

**Yukon Legislative Assembly**  
**Whitehorse, Yukon**  
**Tuesday, March 24, 2009 — 1:00 p.m.**

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

*Prayers*

## DAILY ROUTINE

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

## TRIBUTES

### In recognition of World Tuberculosis Day

**Hon. Mr. Hart:** I rise today on behalf of the House to pay tribute to World Tuberculosis Day. I ask my colleagues to join me in recognizing today as World Tuberculosis Day.

Monsieur le Président, j'invite aujourd'hui mes collègues à se joindre à moi afin de souligner la Journée mondiale de la tuberculose. Cette journée est l'occasion pour moi de parler de cette maladie encore très présente au Yukon.

Recognition of this day provides me with an opportunity to speak to a disease that is still very much part of the Yukon. While much progress has been made in fighting this disease, both in Canada and around the world, it remains a health problem for us, and indeed across the north.

Tuberculosis rates in Canada have fallen significantly over the past three decades. In fact, in 2007, the rate of TB in Canada was 4.7 cases per 100,000 — the lowest reported rate since the first surveillance data on TB began in 1924. However, in the Yukon, we saw two new outbreaks in 2008 alone. Our public health officials continue to work diligently and collaboratively to ensure that treatment is provided and that contract tracing and preventive therapy are offered to those who are at risk of developing active TB in the future.

We have been able to respond to the new outbreaks by augmenting staff, both at the Yukon communicable disease control and oftentimes the communities with community-based TB workers.

We have made a conscious decision to not identify the communities where TB is present because the numbers in each of our communities are so low, and we wish to avoid the fear and stigma that tend to go with the diagnosis of TB.

Together, our medical responders — the medical officer of health and the communicable disease officer, the TB nurse and other nurses throughout the territory, YCDC nurses, the school officials and also First Nation governments — work together to coordinate service delivery, reduce the fear and stigma and increase public understanding of tuberculosis.

This is a disease that can be managed. It is a disease that must and can be eliminated. I applaud the work of our health care providers who work diligently to care for our citizens affected by TB and those who work at the national and international levels to eradicate the disease.

This year, the theme for World TB Day focuses on the elimination of TB and, in order to do that, we are told we need

to strengthen our partnerships. Mr. Speaker, we have done that, and we are here, and our work progresses.

Thank you very much.

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

## INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** I'd like to ask all members of the House to join me in welcoming to the gallery a constituent, who is a frequent attendee here, Peter Wojtowicz, and four staff from the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources, who have joined us this afternoon: Rose Williams, Tara Davy, Patricia Nowell and Chris Wermouth.

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

Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

Are there any reports of committees?

Are there any petitions?

Are there any bills to be introduced?

## INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

### Bill No. 72: Introduction and First Reading

**Hon. Ms. Horne:** I move that Bill No. 72, entitled *Corrections Act, 2009*, be now introduced and read a first time.

**Speaker:** It has been moved by the Minister of Justice that Bill No. 72, entitled *Corrections Act, 2009*, be now introduced and read a first time.

*Motion for introduction and first reading of Bill No. 72 agreed to*

### Bill No. 66: Introduction and First Reading

**Hon. Mr. Lang:** I move that Bill No. 66, entitled *Corporate Governance Statute Law Amendment Act*, be now introduced and read a first time.

**Speaker:** It has been moved by the Minister of Community Services that Bill No. 66, entitled *Corporate Governance Statute Law Amendment Act*, be now introduced and read a first time.

*Motion for introduction and first reading of Bill No. 66 agreed to*

**Speaker:** Are there further bills for introduction?  
 Are there any notices of motion?

## NOTICES OF MOTION

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

THAT this House urges the Yukon government to expedite plans for a four-lane highway between the Carcross Cutoff and the Mayo Road Cutoff along the Alaska Highway and to make sure that the intersections are updated to meet this expansion.

