

Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Wednesday, December 3, 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 International Day of Persons with Disabilities

Hon. Mr. Hart: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to ask my colleagues to join me in recognizing today, December 3, as International Day of Persons with Disabilities. I believe the annual recognition of this day helps to promote an understanding of disability issues for those in our community and throughout the world and it also helps to mobilize support for the dignity, rights and well-being of all persons with disabilities.

Le fait de souligner chaque année cette journée contribue, selon moi, à faire mieux comprendre les questions touchant les personnes handicapées, aussi bien dans nos collectivités que partout dans le monde, et à promouvoir la dignité, les droits et le bien-être de ces personnes.

It is also a time when groups who work for and with persons with disabilities seek to increase awareness of issues facing these members of society. A large part of their work is aimed at integration of persons with disabilities in every aspect of political, social, cultural and economic life. They are to be lauded for their efforts. Our world today is a very different place for persons with disabilities than it was even a generation ago, thanks to their efforts.

Today it is fair to say that everyone will be personally affected by a disability at some point in their life. We may have a family member or a friend with a disability, and as we age, the chances are very good that we will also have to deal with some form of disability at some point in time. This is an issue that affects all of us, not just some members of our community.

This year's theme, Mr. Speaker, is based on our goal of full and equal enjoyment of human rights and participation in society by persons with disabilities. This is the time to renew our commitment as a government and a society to support the principles of dignity and justice for all persons, regardless of their abilities. As a government and as a society, we share the responsibility of making universal human rights a reality for all of us.

This government is taking steps to ensure that Yukoners with disabilities who have a new federal registered disability savings plan will not have their territorial benefits affected. The registered disability savings plan is a new federal program aimed at assisting parents and others to create savings that will

ensure the long-term financial security of a child with a severe disability.

Children with disabilities grow up into adults and we are doing our part to ensure that these individuals will continue to qualify for our social support programs and not be penalized for their families having the foresight to plan for their future needs. We will need to fully exempt the RDSP as income and assets when determining eligibility for territorial financial assistance.

Persons with disabilities have the right to financial security and we are taking steps to ensure that happens. Financial security is a step to maximizing independence and participation in society. We can only support that.

Les personnes handicapées ont droit à la sécurité financière, et nous faisons en sorte que cela se concrétise. La sécurité financière permet de maximiser l'autonomie de ces personnes et leur participation en tant que citoyens. Nous appuyons pleinement ce principe.

This is just one of the many initiatives we have underway in this government to support children, youth, adults and seniors with disabilities. This year we also started a new program to raise awareness of psychosis, so that we can identify this condition earlier.

We have also expanded the chronic disease management collaborative project to include more chronic conditions. Building on the success we have had in developing a model of collaborative care for individuals with diabetes, doctors, nurses and other care providers will be working together to ensure that people with other chronic conditions have access to a coordinated and proactive system of care.

Our programs and services are designed to support individuals so they can participate to their fullest in all aspects of life. In this way we assist in advancing the rights of people with disabilities to full inclusion and full citizenship.

Merci and thank you.

Mr. Mitchell: I rise today on behalf of the Official Opposition to pay tribute to International Day of Persons with Disabilities. The 2008 theme of the International Day of Persons with Disabilities is "Convention on the rights of persons with disabilities, dignity and justice for all of us."

Monsieur le Président, la dignité et la justice pour toutes sont les principaux universels établis. Les Nations Unies a identifié que la dignité inhérente et les droits inaliénables égaux de toute la société sont la base de la liberté, de la justice et de la paix dans le monde. Ces principes, avec l'égalité et la non-discrimination, ont guide le travail des Nations Unies pendant les 60 dernières années, et sont enchâssés dans la charte de l'ONU, la déclaration universelle des droits de l'homme, aussi bien que des traités tels que les alliances internationales sur des droits de l'homme, et la convention du côté droit des personnes avec des incapacités.

Dignity and justice for all are established universal principles. The United Nations has recognized that the inherent dignity and the equal inalienable rights of all society are the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world. These principles, along with equality and non-discrimination, have guided

the work of the United Nations for the past 60 years and are enshrined in the United Nations Charter, the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, as well as treaties such as the *International Covenants on Human Rights* and the *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*.

In the *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* there are several articles that clearly reaffirm that persons with disabilities have the right to full and equal enjoyment of their human rights, and they also make a clear reaffirmation of the principles of dignity and justice for all of us. It reaffirms that all persons with all types of disabilities must enjoy all human rights and fundamental freedoms on an equal basis with others.

Approximately 10 percent of the world's population, or 650 million persons, live with disabilities. All over the world, persons with disabilities continue to face barriers to their participation in society and are often forced to live on the margins of society. For persons with disabilities, as for all persons, the denial of one right can lead to the denial of other rights and opportunities throughout their lives.

As Canadians, we are fortunate that Canada has made considerable progress in all areas of disability. Widespread initiatives in research, prevention, rehabilitation and community action have brought new meaning to the concepts of integration and life with dignity for people with disabilities. We have come a long way in recognition of differently abled persons but we must not stop there, we must fight to eliminate discrimination. We must ensure the rights of differently abled persons to earn a living from freely chosen work and to be able to work in an environment that is both accessible and accepting. We must be able to tap into and use this valued human resource, and more importantly, we must ensure that everyone is able to achieve their full potential.

In Yukon, we have the Yukon Council on Disability, which is a non-profit society with a volunteer board that has cross-disability representation. YCOD is a resources organization for Yukoners with disabilities on issues of equality, community awareness, government policy and employment.

Along with the YCOD, the Yukon is fortunate to have a number of other resources, such as Acquired Brain Injury Society of Yukon, Challenge, Child Development Centre, Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Society Yukon, Learning Disabilities Association of Yukon, Second Opinion Society, Teegatha'Oh Zheh, Department of Health and Social Services' hearing and speech services, and Yukon Literacy Council, to name a few.

This International Day for Persons with Disabilities is a time to make a renewed commitment to the principles of dignity and justice. We as a society have the responsibility of making universal human rights a reality for all of us. We all have different abilities. We must take the time to acknowledge and celebrate the capabilities and experience of people who are differently abled.

We thank the many front-line workers, service providers and volunteers who work tirelessly on behalf of the differently abled to make a difference in their lives.

Merci and thank you.

Mr. Edzerza: I rise on behalf of the NDP caucus to pay tribute to this International Day of Persons with Disabilities, which has been proclaimed by the United Nations as December 3.

The objective of this day is to draw our attention to disability issues and increase awareness of the positive effects of integrating disabled persons into all aspects of life. Accessibility and inclusion are two important themes that disability organizations emphasize.

Research, prevention, rehabilitation and community action have all been instrumental in bringing to the fore the idea of integration of the disabled. Our Canadian *Charter of Rights and Freedoms* was one of the first documents to guarantee the rights of people with disabilities. In comparison with many other countries, Canada has a very good record in accommodating physically disabled persons in our business and social lives and equalizing the opportunities for persons with physical disabilities.

However, we still have some way to go to accommodate persons with what appear to be hidden disabilities, such as FASD, Down syndrome and autism. The last decade has seen the levels of unemployment and poverty for persons with all disabilities increasing. Persons with disabilities have issues that need to be addressed, such as full-time employment and income security.

Only 41 percent of working-age adults with disabilities have jobs; 55 percent of them live below the low-income cut-off. Persons with intellectual and learning disabilities have many more barriers to overcome; 20,000 Canadians with intellectual disabilities still remain in institutions, not in ordinary homes. Community supports and infrastructure are needed to bring them home to the community. This is especially true for the right to have paid caretakers providing care in their homes, whether they are professionals or families. Home care has been embraced as a health priority for many years. Non-government organizations who work with the disabled have been calling for supported independent living situations for mentally disabled persons. We in the Yukon need to heed the call and pay special attention to the needs of all disabled persons.

And, Mr. Speaker, I just want to add that our traditional belief has always been that these people are very special. I remember my mother telling me 50 years ago how special the people with disabilities are, and those are the words that stick with me today.

Thank you.

Speaker: Are there any further tributes?

Introduction of visitors.

Returns or documents for tabling.

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Mr. Mitchell: I have for tabling a letter from the chair of the Social Assistance Appeal Board to the Minister of Health and Social Services regarding the *Social Assistance Act* amendments, the appeal board and committee.

Mr. Hardy: I have for tabling a letter dated June 24, 2008, addressed to the Premier regarding the apology in the Legislative Assembly to the First Nations.

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

NOTICES OF MOTION

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

THAT this House urges the Yukon government to conduct a complete evaluation of the work experience and life skills education program for students with intellectual challenges prior to any decision to eliminate the program, and to replace it, if necessary, with one that has the objective of integrating these students into the school system as much as possible.

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

THAT this House urges the Yukon government to work with the City of Whitehorse and Raven Recycling to ensure this non-government organization can continue to provide its valuable waste reduction, recycling and composting services to the Yukon public in order to:

- (1) dramatically cut down on the volume of solid waste buried or burned at Yukon landfill sites; and
- (2) save both public money and the environment.

Speaker: Are there any further notices of motion?
Hearing none, is there a ministerial statement?
This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: First Nations relations

Mr. Mitchell: Mr. Speaker, I want to ask the Premier about his record of having Yukon self-governing First Nations go to court before this government will honour the spirit and the intent of its own agreements. We all recognize that anyone has the right to seek clarification from the courts on any issue they choose. We also recognize that this government could avoid all the legal costs and construction delays associated with these court actions if they would simply honour the commitments they have already made.

The airport expansion project has been delayed five months because First Nations felt compelled to challenge this government in court or be left out in the cold. The government could have avoided all of the expense and delays of a court battle by simply negotiating an acceptable agreement in the first place instead of at the end.

Does the Premier have any understanding of how destructive this strategy is? Does he understand that this government hurts all Yukoners when it repeatedly ends up in court battles with Yukon First Nations?

Hon. Mr. Fentie: Well, Mr. Speaker, I cannot accept the assertions of the Leader of the Official Opposition. It's not

the government that went to court and, of course, the government continually meets its obligations under the agreements.

But the government must also ensure, on balance, that we represent the public interest in general, and that means there are decisions that have to be made that may require, in the best interests of a First Nation government representing its citizens, a challenge of a legal nature.

I want to point out to the member opposite that his references to court also show that the courts have upheld exactly what the government was doing in meeting its obligations.

Mr. Mitchell: Well, Mr. Speaker, litigation can be avoided if agreements are honoured. This government has choices. It has been choosing to exclude Yukon self-governing First Nations from our economic prosperity when it has previously agreed to do otherwise. This government is forcing First Nations to litigate to confirm that this government must do what they have agreed to do, but won't do. The airport expansion project is already delayed for five months. Some Yukoners have already lost their jobs. Some local businesses that would have provided people, material and services have lost a winter of work. Customs and immigration officials and international Condor flights will have another season in temporary quarters. All of this could have been avoided. What is the cost to Yukoners and the Yukon economy, in terms of lost jobs, construction delays and legal fees because this government chose to ignore its contractual obligations?

Hon. Mr. Fentie: First, to suggest that the government has ignored its obligations under the treaties is simply nonsense. That's not what's happening, and the courts have already borne that out in recent rulings — that the government has met its obligations — and have categorically stated so.

But the member said that the government is not living up to its commitment of economic opportunity for First Nations in the territory. I beg to differ. That's why we share income tax room. That's why we share oil and gas royalties. That's why we have joint investment strategies for the northern strategy. That's why we provided the majority of the housing trust directly to First Nations. That's why First Nations are involved in the Yukon Forum. That's why First Nations are, today, across this territory, working with the private sector on impact benefits agreements. That's why a First Nation like Selkirk First Nation is receiving a tremendous amount of benefit from a development in their traditional territory.

For the Leader of the Official Opposition to suggest the Yukon First Nations aren't involved in the economy of this territory is a direct affront to Yukon First Nations.

Mr. Mitchell: We're hearing it from Yukon First Nations that this government refuses to negotiate fairly with Yukon self-governing First Nations for inclusion in our economy. This is the issue and it's a cost for all Yukoners. This is not the first time this government has reneged on commitments to Yukon First Nations; this is not the first time this government has fought court battles with Yukon self-governing First Nations.

The airport expansion project delays are the culmination of continuous poor judgement by this government. This project was the proverbial straw that symbolizes enough is enough.

This government has agreed to negotiate fairly with Yukon First Nations for participation in Yukon's economic prosperity and everyone loses, not just First Nations, when this government refuses to do what it has agreed to do.

Will the Premier ensure that Yukon First Nations will not be further excluded from our economy and ensure that, in the future, fair negotiations with Yukon First Nations will take place before court actions are brought against it?

Hon. Mr. Fentie: That's exactly what's happening in the Yukon. But if the member is referencing the government meeting its obligation, the government did. What the government would not do is sole source a multi-million dollar project directly to a First Nation. What the government would not do is simply directly transfer land on the waterfront to a First Nation.

This is not an obligation of this government. We act in the public interest; we do so fairly and we ensure that First Nations are included, as they should be, meeting our obligations under the final agreements and self-government agreements.

Question re: *Social Assistance Act, Act to amend*

Mr. Mitchell: In a letter addressed to the Minister of Health and Social Services, dated November 28, 2008, the chair of the Social Assistance Appeal Board expressed some very serious concerns with Bill No. 55. The chair wrote, "The appeal bodies were established to ensure departmental decisions are applied fairly and justly and applicants have a venue to appeal a decision to a neutral arm's-length appeal body."

The appellant needs to feel assured that fairness prevails in the process. Bill No. 55 proposes to combine two appeal bodies into one review committee. It's not enough to say a process is fair; it must also appear to be fair. Openness and transparency are crucial ingredients. Will the minister reconsider the appeal process in his bill?

Hon. Mr. Hart: The eligibility and rights of the claimant remain unchanged.

The act was enacted in 1972 and the provision for the appeal committee was brought forth based on — the idea was to have it in all the rural communities throughout the Yukon and then an appeal board was to be set up in advance of that. But given the fact that it didn't transpire, putting all that infrastructure in the rural communities — because of the fact that our infrastructure was developed along with the technology fairly quickly, there was no need to do that in the rural sense. And thus, we just needed the report here to be handled in Whitehorse.

The social assistance caseload for the communities was often well below 100. Currently it is below 60, and it just hasn't been a practicality to be bringing it forth and in appeal in all of our communities. There was a requirement under the federal act for the Canada Assistance Plan to have this particular appeal process, but when this was transferred to the Government of Yukon in 1995, replacing it with the social transfer agreement —

Speaker: Thank you. First supplementary, please.

Mr. Mitchell: Mr. Speaker, there are other concerns raised by this piece of legislation. Section 9.7(1) proposes that an executive secretary from within the Department of Health

and Social Services would be appointed to serve on the review committee with ex-officio status.

The process for the appellant must be neutral. Having an executive secretary employed by the department will likely bring forth charges and accusations of a conflict of interest. That process is not transparent, nor is it at arm's length. How can one expect a person who guides the committee to be objective if that person reports to the director on a daily basis? Will the minister address this aspect of Bill No. 55 before proceeding any further with its implementation?

Hon. Mr. Hart: Providing the services for the secretariat — this government does with many non-profit organizations. We provide funding to assist them in helping the organization with their meetings and preparation of minutes. In fact, for this committee, we have provided it through the department over many years.

Mr. Mitchell: Well, Mr. Speaker, this is an appeal committee; it's not just an NGO.

There are other issues raised by the present Social Assistance Appeal Board. The fact that the new review committee will not have the authority to grant retroactivity, regardless of the circumstances, is one.

There is the issue of the disclosure of information prior to a hearing. As proposed, the director may bring forth new information on the day of the hearing, without giving the appellant notice.

There is the matter of training on administrative law and natural justice — absent from the bill.

