

**Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Thursday, March 19, 2009 — 1:00 p.m.**

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

Prayers

INTRODUCTION OF PAGES

Speaker: It gives me great pleasure to announce that the following students will be serving the House as legislative pages for the 2009 spring sitting. They are Cheylsea Mitchell and Meaghan O'Connor from F.H. Collins Secondary School, and Tarek Bos-Jabbar, Nathan Brown, Zach Erdman, Samantha Fry, Rhea Slade and Sarah Wright from Porter Creek Secondary School.

Today, we have with us Tarek Bos-Jabbar and Nathan Brown. I would ask that all members help me welcome them to the House.

Applause

Withdrawal of motions

Speaker: The Chair wishes to inform the House of changes that have been made to the Order Paper. Motions No. 18, 34 and 82, standing in the name of the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin, have been removed from the Order Paper at the request of that member.

The following motions have been removed from the Order Paper because they are outdated: Motions No. 58, 354, 514 and 594, standing in the name of the Member for Mount Lorne; Motion No. 211, standing in the name of the Member for McIntyre-Takhini; Motions No. 258, 512 and 603, standing in the name of the Member for Kluane; Motion No. 326, standing in the name of the Member for Mayo-Tatchun; Motions No. 328 and 482, standing in the name of the Member for Porter Creek South; Motion No. 412, standing in the name of the Leader of the Third Party; Motion No. 437, standing in the name of the Member for Klondike; and Motion No. 481, standing in the name of the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin.

Also, the following motions have been removed from the Order Paper because they referred to a bill that has passed this House: Motions No. 519, 520, 551 and 615, standing in the name of the Member for Kluane; Motion No. 550, standing in the name of the Leader of the Official Opposition; Motions No. 552, 553, 554, 555, 556 and 557, standing in the name of the Member for Mount Lorne; Motions No. 558, 559, 560, 561, 562, 566 and 598, standing in the name of the Member for McIntyre-Takhini; and Motions No. 567, 568, 571, 572, 573 and 574, standing in the name of the Leader of the Third Party.

The following motions have been removed from the Order Paper as the action requested in the motion has been fulfilled: Motions No. 205 and 634, standing in the name of the Leader of the Third Party; Motion No. 396, standing in the name of the Member for McIntyre-Takhini, and the Motion for the Production of Papers No. 5, standing the name of the Leader of the Official Opposition.

Motion No. 541, standing in the name of the Leader of the Third Party, has been removed from the Order Paper, as it is not in order.

DAILY ROUTINE

Speaker: We will now proceed with the Order Paper.

TRIBUTES

In remembrance of Fred Berger

Mr. Hardy: Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of all members of the Legislative Assembly to pay tribute to Fred Berger. On that point also, I am very proud to be able to make this tribute on behalf of the Yukon New Democrats as he was one of our own. Fred left us in the last month.

Our deepest sympathy goes out to his wife, Palma, who is in the gallery today and his son, Tony, who wasn't able to be here.

As a party and as a territory, we owe much to our brother, Fred, whose strong democratic ideals and hard work toward social justice never faltered from the time of his arrival in the Yukon Territory in 1954. Fred was a strong union supporter in his early employment in the Yukon, and he soon became very involved in businesses in Dawson City, where he purchased the Bonanza Hotel in 1960. His business interests covered a wide range over his life. Many Dawsonites have memories of Fred feeding firewood into the barrel stove near the screen of the theatre when it was minus 40 and more below.

A social event would be to watch films while sitting wrapped in parkas. He and Palma ran the bus depot from 1975 to 1996 and had the only Sears catalogue outlet. They also owned a small drugstore on the premises for many years. All these enterprises were valued highly by a remote city.

A true Dawson resident is always somehow involved in placer mining, and Fred was absolutely no exception to this. For a time, he worked claims along the Indian River and bought and sold gold. Business enterprises were never an easy route for this hardworking family. The Bonanza burned down; the theatre was closed with a flood; and other businesses closed after fire. Still, Fred volunteered his time on the Dawson City Museum and Historical Society and chaired the local chamber of commerce for many years.

He was a chair of the Yukon Development Corporation and Yukon Energy Corporation. Probably the first time I ever met Fred Berger was when I was also on that board. One of my earliest memories was how intimidated I was by this chair. He was big; he was strong; he was very vocal and he knew where he was going with the Yukon Development Corporation.

I'd like to make a side note: it's that kind of leadership that actually brought about the windmill on Haeckel Hill. I know it was in an article I read just in the last couple of days where credit was being given to some people who deserved the credit. But we also have to recognize those who made the decision to make that kind of investment in this territory and I think that's an indication of Fred's ability to look down the road, look into the future and see what is best and where we are going. Environmentally, this was one of them.

He was also on the Klondike Valley advisory group, which worked on the local land use plan. A highlight for Fred and Palma was their appointment as Mr. and Mrs. Yukon in 1998.

Fred was one of the founders of the Yukon NDP. He worked closely with Tony Penikett from the beginning, organizing the party. In 1974, Fred was elected as an MLA in the relatively new Legislative Assembly. He represented Klondike, a district which, back then, extended from the south end of Dawson City to Carmacks. It was a time of major changes in the political makeup of the territory. He and two other elected New Democrats declared themselves the first official Assembly caucus. They helped moved the territory into an era of territorial political parties, an important step in the emergence of constitutional changes for Yukon. The impact of these New Democrat MLAs officially becoming a caucus was the beginning of the modernization of our political process. It paved the way for greater independence from the federal influence in Yukon. It also gave voters a third significant choice at the polls, which is so essential in our democracy.

Fred Berger was the first president of the Yukon NDP and he became the New Democratic Party's leader in 1976. He was also a very active worker in various capacities in the party, no matter how much personal time it took away from his family and his businesses. He was especially known for his support of First Nation objectives in a time when that was not always a comfortable choice.

He helped to bring together supporters who took the NDP to official opposition status in 1981 and to government in 1985 under Tony Penikett. It is revealing to reflect how different the territory would be now if it hadn't been for the pioneering efforts of these two strong politicians, their colleagues, many supporters and workers.

Fred was well known as a conscience of our party. Former and present MLAs relate many stories of Fred's firm focus on current events and politics and the strong advice to all of us working in the party.

Mr. Speaker, this went on right until the last moment of his life. Over a year ago, I came into a cafeteria in the cancer lodge in Vancouver and, lo and behold, who should I see sitting there but Fred, and Palma was with him. Even at that time, experiencing the surgery that he was going through and the challenges that he faced, he was still concerned about politics in the Yukon and the direction that the territory was going. That shows the passion and commitment and vitality of this man.

Fred's wife, Palma, and his son, Tony, contributed personally to Fred's commitment to the NDP and social change, and we thank them. It is a whole family who does that. They all make the sacrifice.

You must know that he helped forge a stronger New Democratic Party, thus a more humane Yukon. His life's work has shown us lessons that have not been forgotten. They will continue to strengthen our values and nourish our hopes for the future.

In recognition of International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination

Mr. Elias: I rise today on behalf of all the members of the Legislative Assembly to pay tribute to the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination on March 21.

The United Nations General Assembly designated this day in 1966 to mark the tragic events that took place on March 21, 1960, in Sharpeville, South Africa, when 69 peaceful demonstrators were killed during a protest against apartheid. This day is an occasion to reaffirm our commitment to the prevention and eradication of racism and racial discrimination.

This year's campaign theme is "Racism and Discrimination: Obstacles to Development". Development is a comprehensive, economic, social, cultural and political process. Racism and other forms of discrimination are normally human rights violations, but are also major obstacles to achieving development.

Eliminating racism is both a moral imperative and a key element in achieving democracy and stability in our multiethnic and multicultural societies, as racism limits the promise of entire societies where racist practices are tolerated. Unfortunately, racism still continues to afflict the lives of millions of people around the world. Regrettably, we see how racism can manifest itself in extreme violence, causing widespread suffering and death. We must continue our efforts to fight racial discrimination wherever and whenever it appears.

We must continue to help our youth with early intervention and education to recognize and understand that racism is wrong. In Canada, we are free to say, "I will not accept the racist joke, the sexist remark, the bullying behaviour."

As Canadians and as individuals, we need to accept that our freedoms also give us the responsibility to take a stand and say, "No, I will not accept, I will not condone."

I urge all Yukoners to take responsibility for our freedoms, to take a stand against racism and discrimination. Each and every day, let us do our part to help bring an end to racism and discrimination in our society.

Hon. Ms. Horne: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to commemorate the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, which will be recognized around the world on March 21. This day was first recognized by the United Nations after the brutal slaying of 69 peaceful demonstrators during a protest against apartheid in Sharpeville, South Africa, in 1960. March 21 is observed annually to focus attention on the problems of racism and the need to promote racial harmony.

Canada was one of the first countries to support this important UN initiative, and launched its first annual campaign against racial discrimination in 1989. Yukon continues to take steps to prevent racial discrimination in its own right. This government has worked closely with Yukoners to modernize our human rights legislation. The Select Committee on Human Rights, an all-party committee, consulted with Yukoners last year to find out what they wanted in the new *Human Rights Act*. This government listened, and the first phase of amendments will be adopted this spring.

Prohibiting racial discrimination is a fundamental principle of the *Human Rights Act*. The act says: "It is discrimination to treat any individual or group unfavourably on any of the following grounds: ancestry, including colour and race; national origin; ethnic or linguistic background or origin."

This is grounded in our culture as Canadians and as Yukoners. I urge all Yukoners to pause for a moment and think about this grounding principle of the *Human Rights Act* and how it ensures our freedom from racial and other forms of discrimination every day.

I also urge Yukoners to think about what happens when racial discrimination is allowed to fester because human rights are not protected by law. As a society, we must continue to work toward preventing a tragedy like that in South Africa from happening in Yukon, in Canada, or anywhere around the world.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Hardy: Mr. Speaker, I rise with respect to the UN declaration on discrimination and racism.