**Mr. Cardiff:** I give notice of the following motion  
 THAT this House urges the Yukon government to direct its efforts to improve the education system by expanding and

enhancing programs and services, particularly in rural Yukon, that have proven successful, such as:

- (1) experiential learning programs;
- (2) after-school tutoring programs;
- (3) the Leaders in Education Innovation fund;
- (4) the Individual Learning Centre program;
- (5) the Whole Child Project;
- (6) First Nation cultural and language programs;
- (7) counsellors in all schools;
- (8) summer and after-school programming;
- (9) the involvement of community education liaison coordinators in community development and counselling; and
- (10) skills training at the high school level.

I give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Yukon government to direct its efforts to improve the involvement of families and community in the education system by:

- (1) promoting direct involvement of families and elders in more school programming;
- (2) establishing after-school, holiday and summer programs within the community; and
- (3) collaborating closely with other departments in supporting programs for at-risk families.

**Speaker:** Are there any further notices of motion?

Hearing none, is there a statement by a minister?

That then brings us to Question Period.

## QUESTION PERIOD

### Question re: Whitehorse Correctional Centre rebuild

**Mr. Mitchell:** Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Justice.

Shortly after coming to office, the Yukon Party government made a political decision to step in and cancel the construction of the new correctional facility in 2003. "We're looking at more cost effective ways of building the jail. The new facility is warranted. There is no question about it. We recognize there is an urgency to this," the former Justice minister and current Deputy Premier told the *Yukon News*, in announcing the delay.

The building that the former government was working on was too expensive, according to the Yukon Party. It was a Cadillac facility, they said. It was the Ritz Hotel. Let's skip ahead six years. The Yukon Party government has now unveiled plans for the new correctional facility and, lo and behold, the price tag is \$60 million.

Will the minister admit that the delay has virtually doubled the price of this building?

**Hon. Ms. Horne:** I would like to share with this Assembly some of the weaknesses of the centre that was just mentioned by the Leader of the Official Opposition. Their building would have been more expensive in operation and maintenance. Their building would have been a bigger, newer warehouse, but still a warehouse. Isolation means the workplace is less safe for correctional officers and inmates. It did not have enhanced programming options or programming space for male

offenders. It did not have enhanced facilities for female offenders. I am amazed at the lack of consultation that the Liberals did on their facility.

**Mr. Mitchell:** Well, Mr. Speaker, the Justice minister seems unaware of the cost of the new building. It is upward of \$60 million. This has already been confirmed by Finance officials. I don't know why the minister doesn't want to say so.

In January of 2003, the newly elected Yukon Party government halted construction of the facility "due to budget and other considerations," according to a memo to Whitehorse Correctional Centre staff from the Deputy Minister of Justice. At the time, the new facility was going to cost between \$20 million and \$25 million. Now the Yukon Party likes to portray itself as good fiscal managers. Here is another example that demonstrates that is simply not so. They made a political decision to delay the construction of a new facility. That decision is now costing Yukoners about \$30 million.

Will the Justice minister for the record confirm the new price tag as around \$60 million?

**Hon. Ms. Horne:** Mr. Speaker, if it looks like a warehouse, it is a warehouse. Our new multi-purpose treatment and correctional centre reflects what Yukoners told us they wanted in a new facility. We embarked on a correctional reform process after taking office. We talked to the public, to the First Nation governments, to correctional staff and inmates. Let me share with you the extensive consultations we have conducted.

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, published February 2007. We began the correctional act consultation in December 2007. We waited until the conclusion of this consultation and the correctional reform to build an effective centre.

The outcome of the consultation was very clear: healing and rehabilitation should be the focus, and it is. The estimated cost is over \$67 million. My colleague, the Minister of Highways and Public Works, can speak further to the contract process. The new multi-purpose facility is a treatment and correctional centre that emphasizes treatment and rehabilitation.

**Mr. Mitchell:** Well, Mr. Speaker, \$67 million and growing. Apparently it used to look like the Ritz and a warehouse. Not sure how that worked.