The people with the most knowledge of any group, the present boards, were not even consulted or notified. This is too important an issue to proceed to the guillotine clause. Will the minister assure the House that this bill will proceed to Committee of the Whole and then to third reading or, barring that, will he withdraw it and present it again in the spring sitting?

Hon. Mr. Hart: I'd be more than happy to go to Committee of the Whole. Unfortunately, I'm not in control of when we go to Committee of the Whole on this particular project but, as the Minister of Health and Social Services and bringing forward these amendments to this particular act, I have no problem in going to Committee of the Whole and defending the amendments there.

Question re: *Non-union government employees*

Mr. Edzerza: The Department of Education has deliberately excluded roughly 200 people from collective bargaining rights. It excludes people working as substitute or on-call teachers. The department won't define them as employees under the *Education Staff Relations Act* and the *Public Service Act*. When we last asked a question several months ago about this unfair treatment, we were told the department was researching the question.

Can the minister now tell us the result of this research?

Hon. Mr. Rouble: There are a couple of different pieces of legislation that affect this issue. We recognize there are collective agreements not only with the public service employees but also with the Yukon Teachers Association. Yes, the member is correct that substitute teachers perform a very valuable and necessary function in our education system; indeed,

we need more substitute teachers for our schools who can provide assistance when teachers are not available for the classroom.

The current collective agreement and the current legislation do not include this. There has been a recent court decision through the Supreme Court of Canada, and the Government of Yukon is reviewing this recent court decision, its implications on this jurisdiction and its effects on the government. Once the review is completed, we will be going forward on that basis.

Mr. Edzerza: We are very concerned the government relies too heavily on casual and on-call employees in front-line services dealing with Yukoners, such as nurses and teachers. We suspect this is a cost-saving measure but it affects employees and service to the public negatively.

Teachers on call provide a vital support and function to the public education system, yet they are not recognized as full employees because of the definition in the Yukon *Education Staff Relations Act*. This act defines an employee as “a member of the bargaining unit,” but does not include a person employed on a relief, casual or substitute basis. The Yukon is one of only three Canadian jurisdictions that do not allow teachers on call to become union members.

Will the minister commit to bringing the *Education Staff Relations Act* to this House for amendments in our next sitting so that we can finally treat on-call teachers in a fair manner?

Hon. Mr. Rouble: Mr. Speaker, this government certainly appreciates the work that substitute teachers do in our schools. Indeed, I’ve previously had the experience of being a substitute teacher, and going in and working in our schools, and I can appreciate first-hand the challenges that they face.

This government recognizes the responsibility that we have to ensure that we have teachers in our classrooms and that we have the appropriate coverage when teachers are absent. We also recognize that we have collective agreements and a variety of different contracts that we have with our employees, including temporary teacher contracts when there is going to be a longer-term replacement of a teacher. As I said, there has been a recent Supreme Court decision regarding this matter. The government is carefully examining this issue, and we will be addressing it once the ramifications of all of these are fully examined.

Mr. Edzerza: Appreciation is good, but does not take the place of fairness. Employees who do not belong to a union have less stability, greater uncertainty, less training and reduced income and benefits. Substitute or on-call teachers are usually fully qualified, holding the necessary certificates for teaching. The Canadian Teachers Federation policy states that they should be represented by a bargaining unit. Refusal to allow on-call teachers to be represented denies one of the primary rights in Canada: the right of freedom of association.

Since 1972, Canada has been a member of the International Labour Organization and accepts the obligations of its constitution. The principle of freedom of association is part of that obligation. How long will the minister continue to deny on-call teachers this unconstitutional exclusion from the public service of this territory?

Hon. Mr. Rouble: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There are a lot of things that the Member for McIntyre-Takhini and I agree on, but it’s becoming more apparent these days that there are things that we disagree about, too.

As I’ve said twice now, the Government of Yukon has recognized this recent Supreme Court decision. Government officials are examining it, and we are also looking at this in conjunction with our other orders of government throughout Canada, which also have responsibilities in this area.

We will work with the Yukon Teachers Association and with the teachers in our classrooms to ensure that we have a great teaching force available to provide the incredible work that they do in the classroom.

We will also work with our substitute teachers out there, who we also acknowledge play a very valuable and important role and provide a great service to our school and to our students.

Once we have all of the information, and we’ve thoroughly examined everything, we’ll go to work on making any necessary changes to any legislation, should they be warranted.

Question re: Mould in government buildings

Mr. Hardy: The health and safety of workers and citizens should be of paramount concern to any government at all times. People should be protected from things that threaten their health and safety while they are working at or visiting a government office, and it should not matter if they are in a building owned by government or a building leased by government. Nor should it matter if they are in Whitehorse or in one of our smaller communities.

The Member for Mayo-Tatchun asked a question particularly about the situation with the librarian in Teslin working for many months in a government-owned building known to be mould-infested. Frankly, I felt that the answers that came from the minister were not acceptable. As a result, regarding the worker, his or her health might have been endangered.

So, knowing this — knowing that the government and the minister knew about this situation for over a year — why was the situation allowed to drag on for so long?

Hon. Mr. Lang: We certainly worked with the Teslin Library Board on this issue. There was a thorough review of the building less than 12 months ago. Certainly, when it was brought to the government’s attention that there was a question, we certainly went to work and had Property Management on-site. Occupational Health and Safety is also going down to do a review.

We have recommended, as a government, that the library close until such time as that study is done. The Teslin Library Board has decided that it would stay open, but that was a decision they made. We have people on the ground to address the issue.

Mr. Hardy: I feel that the government passed the buck on that one. Now, it goes without saying that workplaces should be free of mould, dust and other airborne contaminants. They should also be properly lit, they should be secure and they should be accessible to the physically disabled.

There are government workplaces and buildings this government owns or leases that do not pass these tests. I know of

buildings in the city where there are government offices that are not accessible, that are not secure, that are not well lit, that are not well ventilated. Is the government aware of other buildings that it owns or leases that have these problems that I have already listed? If so, will they indicate what they are doing to resolve those issues?

Hon. Mr. Lang: In addressing the member opposite, the government has gone to work with the space plan. That is coming down to be critiqued at the moment and a lot of those questions will be answered out of that space plan that is being done by the department.

Mr. Hardy: Mr. Speaker, I think I heard that kind of answer over a year ago. It seems to be becoming a common theme in here that the government is looking at. Yesterday I asked a question regarding a report that came out four years ago and all the minister could say was, "Well, we're reviewing it." Four years of review. Today I hear another Minister of Education talking about how they are looking at it. Now we have this minister over here saying, "Well, we're reviewing it. We're looking at it." That is not good enough. There are examples that we know — the children's receiving home in Whitehorse is an example.

What has happened with that one? The library building in Teslin — what's happening there? When will this government produce some action instead of just words and reviews?

Will this government commit to taking workplace safety and security seriously in all their buildings and do something?

Hon. Mr. Lang: That's what we do on a daily basis, but we do have to do these reviews. We run many buildings; some of the buildings we own and some we lease. The space plan or space study is coming out, and we look forward to reviewing it so we can address some of the shortfalls we have in our structures.

Question re: Mould in government buildings

Mr. Fairclough: I have some questions on the issue of mould arising in more than one building the Yukon Party government is involved in. The Thomson Centre is currently being utilized by employees — not the whole centre, but the part that is apparently usable. The other part is still shut down because of black mould. The Thomson Centre has been an ongoing project for the Yukon Party government since it was elected some six years ago, and taxpayers are still paying. We want to make sure it is safe for the employees and hopefully Occupational Health and Safety has been doing ongoing inspections to ensure work conditions are safe.

I'm not just talking about air quality inspections, but the actual testing of black mould in the building. This begs the question: have we spent all the taxpayers' dollars needed to eradicate the mould and, if so, when will the Thomson Centre be fully utilized?

Hon. Mr. Hart: I thank the member opposite for the question. I discussed this question yesterday with regard to the Thomson Centre. We have been addressing the mould situation as well as the other deficiencies with the Thomson Centre over the last several years. We have been working closely with Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board with regard to the necessary requirements to meet and ensure the staff

working in and around the facility are working in safe conditions.

Mr. Fairclough: The situation at the Thomson Centre continues to cost taxpayers money and seems to be a never-ending problem. Now it turns out we may have the same thing happening in the Watson Lake hospital, a.k.a. the Watson Lake health centre project. There are reports of mould inside the structure. Here is a Yukon Party government project, nowhere near completion and actually changed into a bigger project, which already has mould.

Taxpayers should not have to pay for another Thomson Centre. So I have to ask the question: can the minister inform us what is being done to protect taxpayers from having to pay for another never-ending mould issue in a \$25 million Watson Lake hospital project?

Hon. Mr. Lang: In addressing the member's question about mould in the new structure in Watson Lake, Property Management has looked at it. There is factually no truth to that, Mr. Speaker. There is no mould there today and hopefully we will monitor it as we expand the unit into the resident health care unit for that area. There is no black mould in the new building, and that's where it stands at the moment.

Mr. Fairclough: Those are the government's own reports. All of this brings us back to ensure the health of the people working in these buildings is not put at risk. The building that the Teslin library was in was headed for demolition, but this Yukon Party government stepped in. Now the CEO of the Village of Teslin stated the building has structural problems and has been infested with mould. He also said there was no inspection since the mould was cleaned up last year. There needs to be ongoing reviews of any buildings found to have mould — mould nearly always returns.

A review even three months old, let alone a full year, should not be considered valid. A plan needs to be put in place to assess buildings with mould, especially since mould seems to be occurring in a number of buildings and to consider the health of individuals in these buildings as the most important concern. Can the minister confirm that there is a plan in place to deal with mould in buildings or can he commit to developing one?

Hon. Mr. Lang: As far as the Teslin library is concerned, we have a team of experts down there doing a review of it and it is being done as we speak. I expect to have a report in front of me within the week to see whether, in fact, it is safe for the employer who is employing the individual there. I remind the members opposite that the Teslin Library Board is the managing tool of that library. In fact, the individual the member mentioned, the CEO of the town of Teslin, is actually president of the library board in the community of Teslin and so that, Mr. Speaker, is how the library is operated in Teslin.

We are very concerned, not only for the employee of the library board but the general public, Mr. Speaker. That building was thoroughly gone through 12 months ago. That building is being gone through as we speak. A decision will come out of this review. It is expected to be in front of me as the responsible minister within a week, and the decision will be made on

whether that library is capable of operating as a public building, as it stands today.

Question re: Power outages and reliability

Mr. McRobb: I'd like to have a more enlightening debate with the minister responsible for the Yukon Energy Corporation about the frequent power outages in the territory. To recap yesterday, the minister agreed it's a problem that concerns many Yukoners, yet he offered only two rather dim options to keep our lights on.

First, he talked a lot about the possible future interconnection to the Mayo grid — but that ignores how further stressing the aged main grid would bring increased potential for even more outages that would be even more widespread.

Second, he's trying to find a common supplier for spare parts. Who knows? Perhaps he brought back a suitcase full of knock-off parts in China — good luck with that.

Why is he so reluctant to have the independent Yukon Utilities Board investigate and address this matter?

Speaker's statement

Speaker: Before the honourable member answers the question, I'd just like to remind all members what one side finds humorous, the other side could possibly find offensive, so just keep that in mind when making your remarks.

You have the floor, Minister of Economic Development.

Hon. Mr. Kenyon: We're always concerned about recent and all power outages, and we're always working to address the reliability issues. We have an excellent staff — many with experience of over 20 to 25 years and more in running that grid. We follow a maintenance schedule that's consistent with national utility guidelines.

We are reviewing the maintenance procedures with an eye to beefing them up, but I do remind the member opposite that, in looking at many of these power outages, many are vandalism, many are accidents that can't be helped, such as trees falling on power lines. We can go out and try to look at all the trees that might come down, but there is a point that things do happen.

We are continuing to review the situation.

Mr. McRobb: Let's get to the crux of how to best resolve this problem. The Yukon Utilities Board has the jurisdiction and the expertise to investigate the situation, identify solutions and issue orders for action. We support this option, especially since the hearing is scheduled anyway.

But the hearing is not likely to address power outages unless this government provides direction to either the board or the Yukon Energy Corporation to have it addressed. That's where the minister falls down. He hasn't provided direction or leadership on behalf of Yukoners.

Yesterday he said, "The Yukon Utilities Board, as the member opposite knows quite well, is meeting currently to make those determinations."

Well, Mr. Speaker, does the minister not understand this hearing is still months away and won't be determining anything to deal with power outages unless he acts now?

Hon. Mr. Kenyon: For the member opposite, I won't comment on his personal remarks, but I will say that we are in the process of replacing and standardizing equipment to increase the reliability. This does take time, of course, and we span a huge geographical area, much of which is in remote areas. We're not connected to a North American grid, so when power fails, we can't rely on other provinces or other jurisdictions for additional power. We are addressing that by continuing to connect the northern and the southern grid, and continuing to work with B.C. Hydro to hopefully at some point be able to connect to that. But I would remind the member opposite that the Yukon Utilities Board approves all of the things that the corporation does, including its maintenance plan.

Mr. McRobb: That's exactly what should be addressed by the board. Representatives from the local business community have voiced concerns about the frequent power outages. This same minister would like us to believe he's business-friendly, but why then isn't he taking the appropriate action to have their concerns resolved?

Let's also make sure that this minister understands a bit more about the board's process. The deadline to register as an intervenor is this Friday. People need to know before then whether the hearing will be addressing the issue of power outages, otherwise they won't be eligible to contribute to the discussion. It's only fair to provide advance notice to the public, especially to those in the business community. So will the minister agree now to provide the necessary direction to have the board address this matter before it's too late for the public to participate in the process?

Hon. Mr. Kenyon: Again, for the member opposite, as I said a moment ago, the Yukon Utilities Board has approved the maintenance plan and has addressed those issues in the past, and I have every faith that they will continue in the future. However, I do point out to the member opposite that, in past years — as I am suspicious he is aware — maintenance has been neglected for a wide variety of reasons, and it has been neglected under all political spectrums.

I give the member opposite examples, such as a single waterline and a single pump to the seven diesel generators. Well, guess what? When the pump fails or the waterline goes down, it knocks out all of them. We've addressed that issue.

We are gradually addressing each thing in time, but this is going to take time.

Again, the outages are caused by many external things: trees on the lines, heavy snow, lightning, vandalism and the infamous squirrels. We will continue to address the problem and the Yukon Energy Corporation and Yukon Electrical have an exceptionally well-trained and experienced staff. They are working as diligently as they possibly can.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

OPPOSITION PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

MOTIONS OTHER THAN GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

Motion No. 637

Clerk: Motion No. 637, standing in the name of Mr. Hardy.

Speaker: It is moved by the Leader of the Third Party THAT this House supports the option of a progressive coalition made up of the majority of votes and seats in the most recent election to govern Canada.

Mr. Hardy: Before I get into a longer discussion on what is happening in Canada and how it impacts Yukon, I want to articulate why this motion has been brought forward. Very simply, there are a number of reasons why it has been brought forward. The first reason is you cannot go anywhere in Yukon right now — in the coffee shops, in the offices, at home — without people talking about what is happening in Ottawa — the serious, serious consequences that have been brought about within the last week and how things are shaping up in regard to the fall of a minority government and the forming of a coalition government in its place, which is historic in Canada.

The second reason is the press release that came out from the Premier. The language used in it indicated very strongly that what was happening in Ottawa was wrong and was taking sides on what position the Yukon government, the Yukon people, were on. I felt that was not a representation of the people of this territory, nor was it a representation of the Legislative Assembly as a whole. I will use some of the words of the press release that was issued on December 1 by the Premier. It says, "Government of Yukon is concerned with plans by federal opposition parties to seize power from the democratically elected Conservative government, Premier Dennis Fentie said today. 'In the current economic climate, political stability at the national level is critical and the actions of the opposition parties in Ottawa are threatening that stability. Canadians have made their choice for leadership and I don't believe they are ready or willing for a change in government that does not reflect their vote.'"