I think the two speakers before me have articulated the day and the issues and where it came from. I would like to remind every single person in the Legislative Assembly about our own conduct. I would like to remind everyone in the Legislative Assembly that people look toward us to lead the way around discrimination or against the discrimination through racism.

I would like to remind everybody in our society in the Yukon that this is not tolerated or should never be tolerated at any level. I have seen this practised at young ages — ages 5 and 6. I have seen discrimination and racism in schools. I have witnessed it now that I have a granddaughter who happens to be of mixed colour. She's being discriminated against in our schools, and she is five years old. I have seen racism in the hockey rinks; I have seen it on the streets. I have seen it in art organizations. I have seen it in all walks of life, and enough is enough. We must put forward the resources to eliminate this. We must educate our children so they do not repeat our mistakes.

It has to end at some point. As a government, as elected members and as opposition, we should work to ensure that it ends now, because it cannot be tolerated. But I still see it. I see racism; I see discrimination against people in poverty; against women, against people of other cultures. It's not just one area. When we go home at night and we talk to our children and we're out with our friends and somebody makes a comment that is racist or discriminates against another or a group, we must speak up and not be quiet. So not just one day, but 365 days of the year for the rest of our lives, we must make this commitment. Thank you.

Mr. Edzerza: I also would like to rise to pay tribute to the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. Racial discrimination is something that is very destructive, very damaging to the spirit, mind, body and soul. It's a firm belief in the traditional world that only those who have suffered from racial discrimination really understand the harm it does. Those are the only individuals who will thoroughly understand,

really, what it is to be discriminated against, whether it's because of your ethnic background or whether it's gender.

There are several forms of discrimination, and I would like to just remind everyone that it is solely up to the individual to eliminate racial discrimination. I do not believe that any legislation would probably effectively do this, because it is an individual choice. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

In recognition of Journée internationale de la Francophonie

Hon. Mr. Hart: On behalf of the House, it gives me great pleasure to pay tribute to Journée internationale de la Francophonie.

En tant que ministre responsable des services en français, je prends la parole en ce jour pour souligner la Journée internationale de Francophonie.

Aujourd'hui, dans le monde, plus de 200 millions de personnes s'expriment en français, dont neuf millions au Canada.

La Journée internationale de la Francophonie célèbre la langue française et la diversité culturelle des populations francophones.

Au nom du gouvernement du Yukon, je souhaite rendre hommage aux Francophones du monde entier, à ceux du Canada et à ceux du Yukon.

La langue française est enracinée au Yukon depuis plus de 150 ans. Elle fait partie de notre histoire, de notre culture et de notre identité.

En vertu de la *Loi sur les langues du Yukon*, le gouvernement du Yukon s'engage à offrir des services en français à la population franco-yukonnaise.

Je suis fier de dire que notre gouvernement travaille à l'amélioration des services en français, en étroite collaboration avec la communauté franco-yukonnaise.

Je suis fier de dire qu'ici, au Yukon, il fait bon vivre et grandir en français.

J'invite tous les Yukonnais et Yukonaises à se joindre à moi pour fêter la Journée internationale de la Francophonie.

Je vous remercie.

Speaker: Are there any further tributes?
Are there any introductions of visitors?

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Mr. Hart: I ask my colleagues to join me in welcoming in the House Yann Herry and his daughter Lara Herry-Saint Onge.

Applause

Mr. Hardy: I ask the House to join me in welcoming Palma Berger, who is here to hear the tribute to Fred, who was so much a part of the Legislative Assembly many years ago. As well, please join me in welcoming Audrey McLaughlin, former leader of the national NDP and a much loved Member of Parliament for the Yukon Territory.

Applause

Mr. Cardiff: I would like to ask members to join me in welcoming a constituent of mine, Jeanne Beaudoin and also

Loralee Kesler, vice-president of the Yukon Employees Union, who are with us today.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any further introductions of visitors?

Hearing none, are there any returns or documents for tabling?

Are there any reports of committees?

Are there any petitions?

Introduction of bills.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 13: Introduction and First Reading

Hon. Mr. Fentie: I move that Bill No. 13, entitled *Third Appropriation Act, 2008-09*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Hon. Premier that Bill No. 13, entitled *Third Appropriation Act, 2008-09*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Motion for introduction and first reading of Bill No. 13 agreed to

Bill No. 14: Introduction and First Reading

Hon. Mr. Fentie: I move that Bill No. 14, entitled *Interim Supply Appropriation Act, 2009-10*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Hon. Premier that Bill No. 14, entitled *Interim Supply Appropriation Act, 2009-10*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Motion for introduction and first reading of Bill No. 14 agreed to

Bill No. 15: Introduction and First Reading

Hon. Mr. Fentie: I move that Bill No. 15, entitled *First Appropriation Act, 2009-10*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Hon. Premier that Bill No. 15, entitled *First Appropriation Act, 2009-10*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Motion for introduction and first reading of Bill No. 15 agreed to

Speaker: Are there any further bills for introduction?

Hearing none, are there any notices of motion?

NOTICES OF MOTION

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

THAT this House urges the Yukon government to monitor and take appropriate action, as required, to ensure the expedited fulfillment of necessary improvements to our electrical infrastructure, in order to increase service reliability for electrical consumers, and avoid all-too-frequent power outages.

Mr. Elias: Mr. Speaker, I give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Yukon government to work with the City of Whitehorse to ensure that the 2012 Arctic

Winter Games are a success by investing sufficient financial resources and other support.

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

(1) establish performance targets for Yukon students overall and, to the extent possible, for each major student subgroup; and

(2) develop comprehensive action plans to reach these targets.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to ensure federal infrastructure funding provides maximum benefit to all Yukoners by ensuring:

(1) funding is fairly distributed between rural Yukon and Whitehorse;

(2) job creation for Yukoners is maximized;

(3) money is spent as quickly as possible while maintaining adequate financial controls;

(4) funding promotes economic recovery;

(5) the local economy benefits; and

(6) the funding is actually used.

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

THAT this House:

(1) endorses the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples;

(2) urges the Parliament of Canada to adopt this important international declaration; and

(3) supports Bill C-32, introduced by NDP MP from Victoria, Denise Savoie — an act to ensure that the laws of Canada are consistent with the United Nations Declaration.

And I have some copies of that.

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

THAT this House urges the Yukon government to make public, periodic progress reports on the 2009-10 main estimates:

(a) to provide ongoing economic and fiscal updates;

(b) to detail the actual implementation of the budget;

(c) to itemize the actual effects of the budget; and

(d) to provide details on any adjustments or new measures as may be required to benefit the Yukon's economy.

As well, I give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Yukon government to immediately put a moratorium on all mineral staking in the Peel watershed region until a comprehensive land use plan that recognizes this area's significant culture, heritage, wilderness and economic potential has been completed by the Peel Watershed Planning Commission and approved by the Yukon government.

Speaker: Are there any further notices of motion? Is there a statement by a minister?

This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Education department goals

Mr. Mitchell: I have a question for the Minister of Education. In January, the Auditor General of Canada made public a devastating report on the Department of Education. Among her findings was the fact that only 40 percent of First Nation students and only 58 percent of all students who enter our education system are actually graduating from grade 12. Now the minister may find that acceptable, but I don't. In fact, when 60 percent of First Nation students and 42 percent of all Yukon students are not receiving a grade 12 diploma, I would suggest that it is this government who is failing the students, not the other way around.

Perhaps the minister can enlighten us by providing us with his targets for improving the performance of our schools for our students.

What are his target graduation rates for three years, five years and seven years from now?

Hon. Mr. Rouble: Mr. Speaker, I see the member opposite and I do share a passion, and that's a passion for excellence and a passion for seeing Yukoners succeed. To do that, we have to ensure that Yukoners have the opportunities they need to learn. Whatever goal we've set will never be high enough. It'll never be high enough until we have 100 percent literacy at all levels.

Mr. Speaker, we do have to recognize that there are other factors that affect these situations too. What I can commit to the member opposite, and to all Yukoners, is that the Government of Yukon and the Department of Education will work to provide 100 percent of Yukoners with the opportunities that they need to succeed.

Mr. Mitchell: Mr. Speaker, I would have to say if we don't set goals, we're not likely to achieve them.

You know, Mr. Speaker, this minister just loves to talk about his partners in education. He loves to talk about all the studies and reports. First we had a review of the *Education Act*. Then we spent several years under his former colleague's supervision, developing the education reform report, a report with some pretty interesting and innovative ideas. What did this minister do when he inherited the portfolio? Did he implement any of these new approaches? No. Like his colleague in Tourism, he appears to have gone on a re-branding exercise. So now we are looking at New Horizons — a new brand, and yet another process.

Mr. Speaker, students and parents, First Nations and teachers, the minister's valued partners, are tired of the process. It's time for action, and it's time for results. So again for the minister, what are his target graduation rates for First Nation students and all students, three years, five years, seven years out from now?

Hon. Mr. Rouble: Mr. Speaker, it's unfortunate that the Liberal Party has taken this approach on this, because they haven't recognized what is actually happening in Yukon schools today and the work that's being done with Yukon partners.

Mr. Speaker, I have offered numerous times to the opposition, to the Liberal Party, to sit down with them and discuss, in a joint format, between the Council of Yukon First Nations and the Department of Education, the progress, the steps and the concrete action items that have been going on in our schools. Unfortunately, after offering it to them for three or four or five times now — I've lost track — they haven't chosen to take us up on that.

Mr. Speaker, the opposition isn't recognizing innovations such as the First Nation program and partnership unit, changes to the curriculum, increased numbers of teachers, increased numbers of education assistants.

Mr. Speaker, we've heard in here time and time again about how the number of teachers in the system has increased while at the same time our number of students is decreasing.

Just a couple of weeks ago, Mr. Speaker, we did meet with our partners in education whose input we value tremendously. We discussed additional ways that we could make changes to our education system now and into the future to improve the outcomes for all students. We will continue to do that, Mr. Speaker, with investments in this budget for early years transition work, for additional work on curriculum, for additional work on data collection.

