "You can always do a little bit better." So, on that note, I'd like to make a comment on that.

Another issue came up, riding about, and I haven't brought it up in the House. It's one of those things that just kind of sits out there, Mr. Speaker. I know it's going to bring some chuckles from the members of the House, but it's a serious issue.

It was raised by a constituent so I'll bring it up here just to say that I have, and that is tattered flags. You might think that this is a nebulous term to talk about "tattered flags" but in fact, in going about all of the jurisdictions, I noticed that the Yukon flag in front of virtually every school and government office was frayed. They were actually in worse shape than the Canadian flags that generally flew beside them. While this might not seem like a big issue, it is a sign of our respect for not only the Yukon, but also for Canada.

I don't know if every member here knows, but how do you dispose of a tattered flag? I did some research on it and it turns out that, one, it's actually against the law to have one and, two, that you actually have to burn the flag to dispose of it in a respectful manner.

So having brought that one up, I'd like to move on to some other issues. In the big scheme of things, that one does need some attention, but I think we need to look at some of the other things that crop up within my areas. My critic areas are Justice, the Liquor Corporation, Yukon Housing Corporation and the Department of Economic Development.

One of the things I brought up earlier today and I'll just touch on it for a moment goes initially to the Housing Corporation. I wasn't sure if the minister was fully aware of where I was trying to go with the seniors housing initiative. It was prompted by a constituent of the minister responsible for the Yukon Housing Corporation.

It appears that in the Yukon there's housing available for seniors if they qualify under a minimum amount of dollars, in terms of how much money they have and what their net equity is. For example, if they own a house, it's more difficult. In fact, we saw that a year ago when another constituent came in here and was having some trouble getting into housing. The issue is really one for those people who don't qualify for social assistance seniors housing but are probably a little wealthier. They have a little more income; they may not meet those barriers.

They might actually get on if they sell their home and dispose of all their assets, but then they fall into that social assistance point of view.

I bring this up because I think it's important that we as a government — not necessarily the Yukon Housing Corporation — look at an alternative form of providing assistance to seniors who have some wealth and can afford to perhaps live in something a little better.

The immediate reaction is to let them stay in their own home. I can tell you that a lot do want to do that, Mr. Speaker. But there comes a point in time where, maybe for health reasons, they may have a sore hip and have difficulty negotiating stairs, they are looking for something a little better. Perhaps their spouse has died and all they have is a dog for companionship and they can't get out. Really, with seniors, it is about community. They want to be with their friends. They want to make new friends within their age group and I think that we need to look at some sort of housing process or housing for those people who can move into the community once they are finished with their own home.

I am confronted with that as I speak. My parents live in a house in Calgary, they are 92 years old and they have finally come to the recognition that they need to move into some kind of, not necessarily assisted care but unassisted care where they don't have all of the problems that a house might. I would encourage the minister to look at some programs along those lines — perhaps it is something that the government can look at in cooperation with local businessmen, for example.

Another issue that came up in my walkabout this summer, Mr. Speaker, was one of Yukon drivers' licences. I brought it up in the House here a couple of times and I have asked a few questions. We have seen some horror stories. The issue here, as I understand it from the members opposite, is one where there is a pilot project being done in British Columbia. There is supposed to be an enhanced driver's licence that allows individuals to cross the border. You know, that is all fine and good. I noticed in the paper just a week ago that the Ontario government is having some real issues trying to take a driver's licence and convert it into some sort of document that allows you to go transborder. I know that the Nexus card that exists now does exactly that. The problem that we are having, Mr. Speaker, is that sometimes a driver's licence is just a driver's licence, just like a rose is just a rose.

Maybe we shouldn't be looking to have a document like a driver's licence to be everything to everybody if it is going to take five or 10 more years to get it done. Clearly while there is a lot of acceptance of a driver's licence that has the ability to go transborder — I mean, we have had that for the last 50 years, where we could go up to the border and take our drivers' licences. I recognize that the security issues have changed. The real issue here around drivers' licences is that we need something that is acceptable as piece of personal identification, so that when the police stop you on the side of the road at Christmastime at a roadside check and look at your driver's licence, that it looks like it is something that has some validity and is your authorization to drive.

I have cited a number of instances in my questions in Question Period about drivers' licences. We have a tendency to use a driver's licence as a piece of identification for travel, for example, within Canada. It is becoming increasingly more difficult to accept that driver's licence as just a piece of identification.

I recall the story where the individual was flying Whitehorse-Vancouver and went on to Hamilton. When the individual got to Hamilton and was rushing to meet a connection flight with the Yukon driver's licence, the guy said, "Well, this is fake. I'm not going to accept it. You can't get on the plane." We don't really have anything other than a driver's licence that is a government-issued piece of identification that has a photo on it — and that is what is required.

This individual was in a real bind, and finally the Yukon government ID was accepted, but that's for those individuals who work for the government.

One of the other instances that came up was with young people. If you're under 16, you have no picture identification, other than a passport. It has been suggested that the Department of Education look at issuing student ID that are government-issued student identification that a student can use for travel. We know that students go across Canada frequently. What are they using for ID at the moment? That's a good question. I know they've been looking at this for years now, but they haven't actually gone to the next step of suggesting student identification for those individuals in high school, for example.