Mr. Speaker, I do not believe that is a true reflection of the people of this territory, and I think that the Premier was out of line in issuing a press release that strongly worded in condemnation of an option that is being debated in Parliament.

There are serious concerns that we have to address in dealing with any party that is elected down there, in regard to representing the people of the Yukon. But taking sides, as this press release did, motivated me to have this debate in this House to ensure that the voices of all people of the Yukon are heard on this matter, and not just the Premier's.

I went and looked at all the comments of the other premiers across the country and this is the most strongly worded statement; this is the one, more than any other one, that takes sides. Almost every other premier who did comment on what's happening in Ottawa has taken a very neutral position, only asking that whatever happens — whether it's the coalition or

the minority government that exists today — they would keep the interest of the Canadian people and this country foremost in their minds and work on an economic stimulus package that is necessary because of the financial turmoil that's facing the world today and having a tremendous impact across this country.

No other premier went as far as to condemn one action and support another. We have to remember that we all have to work together. We all have to work together. The Premier's statements were not statesmanlike, and I have a big concern around that. So that is the context as to why I feel this debate has to happen in the House today. We have to balance out that kind of statement. But we also have to ensure that the people in Yukon who are talking about this issue and are engaged in politics again, like they haven't been for a long time, do know where their MLAs stand on this issue and that their MLAs are thinking clearly and are willing to stand up and articulate what they feel and what they believe.

We ask ourselves: what set this in motion? Truly, what set this in motion? Very simply, what set this in motion was the position of the Prime Minister and his Finance minister's position on their economic statement and how they targeted the opposition to undermine their financial abilities. They targeted unions, the wages of union workers and pay equity and ignored stimulus. They went after cuts but they did not offer a stimulus package for Canada. That's what set it in play.

There are a lot of comments out there right now about why the Prime Minister would pick this fight when we have a greater crisis facing Canada than opposition parties or minority governments right now.

Six weeks ago there was an election. The Prime Minister only got 37 percent of the vote in Canada — a minority vote. The Prime Minister only got a minority of seats. The people of this country said, "Work with the opposition. We do not trust you with a majority but we are telling you that you must work with the opposition for the benefit of the people of this country."

For some reason — and I have heard many pundits speak on this — whether it was just unbelievable foolish judgement of the Prime Minister or unbelievable arrogance, or both, the Prime Minister decided to ignore the concerns that are facing Canadian people — the challenges, the massive layoffs, the loss of jobs, the massive loss of financial securities, whether it's pension plans or savings. To ignore the hardships that many Canadians are going through and go after the opposition in its first financial statement after being elected, to go after the federal servants — why did he not rise up to the challenge facing Canada and the world today?

We have to remember that he or his Finance minister was in attendance at a G-20 summit meeting of governments from around the world where they said they must take urgent and exceptional measures to stimulate their economies in a coordinated way to stop a slide into global recession. Actually they said "depression".

He knew that; the Prime Minister was supposed to work with other leaders around the world, who are coming forward with economic stimulus packages, who are working extremely

hard to try to stop what's happening in the financial markets and how it's affecting their countries. He came back to Canada and ignored that advice he got there and probably the pledge he made there.

We always ask why? Why would he do that? We are facing a global economic crisis. The Prime Minister could have come back, reached his hand across to the opposition and said, "Let's work together to solve this. We need to work together. We need people from each party who will commit themselves to finding the best solutions to deal with this situation the world and Canada are in." He wouldn't do it.

As far as I'm concerned, Mr. Speaker, that is not a Prime Minister. That is not a leader who is putting his country ahead of himself or his own ambitions; and he does not deserve to be there if that is the case.

He put political partisanship ahead of that. That is what set off the whole chain of events that followed. There is no one else who can be blamed for what has happened. I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, the blame is not just coming from Canadians, coast to coast to coast; it's not just coming from organizations; it's not just coming from many businesses, which are asking, "What did you do?" Many leaders in this country are trying to figure out what the heck was going on in his mind that he would do this.

Mr. Speaker, I don't know if we can get an answer to why that decision was made to ignore the interests of Canada, to set off a chain of actions that have brought the opposition parties together — united — to replace a minority government and a Prime Minister that did not put Canadian people first. And what becomes quite distressing, Mr. Speaker, is what the reaction has now been, when the Prime Minister realized that he could not bully or push the opposition any more, that they do have a role to play, they do have a right, and they do represent the majority of the votes in Canada.

I see a minister across the way shaking her head. Well, I can assure her that all the minister has to think about is that 63 to 64 percent of Canadians supported the opposition — not a minority — a majority. By only allowing the Conservative government to have a minority — what most of the voters in Canada supported was the ideal and belief that politicians could put aside partisan politics for a little while when they come together in the Chamber and work together for the good of Canada. Unfortunately, they put their trust in the wrong party, and they put their trust in the wrong person, who became Prime Minister. He obviously had no intention to ever work with the opposition, and that's a loss for Canada.

Mr. Speaker, there are options out there. The coalition is an option. I have read their accord and it is titled, *An Accord on a Co-operative Government to Address the Present Economic Crisis*. That is exactly what people want — a cooperative government that will address the situation that we are facing today, not a government that tries to use its strength in the chambers to push the opposition around but one that has come together. The people of this country asked for the parties to work together.

I said it earlier today on the radio and I will say it again. It is something I heard; it is definitely not my statement. The

Prime Minister was able to unite the extreme right, the Reform Party and the Conservatives, Mr. Speaker. Now, he has also been able to unite the opposition. He has been very successful in that, but in so doing, he has put himself and this country in a very difficult situation. The blame can only be laid at his feet. Because of that, I do not believe that he and his government should be in positions of power. We will talk a little bit about who is best able to manage the economic crisis that is facing us today because there is a record out there.

But let's talk about the accord, the coalition that has been formed. The Prime Minister is indicating that this is undemocratic, that this is something that should never happen, that this is something that he would never do. Yet there are documents showing that he himself tried to do this in 2004 — a letter to the Governor General indicating that he would form a coalition or some form of accord with the opposition parties to remove the minority Liberal government — exactly what has happened here. He was willing to do that in 2004, and thought that was democratically right, as an opposition leader.

In 2000, there was an agreement, a letter that was sent, in which the leader at that time of the Conservative — Reform, I believe it was at that time — if the opposition had more seats than the government, that they would unite with the Bloc to do the same thing. There were two examples, not just one.

In 2004, the Prime Minister, who has been fanning the flames of hatred in this country —

Some Hon. Member: Point of order.

Unparliamentary language

Deputy Speaker: Mr. Cathers, on the point of order.

Hon. Mr. Cathers: For the Leader of the Third Party to stand up and accuse the Prime Minister of Canada or any Member of Parliament of "fanning the flames of hatred", I would suggest, is out of order in this Assembly.

Deputy Speaker: On the point of order, I would advise members to be temperate in their comments. The Standing Orders are basically in place to protect the members of this Assembly and not outside members, but that doesn't give free rein for inflammatory remarks toward people outside of this Assembly.

Mr. Hardy, you have the floor.

Mr. Hardy: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I definitely do withdraw that. I should have said "fanning the flames of dissent throughout our country," in regard to the people of Quebec and people in other provinces and other regions of Canada.

I'll talk a little bit about that because I think that's one of the greatest travesties we're witnessing today, which no Prime Minister should engage in. If anything, the Prime Minister's role is to keep this country united. The language that's being used today is actually language that is separating this country, and it's coming out of the Prime Minister's mouth.

The accord says very clearly that the NDP and the Liberals have signed an agreement, the accord itself, in sharing responsibilities, in forming a government, of which the Prime Minister would be the Leader of the Liberal Party, with a distribution of seats in the ministerial positions.

It says very clearly that the Bloc's role — I'll read it to make it very clear: "Furthermore, upon its formation, the government will put in place a permanent consultation mechanism with the Bloc Québécois." Consultation — not decision making. For that, the Bloc Québécois has said they will not bring the government down for 18 months. We would have stability for 18 months.

The accord, I think, is for two and a half years. I think the people of this country would like to see some stability. There is no stability right now. So the accord — the NDP and Liberals — have attempted to create something that is stable. And they have reached out to the Bloc. Of course, people are constantly reminded that the Bloc is a separatist party. But I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that I have listened to the Leader of the Bloc Québécois, and I have listened to some of the MPs, and I have read some of the motions they have brought forward, listened to some of the debates they have had, and I have found that they have a far greater perspective of what Quebec needs and, hopefully, what Canada needs to make it a greater country and to serve the people better than just separatism.

I have a great deal of understanding around why they may be framed so often as only a separatist party, but they are greater than that. We have to remember that the people of Quebec sent — and I could stand corrected — around 50 or 51 members to Parliament, and they do represent the people from those regions in Quebec. I have family in Quebec who have voted for the Bloc. We've had these discussions many times over the years. They do not support separating from Canada, but they believed the best representation for their region — the best candidate who was running at that time — happened to be a Bloc member, but they do not support separating from Canada. Does that make them separatists, because they voted for the Bloc? Absolutely not.

What would drive the people of Quebec to separate? There has been a shift in the last few years in which the people of Quebec have moved more toward being part of Canada. What I find very distressing is we have a Prime Minister now who is raising the spectre of how — I'm looking for a real parliamentary word that replaces "evil" that the Bloc would be — I don't think that is unparliamentary — but how bad they would be. The Prime Minister is casting them in a light that is making the rest of Canada angry. If anything, his actions and his words are separating Canada — especially when we should be bringing Canada closer together. He is using that one single element to try to save his political life.

Let's not pretend here: if this Prime Minister loses this battle, he's finished. He has put himself and his own political future ahead of the unity of his country, because he is playing a separatist card. I hear in Alberta the flames of anger and revenge, in many ways, striking back, being expressed on talk radio. The Prime Minister should rise above that and say, "Enough. My party and I are not more important than this country." Instead, he is adding fuel to that flame. He is inciting that kind of action, those kinds of words, that kind of anger.

I think back a few months ago — actually not too long ago, at all — when at one point during the U.S. election — and many people probably should remember this — where the ra-

cism issue was being played pretty heavily in regard to president-elect Mr. Obama.

Unfortunately, where they were coming from, it was growing and being fuelled by talk shows, by people within the Republican Party and in advertising. It was a rejection of the Democratic representative — Obama. What they were playing on were people's fears and, at times, underlying racism and on people's inability to recognize the good qualities in another person by trying to create an image that it would be the worst thing in U.S. history if someone like Obama ever got elected.

That was getting out of hand. People were starting to phone in to say that this guy was going to go down and that, if he got elected, someone was going to shoot him. It was mounting, building and growing.

I remember watching one night close to the end of the election, in which the person, John McCain, who was running for the presidency, was in a forum and in the crowd people started saying "I'm scared, I'm scared of Obama. I think he's a Muslim, and he's a terrorist." And I remember John McCain saying, "Stop. Stop it right now." And he told that person Obama is not a Muslim. He is not a terrorist. He's a good person. He's a Christian. He's a good person. Do not do this.

And my estimation of John McCain rose substantially, because he rose above that kind of politics, and he did it not just once — and he got booed by those people in the audience — he did it more than once; every time that came up after that, he challenged, or he stopped the people from making those kinds of comments. He said they were wrong comments; they were not true. And that is what a real leader does. Though he never won the election, I think he won a lot of respect.

In the end, of course, we know history: Obama has won; he's the president-elect and I think he will be a good president for the U.S.

Contrast that to what is happening today in Canada. We have a Prime Minister who brought all this on himself. Instead of admitting he has made a mistake, instead of rising above and thinking of Canada as a whole and ensuring it stays united, he has been encouraging — through his words and actions — the separation of Canada and the way we think of Canada as a whole.

The people in Quebec are Canadians; they're my brothers and sisters; they're my children — I have two of them living in Quebec right now; they're my brother-in-law, my nieces; they're friends. I've lived in Quebec — they are Canadian; they are also Québécois and very proud of it.

We need real leadership at this time. We needed real leadership a week ago when that financial plan was brought forward in Parliament. We needed real leadership about the unity of this country. We needed real leadership to deal with the massive job losses in the auto sector. We needed real leadership in a plan for the future of investment, whether in housing, infrastructure, social programs, jobs, training or education. That's what we needed to hear in the economic plan. We did not get it. We did not need to hear how this Prime Minister was going to knock the legs out from underneath the opposition. We did not need to hear that. We did not need to hear the attack on the public servants.

We did not need to listen to the silence about the future of this country because there was no future offered in that plan. A coalition made up of the opposition would be a stronger government than what we have today. They have more people to pull from, they have more experience, they have more depth to put into the positions in the different ministries. They have a will to work together for the common good. We do not have that on the Conservative side.

So what are the actions, and where are we going with this? The Prime Minister's actions have brought us to this state, so what's going to happen now? What's going to happen now? It is democratic to be able to form a coalition on the opposition side and form government. There is nothing undemocratic about it. There is no law that says you can't do it. The Governor General can't say no. It has happened in the past; it can happen a week from now. It is totally democratic under our system.

When we elect people, we elect them to make decisions down there. They made a decision to unite, just as the people asked them to do, to work together. So they have the right to do this; this is democratic. What's not democratic is proroguing the House, which is pretty well the only option the Prime Minister has left to save his own government.

By doing so, he is actually being undemocratic. You can prorogue a House but that's usually at the end of business, not at the beginning of a sitting, not when there are many bills and issues still waiting to be debated, to be discussed and votes to be taken. This is unprecedented to prorogue the House to basically survive as a government. He's putting the Governor General in a very difficult position. What the Governor General will do, I'm sure, will be what her advisors tell her she is capable of doing and what past history indicates she has a right to do.

The constitutional experts will be taking this apart — there is no question about it. I am sure the decision she makes will be one that has been weighed very, very carefully. But ultimately, there is nothing undemocratic about what the Official Opposition is doing, and I do not think it's going to be bad for Canada if they do form government.

This morning I was asked, "Well, wouldn't this be bad for the First Nations in regard to the deals that already exist?" I have heard the Premier indicate that there are a lot of deals out there that are in place that may disappear if there's a change of government. Well, let's take a look at that statement for a second.

First off, when the Conservative government was elected, one of the first things they did was cancel the Kelowna accord. That was good for First Nations. That was brought about by a minority Liberal government because of the influence of the NDP. That was one of their conditions to support them — the Kelowna accord. What has been put in place by the Conservative government since the Kelowna accord has not been anywhere near the benefits that the First Nations would have received under the Kelowna accord.

I look at it this way: with the same group of people — same two parties involved — I could see a greater benefit for the First Nations, especially if it's built on the Kelowna accord.

That is something the Prime Minister and the Conservative government basically cancelled. There were tremendous benefits there.

As to the deals that exist, we have had changes of government on a regular basis through our history. More recently, we have gone back and forth. We have gone from a majority for 13 years to a minority government to a Conservative government and most of those deals stay in place. They aren't just ripped up and we have to start all over again — the Premier knows this. The Premier and the other northern premiers, I should include, have done a good job at negotiating with any government down there. They have negotiated with both of them for benefits for the north in a united front. I would expect that that kind of relationship and negotiation would continue and everything wouldn't just disappear.

I don't think people in the Yukon, or people in Canada at all, have to be afraid of what's happening. As a matter of fact, in some ways they should be embracing what's happening, because it has revitalized democracy. It has engaged people again in what's happening. But we have to do that on a higher level, with more thought, more contemplation, and less rhetoric, fewer knee-jerk reactions to what's happening. We need to take a breath, settle down, take a serious look at the situation, and look at the pros and cons on both sides. There are advantages to the Conservative government staying in power, in that some of the initiatives they have going can continue without any disruption of new ministers being briefed, without other consequences. But there are also advantages of a new accord in which you have representation from more than just one party — a coalition.