Mr. Speaker, there were major cost overruns on the Carmacks school under this government. The government has turned a \$5-million health centre in Watson Lake into a \$25-million hospital, and now the correctional centre has gone from \$25 million to \$67 million. Talk about financial incompetence.

Six years ago, the government delayed the new correctional centre because "we're looking at more cost-effective ways of building the jail." That's the now Deputy Premier talking in 2003. In 2009, the cost has ballooned to \$67 million.

Why has the Minister of Justice or the Premier allowed the budget for this new building to spiral out of control?

**Hon. Mr. Fentie:** Now that the Leader of the Official Opposition has brought up financial management, let's talk about that. Under the former Liberal proposal for a new warehouse, the cost to the Yukon taxpayer over time would have

been enormous. Why? Because of the recidivism rate. We weren't dealing with the root problem under their proposal and their approach. This is not a \$60-million plus investment in the jail; that's not it at all. This is an investment in correctional reform. It is the development of a multi-purpose facility that includes treatment and a women's transitional unit. It is the development of a whole new approach to incarceration, where required, so that instead of indirect supervision, we have direct supervision. This is not only an investment in our justice system to allow for the Community Wellness Court options to treat people instead of incarcerating them, this is an investment in overall treatment for the territory.

This \$60-million plus investment is dealing not only with justice and correctional reform; it's dealing with the need for treatment in the Yukon Territory. That's what this investment is about — it is not a warehouse and not poor fiscal management, as the Liberals had proposed.

#### **Question re: Corrections programming**

**Mr. Elias:** I have a question too for the Minister of Justice. There was a very interesting court case a few weeks back. An individual was being sentenced to Whitehorse Correctional Centre for drinking and driving. He asked the judge for more time. He wanted to serve his time in a federal prison.

His lawyer said, "My client feels that he would receive more assistance for his addictions in the federal system than he is receiving at the Whitehorse Correctional Centre and, in fairness, he's probably correct. There is very little in terms of counselling or treatment that goes on in this particular facility. There is really nothing of a formal nature that goes on there."

Can the minister explain why there is very little or no programming for alcohol addiction available at Whitehorse Correctional Centre?

**Hon. Ms. Horne:** The question that the member opposite is asking right now just puts more emphasis on what we are doing with the new treatment centre. I can tell you that the substance abuse programming that we do have available at Whitehorse Correctional Centre right now is the White Bison program. It is a 12-step substance abuse program that focuses on the teachings of the medicine wheel.

The program is facilitated by a former employee of the Committee on Abuse in Residential Schools Society and an elder. It is very effective programming.

**Mr. Elias:** Mr. Speaker, a new correctional facility will not be ready for at least three to four years. So basically I can hear the Justice minister saying that she's going to ignore dealing with the root problem now?

Yet we have a defence attorney saying that it would be better if his client were sent to a federal prison because there is nothing available for inmates at Whitehorse Correctional Centre. Again, he said, "There is very little in terms of counselling or treatment that goes on in this particular facility. There is really nothing of a formal nature that goes on there."

The minister talks a lot about rehabilitation and healing but her words are not backed up by programs in the facilities we have now.

What is the minister going to do to help these people today — not three to four years from now?

**Hon. Ms. Horne:** Mr. Speaker, this is absolutely not the truth. We take very good care of the inmates at the correctional centre.

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

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

**Speaker:** Member, you cannot say that "is absolutely not the truth." The implication, of course, is that the member is lying, and that is not allowed in this discourse.

You have the floor, please.

**Hon. Ms. Horne:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am sorry if I implied so.

I can confirm to you, Mr. Speaker, that there is a variety of programming ongoing at Whitehorse Correctional Centre. I cannot comment on the case that just happened but I can tell you that there is culturally relevant programming at the Whitehorse Correctional Centre.

During the consultation on corrections, we repeatedly heard the importance of ensuring that programming for offenders included culturally relevant programs. We have that programming available at Whitehorse Correctional Centre, and we also extend that on an individual basis, specifically tailored for that individual, or we have the group programming.