Now, Yukon College does issue student identification, and I think they're valid and they're useful. I'm not sure how well they're being accepted against a driver's licence, but a lot of people don't have them.

One last story on drivers' licences, and I'll move on. Yesterday morning, I got an e-mail from a friend who is in California at the moment. They spend a few months every year in California. He went into — I think it was Walls, and the guy at the door says, "Apply here. We'll give you a credit card, and you can get 20 percent off everything in the store for the next six months." So, he produced his driver's licence and a couple of other pieces of identification. The guy looked at it and said, "Well, I'm not going to accept this driver's licence." This was yesterday. He e-mailed me.

So these problems continue to persist, and what's happening is that Yukoners are having difficulty with their drivers' licences. And maybe rather than waiting five or 10 years until Ontario and British Columbia get their act together, in terms of their pilot projects — it would be nice to even know when the end date is going to be. Perhaps the minister could dig that up, so we'd at least have some sort of time frame and I wouldn't have to harass him as much as I do regarding this particular issue.

But perhaps we should be looking at providing some sort of secure piece of identification — driver's licence — that doesn't look like it has been laminated in the back of a classroom someplace.

That brings us up to another issue — again, one that I posed to my constituents this summer and brought up in the House earlier, and that is a better bus service, not just for

Whitehorse people, but for all Yukoners. I think it would probably have to start here.

Clearly in my walkabout, cost was an issue. I asked him, "Well, would you take the bus?" I mean, we hear stories about nobody wanting to take the bus and they're always empty. What do we find? Almost everyone that I talked to said, "At 40 below or even in the summertime, I would take the bus if I knew I could go out and within 15 minutes, I could catch a bus, and I could be downtown with a minimum of hassle. I don't mind changing, but if I can get to another part of the city within a reasonable period of time, then I will take the bus."

The other problem they experienced — and it was a significant one — was the fact that like us here where we work until 5:30 in the evening, when they leave, they would like to know they can catch a bus ride home if they have to work late until 8:00 or 9:00 in the evening. That doesn't happen. I understand the constraint the city has and that's why I've suggested that perhaps the Yukon government has a role to play, putting together a pilot project to allow the City of Whitehorse to run better bus service around Whitehorse to begin with. I'm suggesting a two-year program whereby we would encourage Yukoners. I know that in Porter Creek South, virtually everybody I talked to supported the concept if we had better frequency, better service, longer hours and longer hours in the evenings.

I realize I'm running out of time, so I'm just going to touch on a couple of other issues here while I have a moment or two. One of them is to do with Justice. I'm still wondering about what to call it, whether it's the Whitehorse Correctional Centre or the Whitehorse healing centre. I know the minister has stood up during Question Period one time and corrected one of the members that it wasn't called that any more. Is it back to being the Whitehorse Correctional Centre? It would be nice to see another news release on it, just to clarify it. I honestly don't believe that we will see the new Whitehorse Correctional Centre as opposed to the women's transition home completed in this sitting. It has been almost 10 years — nine — since the ground was originally broken by the Liberal government and then put on hold by the Yukon Party government. So I think it's important that we address those issues and if it's not going to happen, then taxpayers should know about it.

Within the Department of Economic Development — I'm moving along fairly quickly — I would be interested in hearing about the adventures to China the minister had.

I think it is worthwhile to see some press releases and the millions of bucks coming in from the Chinese government. I would also be interested in knowing whether or not he approached the government regarding human rights issues. I know that there are motions on the floor by the third party and pins that have been turned back in and I'm wondering if the minister actually took those back and expressed the concerns of some of the members of the House regarding Chinese human rights. I think it is important to hear about those.

Finally, I think, if I'm not mistaken, the Yukon Housing Corporation's home repair program ran out of money. I don't see any money in the budget to increase that through to the end of the fiscal year. I think it is important that we look at those



issues regarding upgrading homes and getting them more suitable to the cold climate.

Mr. Speaker, seeing the time, I move that the debate do now adjourn.

**Speaker:** It has been moved by the Member for Porter Creek South that debate do now adjourn. Are you prepared for the question?

*Motion to adjourn debate on second reading of Bill No. 12 negatived*

**Speaker:** The honourable member has another minute.

**Mr. Inverarity:** Mr. Speaker, I've got lots of issues that I can go through. There is no question about that. Just within the Department of Economic Development, I noticed that there is a \$21,000 increase in business and trade. I am looking forward to the member telling us a bit about what that is.

I am also curious about the \$34,000 increase in the strategic industries development budget. I can only assume that is for more travel — let's see if that is going to be what that is.

Also, the overall capital budget was increased by \$2.1 million. I think that most of it is going to strategic industries. I have to say that it is better late than never. It is nice to see the increase. Hopefully we can look at some economic diversification within our economy. I think I have been harping on it for the over two years that I have been standing in this House, Mr. Speaker, trying to look at things that will develop the economy down the road so that, when the economic slump comes, we will have others to fall back on.

On that note, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

*Motion for second reading of Bill No. 12 accordingly adjourned*

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

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*Forest Resources Act* consultation: letter (dated November 24, 2008) from Laberge Renewable Resources Council to Hon. Brad Cathers, Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources (McRobb)