There are impacts to the Yukon, of course. There are impacts financially, possibly; they could be better. No one knows.

No one can stand here today and say that we are going to suffer either way. But, as people, I think it's incumbent upon us to reflect wisely on this and not buy in to a lot of the rumours and distortions of what may or may not happen, but to use our intellect, to use our wisdom, and to recognize that in Parliament they have a right to do this. They are not breaking any law.

In closing — because I do want everybody else to speak; I want to hear the opinions around this on the floor, and there are many other areas to talk about. At the end, I will address some of the concerns and some of the issues that may be brought up. But in conclusion, we have to remember that the coalition is not a minority. It is actually represents a majority of voters.

We could end up with changes in our voting system from this, like proportional representation, which would allow for a greater reflection of the vote. We could end up with better programming, a better stimulus package — actually, a stimulus package that wasn't delivered by the Conservative government, which caused a lot of the problems as well. We could also end up, some time in the near future, going back into another election. And we have to be ready for that as well and seriously think about what has brought this about.

From my perspective, one person has brought this about and has put the country in turmoil, and that is the Prime Minister. I am worried about the kind of reaction that has happened across this country and how he is fuelling that. I want that to

stop. I want people to let them do their business and move on, so that we as a territory can move on as well.

Thank you.

Hon. Mr. Fentie: Mr. Speaker, the debate that this Assembly is having today is going to require a lot more than I just heard. I'll briefly rebut just one theme from the Leader of the Third Party. The Leader of the Third Party is inferring that, because this government has clearly demonstrated and articulated to the nation its concern about what is happening in Ottawa, this is construed to be taking sides. Yet we are here to debate a motion today to support a coalition. I guess I am to assume that is not taking sides.

This government, this territory and the provinces — no one is taking sides on this issue, except for one side, which is the Canadian public. The situation in Ottawa today is frankly a disaster. It is incumbent upon all the parties in the House of Commons to recognize what it is that they are doing. All of them — Conservative, NDP, Liberal, Bloc Québécois — have put their political self-interest ahead of the interest of Canadians. That is clearly evident.

The Leader of the Third Party suggested that there's a debate happening in the House of Commons. I can't accept that. What we're experiencing today in the House of Commons is not a debate. It's a demonstration of that political self-interest that has been moved to the forefront instead of the interest of Canadians.

Look at the divisiveness of the debate now raging across this country. To suggest that this is a good thing, be it coalition, be it minority government — regardless of what view you may take, what ideology you may have, to suggest that what's happening in the country today is a good thing for Canada is simply ridiculous, Mr. Speaker. The country is in chaos because of this issue.

What the premiers are saying is we need to step back in this country. We have to stop this political nonsense and recognize the value of the Canadian public's vote. Does it not count? When we cast our ballots in a general election, what are they worth? This? I can't agree with that, Mr. Speaker. They are worth more. At the very least, Canadians should have the right to see a budget, to make informed decisions, to draw their conclusions from fact and not political wrangling, not speculation, not wild accusations flying across the floor of the House of Commons, throughout the media. This is not in the interests of Canada.

Our attempt, along with virtually all the jurisdictions in this country, is to try to impress upon the federal politicians in Parliament today to stop the nonsense and to recognize that Canada must come first. What we have stated is no different from what many others are stating.

Now, am I to understand from the Leader of the Third Party that the Leader of the Third Party and his caucus support this coalition? I want to point out some things, Mr. Speaker, on why I am confused about that position. I'm not sure if the member is privy to information the rest of Canadians aren't privy to, but I have seen nothing that would provide any comfort that this coalition is in the best interests of Canada. It's

opportunistic; it's obviously self-serving. Let me remind this House that it was six weeks ago that Canadians cast their ballots. They soundly rejected Mr. Dion, who at that time was running to be the Prime Minister of Canada. Canadians rejected that and, through the back door, this same individual could now become the Prime Minister of Canada. I have questions about that.

They base this coalition on — as the Leader of the Third Party pointed out — an accord on cooperative government to address the present economic crisis. I challenge any rational human being to show me in this accord how we're going to address the present economic crisis.

There is nothing in here that gives any comfort to anyone in this country, other than those who have political leanings and ideologies may feel comforted that their particular party will seize power. There is nothing in here that demonstrates that the coalition, as led by Stéphane Dion, and supported by a separatist party in this country where only Quebecers can vote for the members of that party — no other Canadian in this country has a say in that. Nothing in this accord demonstrates a plan to deal with an economic crisis.

Furthermore, I have to compare that something. It's a very important issue, because fundamentally the opposition parties are saying that this coalition is a requirement. It is needed because the Government of Canada did not bring forward a stimulus package. That, Mr. Speaker, I have pointed out — and will continue to point out — is under false pretense. It is not the case, Mr. Speaker.

Billions of dollars already in guarantees for banks, billions more for mortgages, a tremendous effort nationally to coordinate Canada's approach — and this is real — coordinate Canada's approach to dealing with this economic crisis. And the point that I'm making is that it included — the plan of the duly democratically elected government includes the input of every province and every territory.

Now I say that because when the Leader of the Third Party tries to make a case about the majority of votes in the country — Mr. Speaker, when we have a national government, the governments of 10 provinces, the governments of three territories collaborating and coordinating an approach to deal with the economic crisis Canada and the world are facing, that represents all Canadians, in a very diverse and a very, very important way. It's all of us. It's not a separation; it's not an initiative born of self-interest. It comes from dedication and commitment.

Here are some of the elements and I'm going to compare those that we are working on today in this country to what is in this accord that is apparently based on Mr. Layton and Mr. Dion's statements: going to lead Canada through this economic crisis.

Item number one is a very complex and detailed one but it is about accelerating infrastructure investments in the country. Now, I heard through the media — but I have no evidence — that the coalition has some sort of a \$30-billion stimulus package. Nobody knows for what, where it is to be invested, how it is to be invested, what strategic areas of investment will be a priority — nobody knows. Furthermore, they haven't explained

how they intend to create this fiscal situation or position. We all know what the fiscal situation of Canada is. On this note, I want to point something out and another reason why I and many Canadians should be concerned.

The last time the federal Liberal Party of this country addressed a fiscal issue for the country, they called it fixing the deficit. All they did was off-load the burden of the deficit onto the provincial and territorial governments. They didn't ask us; they didn't inform anyone; they fixed the deficit by handing it off to the provinces and territories through the cuts of transfer to the governments of the provinces and territories, which resulted in what became known as fiscal imbalance in the country.

Today in every province and each territory, we are still grappling with that issue.

So I have concerns with where a Liberal-led — though we make no bones about it: whoever is government, we will work constructively and positively with them, as we always have. I am concerned with where their fiscal management will take the country.

Let me go back to what is real; all I can glean from this accord is conceptual, other than statements that should be no surprise to anyone. It's how Parliament works.

Accelerating infrastructure investments strategically does not only result in immediate stimulus and job creation and benefit for Canadians, but it ensures that in the longer term these investments in infrastructure will complement economic growth for Canada. That is in the billions of dollars. Compare that to an accord that says the role of caucus, the role of Cabinet — a no-surprise approach. Well, that's refreshing. But it also states: "Furthermore, upon its formation, the government will put in place a permanent consultation mechanism with the Bloc Québécois," — a self-stated sovereigntist party of the country, whose mission is not to unite Canada. Their mission is to separate from Canada.

This raging, useless debate in Parliament and in the country today has given rise to statements that are very, very disturbing. I now want to put in context some of those statements as they relate to this coalition. The Leader of the Parti Québécois, in the Province of Quebec — Pauline Marois — is using this crisis to advance her own cause, by the way — which is where her political self-interest is really at issue and is another example of it — in the provincial election campaign. She says that the agreement allows Quebec to get \$1 billion in equalization payments that it would not otherwise have had. We do not oppose Quebec getting its fair share of the national wealth to provide comparable services for Quebecers based on comparable levels of taxation. But out of the accord, Mr. Speaker, where is the detail that demonstrates that Quebec will get \$1 billion that they otherwise would not have? That is a question that should be in everyone's mind in this country. What kind of deal has been made here?

It's not the issue of a coalition where, under our parliamentary system, if the confidence of the House has been lost by the incumbent government, it can be voted down and out of office. That's not it. It's: what is the detail of these agreements? When we hear statements like this, it should give rise to concern for

all. This is not about Canadians' interests being put first. This statement clearly demonstrates that this is obviously something else. It also says — and she says, going on, which is of great concern — "on the other hand, Ms. Marois says the crisis shows the Canadian federation no longer functions and Quebec should separate."

Again, Mr. Speaker, all Canadians should be concerned about what is in this deal on the basis that though we do not oppose the fact that Quebecers vote for a party to represent them in the House of Commons, what is at issue here is: should the party that openly presents itself as a sovereigntist party that wants to take Quebec out of the federation be the king-maker and the decision-maker in our Parliament?

This mechanism, though it is very general in its statement, says it will place a permanent consultation mechanism with the Bloc Québécois. What does that mean? Canadians must be concerned.

This accord also goes on — and this is in the context of saving Canada from an economic crisis — that they will make appointments and create a "standing managing committee of the accord" which from time to time could have distinguished Canadians sitting on it.

Mr. Speaker, I ask you, the members of this House, Yukoners and Canadians: what then is the Council of the Federation? It is a duly-elected standing committee to deal with all matters that affect this country. The governments that make up the membership of the Council of the Federation represent all Canadians.

What then is the Council of the Federation if it is not a duly-elected, democratically elected standing committee on behalf of Canada? That standing committee has not only worked with the federal government — again I say, whomever that may be — to accelerate infrastructure investments in this country — step one, in the immediate, to address the situation. That is stimulus.

Strengthening financial market regulation — surely we can all understand what got us here, what started this global crisis and what has created the depth of this downturn. I think that the evidence is clear. The way that the financial markets were set up to self-regulate did not serve our interests as they should. Another part of what the standing committee of the Council of the Federation and the national government — the Government of Canada — have agreed to is to ensure that we strengthen the financial market regulations. This is a coordinated approach across the globe. It's not just in Canada, Mr. Speaker. It is international in scope.

Another point — and this is a real initiative in comparison to "no surprises" appointments; standing committees with, from time to time, distinguished Canadians; the role of caucus and Cabinet. Here's another item: improving competitiveness. Surely we can understand that in this country, in the manufacturing sector, one of the flaws in our manufacturing sector is our level of competitiveness. Canada must become more competitive to truly survive economically and to have a sustainable economy. Competitiveness is a prerequisite.

Improving competitiveness, in comparison to appointments and roles of caucus — Mr. Speaker, I am astounded that

anyone in this House would simply jump to the conclusion that this accord, creating this coalition, is going to solve the problems that Canada faces today and going forward. This improving competitiveness is fixated on the developments unfolding in the auto sector.

But unlike our friends in the NDP and the Liberals who have created this self-serving coalition under false pretense, this includes the United States. How can Canada, how can we address the issues in our auto sector in isolation of the Americans? It is not possible, Mr. Speaker, and to ensure that we protect Canadian interests, we must address the auto sector in unison and in collaboration with the Americans. How is an announcement about a \$30-billion stimulus package going to resolve the situation in the auto sector?

Mr. Speaker, competitiveness includes taxation. Surely we all recognize the measures in dealing with the tax regimes in the country not only by the federal government but in other jurisdictions like ours that have changed our tax regimes in a manner to allow for more competitiveness. This is real. This is not appointments and creating standing committees of distinguished Canadians. This is real on-the-ground work — initiatives addressing the situation Canada is in.

You know, Mr. Speaker, the disturbing part of what we are doing today is that this is a partisan debate that this House should not be having. This House should be standing up on behalf of Canadians and clearly saying that we want our vote to count. We want our vote to count.

Now I want delve into that to some degree, because there is so much more. When we look at in context our vote meaning something, in the recent election, Canadians rejected Jack Layton and rejected Stéphane Dion to become Prime Minister of the country. There is no question about that. So there is an issue here in this process of a coalition anointing an individual who, six weeks ago, was rejected by Canadians to become Prime Minister. More importantly, Mr. Dion's own party rejected him.

But in the self-serving environment that the federal politicians are in today, which is certainly doing no good for the country, suddenly, Mr. Dion is again the chosen one. I have a question about that. All Canadians should be concerned that that is actually happening. How can this be? Under the pretense that there is no stimulus? I just pointed out already three examples of stimulus — of what is really happening in this country. That's why I say that this whole movement is under false pretense. It has nothing to do with the best interests of Canadians or the country.

Furthermore, though I don't really want to belabour the point, I have to say something that really has me asking questions, as I am sure it does other Canadians. This is Stéphane Dion. Here again is an issue. If the NDP and the Liberals were that committed to a coalition, why, six weeks ago, did they not stand up and say so? We know that Mr. Layton was signaling a coalition. We know that. In the heat of a campaign debate, things get said, but we know there were signals there.

But here's what Stéphane Dion said: "Liberal Leader Stéphane Dion flatly rejected forming a coalition government with the New Democrats today on the heels of hints from NDP

Leader Jack Layton that he'd be open to the idea." But here's the relevant issue: the rationale for that statement by Stéphane Dion is: "We" — I'm assuming "we" meaning the Liberals — "cannot have a coalition with a party that has a platform that would be damaging for the economy. Period." This is a statement by Stéphane Dion, the Leader of the Liberal Party, yet we are to accept this accord with nothing in it but very broad and general statements. We are to accept that that has all changed, and suddenly the NDP platform is no longer a big issue for the Liberals who said a few short weeks ago they "cannot have a coalition with a party that has a platform that would be damaging for the economy." This is about, as they stated, addressing the present economic crisis. I have a question about that, and all Canadians should be asking, "What is going on? What does this mean?"

I'm pointing to things here, Mr. Speaker, that ultimately lead one to draw a conclusion that this is political self-interest. It's self-serving, it is under false pretense, and it is not in the best interests of the country.

Oh, Mr. Speaker, along with the *Accord on a Cooperative Government to Address the Present Economic Crisis*, the provinces, the territories and the federal government are working on international trade. This is a real initiative. It's tangible; it's happening. Our own Minister of Economic Development was recently in China. The national government is looking to Europe and other countries beyond our traditional trading partner, the United States of America, to strengthen and improve Canada's economic position globally. I can't help but support that tangible initiative addressing Canada's economic crisis. I am having a hard time supporting this accord of general statements that tells me nothing. It doesn't tell me how they intend to fix this crisis or how they intend to address the crisis.

You know, the wrong thing here is for us in this Assembly to take sides, and we are not taking sides. I have just heard the Leader of the Official Opposition laugh. Has he been watching what is going on in this country? Is that funny? This is something we should be laughing about? This country is a train-wreck today because of the situation that is being created at the seat of the national government with political self-interest driving the agenda. The motivation for the lust for power is driving the agenda, and they are all guilty of this terrible situation. This is not about the Conservatives. This is not about the Liberals. It is not about the NDP and it is not about the Bloc. It is not about technicalities in Parliament. It is about Canada.

I take exception to the Leader of the Official Opposition finding what is going on in this country funny. I certainly do not find it funny.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

Speaker: Order please. Mr. Mitchell, presumably on a point of order.

Mr. Mitchell: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, it has been established not very long ago in this Legislative Assembly that members should not be imputing false or unavowed motives to another member, based on somebody laughing or any other comment. It is fine for the Premier to note that I laughed at something he said, but not to impute what it means.