Mr. Speaker, the Government of Yukon is committed to preparing Yukoners for Yukon opportunities.

Mr. Mitchell: Mr. Speaker, there is the problem. This minister offers to talk with us, parents across Yukon are looking for him to act. Mr. Speaker, this minister likes to talk about every student achieving his or her potential — well, that's not happening under his watch. It's not happening under this Yukon Party government.

Mr. Speaker, 5,219 students were enrolled in Yukon schools in 2007. According to the findings of the Auditor General, if things don't improve, 2,192 won't graduate. Surely the minister doesn't believe that reflects each student achieving his or her potential. It is a long shot from the 100 percent he talks of.

Mr. Speaker, when a hockey team fails to make the playoffs, fans don't want to hear the coach talk about what a great system they have employed, how well their practices have gone and how hard everyone is playing. The measure of success is to score goals and win games. When you don't, the coach usually loses his job.

The auditor recommended setting targets so you can measure how effective the programs are. Why is the minister ignoring the Auditor General's recommendation?

Hon. Mr. Rouble: Mr. Speaker, the member opposite knows full well the actions committed to by the Department of Education. The member opposite received a copy of the action items and the action plan prepared by the Department of Education to respond to these issues. Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, he's not remembering that, for whatever reason now.

Mr. Speaker, there have been significant commitments to work with Yukon parents, to involve school councils, to involve Yukon First Nations, to involve Yukon First Nation governments in the process. Mr. Speaker, that is governance in action. We have included their input in changing curriculum.

We're seeing that in this budget with the \$400,000 toward the replacement of the F.H. Collins Secondary School. These are concrete changes.

We are seeing changes in curriculum. We're seeing increased numbers of students graduating. At least, Mr. Speaker, the member opposite should recognize the value of the Individual Learning Centre and seeing those students re-engaged in the system. That didn't happen under the previous Liberal government. Those are some of the changes happening now.

Question re: Education department goals

Mr. Elias: Same minister, same topic. Let's look at this from another level. There are some children who recently moved down from Old Crow to attend school in Whitehorse. They are in grade 5, and I have recently been advised that they are reading and writing at a grade 2 level. This is happening today. For years this has been a common theme for First Nation students here, particularly those from rural Yukon. I know these kids personally, and they are not just a statistic to me. I want them to succeed and reach their goals and aspirations and dreams, but they need to do well in school. In order to do that, the system has to help them, but right now the system is failing them. The government is failing them. This minister is failing them.

How does the minister plan to ensure that students from Old Crow succeed in the Yukon education system?

Hon. Mr. Rouble: I'll make the same commitment to Old Crow as to all Yukon — that we will allocate resources responsibly to address community needs and concerns, in an equitable manner, throughout the territory; that we will look at innovative programs, like reading recovery and Wilson Reading; that we will work with community members to establish additional resources, like the NorthWind Books that have been released recently, which use Yukoners in a reading context; that we'll work with parents to encourage them to read at home with their kids; that we'll work with the school councils to ensure that we can address a school calendar that meets the needs of students and the needs of the community.

Mr. Speaker, we need to engage our students and have them attend school. One of the biggest challenges we have, that we're all aware of, is the attendance record of many students. This is a huge challenge.

The member opposite, I believe, has received a copy of the reading recovery annual report, which states that their biggest challenge in this one-on-one intensive reading program is attendance for students. I'm not saying that that is specifically the case with the constituents the member opposite is speaking of. I don't know, and I wouldn't speak to their individual situation here on the floor of the Assembly.

We've seen programs like full-day kindergarten enacted, reading recovery and Wilson Reading.

Mr. Elias: The biggest challenge Yukoners are facing is leadership from this minister. Our First Nation students are not doing well. A lot of attention has been paid to the shockingly low First Nation graduation rate, yet the six-year average graduation rate for Yukon overall was just 58 percent, which is third lowest in Canada. So this is not just a First Nation issue; it's a problem across the territory.

The Yukon Party government has been fooling around with education reform for the last seven years. The minister is very good at producing report after report and attending conference after conference, but it's the action part he seems to have trouble with. When are we going to see the type of changes that were recommended in the education reform project actually happen?

Hon. Mr. Rouble: The member has to look behind him, because they're already happening. We've seen the development of the First Nation program and partnership unit. We've seen the changes to curriculum. We're seeing changes in working relationships. We're seeing changes in how people involve and engage our partners in education. That was a key priority that we heard in the education reform project: that we had to work with all of our partners and include them in the decision making. And we're going to continue to do that.

As for seeing other changes in the classroom, we've seen them under the last two budgets that I've been involved with and we're going to continue to see that in this budget, with money for early years transition, which is an initiative that we're all aware of, engaging students when they're very young and identifying issues they might have right off the bat; with additional resources for curriculum and special programs; with assistant technology.

We have money in the budget this year also to address the F.H. Collins school replacement; also for the British Columbia enterprise student information system to track student progress and provide the statistical indicators that are so valued by members opposite. As well, this budget is launching the leaders in education fund, which is a fund that teachers and school councils will be able to tap into in order to provide innovative new programming for their school and ultimately across our school system.

Mr. Elias: We are going to hear about a record budget today, a \$1-billion budget. But let me say this: all the money in the world is not going to secure Yukoners' future if we don't educate our children properly. Parents and students are not happy with the status quo. They want change and they want it yesterday. The government spent millions of dollars in three years on the education reform project. Instead of moving ahead with the recommendations, the minister has decided to reinvent the wheel with New Horizons — anything to avoid making a decision.

These kids from Old Crow are going to be in high school before this minister gets around to making the changes that are needed in our education system here in the Yukon. When is the stalling going to end and the action going to begin?

Hon. Mr. Rouble: Mr. Speaker, we'll continue to take action. We'll continue to take action with our parents, with our school administrators, and the school. We'll continue to work with our partners in education: with school councils, with the First Nation Education Advisory Committee, and our partner in the New Horizons project, which is the Council of Yukon First Nations. Members opposite often forget that this is a joint Yukon government and Council of Yukon First Nations initiative, and that we're working very closely with how we proceed together on this.

Mr. Speaker, we're seeing changes in the classroom, and we're going to see changes in outcomes. We've seen them increase in the past, and we're going to continue to see them improve in the future.

Question re: Budget consultations

Mr. Hardy: You know, earlier today, we attended a meeting in which we were briefed about the budget, and I actually had to laugh a little to myself when I saw the word "embargoed" on it, because the government has been announcing this budget for the last few weeks. It's not embargoed any more; it has become a joke, Mr. Speaker.

To receive the documents and to be told that you're basically not allowed to talk about it — meanwhile, for the last few weeks, the Finance minister has been going everywhere and making announcements all over the place. So the rules have been changed. So we will talk about the budget.

Now, last fall, the minister committed to holding a series of round-table meetings with various unspecified stakeholder groups to get input for his budget. However, many of the stakeholder groups I have regular contact with tell me they were not consulted. So, will the minister tell us which stakeholder groups he and his officials consulted with and when before drafting this budget?

Hon. Mr. Fentie: Well, Mr. Speaker, it's somewhat astonishing that the Leader of the Third Party would deem a \$1.3-billion investment in meeting the challenges for Yukon today and building Yukon's future as a joke. Frankly, Mr. Speaker, I take exception to that and I'm sure all Yukoners will.

Furthermore, the member full well knows whom we've been consulting with: it was stated clearly on the floor of this House last fall and on many occasions publicly. It's with key stakeholder groups in our economy, it's with Yukoners in general, it includes fall community tours, and this budget, to a great degree, is the result of all those consultations and discussions with Yukoners.

And already, action is being taken from those consultations. We have a marketing initiative ongoing in Europe, we have the Convention Bureau actively working on soliciting more visitation through conventions to the Yukon. We've had millions and millions of dollars invested in green-home construction, energy retrofits and home rehabilitation here in Yukon, which puts many Yukoners to work, including benefits to our manufacturing and retail sector. It's not a joke, Mr. Speaker; it's serious business.

Mr. Hardy: Here we go right away, misrepresentation of what I said, very clearly. I could recommend that —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

Speaker: The Government House Leader, on a point of order.

Hon. Mr. Cathers: I believe that the characterization or the comments made by the Leader of the Third Party accusing the Premier of misrepresenting his comments are clearly out of order and in contravention of our Standing Orders.

Speaker: The Leader of the Third Party, on the point of order.

Mr. Hardy: They are not out of order from our perspective, because I was clarifying what I was trying to say — for their benefit.

Speaker's ruling

Speaker: From the Chair's perspective, there is no point of order. It is simply a dispute among members. However, the Leader of the Third Party, knows full well to rein himself in. The Leader of the Third Party has the floor.

Mr. Hardy: Yes, Mr. Speaker, of course I will.

Now, because of this government's lack of respect for public processes, we no longer have an active Yukon Council on the Economy and the Environment to offer oversight, give advice and ensure accountability, which they have done for many governments in the past.

Now even the Auditor General of Canada often has been sharply critical of this government's spending practices and contracting policies. To quote from one of the recent reports, it says, "It is our conclusion that the government is not making sufficient effort to ensure that its contracting activities serve the public interest in bringing value for money."

So my question is, Mr. Speaker, since the minister said in his preannouncements that this budget will be the largest in Yukon history, how will he ensure full accountability and that the public gets value for the roughly \$1 billion he proposes to spend over the next fiscal year?

Hon. Mr. Fentie: Mr. Speaker, considering what is going on globally, considering the situation that Canada is experiencing because of the global economic turmoil, considering the impacts that Yukon is experiencing, and will continue to experience, this budget is a budget to address those challenges. It is a massive investment in stimulus.

Now, as far as the member referring to audits, it is this government that has taken the initiative to conduct audits across the corporate structure of government to ensure that we're getting value for the investment we're making on behalf of Yukoners.