**Mr. Elias:** Mr. Speaker, a Yukoner asked a judge to sentence him to more time in jail outside the territory, because he can't get the services he needs from this government. This is a pretty extreme step for an individual to take. It says a lot about how bad the level of programming is in the minister's correctional centre. His lawyer, with years of experience, said that he would receive more assistance for his addictions in the federal system than he is receiving at the Whitehorse Correctional Centre. "In fairness, he is probably correct." That says it all, Mr. Speaker.

If the minister isn't too busy designing and building a \$67-million building, then she could perhaps get these people the help they need today. Will she do that?

**Hon. Ms. Horne:** The member opposite is again just enhancing what we are doing with this centre. We are making an effective correctional centre in the truest sense of the word. Our inmates will come out of there rehabilitated into society, and I would suggest that if there are any questions on what programming we have available at Whitehorse Correctional Centre, I would suggest that the lawyers contact Whitehorse Correctional Centre to see what is actually available at the centre. We have Elders Council; we have talking circles, traditional crafts, individual counselling, drum-making, traditional parenting, solstice gatherings, and appropriate space is now available for First Nations programming. We have also renovated an existing program area to create a healing room. The members opposite have also toured the centre with me to see this very effective area that has the First Nations traditions in it.

#### **Question re: Corrections programming**

**Mr. Hardy:** Mr. Speaker, yesterday, we asked questions concerning the various announcements and statements made by this government about the new correctional facility. We reviewed the replies from the two ministers and the Pre-

mier, and are dismayed at the confusing messages coming to the public. On March 17, the Premier announced a budget commitment of \$21.6 million for a new treatment and correctional centre. That announcement states that the treatment space would be accessible to inmates and scheduled outside users seven days a week.

We're looking for clarification of this statement. Will the Premier clarify what is meant by "scheduled outside users"?

**Hon. Mr. Fentie:** I'm really actually quite pleased that the members opposite are choosing to debate this very critical issue for the Yukon. For years, this territory has warehoused individuals, creating a recidivism rate of well in excess of 80 percent. We all know that the common denominator in many, many cases in this justice system is substance abuse, so treatment and rehabilitation has to come to the forefront.

When we explain to the public that this is a multi-purpose facility, that's exactly what it is. One of the areas, where needed, would be things like the Community Wellness Court, which would have options in sentencing versus incarceration in exchange for a treatment program. However, Mr. Speaker, there is much more that has to be done in this area. What we face in today's society in the Yukon is relevant to what we have passed in this House — the substance abuse action plan — with the parties opposite to address enforcement, to address education and prevention and indeed, to address treatment.

That is what this investment is all about. That is exactly what we are delivering.

**Mr. Hardy:** I am pleased to hear the Premier recognizes the substance abuse action plan. It was a joint effort among some politicians to make that come about, and I think some good dialogue and results came out of it.

The Minister of Justice has further muddied the waters by calling the corrections centre a multi-purpose correctional and treatment centre. She expanded on the concept last week saying that the multi-use treatment space would be used by Justice, Health and Social Services and even NGOs providing services for a range of other individuals as well. Finance officers confirmed in the budget briefing that treatment for addictions would be located at the new corrections centre. They did not clarify if that meant all treatment services for inmates and the public. So, since the Premier didn't answer the first question, I'll try this one.

Will all addictions services be located at the new corrections centre, or will there be a dual system — one for inmates and one for all others seeking treatment?

**Hon. Mr. Fentie:** The short answer is no, because it is going to take much more to deal with the situation we are dealing with in Yukon society today when it comes to rehabilitation and the treatment of individuals who are afflicted with substance abuse and addiction. This is but one step in many.