Speaker's ruling

Speaker: I think that is a fair interpretation. Hon. Premier, we have discussed this before among members. The Chair must apologize, because I allowed the Leader of the Third Party to do exactly that to one of the ministers on the government side earlier today. I would presume this is somewhat of a quid pro quo; however, the honourable member is right, so Premier, please don't do that.

Hon. Mr. Fentie: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

To carry on — international trade. I haven't heard from the Liberals in Ottawa, the NDP or the Bloc Québécois how they intend to deal with, enhance, improve and increase Canada's international trade. All I have heard is that they want to seize power and that they have an accord. It tells us that there is a role for caucus and a role for Cabinet. Most importantly, it tells us that there is a permanent mechanism for consultation with a sovereigntist party in the country.

Mr. Speaker, I would hope that cooler heads prevail and that Canadians rise up and demand this — that their vote must be worth more than what we are getting today at the seat of our national government. I will emphasize once again: all parties are to be held responsible for this mess. What the premiers of this country are saying is to stop the nonsense. Allow a duly-elected government at least to table a budget so Canadians can draw a conclusion based on real information not some conceptual accord.

Mr. Speaker, here is more — and this is what we are working on today in the country — real, tangible, supported by the 10 provinces, the three territories and our national government: ensuring labour market preparedness and flexibility.

Mr. Speaker, it also goes on to say that with the completion of a devolved labour market development agreement the Government of Canada is providing nearly \$2 billion annually for employment insurance labour market programming. It is also providing an additional \$3 billion over six years for training supports for non-employment insurance eligible workers through labour market agreements.

This is real, tangible investment in dealing with the economic crisis, yet we're asked as Canadians to accept an accord that doesn't tell us anything about how we're going to address labour market preparedness and flexibility. It doesn't tell us anything at all.

Removing labour market barriers and labour mobility barriers — another tangible, real initiative that the whole country is supporting. That's not what I am hearing today; I'm not hearing that from the coalition. I'm hearing other disturbing statements, and the debate has become so vile and divisive that it is damaging this country and this country's role in the international community.

Foreign credential recognition — another real, tangible initiative that this country has undertaken, as led by our national government with the support of the provincial and territorial governments. It's important because part of what impacts us economically is our shortage in the labour market area, especially with trades, skills so needed and other disciplines, such as the medical field and teachers. This is a real, tangible exam-

ple of what we are doing to deal with the present economic crisis and beyond, yet we're being asked to accept a three-page accord that doesn't tell us anything. We should be concerned. We should be provided with all the details. For example, as a Canadian, when the opposition parties are saying that the government is not cooperative — I hear that all the time but the evidence is quite different.

I would like to know something. I would like to know from the Liberal caucus, the NDP caucus and the Bloc caucus, through telephone records, e-mails, correspondence or any log that can be made available, how many attempts the opposition party made since the last federal election to work with the federal government.

I want to know from the Conservative Party and the Prime Minister's Office by e-mail, by phone record, by correspondence, by any log that could be made available, how many attempts the Conservative government made to work cooperatively with the opposition. As a Canadian, I want to know those things so I can make an informed choice.

That's why this issue of a coalition seizing power in this manner is wrong for the country. This issue is so important for Canada and its future because our future hangs in the balance. Canadians must make this decision. The citizens of this country must make the decision. Considering what has happened in six weeks at the seat of our national government, that should be the only choice. All the federal parties have failed this country and failed Canadians.

I'd also like to know, before I can — and I'm not going to be as presumptuous as the Leader of the Third Party who openly supports this coalition — I want to know what deals are being made, who gets what; I want to know what their plan is. I want to know that there's a firm commitment that the provinces and territories will have meaningful input in their plan, and already the signs that we should be concerned about are evident.

They're saying they have a plan. I haven't had one discussion with Stéphane Dion, Jack Layton, or Gilles Duceppe in the last six weeks about the economy and what we should do about it in Canada, nor do I know of any other provincial government or premier or territorial premier who has had those discussions in any meaningful way. I do know that we've had discussions already with federal ministers and the Prime Minister. I do know that there'll be more to come in December and January, all contributing to — and I'll keep reciting what's in the overall plan that we're all committed to — this is about stimulus and addressing the economic issues.

No one in the opposition parties in Parliament have demonstrated to anyone what this plan is or what's in this deal. When you hear a Quebecer state in a campaign that Quebec will get another billion dollars of equalization they wouldn't have had, why is this person saying that? How does that fit with this accord? How does that fit with this coalition government? What does that mean to Alberta, B.C., Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario and the Yukon? What does that mean? Is this going to be a balanced approach — that if the Province of Quebec gets something, we all get something? How is that going to work to address the economic situation we're in?

Realistically, what I'm articulating here in the House today is exactly what we've all agreed to do to address the economic situation. So it also includes, beyond foreign credential recognition, skills development. And we've stated a number of times already that this investment in infrastructure means more than highways, bridges and buildings. It's an investment in Canadians. It's an investment in people.

I can't find that in this accord. I can't find where this is committing this coalition government to invest in Canadians, to invest so that Canadians can gain skills, trades and expertise. Where in this accord does it commit this coalition government to do that?

Expanding aboriginal economic development opportunities — right to the point where the next first ministers meeting in January will include sitting down with First Nation leaders from across the country to discuss the economy of Canada, which I am proud to say the Yukon is already doing. Here in our jurisdiction, we have already taken that step. It is the Yukon, Saskatchewan and our sister territories that tabled this initiative, and the Prime Minister accepted it. This is real and tangible. It is action and is addressing the economic crisis we find ourselves in. I think that this accord does not.

As I go forward here, I will be repeating a point: the parties in Parliament, all of them, must step back. I challenge all of them, here today, to sit down — and I'm talking about Prime Minister Harper, Stéphane Dion, Jack Layton and Gilles Duceppe — sit down and work this out. Put Canadians and the interests of this country ahead of this political nonsense and wrangling that we are experiencing today. That is an open challenge. The time has come to step back because Canada's future hangs in the balance.

Though I accept the spirit in which this motion was brought forward by the Leader of the Third Party, in this Assembly we cannot just blindly offer our support for this institution without knowing what that means. Today, no one in this country knows what this accord really means in terms of addressing the economic crisis that Canada is facing. That is why there is a problem with this, Mr. Speaker. It is very problematic because it does not provide Canadians any detail, any information that would allow Canadians to make an informed decision, to pass an informed judgement on what is being offered. This is wrong and that is why all federal parties must step back and put Canada's and Canadians' interests ahead of their own political self-interest.

Mr. Speaker, this debate could go on for a long, long time because there is much to be said. No matter what the spirit and intent of the good intentions are, I can't in good conscience support a coalition when I have no idea what it intends to do. I do have a lot of detail on what the duly- and democratically elected government intends to do.

I would like to see a budget to better understand what our national government is doing but, under the circumstances, how can we in good conscience offer support on something when we don't really know what this coalition will do? We can't.

I could tell right away from Question Period yesterday and the opening statements today in this debate that there's a lot of

partisan furor and emotion involved. I hope I have lowered that bar.

I hear the members across the floor laughing off-microphone; this is not funny. Canada is now where it was not earlier, indeed now in a crisis. Why? Because we now have, coupled with a global economic downturn and the impacts on Canada, political instability at the seat of our national government. We are in crisis now, thanks to the federal politicians.

That is why this is no laughing matter. Any member in this House who thinks this is somehow a partisan debate had better rethink their position. This is about Yukon and its future. This is about Canada.

So Mr. Speaker, we on this side of the House do not support such a motion. It is ill-advised. It is based on no fact or detail other than a very, very empty accord regarding what it is that this coalition intends to do. What we should support is the voice of Canadians and their vote. It must count. We must demand that our federal politicians do the right thing and set aside this self-serving partisan interest and focus on Canada. That's what we should support.

Mr. Mitchell: It certainly gives me great pleasure to get into the debate. I found myself listening intently to the other two leaders and I heard much passion. This is an issue — obviously the fate of our country is something we all feel passionately about. I also heard a lot of statements from both leaders that I can agree with. I heard others that I can't necessarily agree to.

I will be a lot briefer than the other two leaders because our rules only provide me with 20 minutes. I know there's a lot more I want to say, but let's get some facts on the table first of all.

The Premier has repeatedly said here this afternoon and over the past week that Canadians chose the Prime Minister and the government, that they elected a government. Let's be clear: that's not exactly how things work. Yes, the government has been elected. Canadians chose a parliament. Every Canadian who exercised his or her franchise to vote, voted for their choice for a member of parliament.

In Yukon, for example, the majority of people who voted chose Mr. Bagnell, who happens to be a Liberal — 43 percent. They didn't choose a Prime Minister, they chose a parliamentarian to represent Yukoners in Ottawa, to bring Yukon's issues to Ottawa. Some of those people may have also been supporting Stéphane Dion; others may have simply been supporting Mr. Bagnell, and that choice happens independently among millions of Canadians across this great country, in 308 ridings.

Now if you think about it, it's actually Parliament that chooses a Prime Minister. Yes, traditionally that's the leader of the party with the most seats, and in the case of a majority government, it's basically always the leader of the party that has a majority of the seats. But with a minority government, things are considerably less certain and more flexible.

First and foremost, any Prime Minister must have the support of the majority of the Members of Parliament. Again, in a majority situation, that's not an issue. We have a majority government here in Yukon; we know that on any vote, the gov-

ernment side will win the vote if they choose to exercise their majority. It's much the same in Parliament. But that's something that any minority Prime Minister must never lose sight of. To govern as a minority Prime Minister, as Mr. Martin did for a period of time, and as Mr. Harper did for some two and a half years in his first term, you have to be able to maintain the confidence of the House. You have to work with all sides. It does appear that Mr. Harper may have forgotten this, and now he's scrambling to retain his hold on government. It's becoming unseemly, as the Premier has said, on all sides of Parliament. It has become very messy. Strong statements are being made on all sides. Some statements are being made that I suspect members on all sides may live to regret.

But democracy is messy. It's an imperfect system, but it works if we allow it to work. Now, I heard the Leader of the Third Party — the Leader of the New Democrats — talk about some of the reasons why he feels that the current government has failed. He talked about what started this, which was the economic statement of the Finance minister, the Hon. Mr. Flaherty, which included no new fiscal stimulus, unlike what's being brought forward in the majority of other countries, certainly in the western world, if not worldwide.

The G-20, which he also referred to — certainly in the United States and across Europe there have been additional stimulus packages. There was the move to remove the public sector unions' right to strike — a fundamental right of collective bargaining to withdraw services at the choice of the vote of the union and the indication that there would be the removal of public financing of political parties that has been in place for a number of years.

We have also heard about the job losses. We know it. We turn on our TVs and we listen to our radios. Things are quite serious across the United States and across eastern and central Canada and spreading west. We have been very fortunate in Yukon. We haven't been nearly as impacted as other jurisdictions but we don't live on an island. We know that now the Premier who previously described this as part of the regular economic cycle, part of the normal global economic cycle — he has several times today talked about the world economic crisis — so apparently it has caught his attention. We know that pensioners are losing large portions of their retirement funds in pensions; they are watching them evaporate daily. For those who are close to retirement age that is very serious.

We know that people are losing their jobs in advance of Christmas. We heard that the Prime Minister only had 37 percent of the popular vote, but in fact he is the Prime Minister. I initially questioned whether we should be discussing this matter in the House, because we have a great deal on our plates and only seven days left in which to accomplish it here in Yukon. I wasn't certain if anything we say here will in fact have any impact on the eventual outcome, but I recognize that for Yukoners — if you go to any coffee shop or any event in the evening — it is what is on their minds. They are looking to their leaders to provide some sense of calm and direction.

I think we should take a look. There have been some statements made about this being undemocratic. I was, to be quite frank, offended by the news release that the Premier put

out on Monday. He says that he is not being partisan. Toward the end of his remarks today he said that he was reflecting on all the parties. He said that in his closing remarks. But I looked at what he put out the other day, and he said that in the current economic climate, political stability at the national level is critical and the actions of the opposition parties in Ottawa are threatening that stability. That is what the honourable member said. He clearly placed the blame on the opposition parties. He didn't say "the actions of all parliamentarians." That was partisan.

He went on to say, "Canadians have made their choice for leadership and I don't believe they are ready or willing for a change in government that does not reflect their vote." He said, "Canadians did not vote for a Liberal/NDP coalition government supported by the separatist Bloc Québécois." Those are fairly inflammatory words. The facts of the matter are that 63 percent of Canadians voted for someone other than a Conservative, so to say what Canadians didn't vote for — as I said, Canadians voted to elect a Parliament, and as long as that Parliament functions, that remains the Parliament. But in a minority situation, it must retain the support of the House.

In history, across parliaments, there are many examples, and in the limited time I have here I'm not going to go into details; perhaps other speakers, perhaps the Member for Kluane will use his time to do so. But we had, in Canada, earlier in the 20th century, the King-Byng affair. Certainly that was a case that was of great interest, where the Governor General had to make a decision, and that decision was not to immediately go to an election.

So for the Premier to say that it is fine for Parliament to defeat a government, but it is undemocratic and that they have no right to choose another government, is not so. That is not how our system works. The system is more flexible than that, particularly in times of national crisis when it may not be in the best interest of Canadians to go back to the polls immediately. That won't be our decision to make. That will, depending on how this plays out, be the decision of the Governor General to make.

In Australia in 1975, they were faced with a somewhat similar situation as well. It was a constitutional crisis commonly called "the dismissal". Again, it had to involve the Governor General. More recently, in memory of all of us here, in New Zealand in 1999, a coalition agreement was formed to change government between the Labour and Alliance parties. I might point out because the Premier has spoken of this document and dismissed it: the coalition accord that was signed by the leaders of three parties in Ottawa. Well, there are only four sentences in the accord that was signed in New Zealand. It is apples and oranges, Mr. Speaker, because the accord that has been laid out by the leaders of the parties in Ottawa is not meant to give all the details of an agreement between 10 provinces and three territories in Canada for economic stimulus, for going forward, for negotiating with other governments for trade missions — that's not its purpose.

It's not a detailed set of blueprints to build the building. It's an outline of how they will get along and function working together.

For the Premier to state that it doesn't tell him anything and that he wants more information — that's not its purpose. Let's remember that a majority of Canadians did vote for someone other than a Conservative and that a majority of the members of that Parliament are not Conservatives.

In our sister territories, this happens all the time because they don't have the party system. They elect members — they elect 18 or 19 members in the Northwest Territories, and then the members get together and they choose a Premier and a Cabinet. So the people vote for the individuals to represent them, not knowing who is going to lead government. It's not as if there is no precedent for government to work without the people directly voting each time. For that matter, in 2005 — and there are numerous examples of this — delegates to a Liberal convention chose a Prime Minister. Not all of Canada — delegates to a convention.

Prime Minister Chrétien was stepping down and Prime Minister Martin was elected to lead the party at that convention. I was there and I had a vote. Many people obviously did not have a vote. Previous to that, Prime Minister Kim Campbell was elected within a party to succeed a sitting Prime Minister. I didn't have a vote at that convention. Let's not kid ourselves into thinking that the only solution to every situation is to have another election. That may not be the solution that's in the best interests of all of Canada.

I do agree with the Premier when he says that what is important is that we have stability and what is important is that we have a continuity of government — but it is a continuity of government if the government were to change. That's how the system is designed. That is how our constitutional system is meant to work. It's a remarkable and flexible system. We should not sit here and judge that it can't work. It can work.

Basically what I'm saying is that we have a Governor General. Constitutional experts will advise the Governor General. The Governor General will make a decision. She may accede to the Prime Minister's request if he makes that request later today to prorogue Parliament and everyone will have a cooling-off period. Perhaps the Prime Minister will come back in January with a budget and an economic statement that shows that he is taking decisive action on behalf of Canadians. If that is the case, he may well have the support of the House. If he has the support of the House, he will have my support. He is my Prime Minister today. If he continues to govern, I will continue to support him.