Let me point to some statistics. Since taking office, through those efforts, we have seen double-digit unemployment disappear from the landscape here in Yukon. We have seen a diminishing population turn around to record levels of population. We have seen our workforce continue to grow. We have seen the increased demands in the trades and the skilled and other disciplined areas that we are now actively addressing through our investments in training and education, and we are also dealing with it through our labour market programming.

Mr. Speaker, we are making sure that there is value for the investments we are making, and that is why the Yukon is in a good position today to manage its way through this global cycle.

Mr. Hardy: I'd like to add to that list, Mr. Speaker. We have greater than ever dependency on federal transfers. We have less economic diversification in the territory, and our population is not what it was in the 1990s. Now, I'm not going to be convinced by anything that the minister has said in recent

weeks that this budget will protect the most vulnerable, will minimize job losses and that it will create new employment opportunities of tomorrow. I am also afraid that the spending spree this government is on might result in a permanent deficit that will hamper the ability of future governments to provide continued economic stimulus. I am very concerned about that. The federal Conservative government has agreed — as an example — to provide ongoing economic and fiscal updates to the House of Commons to detail the actual implementation of their budget and to itemize the actual effects of the budget. So, will the Finance minister at least match this level of public accountability and make the same commitment today to the members of this Assembly.

Hon. Mr. Fentie: Mr. Speaker, we've actually been going beyond that kind of accountability by actually engaging with Yukoners. The member seems to have a problem with their government, the government for Yukon, actually informing its public on what its government is doing and what is happening with their finances and where we are investing their finances.

Mr. Speaker, let me make a couple of points. The member states that the population records of the 1990s somehow were higher than where we are at today. How can the member explain that when this government took office, we were experiencing a population in this territory of some 29,000? Today, we are almost at 34,000. So I think there is a little problem with that statement.

Furthermore, if the member, who was in lock-up today and seems to think that that's a wasted exercise, if the member would have taken the time to pay attention in lock-up, he would see that the five-year fiscal plan of this government doesn't show deficit spending at all. It shows, from the year 2009 through to 2013, year-end surpluses, Mr. Speaker. How can the member derive deficit spending from that?

Question re: Whitehorse Correctional Centre rebuild

Mr. Cardiff: Mr. Speaker, eight years ago, the then Liberal government committed to spending \$24 million to \$30 million on a new correctional facility. They moved some gravel around before they lost the election, and the Yukon Party said that \$24 million to \$30 million was too expensive so they put the project on hold. They ignored the money that had already been spent on planning and preparation of the site. Five years later, almost an additional \$5 million has been spent on renovations and more planning. In the last two and a half years, more renovations, more planning and serious safety concerns in the existing facility have taken even more from the taxpayers' pockets.

Can the minister give us the total amount that has been spent since this long process began and justify it for a facility that has yet to see the light of day?

Hon. Ms. Horne: Mr. Speaker, our new multi-purpose correctional and treatment centre reflects what Yukoners told us they wanted to see in a new facility. We embarked on a correctional reform process after an agreement was reached at the Yukon Forum. We talked to the public, to First Nation governments and to correctional staff and inmates.

Let me share with you and this Assembly the extensive consultations we have conducted in partnership with First Nation governments. The corrections consultation began in April 2005. We held a corrections summit in November 2005. The corrections consultation final report was issued April 2006. The correctional redevelopment strategic plan was published in February 2007. We began the *Corrections Act* consultation in December 2007. The outcome of that consultation was very clear. Healing and rehabilitation should be the focus and indeed it is. The new multi-purpose facility is a correctional and treatment centre that emphasizes treatment and rehabilitation.

Mr. Cardiff: Well, the minister didn't answer the question about how many millions of dollars have been spent to date before any progress has been made as far as building a new facility up the hill.

Two days ago we were treated to an old refrain from both the Premier and the Minister of Justice. The minister announced once again that this government is committed to building a new facility. She says there will be \$21.6 million for a new treatment and correctional centre in this budget with site work to begin this spring. We were promised cranes swinging over the site last fall, but there was no sign of that.

So this is just the latest in a long string of announcements in each budget for this capital project. We've heard that song many times before. The tune is the same, but the lyrics change. Yukon taxpayers need to know: what will the total cost of the whole project be, once it's completed? Can she tell us that — the total cost?

Hon. Ms. Horne: Keep your eyes on the horizon and imagine tomorrow. Flowing out of our extensive consultations was a corrections action plan focused on treatment and programming to help offenders transition back into their communities and to lessen the chances of re-offending. The new multi-purpose correctional and treatment facility will not be a warehouse, as was proposed by the Liberal government. Offenders will receive treatment opportunities for their substance abuse issues.

This facility will work in concert with our initiatives in correctional reform, with the substance abuse action plan and our expanding options for treatment, like the Domestic Violence Treatment Option Court and the Community Wellness Court. The new correctional centre we are building will provide secure custody housing for inmates. It will provide multi-use treatment space that can be used by Justice, Health and Social Services, and NGOs provide programs for a range of other individuals as well.

Mr. Cardiff: Mr. Speaker, over the years, we've heard a baffling number of millions of dollars being spent, and several different completion dates on this project. This time, apparently the completion date is set for late 2011.

This government's ability to competently manage this project makes us wonder whether or not it is a priority — is the priority — that the Yukon Party said it was in their election campaigns. It's doubtful that the stated budget of \$21.6 million is even reasonable since the original purpose of the facility has been expanded considerably. We know it's going to cost more. What is that total actual cost of the completed facility when it's

complete, and why is the government trying to hide that from Yukoners?

Hon. Ms. Horne: Mr. Speaker, there are no hidden costs. What we are focusing on, what we have focused on: this will be a multi-purpose facility. It will not be the warehouse that we would be adding on to today, if we'd gone with the Liberal government plans. This will be a multi-purpose facility that will help our inmates rehabilitate into their communities. We listened to what Yukoners said, and we're delivering.

Question re: Education audit

Mr. Fairclough: I have more questions for the Minister of Education.

The Auditor General's report gave this minister a failing grade, and her conclusion was simple: "The Yukon Department of Education could not demonstrate to us that it effectively delivers public school programs to Yukon children."

Now, the Auditor General has been critical of this government in the past, and the Premier dismissed that criticism and said it was merely the auditor's opinion, and that what she had to say didn't really matter. So I ask the minister this: does he accept the conclusion reached by the Auditor General, and does he accept responsibility for the failing grade he has received?

Hon. Mr. Rouble: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question from the member opposite. The Auditor General of Canada has raised some significant issues, to which the Department of Education has produced an action plan as to how these issues will be addressed. It's unfortunate that this historic audit did not capture some of the recent changes, such as innovations under the New Horizons and education reform, such as the creation of the First Nation programs and partnerships unit, such as the Individual Learning Centre, the labour market framework, or other initiatives that have gone on.

Mr. Speaker, we will continue to implement the action items that have been identified in order to increase the educational outcomes, opportunities for all Yukon students. I should note that the Auditor General of Canada also noted that it was important to note that they were not saying that the Department of Education was ineffective, however, but that it did not have the appropriate measurement tools to describe the situation.

Question re: Education audit

Mr. Fairclough: I have more questions for the Minister of Education. This minister has been in charge of the department for about two and one-half years now. It has been adrift under his watch. That was confirmed in January by the Auditor General's report. The Auditor General's report gave this minister a failing grade. I'm going to repeat it again. "The Yukon Department of Education could not demonstrate to us that it effectively delivers public school programs to Yukon children." That says it all.

When the report was released, I said there was only one thing left for this minister to do and I'm going to ask him to do it again here today: will the minister resign and allow someone else to make these much-needed changes underway now?

Hon. Mr. Rouble: There has been a significant amount of misinterpretation and misinformation about the

Auditor General's comments. I think the best clarification of this came from — well, the Chair of the Public Accounts Committee who, if I may quote from him, said, "...I want to clarify something that has become apparent. The issue from an audit perspective is that the Yukon Department of Education could not demonstrate that it effectively delivered public school programs to Yukon children. It doesn't mean that it isn't effectively delivering public school programs in many, many cases, if not all, to Yukon children, but rather that there wasn't information that allowed measurable, quantitative analyses to take place."

The Chair of the Public Accounts Committee also said, "I want to say that I know that department officials, educators at all levels, may have been taken aback by this report, but I don't think it was meant as criticism of the job that people are doing, but rather of the difficulty from an audit perspective of making a determination based on the information available."

Would the Liberal Party please form a consistent position on this? It would appear that the statements from the Member for Mayo-Tatchun are inconsistent with the statement made by his party's leader.

Mr. Fairclough: My statements are consistent with the Auditor General, and the minister knows that. He's trying to skirt around the issue again, and he refuses to resign. I'd like to remind him of a commitment his government made in 2006 in a Speech from the Throne. It said, "My government is committed to ... implement the findings of its major education reform initiative." Now, in two and a half years since that commitment was made, the minister failed to move ahead on that agenda. In fact, an argument could be made that we have moved backward.

Now, the education reform project has been abandoned and shelved by the minister. The Auditor General confirmed that the minister is not providing effective leadership, and we're hearing that from the public too. The minister seems quite content to simply carry on with the status quo. Well, it's not good enough, and it's not good enough for Yukon students.

Will the minister resign and let someone else take over?

Hon. Mr. Rouble: I'm stuck on this quote from the Chair of the Public Accounts Committee: "It doesn't mean that it isn't effectively delivering public school programs in many, many cases, if not to all Yukon children..."

Mr. Speaker, I would encourage the member opposite to take another look at the report. I'd encourage the member opposite to take a look at the work under New Horizons. I'd encourage the member opposite to take me up on a briefing, so that he can hear from the Council of Yukon First Nations and government representatives how we're working together to make changes. I'd encourage the member opposite to attend things like the education summit that was held here in Whitehorse a couple of weeks ago, where we discussed moving forward with the themes brought out in the education reform project. The member opposite needs to recognize what's really happening out in the Yukon today: schools are being built. He knows that; a brand new one just opened in his own riding. This budget includes funding for new schools —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Hon. Mr. Rouble: — for changes to curriculum and for increasing educational opportunities for all Yukon students.