I'll remind the members opposite that when this government came into office, we didn't even have a detoxification centre. We have one now. This government is now delivering on treatment. Subsequent to the substance abuse action plan, we've increased enforcement, we've increased education and prevention, and we are now taking steps toward more capacity in the area of treatment. It includes this facility, but it does not

preclude other options for treatment across the territory, such as land-based treatment. We are in discussions with some First Nations in that regard for the possibility of other programming and forms of treatment, such as land-based.

So I think the members have to wrap their head around this: it's a multi-purpose facility. That means it has more than one purpose, not just warehousing individuals. It has treatment and other capabilities that not only can help inmates, but also others, wherever the need is demonstrated. We will go beyond, because treatment will take much more than that.

**Mr. Hardy:** I go on record very clearly as supporting what the government is doing in this regard, but I just need some clarification around this. I think the public needs more clarification — such as what other options there are and what is going to be effected for the general public.

Now, yesterday, the Minister of Health and Social Services weighed into the fray, but also did not give any sense of the direction the services under his watch would take.

We are aware that the Sarah Steele Building is in need of replacement or a major upgrade and we want to know what's going to happen with that. It is apparent that not everyone involved in this decision — and who are providing addictions services — is on the same page and that worries us, as well.

Now the lack of a clear idea on what this \$67-million facility will offer Yukoners and what will happen to present addiction services leaves us and many others uncertain about plans this government has for this very important service. It is unclear which department will be responsible. My question is this: what plans does he have for providing drug and alcohol addiction detoxification treatment prevention and after-care services for the general public once the new correctional facility is built?

**Hon. Mr. Fentie:** Mr. Speaker, what is not clear about the substance abuse action plan that this House unanimously supported and with which we are now proceeding and have been for some time? I think that's very clear.

It would be a lot more constructive if the members opposite would at least let us get the building built. No, we are not shutting down the Sarah Steele Building because we are building a new multi-purpose facility. It was shut down by a past government. We opened it up again. We have no intention of reducing detoxification needs in the Yukon. We need it. It's a prerequisite step to even get to treatment.

So, Mr. Speaker, the clarity issue is not one from the government side. We're quite clear in what we're doing and it is driven by correctional reform and substance abuse action. We will endeavour each day in this House to help clear this matter up for the members opposite. I think the ultimate priority for all of us is to recognize the problem in Yukon society, recognize the problem of recidivism that has been in our justice and correction system far too long, recognize the cost to the Yukon taxpayer because of that, and get on with dealing with the problem by finding a solution. That's what the government is doing; that's what the investment in this budget is all about.

#### **Question re: Residential schools in Yukon**

**Mr. Edzerza:** On Friday, March 20, there were presentations and a display regarding Indian residential schools in

the Yukon held at Yukon College sponsored by Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in, Han First Nation, Yukon College and the Yukon Human Rights Commission.

There were several hundred First Nation citizens who attended those schools and I want to personally thank all of those who had the courage to share their personal stories and to make them available for the public to read. Needless to say, there are many heartbreaking, heart-wrenching stories.

My question to the Minister of Health and Social Services: did he, the Premier, or any other elected MLA from the Yukon Party attend the presentations and view the displays?

**Hon. Mr. Hart:** With regard to that particular event, I was not in attendance, but neither was I invited.

**Mr. Edzerza:** A no-show speaks volumes, believe me. Mr. Speaker, the presentations and displays were valuable and crucial information for any government to justify and support the need for a culturally relevant land-based treatment centre in the Yukon.

Mr. Speaker, many of the students whose pictures were in the scrapbook on display have recorded several personal stories of their experiences at the residential school they attended, and I must say some of them are very emotionally upsetting to read. I talked to some of the former students there and, believe me, there are many hard feelings alive and well today.

Does the minister agree that there is a priority need for a culturally relevant, land-based treatment centre in the Yukon?

**Hon. Mr. Fentie:** Mr. Speaker, recognizing the overwhelming situation that has occurred with Canadian aboriginal people because of what transpired many years ago under the direction, guidance and control of the federal government, we all recognize that and steps are being taking. It starts with the apology by Prime Minister Harper a year or so ago. Of course, all the work that we do here internally in the Yukon is relevant to that.