What Yukon needs to do and what I have tried to point out to this Premier is to recognize that we need to work with whoever is Prime Minister of Canada. We need to work with Prime Minister Harper. If it should become Prime Minister Dion, then we need to work with him. We shouldn't be laying out lines in the sand. We shouldn't be making grandiose statements that position us on one side or the other of the issue. We need to function together with the federal government and all of our fellow Canadians.

There has been a lot said, a lot of heated comments in recent days, certainly in Parliament, that I expect many parliamentarians will regret saying, but there have also been some things said in Yukon that I think members should give great

consideration to what they're saying, to what their statements are. I know, in fact, that the Yukon Party changed its name a number of years ago from the Yukon Progressive Conservative Party because they wanted to be more inclusive. They wanted to attract people who might be federal Liberals, or federal New Democrats. They wanted those people to be able to support them. They shouldn't lose sight of that.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I have talked about the fact that there are many options and that the Governor General will, at the end of the day, serve us well as the system is designed to. I would like to therefore suggest that, while there are aspects of the motion on the floor that I can support, I think it's too limited; it only picks one option, and I would like to suggest an amendment.

Amendment proposed

Mr. Mitchell: I move

THAT Motion No. 637 be amended by replacing all words immediately after the word "supports" with the following:

"the responsible resolution to the current national issue of who should govern Canada exclusively to the Governor General of Canada as our system of constitutional governance is designed and respect her decision."

Speaker: The amendment is in order. The *House of Commons Procedure and Practice* says: "A motion in amendment arises out of debate and is proposed either to modify the original motion in order to make it more acceptable to the House or to present a different proposition as an alternative to the original." In that sense, changing the intent of a motion is in order. An amendment is not in order when the amendment is irrelevant to the subject matter of the main motion or is the direct negative of the main motion and would produce the same result as the defeat of that main motion."

Therefore, the amendment is in order. Leader of the Official Opposition, you have about 3 minutes and 15 seconds left.

Mr. Mitchell: As I said, I listened quite carefully to both of the other leaders today. They were both passionate in their positions. What I'm suggesting is that all Canadians need to come together now. We need to calm down, and we need to understand that our system is meant to work as a constitutional monarchy. The Governor General represents the Queen.

It's meant to work with a continuity of government. That may mean that we carry forward with the same Prime Minister; it may not, but this is not a crisis or a disaster. Canada is going to carry on. The sun is still going to rise in the east and set in the west, if we simply respect the process as it is designed, as it has worked in the past and as it is going to work in the future, as it is working today. I can support, with the Leader of the Third Party, the option of a progressive coalition made up of a majority of votes and seats in the House but I can't sit here and say it is for me to say it is the only option. I can support, as the Premier has said, the Prime Minister carrying forward or an election, if one should be called. But it is not for the Premier to say that is the only option and that anything less than that is undemocratic.

The Governor General will hopefully inject some calm and reason into this whole process. I can agree with both leaders that we have seen all too little of that over the past week in the House of Commons. I can certainly understand that Members of Parliament feel passionate about their views, but when I see Members of Parliament accusing people virtually of treason for supporting other members to be involved in a process, I think it has gone too far.

I think that there will be a resolution to this. None of us knows what it will be. We may all have our preference. I will be clear that I supported a Liberal government. That was not what was elected, but many Liberals were elected. My Member of Parliament was elected as a Liberal. Others have supported other people — other Members of Parliament.

I don't think that I want to hear too much more in this House casting blame on one side or another and saying that one side or another is undemocratic. I don't think I can support the Premier when he says that Canadians have made their choice for leadership and that they are not ready or willing for a change. They are ready and they are willing, and they will accept the change if it comes.

It is not only opposition parties that are threatening the stability in Ottawa. There is no threat. There will be stability, because there will be a government. There will be a government today and there will be a government tomorrow. There will be a government next week, next month and next year. That's what makes this the best place to live in the world. That is what is right about Canada. I think that all members should be willing to support this motion as amended.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Leader of the Third Party, on the amendment.

Mr. Hardy: Very briefly, I haven't got a problem with the amendment to the motion. The Governor General will make a decision anyway. We're not breaking new ground here.

What was important was that debate happens in the Legislative Assembly. Positions have been taken; points have been shared. What's really important is the public is informed before they react to what's happening in Ottawa, and it's important that we have these discussions within the Legislative Assembly. Never should we tell any member that they cannot bring a motion forward in the Legislative Assembly to debate. That's what our democracy is about: freedom of speech. We have to respect each other's opinions. I think it's extremely important that we do that, and that has to be shared across this country. That has been one of my concerns, that much of the dialogue that's happening right now is not uniting this country — it's dividing this country. On a bigger picture, putting aside what's happening in Ottawa, what is being said out there now worries me greatly and could have ramifications down the road.

I do not necessarily agree that we just keep moving on and everything's fine. That's not the way it is. There is no question that we have problems within our system. We have problems within the party structures. We have problems within the Westminster model that we work under, whether it's in Parlia-

ment or in here. There is no question about it; these are just indications that change has to happen and in order to get change, you need to have debate. You need to have discussions on the floor. You need to share your different views with each other, but respect those different views.

I listened today to the comments made by the Premier and I respect the comments that the Premier makes. I may not necessarily agree with them; I may have a different viewpoint, but I respect his right to make those comments, as I respect everybody's right in this Legislative Assembly. I will listen as much as I possibly can with respect, even though I may disagree. That is what good debate is about — good debate. My fear today is that within Canada, right at this moment, good debate is not happening.

As to whether it's going to be a coalition government or whether it's going to stay as the minority government — the Conservative government — of course the Governor General is in that situation. She has to make that choice. There is no question about it. The amended motion brought forward just recognizes that. That does not and should not deny the opportunity for people within the Legislative Assembly to continue to debate this issue and put forward what they believe would make Canada stronger, and also what would make the Yukon stronger by Canada as a whole being stronger. It's sharing respect across this country, whether from the Atlantic provinces, Quebec, and the Prairies, the west coast or the north. There are different opinions — let's share those opinions. Out of that we may come to a very good understanding of what really makes this country great.

I tell you right now, Mr. Speaker, that one thing that makes this country great is the fact that people are allowed to have a dissenting voice — to have differences of opinion — and they are not put down or locked up or taken away. That is what makes Canada great. That is what makes Yukon great. I support this amendment and hope to see us move forward.

Hon. Mr. Fentie: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. All in all, what we have heard so far, the fact of the matter is that the party leaders are going to the Governor General as we speak; therefore, the amendment is, quite frankly, exactly what is happening. Of course we can accept this amendment today, because today in Ottawa the Governor General is being visited.

I think we have to recognize the unfortunate circumstance that has created this situation where the Governor General is burdened with this kind of a decision. We must hold all of those in Parliament accountable to that fact. The Governor General will be deliberating on the possibility of calling an election because of a confidence vote that will take place possibly on Monday — who knows? The Governor General will deliberate on proroguing Parliament. I have stated on the floor of this House today that our vote should count for more than a three-page general statement of an accord. It should account for at least seeing a budget.

The Governor General may allow for a coalition government, but it is up to her.

That is our system and we all accept that. I can thank the Leader of the Official Opposition for bringing forward an

amendment on matters that are actually taking place as we speak today. That is, I guess, something the Leader of the Official Opposition felt was pertinent to the debate. We accept the amendment, because that is exactly what is taking place.

Mr. McRobb: I will be very brief. It is somewhat reassuring to hear the leaders of both the other parties indicate that they will be supporting this amendment to the motion. I think it is important, Mr. Speaker, to try to bring some resolve to the debate this afternoon.

The wording of the original motion, I think it is fair to say, favoured only one option. It is probably also fair to say that that option would not be supported by the majority of members in this House. In order for it to come to any sort of successful conclusion, it is important to moderate the wording of the motion and to also signal respect for the Governor General's office.

The decision will be made following the meeting this afternoon which, will, according to the clock, Mr. Speaker, start in about 10 minutes time. Furthermore, there's one more aspect to the amendment that wasn't referred to and that is that this House respects the Governor General's decision, and I think that's an important aspect, because that is an obligation for all members of this House to respect, whatever decision is made by the Governor General to resolve this situation in Ottawa.

And we don't want to entertain the possibility of future debate that is spent rather unproductively trying to rehash all the circumstances and re-fight what in fact could be the start of another election campaign, the second one in about a month.

Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the Leader of the Official Opposition, the Member for Copperbelt, for having the foresight and sense of fair play to bring forward this amendment, and I'll look forward to the vote.

Amendment to Motion No. 637 agreed to

Speaker: Is there any debate on the main motion as amended?

Are you prepared for the question?

Some Hon. Members: Division.

Division

Speaker: Division has been called.

Bells

Speaker: Mr. Clerk, please poll the House.

Hon. Mr. Fentie: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Cathers: Agree.

Hon. Ms. Taylor: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Kenyon: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Rouble: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Lang: Agree.

Hon. Ms. Horne: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Hart: Agree.

Mr. Nordick: Agree.

Mr. Mitchell: Agree.

Mr. McRobb: Agree.

Mr. Elias: Agree.

Mr. Fairclough: Agree.

Mr. Inverarity: Agree.

Mr. Hardy: Agree.

Mr. Edzerza: Agree.

Clerk: Mr. Speaker, the results are sixteen yeas, nil nays.

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

Motion No. 637 agreed to as amended

Motion No. 496

Clerk: Motion No. 496, standing in the name of Mr. Hardy.

Speaker: It is moved by the Leader of the Third Party that this House urges the Yukon government to allow the House the opportunity to formally apologize to the Yukon's aboriginal people in the 2008 fall sitting of the Legislature for the great wrong perpetrated on them in residential schools which were present in the Yukon, and further, to:

(1) allow First Nations leaders in the Legislature to hear and respond to the apology to help demonstrate our collective commitment to building a future based on fairness, equality and respect;

(2) express our recognition of the fact that their children were stolen;

(3) acknowledge the effect of residential schools on aboriginal culture, language and identity;

(4) recognize the fact that we are losing our former residential school students at an alarming rate; and

(5) start on this important process as soon as possible in order to move forward together in healing, reconciliation, and dignity.

Mr. Hardy: It's with great honour that I stand today to discuss the Yukon Legislative Assembly issuing an apology to the First Nations, not just the apology that came from the leaders of the national parties in Ottawa in the Parliament.

I feel very strongly today that we need to add our voice in Yukon to the voices that were expressed in Parliament in the spring. It's extremely important that people of the Yukon hear it from the people who actually live with them, and not from such a distance that sometimes can lessen the impact and sincerity of what is being said.

I would like to acknowledge and honour all of the First Nation people in the Yukon and across Canada. I'd like to acknowledge the influence they've had on me growing up in the Yukon. I believe that influence has brought me to this point where I feel it's necessary that we in the Yukon also add our voice to what was said on a national level.

Residential schools, as I said in the past, were in the Yukon. As a matter of fact, I believe there were approximately six of them. There was one in Carcross, there was the Coudert Hall, which I remember as a child. Though I'm not First Nation, I was over at Coudert Hall on numerous occasions, as my mother was employed there. That was a student residence and a predecessor to Yukon Hall. There's St. Paul's Hostel, which ran from 1920 to 1943; there's Shingle Point, which is the predecessor to All Saints in Aklavik; there's the Whitehorse

Baptist Mission and, as mentioned earlier, Yukon Hall, which was the Whitehorse/Protestant Hostel.

In the stories we've heard over many years and from what people remember clearly, there was a separation of First Nation families, a separation of children from their culture, a separation from their language, a separation from their relatives and their lifestyle, the imposing of another culture, language and lifestyle. It has been said in the past by people who brought this about that it was to eradicate the culture of the First Nations and to bring them into the white culture.

You cannot do that to a people. You cannot do that to a culture without having major impacts on their lives and their children's lives and their elders before them, as well. I heard a comment that was made by my colleague for McIntyre-Takhini and I'm sure he is going to reference it as well in his comments. I will allow him to elaborate on it. He commented about the silence in the villages because there were no children — they were all gone. I want people to think about that and my colleague from McIntyre-Takhini will expand upon that, I'm sure.

It is important that we in the Yukon, who work and share this land with the First Nations, also recognize the wrong that was committed upon the First Nations and recognize that within our government structure that we have now, that we can start addressing those wrongs. And in some ways and in many steps, some of those steps have already been taken, but in many others, they haven't.

One of the steps we can take, very clearly, is to allow First Nation leaders and others — elders, people — into the Legislative Assembly to hear and respond to the apology to help demonstrate our collective commitment to building a future based on fairness, equality and respect. And I just read that right out of the motion that we've brought forward.

I believe that by doing so, we will have taken one more step — one more; not the biggest step, possibly. To some, maybe it will be, but it's just one more action that we can take to move forward from what has happened in the past. I believe we can do this collectively. I believe we can do this with compassion, and I believe we can do this with sincerity. I believe we can do it.

I believe we can do it as all elected members from all across the Yukon so that there is no silent voice. I don't believe that we need to be silent any more in expressing our profound regret over what happened to the First Nations and the residential schools that brought about so much pain and suffering, death and problems within a culture, a very beautiful and long culture that was here long before we were.

Mr. Speaker, the residential schools were established 151 years ago and it was established in Parliament and the Parliament had chosen to treat First Nation and Métis and Inuit people as not equal, not equal humans. The statement that is often made is that it was set out to kill the Indian in the child. Mr. Speaker, I hope that kind of decision back then would never be tolerated now in this country and should never probably be tolerated around the world.

But there is a long history of this kind of action, not just in Canada, but elsewhere. It has led to absolutely incredible suf-

fering, and it took away their basic right: their freedom to choose, to make the choice of what kind of life they will lead.

We continue to work with First Nations to address those concerns, but it's the strength of the First Nations that have risen up, even after what was done to them, that is truly astounding. They have created their own governments. They have negotiated their rights back. They have negotiated their lands back. They have built an economic structure that is supportive of their beliefs, of the programs that they want to offer. They have reintroduced their languages. They have reintroduced their culture, and they continue to try to raise their children to be proud of being aboriginal.

That is something we have to recognize and applaud. We also have to recognize that the choices that were made back then were wrong. We now have to be part of rectifying that. I think we are. As I said, this is just one thing we can do. We can do it in the Yukon. We can do it face to face, looking at each other and offer that apology, then listen to the response. It is extremely important for me — someone who has grown up here and lived with the First Nations and gone to school with many, that I continue to engage on many levels with the First Nation culture and people — to be able to issue that apology and hear their response, whether it is one of condemnation for what happened in the past, one of acceptance, or one of concern about what is happening presently, but to listen with respect and understanding and a commitment to do better — to right the wrongs and to make that a commitment of my life, though I was not part of those decisions — I was not part of that — but I have a shared responsibility of my culture. I have a shared responsibility for decisions that were made, and I won't shirk from that. I hope my actions and others' actions will address some of those very serious issues that were brought about by children being taken away from their families, communities, land and lifestyle.

We need reconciliation, and that has to be built through positive steps, and positive steps are really about showing respect, about building trust, about acting in a manner that is reflective of that.

In Canada particularly, but in Yukon as well, there are still very, very many problems facing First Nations. Many of those problems are problems that we face in our society as well but they are exacerbated or they are ten-fold, or five-fold, or ten-fold within the First Nation communities. What are those problems? Well, housing and the quality of housing, Mr. Speaker. It is recognized that the quality of housing for First Nation people across the country is substandard compared to the other cultures. It is recognized that the food sources, the poverty level is far greater. The quality of food and poverty is far greater within those communities. Health issues are greater with the First Nations. Safety and many other areas that we can point to are problems within the general population.