Mr. Fairclough: We do look at the public and we do recognize what's happening here in the territory. The fact is this minister is failing Yukon students. The graduation rates are very poor here and the minister needs to know that. He doesn't recognize it yet. He takes on the Premier's position of basically ignoring the Auditor General.

Now, it's obvious by the minister's answers that he doesn't intend to change his way one bit at all. The Auditor General's report was a wake-up call and it appears that this minister slept right through it. Instead of being spurred into action, the minister was quite content to dwell on process. He wants more meetings, more conferences, more studies, more consultants and yet no action. So I'll have to turn my final question to the Premier.

Why is the Minister of Education still on the job when he has proven he is incapable of doing it?

Hon. Mr. Fentie: The short answer is the Minister of Education is on the job because he is doing a good and effective job. That's why he's still on the job and that's why he's not resigning. The minister will continue on in his exemplary work.

For the member to suggest that there has been no follow-up on the Auditor General's report — and I might remind the member it's this government that brought the Auditor General in to do these audits. We woke up a long time ago in this territory — the Yukon Party did — and that's why we conducted the educational reform process.

The implementation of New Horizons is a multi-year education strategy flowing from the education reform project. The establishment of leaders in education innovation fund — I hope they vote for this because it's another action item addressing the issues as presented. Early years transition learning program, targeting pre-kindergarten to grade 3 students — another action item. Student advisory council, involving students in their own future in education — another action item. Replacement of schools, including in the member's riding as the minister pointed out, which that member and his colleagues voted against. They can't have it both ways.

The Leader of the Official Opposition stated clearly at Public Accounts that the Auditor General's report reflected not a problem in the Education department — they were doing their job.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BILLS

Bill No. 15: Second Reading

Clerk: Second reading, Bill No. 15, standing in the name of the Hon. Mr. Fentie.

Hon. Mr. Fentie: Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 15, entitled *First Appropriation Act, 2009-10*, be now read a second time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Hon. Premier that Bill No. 15, entitled *First Appropriation Act, 2009-10*, be now read a second time.

Hon. Mr. Fentie: Mr. Speaker, honourable members, it is a privilege today to table the 2009-10 budget, the third budget of our second mandate. The 2009-10 budget has been constructed to meet our challenging economic times and is an investment in Yukon's future. It is the largest budget in Yukon history and will exceed the \$1-billion threshold.

Mr. Speaker, the Government of Yukon's capital and O&M budget for 2009-10 is \$1.3 billion. On the O&M side, the budget totals \$762.6 million, of which \$79.1 million is recoverable. On the capital side, the total investment will be \$240.6 million, of which \$90.2 million is recoverable.

This budget received a great deal of input from Yukon economic stakeholders and Yukoners generally. It is designed to stimulate Yukon's private sector economy by investing in economic, social and public infrastructure that will keep Yukon's economy primed for the near term while contributing to the territory's longer-term economic prosperity.

Now, while this is a record level of investment, this government can assure Yukoners that we are not mortgaging Yukon's future. The 2009-10 budget will be our seventh consecutive year with a forecast surplus, managing appropriately Yukoners' finances. In our first mandate, from 2002 to 2006, we helped restore the Yukon economy by focusing on diversification and building on our strategic industries. Since taking office, we utilized our successive annual budgets strategically to stimulate the private sector economy. Mr. Speaker, that strategy has worked.

Now, in 2009-10, we are using that same strategy to maintain and build upon what we have already achieved.

First I want to address the issue of promoting a strong and diversified private sector economy. Given our fiscal capacity and the growth experienced, the Yukon has many options to continue to build upon the successes of the recent past. As we face the challenges of the global economic downturn, our budget will make strategic investments in infrastructure and in people, maintaining a high level of stimulus throughout the territory.

In the tourism sector, for example, led by our Minister of Tourism, we are working hard to maintain and grow our tourism industry. Our government is taking strategic measures to increase our market share during these troubled global economic times. We are investing an additional half-million dollars toward overseas tourism marketing in order to increase the awareness of Yukon as a destination of choice and promoting unique tourism experiences.

The additional investment is focused on generating measurable results from stimulating winter visitation in 2010, enhancing awareness among specific target audiences and increasing the inventory of marketable tourism services and products exposure in key growth markets.

Another initiative designed to promote visitations to the territory involves the Yukon Convention Bureau. Our government will invest \$100,000 toward attracting more meetings and

conventions to the territory. This initiative will help launch a sales-focused meetings, convention and incentive events sales campaign in Canada, primarily in Ottawa, metro Vancouver, Calgary and Edmonton. The Yukon Convention Bureau will lead this initiative in collaboration and consultation with Yukon's tourism industry and their representative body — TIA.

Yukon at the 2010 Olympic Games will be one of the largest marketing initiatives of the decade. Our government and VANOC announced a partnership on September 12, 2008. Under the contributing province-territory program, our government allocated \$167,000 for the Own the Podium program and the cultural Olympiad, staging the games, access to 60 Olympic sponsors and the right to use some of the marks.

Our objectives in participating are several: support Canada's games — of course; generate international unpaid media coverage for Yukon; showcase Yukon and Canada's north as a premier visitor destination; sponsor Canada's north weekend; promote Yukon as a place in which to invest and do business; celebrate Yukon First Nation culture; foster opportunities for youth and sport development; showcase our artists and performers to the world; and nurture relationships and opportunities with Olympic sponsors.

Altogether, Mr. Speaker, our government is investing over \$2 million to participate in the 2010 Vancouver Olympic and Paralympic Games.

Here at home, tourism and culture has worked with Carcross people to develop tourism opportunities and add attractions, facilities and community gathering places to the downtown core. This year, over \$700,000 is being provided under the Canada strategic infrastructure fund. This is an agreement to complete the public dock and boat launch, welcome signs and road and drainage works in Carcross.

Our government, through CSIF, will be investing another \$3.4 million to make improvements to the Whitehorse waterfront, focusing on constructing the wharf and working with the Kwanlin Dun First Nation toward its cultural centre.

We are also working with the Champagne and Aishihik First Nations to construct the cultural centre in the community of Haines Junction.

Of course, the mining sector is another major economic engine for Yukon. It is critical to the Yukon economy and our Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources is playing a major role in ensuring and promoting mineral exploration and development in Yukon.

The department increased its investment to the Yukon mining incentive program by \$1.1 million for a total allocation for this year of \$1.8 million. The YMIP program stimulates the discovery of new mineral occurrences and advances existing discoveries to a mature exploration stage. This investment, combined with current geoscience databases and a single regulatory process, positions Yukon to compete for investment in the mining sector, now and into the future.

Providing and improving infrastructure in mine support, development and exploration is underway across Yukon. Improving and upgrading road infrastructure enhances access to Yukon's valuable natural resources. Up to \$500,000 per year

for the next four years will be invested in the resource access road program to upgrade and improve access roads.

Creating economic stimulus by investing in transportation, communication and other public infrastructure provides employment in the short term and develops infrastructure to promote longer term economic growth. The Department of Highways and Public Works will make major investments in each of these sectors.

Our minister responsible for Highways and Public Works is one of the busiest ministers in government. In 2009-10, \$56.7 million will be invested in transportation infrastructure. Mr. Speaker, this represents a 13 percent increase over last year's expenditures in road construction and bridge rehabilitation.

There will be an investment of over \$23 million in the Shawkak project, including over \$14 million on the Slims River bridge. Another \$10 million plus will be spent on further reconstruction of the Robert Campbell Highway, and also over \$2 million will be invested for the reconstruction of the Atlin Road.

An investment of \$4.2 million will be made to upgrade the McClintock River bridge. Further highway infrastructure enhancements include the Klondike, North and South Canol, Alaska and Dempster highways.

Mr. Speaker, on the communications front another major project being undertaken is the over \$14-million investment in a mobile communication system to meet the long-term needs of emergency responders and other users of the existing system, including cell expansion to Ibx Valley and Lake Laberge.

Yukon airports are another important piece of Yukon's transportation system and our government will continue to invest in their improvement. There will be an investment of over \$15 million this year for the Whitehorse International Airport terminal expansion. A total of \$1 million plus will be provided for airport projects in Beaver Creek, Burwash, Old Crow, Dawson City and Whitehorse.

On the Community Services front, our minister responsible continues to work with Yukon municipalities on building sustainable communities. In our government's view, that investment in community infrastructure is key to growing and promoting sustainable communities. Planned and strategic infrastructure development at the municipal level strengthens local job creation and adds to the Yukon economy overall by developing an infrastructure system to promote economic growth and sustainable healthy communities.

In support of this development, our government will once again be increasing the comprehensive municipal grant. Under this grant, this year Whitehorse will receive \$5.6 million; Dawson City will receive \$1.4 million; Haines Junction — \$957,139; Teslin — \$1 million; Carmacks — \$895,612; Faro — \$1.5 million; Mayo — \$1 million; and the community of Watson Lake — \$1.7 million.

Another critical underpinning to the growth of the private sector economy in Yukon is the supply of sustainable green energy. To that end, our minister released the *Energy Strategy for Yukon* on January 23, 2009. The *Energy Strategy for Yukon*

will set long-term direction and define short-term priorities for the Yukon government.

Our government is working with the Yukon Development Corporation, Yukon Energy Corporation and the Yukon Electrical Company Limited to develop an improved approach to managing electricity generation and distribution with the objectives of improving reliability, providing downward pressure on rates and expanding the system to meet the needs of a growing economy.

This government continues to promote the development of a forest industry in Yukon, and we are currently working toward the implementation of the Yukon's new *Forest Resources Act*, based on advice from Yukoners in a very comprehensive consultation process. The key feature of the new legislation is a new regime of current forest practices and tenure opportunities, to support forest industries and protect diverse forest values.