All we have to do is look at the First Nations particularly, and recognize that it's twofold or tenfold how bad it is. It's a multiplier and that has to be addressed. Those are things that I think everybody is committed to addressing at every level, and I hope that at some point those will be addressed.

We will continue to invest and stand by our First Nation brothers and sisters to address many of the problems.

Substance abuse is another one. Many of this can be traced back to residential schools; there's no question about it. The residential schools were brought about by us — by our forefathers — and it's something that we have to deal with and recognize. We have to acknowledge the effect on their culture, their language and their identity. We have to recognize the fact that many of them are dying now. They're older, they're passing away, and they're not getting the chance to hear the acknowledgement from us that what we did was wrong.

I don't want it to go on and on, having this debate. Then a year later or in the springtime, we have this debate again and a few more elders have passed away — a few more residential school survivors pass away — and never have that opportunity to hear people of Yukon offer an apology. Never mind Canada. That was very significant and very moving. I, like the other leaders, went to Yukon Hall and listened to the apologies from the leaders of the various national parties with First Nation people and found it very moving.

I also think that within the Legislative Assembly we could have our own ceremony. We could issue our own apology and we can hear the response of the First Nations who may wish to speak on it. I think it is important that we start this process as soon as possible, because whether we like to hear it or not, there is still a lot of healing that has to happen.

Reconciliation has to happen still. It is not complete. We have to put dignity back into our relations. We are all northern people now. Many of us are raising our families here. Our children have been born here. They are northern people as well.

I have talked to my children about this. They agree with it. They don't see a problem. Maybe they are a little bit more insightful — far more insightful than I am, because it took me awhile to get to this point. I don't think that there is any loss in doing it here. I don't think that there is anything wrong with doing it. I don't think there is anything negative about it. I only see a positive. I would hope that this is what we are trying to do; that is, do the positive things that bring about transformation and change for the good of people.

Mr. Speaker, I think and I hope that there will be support in the Legislative Assembly for this. I am sincere about it. and if there is not, I'm open to hear the opinions. I doubt very much that I'll be swayed to agree with them, if there is not support for this, because I truly believe in this. I believe we can move forward with this, and it's something that we, together, can make arrangements for it to happen. I doubt if it can now happen in the fall sitting, though I had requested it for the spring of this year, hoping that we would be able to do it in the fall sitting, but maybe next spring, we could do something like this.

Maybe it would be a really, really good way to start our new session, with a new budget and a new fresh start with the First Nations as well, so we can move forward as a territory together, side by side, brother to brother, sister to sister.

Thank you.

Hon. Mr. Fentie: I want to begin my remarks by openly suggesting and admitting to the Leader of the Third

Party that I think we all understand his position on this matter, and we all respect it and clearly understand what is behind the member bringing forward this motion.

But I want to just focus my remarks on a chronological accounting of what transpired in this country. I'll say a few other things, Mr. Speaker, and I want to begin by delving into the chronological issues here. It comes from a document entitled *Remembering the Children*.

In 1857, this country passed what was known as the *Gradual Civilization Act*. It was passed to assimilate — at that time — Indians. From the period of 1870 to 1920, a period of assimilation was taking place in this country, where the clear objective of both missionaries and government was to assimilate aboriginal children into the lower fringes of mainstream society. In 1920: compulsory attendance for all children ages seven to 15 years. Children were forcibly taken from their families by priests, Indian agents and police officers. This was happening in this country in 1920.

By 1931, Mr. Speaker, there were 80 residential schools operating in this country. By 1948, this was reduced to 72 residential schools with 9,368 students in attendance. By 1979, in Canada, the number of residential schools was reduced to 12 and the number of students reduced to 1,899 students. In the 1980s, residential schools students began disclosing sexual and other forms of abuse at these residential schools.

Ten years later, in 1990, Phil Fontaine, now the Grand Chief of the Assembly of First Nations, and at that time the national chief of the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs, went public as the first native leader in the country to tell the story of his own abuse in residential school and called for the recognition of the abuse, compensation and an apology for the inherent racism in this policy — this is in 1990.

In 1991, one year later, several individual lawsuits were launched and, at that same time, some residential school survivor groups were then formed. By 1996, the Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples was released, and it recommended that a public inquiry be held to investigate and document the abuses in Indian residential schools. At that time, the last federally run residential school, the Gordon's Indian residential school, closed in Saskatchewan — the last one — and this was in 1996.

In 1997, the Assembly of First Nations initiated negotiations with the federal government and officials for an out-of-court settlement for the residential school abuses. Consultative exploratory dialogues took place between the Assembly of First Nations, survivors, the federal government and church officials to set out the guiding principles for a resolution of residential school claims.

In January of that year, government admitted wrongdoing for the first time. This all began in 1857 and only by 1997 did government admit wrongdoing for the first time and issued a statement of regret to residential school survivors in what was called the "Statement of Reconciliation".

In May, the Aboriginal Healing Foundation was established with \$350 million for survivors of residential schools. In 2000, class action suits were launched. In 2001, the Department of Indian Residential Schools Resolution Canada was formed

to deal with the out-of-court settlement of residential school abuse claims.

In November 2003, Canada launched the alternative dispute resolution process. In 2004, in March, a conference was held at the University of Calgary law school to examine the alternative dispute resolution process and delegates found it to be seriously flawed. So in November, the Assembly of First Nations, through an expert committee, published the report on Canada's dispute resolution plan to compensate for abuses in Indian residential schools, which set out the requirements for a holistic, just and fair settlement for all school survivors, the key elements of which I will list here.

A lump sum payment for all survivors of \$10,000 and \$3,000 per year for every year attended, and early payment for the elderly; a truth commission; a healing fund; a commemoration fund; and a more comprehensive and fair and just process for the settlement of individual, serious, physical, sexual and psychological abuse claims.

From there in 2005, in May, Canada appointed the Hon. Frank Iacobucci — I apologize to this honourable gentleman if I've pronounced his name incorrectly — to be the government representative in final negotiations. The announcement at that time included an \$8,000 advance payment program for eligible elders 65 years of age and over as of May 30, 2005.

In July of that year, negotiations commenced in various locations with all parties. Mr. Speaker, I think it's important to recognize that, from that point and by November 30, all parties to the negotiations signed the agreement in principle. This was in 2005. From 1857 to 2005, when finally an agreement in principle was signed incorporating all the key Assembly of First Nation report recommendations.

By 2006, all parties commenced negotiations leading to the final settlement agreement. On April 24 of that year, all parties signed a final agreement, which awaits final Cabinet approval at this time. I believe that final approval is now completed. On March 22, 2007, courts in seven jurisdictions approved the agreement. As the chronological accounting goes on, we then move to —

I see someone sent me a note about pronunciation. Whoever it was, I thank them. Obviously I didn't do justice to the name. My apologies once again, Mr. Speaker.

We moved on to some important steps and I think this is where we must understand where all parties are coming from. We don't take issue at all with the Leader of the Third Party's desire but I think we have to look at where we are at today, after all this long period of time in this country dealing with this matter.

On June 11, 2008, we reached this juncture after this long and arduous journey by First Nations in this country to where not only was compensation addressed, a truth commission established, a healing commemoration fund and also the fair and just process, but the Government of Canada as represented by the Prime Minister offered a sincere apology to First Nations in this country. We here in Yukon fully endorse that apology. It was made on behalf of the Government of Canada but most importantly it was made on behalf of all Canadians.

And we encouraged, at that time, that all Yukoners acknowledge and remember this day. This apology marks a new era, one in which citizens and governments can start to build new relationships.

From that point, I want to just state for the House what I feel to be the underpinning of this whole approach. Mr. Phil Fontaine, who was the Chief of the Assembly of First Nations at the time of making this statement, said that "the government's apology is a momentous occasion for Canada. This apology will help the country" — I emphasize "country" — "come to terms with its past and accept full responsibility for the pain inflicted on so many aboriginal children." This is the Chief of the Assembly of First Nations.

"Fontaine, also a victim of the residential school system" — a victim of this system — "said that the government's apology" — and I want to emphasize this — "must also be seen as a time for this country to turn the page on a black period in Canadian history. Fontaine said he wants this to now be part of his past, as First Nations people tackle the challenges that lay ahead, including working toward the eradication of First Nations poverty." I accept those words of the national chief as they were intended. The time has come to move on. Though I respect fully the Leader of the Third Party's point and what the Leader of the Third Party is asking this House to do, I have an amendment to bring forward that is more in keeping with what not only the national chief and many others have said, but also in his statements, we must understand that the National Chief was also a victim and categorically stated: apology accepted; apology endorsed; time to turn the page.

Amendment proposed

Hon. Mr. Fentie: The amendment, Mr. Speaker, is this:

THAT Motion No. 496 be amended by deleting the words, "allow the House the opportunity to formally apologize to the Yukon's aboriginal people in the 2008 fall sitting of the Legislature," and replacing them with the following: "acknowledge and fully endorse the official apology to former students of Indian residential schools that was made by the Prime Minister on behalf of the Government of Canada and all Canadians in the House of Commons on June 11, 2008", and by deleting the following words in clause (1): "allow First Nations leaders in the Legislature to hear and respond to the apology to help".

Speaker: From the Chair's perspective the motion is in order and it reads as follows. It has been moved by the Hon. Premier

THAT Motion No. 496 be amended by deleting the words, "allow the House the opportunity to formally apologize to the Yukon's aboriginal people in the 2008 fall sitting of the Legislature," and replacing them with the following: "acknowledge and fully endorse the official apology to former students of Indian residential schools that was made by the Prime Minister on behalf of the Government of Canada and all Canadians in the House of Commons on June 11, 2008", and by deleting the following words in clause (1): "allow First Nations leaders in the Legislature to hear and respond to the apology to help".

You have 20 minutes, Hon. Premier, on the amendment, please.

Hon. Mr. Fentie: I'll be very brief. This amendment is in keeping with what obviously is clearly the position of not only a survivor, but the national chief and many others who have accepted the fact that the time has come to move on and to support the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and other matters in addressing this situation because of the apology that has been given.

So, with that, I'll turn it over to the House and await the outcome.

Thank you.

Mr. Mitchell: On the amendment — and I want to start by thanking the Leader of the Third Party for bringing forward his motion today. I listened with great interest to both of the speakers on the main motion, but I will address the amendment.

The amendment basically asks this House to acknowledge and fully endorse the official apology to former students of Indian residential schools that was made by the Prime Minister on behalf of the Government of Canada and all Canadians in the House of Commons on June 11, 2008.

I attended at Yukon Hall, along with the Premier and the Leader of the Third Party, on that historic day and witnessed via television the formal apology from Prime Minister Harper and from all three opposition leaders. I will say that previously, a couple of years earlier, I had written to the Hon. Jim Prentice when he was the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development minister, requesting that the Government of Canada issue a formal apology. There was already compensation being organized but I felt that a formal apology was important and necessary in order for people to heal, in order for aboriginal Canadians from all across Canada to understand that Canada and Canadians were acknowledging the terrible wrongs that were committed to generations of aboriginal people in Canada.

I also would say that Mr. Prentice wrote back and said that they were working on this, and I will note that he kept his word; it has been done. It was done by a Conservative government; it was done on behalf of all Canadians, regardless of their political stripe.

I was quite moved when I listened to the Prime Minister on June 11, and I thought of him as my Prime Minister, not as a Conservative leader. I was also quite moved when Stéphane Dion spoke, on behalf of the Official Opposition, apologized and took the step of noting that so many of these wrongs were perpetrated upon First Nation people while there were Liberal governments in power in Canada. All of the leaders spoke movingly, but I think it's quite important to recognize that no government, no political party, no Canadian is without responsibility for what occurred.

I also listened and watched and experienced a great deal of emotion to the testimony of First Nation survivors of the residential school system, many of whom I knew personally. Some of them had previously talked privately with me about their

experiences, but most of them had not shared that. There were also children of survivors, who talked about how it impacted on their families, even if they had not attended the schools. It was a very powerful day. I also observed the emotion on the faces of our Premier and of the Leader of the Third Party. I could see it in their eyes that everyone understood that this was a very historic day.

Mr. Speaker, previously what was at issue today was a separate apology here, but now we are talking about recognizing the apology that was done on our behalf. There is an old saying that actions speak louder than words. We can apologize once, twice or a thousand times.

It will be our actions — our actions in this House — when we collectively address issues that impact on First Nations, such as when we look at improving new curriculum that will help First Nations to restore those portions of their culture that are gone. I recognize that I am speaking to the amendment, but in acknowledging and fully endorsing the apology that was made I think we have to do our part. To acknowledge and endorse something, we have to act. I think it is important that our actions are consistent with the apology.

There is more to be done. There is the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. We have to support that process in whatever role we have with it. In order to acknowledge and fully endorse the official apology that was made, I believe we have to endeavour to properly implement the land claims that were negotiated 35 years ago. That is what will ultimately be the remedy. There have been other terrible wrongs that have occurred in recent years in Africa and other parts of the world. Just before I was born, there was the genocide that occurred in Germany to the Jewish people. It has become known as the Holocaust under the Nazis. There was a formal apology that was eventually issued by the Government of Germany for the wrongs that were committed by their predecessor governments. That is like that apology that we are talking about acknowledging and endorsing here.

I have spoken to Holocaust survivors, Mr. Speaker. When I spoke to survivors, some of them told me that they were helped in their healing by that apology. Others said that they could never accept an apology and that no apology could ever undo what they experienced and what their families experienced. In most cases, their families were eradicated. It was too overwhelming. In all cases, they wanted to move on with their healing. They didn't really want to revisit it again and again. From what I have heard from First Nation people — those people that I have talked to — they have accepted this as a genuine apology. It can't undo what was done, but it can help in the healing. I know that not all will feel that way. I know that others wish to speak.

I know that the Member for McIntyre-Takhini has spoken on many occasions quite passionately about his experiences and those of his family. I will respect the views that he brings forward when he does. From my perspective, as a Canadian, I do acknowledge and fully endorse the official apology that was made on that day. I felt it was genuine. I felt that the people in the room that I was in that day acknowledged that it was genuine. Most of them, as the Premier said, followed the example of

Grand Chief Phil Fontaine when he spoke on behalf of aboriginal Canadians that day and said that he accepted the apology.

I know that there are some for whom no apology will ever be sufficient. Because this was an attempt at cultural genocide that was perpetrated by leaders of the day — by Canadian government leaders, educators and church leaders — I can understand how deep the hurt must be.

I believe that if we genuinely acknowledge and endorse the apology that was made, and we act in good faith every day in our dealings and the decisions we make that affect First Nation people, and if we never again allow prejudice, bigotry and all of the ugliness that comes with it to prevail, and if we correct people when they speak in those terms, then I think the apology will be meaningful, and I can support the amendment to the motion.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Edzerza: I'm going to be quite brief on this amendment. I want to start by saying that the only people who would know how much the apology meant would be the victims — the First Nation people — and nobody else, and not as a group — as an individual.

No one else would know the pain, and not one person's opinion speaks for everyone. The Grand Chief's comments are his own — strictly his own. He can't speak for every First Nation person across Canada. One has to ask: does everyone accept the apology?

Mr. Speaker, First Nation people are basically homebodies. You don't see many First Nations up and move to Ottawa for a job. You don't see many First Nations pull up stakes and move to Vancouver, or move to Alberta for work. They'll stay here, and they'll suffer until things get better. They stick very close to home, and it's the same with their train of thought about historical traumas and about past abuses. It happened to the people in the Yukon, not Ottawa. Not everybody's going to understand that, but I do. As a First Nation person, I totally understand it. We don't know Mr. Harper. We know Dennis Fentie. That's about the extent — we know the Prime Minister of Canada, we know the Premier of the Yukon, and that's about the extent of what we think.