Mr. Speaker, our government is also working to support the development of a profitable and sustainable Yukon agricultural industry. Energy, Mines and Resources is allocating \$987,000 for the Growing Forward initiative, which will include \$592,000 leverage from Canada to address industry priorities and infrastructure that will improve access to markets.

Our minister responsible for the Department of Economic Development, Mr. Speaker, has been hard at work with the Yukon business community and with other governments to support business development, trade and investment opportunities and partnerships. That has been our minister's focus in the development of the Yukon economy.

This department coordinates and facilitates the Yukon government's economic development agenda and markets Yukon as a great place to do business.

An example of this is the department's continuing work with private and public partners in Asia to enhance business, trade and investment opportunities right here in Yukon.

As a result of these efforts, Yukon Zinc's Wolverine property was purchased by two Chinese companies. A 200-person camp is being established and approximately \$240 million will be invested to bring the mine into production in the third quarter of 2010.

Further marketing of Yukon by the department will occur at two signature events in May 2009 in Edmonton, Alberta; namely, the 2009 Yukon Expo and Meet the North "Going Global". These two events are focused on export-ready small- and medium-sized enterprises.

The theme for these events is "Yukoners on the world stage".

The department is currently working on a business development strategy that will identify and remove barriers to business development here at home.

The Department of Economic Development will invest over \$3 million for programs to support business development and the diversification of the Yukon economy.

And, once again, our minister will be allocating over \$3 million to a very important and needed community development fund for communities across the territory.

Further, assisting Yukon First Nations to become full partners in the economic development of the Yukon Territory is

another priority initiative for the Department of Economic Development.

Valuable assistance to Yukon First Nations is provided in a range of areas from building capable institutions of governance and capacity development to opportunity identification and project selection.

Another area is the Yukon Film and Sound Commission, which continues to actively engage and support Yukon's film and sound industries.

Over the past year, the commission supported the Northern Film and Video Industry Association to undertake a comprehensive film training program, as well as investing in Showcase Yukon 2009.

Organized by Music Yukon, Showcase Yukon 2009 provided an opportunity for 16 musical acts to perform in front of international music buyers at the Yukon Arts Centre.

Now, Mr. Speaker, government's main priority always is achieving a better quality of life. I mentioned in the introduction to this speech that this budget is an investment in the economy and an investment in people. Strong and healthy communities and a strong and healthy economy go hand in hand. This government has a proven track record on investment on the "social side of the ledger". We have worked to ensure that the Yukon government is focused on achieving a better quality of life for Yukoners, as we have committed to do.

We are fortunate to have a hardworking Minister of Education — and that's why he is not being told to resign — who is bringing forward a number of new initiatives in this fiscal year, 2009-10. One of the most important initiatives is to implement New Horizons, which is the product from our education reform project. This new process is designed to build community capacity and to develop a collaborative local response to educational issues and holistic lifelong learning.

As part of the implementation of New Horizons, and in response to the Auditor General's report, the Department of Education is replacing the current student information system that has been in use for the past 18 years with the British Columbia enterprise student information system. Once implemented, this system will provide current, accurate and historical student information that allows for informed decision-making by educational leaders for Yukon students across all curriculum areas in the Yukon education system.

The department has also established a new leaders in education/innovation fund — \$75,000 of investment for that. It will provide support for innovative educators by investing in projects led by teachers and community-based teams, which can then be shared with other schools. This investment will also support the enhancement of the school growth planning process that makes innovative education projects proposed by teachers, administrators, school boards, councils and committees eligible for funding.

Another education initiative is the \$150,000 early years transition learning program targeting pre-kindergarten to grade 3 students to help reduce the performance gap in both First Nation and other Yukon children.

An equal amount of investment is being provided to implement a curriculum and special programs training initiative to

provide training for counsellors, learning assistants and education assistants in dealing with the socio-emotional well-being of vulnerable students.

Another \$140,000 has been designated for assistive technology software and related training program to provide support for special needs students. The Department of Education has established a student advisory council to provide a forum for students to offer their perspectives about our school system and give Yukon youth a voice in their education.

Of special interest is the introduction of a new bicultural program at the St. Elias Community School in Haines Junction. Our government and the Champagne and Aishihik First Nations government have signed a memorandum of understanding to introduce this program that aims to connect elementary school children with the Southern Tutchone language.

At the high school level, \$400,000 has been set aside to commence the planning on the program and design needs of a new high school to replace F.H. Collins Secondary School. The new high school will be designed to take advantage of the program opportunities in the secondary program review as outlined.

Our government will also provide another \$100,000 for Yukon College to market the college as a desirable choice for Yukoners and to attract students from the rest of Canada and indeed, internationally.

The advanced education branch has a number of initiatives implementing our election commitment of educating today for jobs tomorrow. In order to meet the demand for both skilled and entry-level workers, the targeted initiative for older workers program has been extended for three years to help older workers between the ages of 55 and 64. Investment of \$286,000 is being made available under this program for projects to improve the employability of older workers by assisting them through activities such as prior learning assessment, skills upgrading and experience in new fields of work.

Our government is continuing to also make progress on its labour market framework for Yukon.

Four labour market strategies are being developed by multi-stakeholder working groups. They are comprehensive skills and trades training, immigration, retention and labour market information.

An investment of \$210,000 is being provided in the fiscal year 2009-10 to carry out this very important initiative.

It should be noted that the Government of Yukon's immigration portal was officially launched in May of 2008 and now provides information and links for prospective immigrants, information and forms for the Yukon nominee program, and promotes Yukon as a destination of choice.

Each month, thousands of visitors view the site to learn more about Yukon and what it has to offer newcomers.

This budget also supports community training.

Funding of over \$1 million is distributed annually based on proposals to partner with non-government organizations, First Nations, economic sectors, Yukon College and community-based organizations to provide employment training.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Minister of Health and Social Services plays a role in contributing to a better quality of life for all Yukoners and, I might add, a vital role.

To meet the needs of Yukoners in that regard, this government has increased the Health and Social Services budget by approximately \$20 million for the coming fiscal year.

The minister and the Department of Health and Social Services are undertaking a number of new initiatives in partnership with the Whitehorse Hospital Corporation.

The teleradiology initiative is a three-year project that began in 2008-09 and has a projected total cost of \$3.5 million in capital and another \$924,000 in operation and maintenance. This is a commitment over four years.

Community nursing is in the process of replacing the existing manual processing of X-rays with a digital X-ray processing capability in all rural health care facilities.

The Whitehorse General Hospital is coordinating this project, in conjunction with improvements to their digital imaging program.

X-ray views will be processed in all rural communities and forwarded electronically to a radiologist in Edmonton for interpretation, with a report returned within a very short period of time.

Another joint venture with the Whitehorse General Hospital is centralized lab services for communicable disease control. All lab services in this area will now be managed by the Whitehorse General Hospital, making lab results more readily available to our health care providers.

Further, our government will be investing in enhancing health care services in the communities of Watson Lake and Dawson City. Mr. Deputy Speaker, \$1.8 million is being provided for the replacement of the children's receiving home here in Whitehorse. We all know the existing building will be replaced by a smaller home that will house up to six male youth, while female youth will be located in another renovated building.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, one of our election platform commitments was to continue to ensure that seniors and elders are able to remain in their home as long as possible by increasing home care and other services. With the support of Canada Health Infoway, Yukon home care is implementing a new tele-home care program that provides the tools for staff to better engage their clients in planning their care, collect important data to assist individual clinical care planning and provide better information for planning future services. With the new technology, assessments and care planning will be completed at home with more input from home care clients themselves.

Mr. Speaker, all of these new initiatives by Health and Social Services will serve to augment Yukon's already impressive health and social safety net. At the same time, Health and Social Services is continuing to enhance its ongoing programs and services. As part of the health human resources strategy, Yukon is sending nurses to the Aurora College in Yellowknife to take the Introduction to Advanced Practice — otherwise known as IAP — program. We are expanding the nurse mentorship program to include licensed practical nurses. Both of these initia-

tives contribute to improving the recruitment and retention of nurses for our territory.

The Department of Health and Social Services is implementing a number of different initiatives under the territorial health access fund. One of the most successful has been the 811 Yukon health line. In 2009-10, an additional \$200,000 will be invested in this service, which will include a new dial-a-dietician feature.

Other THAF initiatives include: \$50,000 for the development of a nutrition framework and strategy to improve the understanding, awareness, education and practice of healthy eating; \$41,000 for a "Drop the Pop" awareness campaign to improve the consumption habits of youth by encouraging the replacement of pop with other healthy choices; \$275,000 for an injury prevention initiative to analyze emergency room visits to inform the development of a target injury prevention activity program throughout the Yukon; and \$262,000 for a rural community dental health initiative to encourage and support regular visits of dentists to rural communities.

Mr. Speaker, there is also a pan-northern approach to sustaining health care. Under the territorial health system sustainability initiative, Yukon is leading an overall pan-territorial mass media collaboration with the Northwest Territories and Nunavut. The three territories are sharing an investment of \$865,000 to produce four awareness and education campaigns and they are aimed at smoking, FASD prevention, prevention of elder abuse, and sexual health.

There is also an oral health pilot project as part of this pan-territorial initiative targeting clients from birth to five years of age and their parents or caregivers to improve the oral health of children across the north. In Yukon, the program consists of monthly preschool clinics, educational programs for parents, brushing programs at daycares and the application of fluoride varnish to improve dental health. To date, a total of 554 children and infants have been seen under this very program.

Our government is also utilizing another fund, the wait-time trust fund, to improve services to Yukoners. It includes: a \$50,000 contribution to the Whitehorse General Hospital for echocardiology to upgrade its sound equipment; \$245,000 for mammography to extend service hours to weekends and evenings — increasing accessibility and reducing wait times; and \$194,000 for knee replacement surgery. This, Mr. Speaker, will double the number of surgeries that can be completed locally in any year from 12 to 24.

In 2009-10, \$698,000 will be allocated to support a patient wait-times pilot project to test the feasibility of providing Yukon patients with access and recourse to a wider range of choice in service providers and service locations for cancer care, cardiac care, orthopaedic surgery and sight restoration. As part of this pilot project, three new positions are being created to enhance access to medical services for Yukoners: a cancer care navigator; a total joint replacement navigator and a travel recourse administrator.

Mr. Speaker, water and food safety are cornerstones of public health and our department is providing another \$108,000 to employ an additional environmental health officer to monitor and address food and waterborne threats and illnesses, a job

that is becoming increasingly complex due to the more rigorous guidelines for drinking water quality and the global production and distribution of food.

Now, Mr. Speaker, children — children are Yukon's future and our government continues to focus on their health and their well-being. Staffing for Family and Children's Services has been increased by \$424,000 to enhance the quality of services, including a childcare welfare specialist, a staff development coordinator, a mobile youth probation officer for rural Yukon and two adoption workers.

Our government is also assisting the Child Development Centre with an additional \$100,000 to hire a psychologist to provide services to children with special needs.

The childcare subsidy program, which supports the affordability of childcare spaces, has increased by \$176,000.

Other childcare initiatives include support for increasing childcare worker wages, supports to children with special needs and training to increase the quality of care that is provided to our children.

For Yukon seniors, our government is providing a \$612,000 increase to the Yukon seniors income supplement, which will be indexed for the future.

As part of our social assistance reform, items of basic need are also being indexed each fall to the Canadian consumer price index. In this budget, over \$2 million is being allocated to cover the increase, including the recent raise in the food benefit and the increases in the food allowance by 15 percent for singles, 10 percent for couples and five percent for three-person families.

Mr. Speaker, the major initiative being undertaken by the minister responsible for the Department of Justice is the corrections infrastructure project, which will see the replacement of the Whitehorse Correctional Centre with the construction of a new corrections facility. The corrections consultation action plan identified how corrections should look in the Yukon and part of that was a new facility to support that very plan.

Our minister, in response to the findings of the correction reform process, is now focused entirely on building this new facility, which will be in conjunction with a treatment centre that will be available to those in need. In 2009-10, over \$21 million is being invested in this highly important project.

To continue with the implementation of correctional reform, another \$569,000 is being provided for the ongoing operation of the corrections action plan implementation office. In order to meet the immediate needs of female inmates at Whitehorse Correctional Centre, our government will be allocating \$719,000 this fiscal year to begin construction this spring of the women's transition living unit.

The Department of Justice will also receive \$321,000 to implement a new initiative, the correctional officer living unit training, which provides specialized training to supervise inmates in the living unit model. This model, Mr. Speaker, as it relates to correction reform, introduces a significant change in the way corrections staff will work with and supervise inmates.

In conjunction with the Department of Health and Social Services, the Department of Justice has established a Community Wellness Court and a therapeutic court that provide a

comprehensive approach to meeting the needs of offenders in order to reduce recidivism.

Justice is providing \$575,000 to implement this initiative with Health and Social Services, adding another \$96,000 for a full-time alcohol and drug services addictions counsellor for the court.

Another joint initiative with Health and Social Services is the Journey Far carver program that is aimed at youth at risk.

This project has been shown to have a positive impact on the artistic growth, employability, and business development skills and personal wellness for its participants.

Mr. Speaker, the Department of Justice is also working with the Carcross-Tagish First Nation on the Southern Lakes justice development project, with \$168,000 investment from the northern strategy to redefine the ways that justice is administered in the community of Carcross. And of course, Mr. Speaker, the safer communities and neighbourhoods office has been very, very successful, and an additional \$178,000 has been set aside in this budget for equipment and another part-time SCAN investigator, as well as for a full-time director of policing and investigations in the interest of public safety.

A further \$300,000 is being made available for a new court registry information system that will improve the treatment and management of offenders.

Mr. Speaker, our government, through the Women's Directorate, is placing increased emphasis and resources on the prevention of violence against women. The prevention of violence against aboriginal women fund was established by our government in 2004 to support projects designed and developed by aboriginal women for their own communities. In 2009-10, we are doubling that investment toward this very valuable initiative to a total of \$200,000. This increase in funding will address recommendations of the Yukon Aboriginal Women's Summit and the National Aboriginal Women's Summit.

Another area of great importance in this government is the operations and functions of the Yukon Housing Corporation. Together with the Women's Directorate, the Yukon Housing Corporation is building a new 30-unit social housing complex, known as the Whitehorse affordable family housing project. This estimated \$11 million innovative housing initiative is to be built to super-green standards and will meet the growing demand for affordable housing for lone-parent families. Design work has now begun and site preparation is expected to start this summer, with construction continuing throughout 2009-10.

To address the needs of seniors, the Yukon Housing Corporation is also constructing a 12-unit seniors housing complex in Watson Lake, and work is underway for a similar complex in Teslin.

You know, Mr. Speaker, the initiatives of the Department of Community Services contribute significantly to providing a better quality of life for all our citizens by investing in emergency response, initiatives to reduce fire hazard, access to safe drinking water and environmentally sound solid waste management.

FireSmart funding, for example, has increased from \$1 million to \$1.5 million for 2009-10. This will significantly increase FireSmart activities directed at reducing the threat of

wildfires in communities by minimizing flammable materials in high-risk areas. This increase will also serve to strengthen local economies by increasing winter employment opportunities.

As a point of note, Mr. Speaker, in 2008 the FireSmart program created 28 projects and some 39,000 hours of employment for Yukoners.

This government will also invest another \$150,000 toward replacing operational equipment for wildland fire management.

We will invest another \$775,000 in emergency response vehicles for protective services to enhance emergency response throughout Yukon.

Purchases for 2009-10 include a fire truck for the Ross River volunteer fire department, a new multi-purpose fire management vehicle for Mayo to provide initial response to wildland fires and other emergencies, and two new ambulances to maintain a reliable Yukon-wide ambulance fleet.

Emergency Measures is also receiving \$45,000 to purchase a new river rescue boat for use by the Dawson Search and Rescue Association.

Emergency Medical Services and the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation are working cooperatively to provide basic emergency medical responder training to members of the First Nation government and Old Crow community so they are better equipped to deal with emergency situations.

A new fire hall is under construction in Golden Horn, with construction completion expected this spring.

The Department of Community Services has a number of initiatives addressing water treatment. These include allocating \$25,000 to complete a water operator's training program at Yukon College. This will help ensure safe drinking water is available and to certify water handlers and operators in the communities. Also included is investing in potable water supplies and systems to improve water quality and supply; building a full-scale water treatment facility in Ross River; improving the physical water infrastructure and service in Carcross; and building full-scale water treatment facilities for Champagne and Aishihik First Nations and for Haines Junction and Teslin.

The total cost for the arsenic treatment upgrades will be some \$4.5 million, with \$750,000 of that being allocated in 2009 and 2010.

This year Community Services is providing another \$2.4 million to complete the final design and construction of a water treatment system at Army Beach. \$250,000 is being provided for a water well in Old Crow, and a potable water well is also being installed at the Haines Junction initial attack base to replace the need for trucked-in water at a cost of around \$70,000.

Community Services is also allocating \$250,000 this year for Carcross sewage treatment and disposal. This investment for the Carcross facility will provide design and construction of sludge-drying beds that will also serve other facilities such as the Marsh Lake lagoon.

The department, in consultation with municipalities, is developing a Yukon-wide solid-waste strategy for environmentally sustainable solid-waste management practices by conducting a full review and options study for the 20 solid-waste facili-

ties that the Yukon government operates in unincorporated communities, and \$500,000 is being provided to provide this strategy.

Construction of the \$5.5 million Carmacks waste-water treatment system is underway with completion scheduled for this year. Mr. Speaker, \$3 million is initially being made available for the selection and construction of an appropriate option for treatment of Dawson's sewage.

The availability of land to establish homes is an important factor of quality of life for all Yukoners. This government has initiated several large land development projects in rural Yukon with an investment of over \$10 million. These land developments include \$2 million for Dawson, for industrial and country residential lots; \$2.75 million for Haines Junction, for urban residential and country residential lots; \$4.7 million for recreation lots in Grizzly Valley; \$500,000 for rural residential lot development in Mount Lorne and \$500,000 for recreation lots Yukon-wide.

Here in Whitehorse, over \$8 million is being allocated to develop 132 residential lots in Arkell and another \$10 million has been budgeted for engineering and design of off-site utilities and services for the Whistle Bend subdivision.

For municipal infrastructure support in the Whitehorse area, Yukon and Canada have approved another \$2.5 million under the municipal rural infrastructure fund for water, sewer and road upgrades in Takhini North. A further \$1.75 million has been allocated for the Hamilton Boulevard extension which is slated to be open to motorists this summer.

For the citizens of Dawson City, their Member for Klondike is indeed hard at work and continues to represent their issues on their behalf at the seat of government. Our government remains committed to ensuring the Dawson City recreation centre is functional. Over the next five years, Community Services will provide Dawson City with funding and technical expertise, as requested, for structural repairs to make the building safe and usable, for a total contribution of \$4 million. A further \$3.5 million will be invested in Dawson City to upgrade Front Street.

For the citizens of Teslin, to ensure the community can continue to enjoy the benefits of a public library, we will be moving the Teslin library to a newly renovated space in April 2009.

The development of arts and culture in the territory also contributes significantly to the quality of life for Yukoners. Mr. Speaker, the Department of Tourism and Culture plays a key role in this area. The department has initiated a three-year lease and funding arrangement with the Whitehorse Chamber of Commerce and the Yukon Arts Centre Corporation to utilize the Old Fire Hall in downtown Whitehorse as a venue for community and artistic events. The department will invest \$100,000 in the touring artist fund, which enables Yukon artists to market their creative endeavours outside the Yukon Territory. This investment provides assistance to Yukon artists, ensembles and companies creating and producing work in theatre, dance, music, visual arts, film, storytelling and literature. It provides applicants with assistance to present their work to the

public at national or international exhibitions, concerts, festivals and showcases.