I have heard victims from the residential schools here in the Yukon ask, "Why is that guy from Ottawa apologizing to us? It happened to us here in Whitehorse, in the Yukon, not in Ottawa. Why is he talking about apologizing to us? I don't accept it — totally."

To put everyone in the same basket is not right. Personally, I would like to see all the premiers across Canada apologize in each province and each territory. It is quite obvious that we can't just turn the page. It's not that simple. The proof is in the pudding, right here in this city. Look at how many residential school victims died since they got their compensation money. Look at how many died at a very young age before they got any compensation or ever heard the apology. Look at how many people today are homeless and suffering, not knowing or making the connection that it is directly linked to the trauma from time they spent in the mission school. They don't know. Why is that? You have to ask yourself why. Well, until just

very recently, there was never ever any intervention into helping the First Nation people to understand the historical trauma that the residential schools inflicted upon them. A lot of the people who are still walking the streets today don't even realize they were a victim. They don't make the connection; they don't understand it. I feel that this amendment sort of takes away from what the intent was.

But we have to start respecting the aboriginal traditional knowledge, values and beliefs. It's not all about the western European culture. I know that has been inflicted upon the First Nation people and we get criticized over and over and over because we can't adapt to it, and we never will because we are Indian people.

We have a very difficult time when none of us know how to speak our language. Like I said before, I'm 60 years old now, and I don't know my language. I never went to residential school, because my father brought me into this world as non-status Indian. My father gave up all of his status rights so that his children didn't have to be taken away to the residential school. That, in itself, is a whole different story that probably needs some apologizing from the government again down the road because mentally, spiritually, emotionally, it destroyed us because we have no sense of belonging. Our sense of belonging was destroyed. I know all through my life I never really passed off very well as a non-native person but I did very well as a native person, which I am.

However, you would only understand the complications when you walk in my shoes. You will only understand it when you walk in somebody else's moccasins. The old phrase, "before you have anything to say about anyone you want to walk a mile in their moccasins," could very well apply to this. A lot of people can make comments about it. "Well, get over it" — I've heard that phrase too. Get over it. Get over the mission school. Well, you know we certainly would love to; all of us.

Some of my older brothers and sisters went to the mission school, and they never speak about what happened. They don't talk about it, and I don't think they ever will because they had much difficulty in their life — lots of problems.

The other thing that a lot of people who want to come forward and talk about the mission school don't realize is that the homes were basically non-existent. I have relatives through marriage who don't know each other, and they are brother and sister. That's because they were taken and separated. In fact, I know some who didn't even know they had brothers and sisters until they were 16 years old.

The story goes on and on and on. I find it somewhat discomforting when I hear people say, "turn the page and just get going — leave it." Well, we can't, and I guess maybe that's why, ever since I've been an MLA, I have consistently asked for a land-based treatment centre, because in my heart, I feel that's the only thing that'll help us, even more than an apology ever will. It'll help the First Nation victims more than any amount of compensation dollars ever will. What's really critical here is something that's not being talked about too much — the well-being of the grandchildren and the generations of people who have been affected by the mission school. It's generational; it's not only about those victims who went to the resi-

dential school or the people who attended the school. It's about all of the grandchildren and children of the victims. It's a very, very humungous issue. I can't help but believe that an apology from every premier across the country may have a very positive impact. I say that again only because of the comments made right here in Whitehorse by some of the victims. "It wasn't a guy in Ottawa who did this to me; it was right here in the territory."

To be able to have the leaders of every province and territory stand up and say, "I do accept the apology from the federal government but I would also like to make an additional apology on behalf of the Yukon people," — there's nothing wrong with it. Who knows? As long as it doesn't happen, you will never know if it would have had a very positive impact on those who are stuck today mentally, spiritually and emotionally. They're stuck just because — it's like I said: a man from Ottawa should not be apologizing for what happened in the Yukon.

I'll just close with that and thank you for having the opportunity to put that different perspective out on the floor. Like I said, we're never going to know. If there were a public apology from the Yukon government, it could make the world of difference or it could make no difference.

I think the intent of this motion was to further speak right from the homeland. A lot of us don't even know Ottawa. We don't care about it. We have never seen it. We've never been there. All we know is there is lots of political turmoil down there today.

Thank you.

Hon. Ms. Horne: I would like to speak on this amended motion especially since I was one of the children who were taken away from parents and sent to a residential school. I awaited the Prime Minister's apology on June 11 with trepidation as it was part of my life which I endeavour to bury and forget. I accompanied Premier Fentie and executive assistant Sheila Clark to the CYFN cafeteria to listen to the Prime Minister's statement of apology to former students of aboriginal residential schools. I knew that it was not Prime Minister Harper who was the perpetrator of the policies behind the residential schools which were racist and wrong.

I did not expect much or think the apology would be effective and meaningful and I was pleased to have this support that was with me. I, like many, many, other First Nation children, suffered serious emotional, cultural, linguistic, spiritual and sexual abuse while in residential school, to which we were entrusted as children.

My siblings and I were placed in three separate facilities. We, to this day, do not know each other as we would in a healthy family environment. As children, we all experienced and felt deeply our removal from our siblings, from our mother, from our father and grandparents, and from the communities, our language and our culture. We were degraded to a point where we had no self-worth. We were ashamed of ourselves, and we lived in atmospheres completely devoid of recognition and respect for who we were as First Nation people, with a strong cultural background of pride.

We were not allowed to speak our language, to practise our traditional offerings of spirituality, nor to receive our traditional teachings of responsibility and respect, which historically were passed down from generation to generation — the traditional knowledge of loving ourselves and others, the strength and endurance of the family unit.

Sadly, many survivors in the past and present who could not cope with their pain and suffering have died and are dying prematurely under many different circumstances. A high school friend of mine who attended residential school with me took his own life, unable to find his way out of the trauma. He never did tell me what trauma he endured from the hands of those to whom his care and life were entrusted. Today, I wonder if the apology would have made a difference in his life and spared him.

This impact on our people is real. It is very deep; it is multi-layered and it is multi-generational. We will never fully recover the past, and I humbly ask that all Canadians acknowledge and understand that this horrendous past of First Nations is part of your legacy too. It is our shared history that we must ensure never happens again.

The apology delivered by Prime Minister Harper was very powerful and well-intentioned and delivered with utmost sincerity. Prime Minister Harper had the courage to stand up before the world and offer an apology on behalf of the Canadian government. No other Prime Minister had the courage to stand up and acknowledge these atrocities visited upon First Nations. What is also important in an apology is the strength and courage of giving forgiveness. I want all Canadians to know that we have survived, that we will celebrate. We stand on the dignity of our individuality and on the strength of our cultural teachings, beliefs and practices, and we will work on the ongoing development of our individual and collective well-being.

With the Prime Minister's commitments, let us move from apology to forgiveness with dignity and pride. We are a strong and enduring people, with a strong culture that has survived and will survive. The apology offered by Prime Minister Harper touched me deeply that day. I suddenly realized I had tears streaming down my cheeks, and with those tears came release. Mr. Speaker, I felt I had been justified.

Indeed, we have a great deal of work yet ahead with those who have been affected negatively with drugs and alcohol to escape the indignities, degradation and low self-esteem. We cannot take back or magically erase those atrocities, but we now have to move forward and not prolong the pain. The Prime Minister symbolizes all Canadians. Hearing him apologize meant that the whole nation apologized to us. An apology of that magnitude brought the closure I needed.

Thank you.

Mr. Hardy: I would like to acknowledge and thank very much the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin for her comments. Maybe it's what I need to hear in the Legislative Assembly. Maybe that's enough — also the comments from the Member for McIntyre-Takhini, both First Nations. This amendment is an amendment I don't disagree with.

In some ways, I look at it as not an amendment but another motion — a motion that on its own should be voted for and supported. But it does alter the motion that I brought in a way that I feel I would still like to follow through with the original motion. It creates a situation for me in that I don't oppose the amendment as written. I support it as a motion on its own. I also support very much and feel deeply touched by the comments that were just made by the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin. I hope that the member doesn't feel that I have brought this motion forward with any degree of disrespect for her experience and many of her family, her brothers and sisters as she mentioned — and so many others in the Yukon — because it was never meant to be that.

I will have to vote against the amendment, only because it alters the motion more than I think it should — but I also have to put on record that the amendment itself is a good motion in itself — and for only that reason that it changes what I feel should happen in the Yukon too much.

So before I close, I would just like to put on record that if we can't do it collectively, the Legislative Assembly with various First Nation leaders — there are some in the Legislative Assembly elected — four here. If we can't bring in more to hear our talk, then on behalf of my ancestors, I offer an apology, personally.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Is there any further discussion on the amendment?

Amendment to Motion No. 496 agreed to

Speaker: Is there any debate on the main motion as amended?

Mr. Edzerza: I want to talk a little bit about a scenario that's quite factual. It almost sounds like maybe a story that you might hear out of some kind of fiction book, but this is true. Try to imagine a strange person, a non-native person, walking into the home — a total stranger — no one knows this guy.

He grabs a young girl by the wrist and starts taking her out of the house. As this individual is doing that, the young girl is trying to grab on to things as she is being removed from the home by a strange man. She is probably crying and trying to fight back, but is unable to because of the difference in size and age. The young girl is taken, put in a stranger's car and taken many miles from the only place she knows — her home. Try to imagine that.

What do you think goes through that child's mind? Fear would be the biggest thing, I would imagine. Taken and put in a place where there are 100 or maybe 200 other children you don't know. You are there by yourself and it all happens within one day or maybe two.

So as a young child of five years old, you are taken and totally displaced in another part of Yukon with nobody you can talk to, with nobody you can go to for support — just a bunch of strange people. How do you think that individual is going to be able to survive that? What is there at this place that could

make them feel like their mother or father would? Nothing, absolutely nothing. What seems like an eternity in one day grows into 13 years. Try to imagine being taken from your home at five against your will, crying and screaming only to never to be returned for 13 years plus.

Try to imagine that. What would people today do? I often thought about this: what would a non-native person do if a strange Indian man came into his house and took his daughter? What would the family do? What would they do if an Indian man walked in and took the young girl from the house? They would probably shoot him. He probably would get shot. Well, that happened repeatedly. The story I'm telling you today is one that I heard. I am aware of it. It actually happened. For 13 years, that individual was never returned home — not through summer holidays or Christmas. Never. She did not know that she had three other younger sisters. She had no idea.

After 13 years, she was just basically thrown out the door, because, let's see, she would be around 16 or 17 years old. She started running away. She left the school and wandered the streets.

They left the school, wandered the streets, had no home, nobody to talk to — basically became a street child. Now, there is a lot of theory out there among the professional psychologists that state that sometimes when a young person is introduced to trauma, they don't grow past that age. So at the age of five, if you have a very, very traumatic experience, you have a hard time to develop mentally, intellectually, spiritually, emotionally. At 16 you are basically going to be — if you went to any kind of professional to have an evaluation, they would probably state that intellectually you are around 10 years old and you are actually 16 or 17.

That is the kind of devastation that this really created for a lot of our First Nation people. We have a lot of people who never really developed intellectually, spiritually, mentally. They stayed stuck there and they are still there today. A lot of the street people that we see downtown, doing their thing — a lot of them, if they weren't mission school people, they are descendants of the victims of mission school.

It would be very interesting if sometime we could trace a person's whole life who went through the mission school, just to be able to have a better understanding of what the real impacts were. I've heard many people say today that we survived the mission schools, but I really question that, as a First Nation person. I really question that, and I do so because I don't think we did.

I think the First Nation people did not survive the mission schools. That's why the majority of our people fill the correctional facilities across Canada. That's why the majority of children in care are First Nation children. That's why the majority of youth on the streets are First Nation children.

So how can we say wholeheartedly, and believe, that we survived the mission schools? We didn't. We're still suffering today, as I speak, and like I said earlier in the amendment, the only ones who are ever going to know are those individuals who are still there. I also know that over my 60 years on this earth I know a lot of people who are in denial about mission school. I know a lot of people who have been conditioned by

the European culture to turn against their own people. The Indian people of today call those “red apple Indians,” because they’re red on the outside and they act like a non-native on the inside. That’s how they describe people who totally deny that they had any wrongdoings in the mission school, but they did. We have a lot of First Nation people who actually totally disrespect a lot of the victims who were in the school by not acknowledging that they are in a bad state of affairs today because of the mission schools.

One of our traditional beliefs is that we try to seek understanding and not judgement of everything that happens in our lives. To seek understanding of the mission schools and the effects even on the victims who are alive today, as an advocate and volunteer counsellor, I have always encouraged them to go back. We have to turn around, face the dragon, go back to understand what took place.

There is one simple example I will give and why it’s so important. One time, I was working with a man who was incarcerated for spousal abuse and had been on several occasions. When we were talking about this issue, he made a comment to me that it all stemmed back to mission school days, and I asked him then, what was the connection there? He said, “It was my mother who sent me to mission school.” So he blamed every woman for what he thought was his mother’s doing.

So when we talked about that I mentioned to him if he was aware that it was against the law at the time to refuse to send your child to the mission school. He wasn’t aware of that. I encouraged him to seek a lot more understanding of the whole issue around mission school. He was blaming his mother. I don’t think that is an isolated case. I think there are lots of First Nation children who truly blame their mother and father for having to go to the mission school, when in fact they were also victims. They lost their children. They lost their children and there was no responsibility left for the parents. Through the sorrow, through the loss of their children, a lot of them turned to alcohol. Lots of people started drinking.

By the time they were able to see their child, they were then put into the category of “unfit parents”. So they never did get to reunite with their children. They never did get to go back to the family life, because they were now branded and labelled as chronic alcoholics who were unable to look after their children.

So the saga goes on and on and on. It’s not just an open-and-shut case where we could believe that one apology will heal everybody across the country. I would have felt a lot better if the Prime Minister of Canada had turned around and said, “An apology is one thing, but I want to put \$50 billion into developing treatment centres and running them and working with the people who are willing to go down that road.” But that opportunity is not there. There is no real treatment centre in this territory, and how many residential schools did we have here? I know of at least five.

It is only a matter of years since the last one closed in the Yukon. I believe it was in the 1970s. Until the day comes when every government across Canada — every provincial and every territorial government — becomes very serious about supporting land-based treatment centres, I don’t see much hope for

change in the future. A lot of people have stated and a lot of people would like to see that we should just turn the page and get on with it and get over it. Well, that’s not going to happen. There are still going to be effects on our grandchildren and our great-grandchildren yet to come.

I find it unfortunate that we weren’t all able to agree with this motion today. Like always, the First Nation people will continue to live on. Thank you.

Speaker: Are you prepared for the question on the motion as amended?

Some Hon. Members: Division.

Division

Speaker: Division has been called.

Bells

Speaker: Mr. Clerk, please poll the House.

Hon. Mr. Fentie: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Cathers: Agree.

Hon. Ms. Taylor: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Kenyon: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Rouble: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Lang: Agree.

Hon. Ms. Horne: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Hart: Agree.

Mr. Nordick: Agree.

Mr. Mitchell: Agree.

Mr. Elias: Agree.

Mr. Inverarity: Agree.

Mr. Hardy: Agree.

Mr. Edzerza: Agree.

Clerk: Mr. Speaker, the results are 14 yeas, nil nays.

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

Motion No. 496 agreed to as amended

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

The House adjourned at 5:35 p.m.

The following documents were filed December 3, 2008:

08-1-75

Social Assistance Act amendments re Appeal Board and Committee: letter (dated November 28, 2008) to Hon. Glenn Hart, Minister of Health and Social Services from Patricia Bacon, Chair, Social Assistance Appeal Board (Mitchell)

08-1-76

Apology to Yukon aboriginal people for the wrongs perpetuated in residential schools: letter (dated June 24, 2008) to Hon. Dennis Fentie, Premier from Todd Hardy, MLA Whitehorse Centre (Hardy)