Many Yukon artists are ambassadors for our territory. While sharing their artistic talents abroad, they are promoting Yukon as a tourism destination.

Further investments in the decade of sport and culture, which is an important initiative this government has undertaken, and the Culture Quest program allows for many artistic groups to participate in the Cultural Olympiad, part of the 2010 Winter Olympics in Vancouver. No doubt, Mr. Speaker, the 2010 games represent a tremendous opportunity to showcase Yukon as a wonderful place to live, invest in and to work.

Mr. Speaker, our balanced approach to governance includes a very high priority and emphasis on protecting and preserving our environment and wildlife. Part of what makes the Yukon a wonderful place to live and work is our natural environment. We are fortunate to live in an area of the world that has such natural beauty. Protecting and preserving our environment and wildlife, while adapting to and mitigating the impacts of climate change, are of paramount importance to our government.

We released the Yukon climate change strategy in the fall of 2006 and the climate change action plan on February 12, 2009. The climate change action plan builds upon the goals of the strategy and identifies 33 priority actions to be implemented. Implementation of the action plan will involve all departments and agencies of the Yukon government.

The 2009-10 budget includes an additional allocation of \$450,000 to establish a climate change secretariat to oversee the effective implementation of the action plan and to provide government-wide leadership and coordination on the Yukon government's response.

Mr. Speaker, many actions are already underway. Over the last number of years, our government has undertaken, or is in the midst of implementing, more than 80 projects and policies to address climate change.

In the area of adaptation, work is being undertaken to test different road surfaces in order to determine strategies for the reduction of permafrost degradation on our highways.

Our government is providing support to study climate change impacts on major watersheds, such as the Yukon River, through the use of traditional knowledge, as well as scientific monitoring.

The Department of Energy, Mines and Resources is conducting a forest health risk assessment.

The Department of Environment will continue to invest in Yukon's fish and wildlife inventories, which will help us manage our resources in a balanced and sustainable way.

Mr. Speaker, the Yukon Cold Climate Innovation Centre, which our government supports, is dedicated to creating commercial solutions to cold climate issues affecting northerners. The centre has established a presence at Yukon College, in conjunction with the Climate Change Research Centre of Excellence, and has reached an agreement with the University of Alberta to work together on pan-northern research.

The Yukon Housing Corporation is also a major contributor to green initiatives. It offers a range of programs and fund-

ing options, all designed to enhance home energy efficiency, increase affordability over the long term, and reduce negative environmental impacts.

Our government is working to reduce greenhouse gas emissions through energy efficiency, conservation and the use of renewable energy. For this reason, the climate change action plan and the *Energy Strategy for Yukon* were developed in concert.

Our government has been working to lower Yukon's carbon footprint by increasing our capacity for hydroelectric generation. The Energy Solutions Centre, a centre with the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources, is allocating \$150,000 through the good energy program to help Yukoners lower their energy costs, and supporting the move to energy-efficient projects, providing \$100 to \$500 in cash rebates on a wide range of energy-efficient purchases.

This year's enhancement program includes rebates for grey water heat recovery systems here in Yukon.

We are continuing to expand our hydro-generated power, as opposed to diesel-generated power and, in doing so, we will be able to displace thousands of tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions each year. The extension of the Whitehorse-Aishihik-Faro grid to Pelly Crossing and the Minto mine, taking both off diesel, have reduced Yukon's greenhouse gas emissions, or carbon footprint, by some 24,000 tonnes annually.

With respect to contaminated sites, Mr. Speaker, the Department of Environment is providing an additional \$200,000 for an enhanced program to assess and remediate these sites. The site assessment and remediation unit was established in 2008 to manage Yukon government-owned contaminated sites, and was set up in response to recommendations by the Auditor General of Canada to create a contaminated-sites liabilities policy and clean-up program.

Mr. Speaker, with respect to contaminated sites which are a federal responsibility, the abandonment and reclamation of the Faro mine is one of the foremost and formidable environmental challenges facing our territory. Our government has reached a consensus with Canada and affected First Nations on a preferred closure option for the Faro mine that will maximize local job opportunities and is estimated to cost \$30 million per year for the 15-year construction phase and another \$10 million per year for the 15-year period of adjustment.

Mr. Speaker, the Yukon government took over management and responsibility for care and maintenance of the Faro mine complex at the beginning of this month.

Total federal funding in the amount of \$90 million plus for type 2 sites in Faro is being provided under the federal contaminated sites action plan.

With respect to wildlife, the Department of Environment is providing another \$319,000 to establish a new comprehensive animal health program to support interdepartmental integration and coordination of animal health and animal welfare functions and support services within Yukon government.

The preservation and the protection of the Porcupine caribou herd remains of paramount concern to this government. We continue to provide an investment to the Vuntut Gwitchin

government to support the lobby efforts related to ANWR and its impact on the herd.

The Department of Environment is investing another \$206,000 to support the Yukon Wildlife Preserve and upgrade the infrastructure, including the double fencing on the perimeter of the complex in order to protect the health of wildlife, both within and outside of the preserve. The Yukon Wildlife Preserve will receive an operational funding investment of \$600,000 this fiscal year.

Mr. Speaker, the humane treatment of domestic animals is another important commitment by our government. To this end, we have agreed to work with stakeholders to review and to modernize legislation pertaining to domestic animal control and protection.

Last fall our government improved the *Animal Protection Act*, and consequently Community Services has hired an animal welfare officer to develop and deliver education, awareness and enforcement initiatives to help prevent animal abuse and encourage the humane treatment of animals throughout Yukon. An amount of \$240,000 has been provided to implement this very important initiative.

And, Mr. Speaker, we support recycling. It is part of our commitment to the Yukon public and the Department of Environment is providing \$250,000 to assist community-based recycling centres with their operations in order to support public recycling efforts, to divert from landfills and promote the re-using concept.

This increase in program investment will help the centres meet increased costs that have occurred in view of the recent changes in the world's economy that have reduced the market for recyclable goods.

Practising good government, Mr. Speaker, is a cornerstone for any government. Throughout this speech I have referenced the economic global climate. On the economic front, we are living in unprecedented times globally, nationally and regionally. These economic impacts are being experienced worldwide and have called upon public governments at all levels to take action to reduce the impacts. This government has managed the fiscal resources of Yukon strategically and, as a result, we are in a positive position to manage our way through this current global economic cycle.

In that regard, we have brought forward a budget that is strategic and focused on creating economic stimulus in the territory in the short term. We have also balanced that investment with initiatives that continue to develop the quality of life for Yukoners and protect and preserve our environment.

Within Yukon, we will continue to engage Yukon economic stakeholders through our internal deputy minister committee on the economy.

We will also continue to provide oversight on infrastructure projects through a deputy minister committee to ensure maximum benefit to Yukoners.

At the national level, we will continue to participate on committees struck by the federal Minister of Finance to provide input on federal funding initiatives to ensure appropriate and ongoing federal investment here in Yukon.

On the health care front, we are taking proactive measures to find solutions to deal with the challenge of rapidly escalating health care costs.

We commissioned a report called the *Yukon Health Care Review*, which examined the current and long term sustainability of our health care system over the next 10 years. The report is now being taken out to the general public, stakeholders and First Nation and municipal governments for comment and review. Our government will be utilizing the findings of the *Yukon Health Care Review* to develop a business case to present to the federal government for the continuation or replacement of funds such as the territorial health access fund, which was designed to meet the unique health care needs and challenges of the north.

To meet the energy needs of Yukoners, we are proactively developing green energy initiatives in Yukon to support resource development and to provide Yukoners with more cost-effective energy sources. One such area is the generation of hydroelectric power. We are working toward the extension of the WAF grid from Pelly Crossing to Stewart Crossing and the upgrading of the Mayo dam, known as Mayo B, to provide another 40 gigawatt hours of power — green hydro power, I might add, Mr. Speaker — to be developed in partnership with the federal government and with First Nations.

The Yukon Energy Corporation has already undertaken a YESAB review of the line extension and has now submitted a YESAA application for the upgrading of the Mayo dam site itself. Mr. Speaker, all Yukoners will benefit from this development.

To further enhance the practice of good government, we will continue to invest in capacity development within the public service. This involves training, developing, recruiting and retaining a representative professional public service that is working within a safe and healthy workplace and is responsive to the general public. The Yukon government has committed a total of \$113,000 over two years to the implementation of a new corporate health and safety initiative to create a health and safety leadership system government-wide.

We will invest a further \$349,000 annually for the next three years for program support to employees addressing substance abuse issues.

With respect to partnerships with First Nation governments, we will continue to work actively to assist self-governing First Nations so that they can secure the renewal of responsible fiscal transfer agreements with Canada in support of First Nation governance in this territory. We will continue to assist First Nations in developing and enhancing capacity within their own public service.

Practising good government also means meeting our government's obligations to the Yukon's francophone community. The French Language Services Directorate is continuing to increase our government's capacity to deliver French language services. The Yukon government signed an agreement with the Public Service Commission of Canada that provides a linguistic assessment of our employees in relation to their progress in French language training, as well as an objective assessment of linguistic skills required for staffing bilingual positions.

Mr. Speaker, in closing, we are confident as a government that the budget we have brought forward represents responsible fiscal management while providing necessary economic stimulus. It represents the input of Yukoners and, as such, contains measures to improve the quality of life of Yukoners and balance economic development with the preservation and protection of our natural environment.

We firmly committed to Yukoners that we would build a bright future for all. We have demonstrated the necessary leadership through responsible fiscal planning to deliver on that commitment. Our efforts have positioned Yukon positively to weather the current global economic cycle and, through our strategic investments, to promote long-term future economic growth.

Mr. Speaker, I am indeed honoured to commend this budget to all members of the House on behalf of the Yukon Party government. Thank you.

Motion to adjourn debate

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

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

Motion to adjourn debate on Second Reading of Bill No. 15 agreed to

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

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

Motion agreed to

Speaker: This House now stands adjourned until 1:00 p.m. Monday.

The House adjourned at 3:13 p.m.