I must remind this House that the member opposite, who now sits as an independent member, was once the minister responsible, who was given direction to develop a treatment centre. He did not deliver. He quit.

This government is delivering. We are delivering a treatment centre in conjunction with the new correctional centre. We are in discussions on land-based treatment. We are proceeding and implementing substance abuse action in all its areas. Mr. Speaker, the government did not quit, it acted.

**Mr. Edzerza:** I have consistently demonstrated respect to this Premier by being silent. I would encourage him to do the same.

Mr. Speaker, Council of Yukon First Nations produced a report in March 2007 called, *Reclaiming the Well-Being of Our People: Summary of Yukon Regional Longitudinal Health Survey (RHS) Report*. If the minister does not have a copy of this document, I would encourage him to get one. In this document there are stats of some residential school survivors who experienced negative impacts, such as isolation from families — 88 percent; language loss — 87 percent; culture loss — 87 percent; verbal abuse — 80 percent; physical abuse — 75 percent; sexual abuse — 47 percent; and several more were listed.

Well, will the minister now do what is right and immediately start the process of establishing a culturally relevant land-based treatment centre in the Yukon? Will he do that?

**Hon. Mr. Fentie:** Mr. Speaker, the government is establishing many culturally relevant programs and initiatives across the territory, be it in education, the justice system or health and social services. The government is actively doing that now and we are proceeding with discussions on what would be a culturally relevant treatment centre specific to land base. We have already invested in some programming in that regard.

Mr. Speaker, it is this government that is providing and implementing culturally relevant programs for language in our education system. It is this government that took the lead in dealing with the violence against aboriginal women, which is some 40 percent higher in the country as it relates to other women. The government is leading, not only here in the territory, but in the country. I would encourage the member opposite to recognize that.

We are delivering on all fronts. The problem that we have inherited — all of us in this Assembly have inherited — goes back a long way. The solution will take a long time to develop and implement. It is a tragic situation, but the government is very cognizant of that, sensitive to that, and doing everything that we possibly can to address it.

#### **Question re: Education standards**

**Mr. Elias:** I have a question of the Minister of Education today.

The testimonials of Yukoners are coming into the office and they are not very good. I want this minister to succeed, Mr. Speaker. That is why we have asked 20-plus questions of him in the last three days and the only response we get from this minister is that people have to earn their high school diploma. It is no wonder that many First Nation governments are fed up and beginning to draw down education and do not want this government as a partner in education because of the minister's inability to make a change in the system and even get the job done. After seven years of this Yukon Party government, we have a 58-percent graduation rate. A better quality of life this is not, Mr. Speaker.

When is the Minister of Education going to make a real and effective change so that many more of our students end up with diplomas in their hands?

**Hon. Mr. Rouble:** Mr. Speaker, this government recognized that while there are tremendous successes in Yukon's education system, one only has to look at the 1,000-plus Yukon students right now receiving the student grant to attend post-secondary education. One only has to look at the over 400 Yukoners involved in trade and apprenticeship training now.

We have tremendous successes in our education system, but there are also some significant challenges, and that's why we established the education reform project. We've done that in partnership with the Council of Yukon First Nations. In our implementation strategy, New Horizons, we continue to do that, in partnership with the Council of Yukon First Nations and Yukon First Nation governments.

We've seen significant changes in recent years to address many of the issues brought forward by the education reform project. The education reform project highlighted issues, such as curriculum, professional growth, collaboration, lifelong learning, information and assessment systems, and First Nations culture and language.

We've seen innovations, such as the early years transition initiative, which is in this budget. We've seen the full-day kindergarten. We've seen individualized learning plans expanded. We've seen learning assistance expanded in the schools.

We recognize that there are tremendous learning challenges in the classroom, and we're providing our teachers and our schools with the resources they need to address the situations. And through our school growth plans, we're involving the community in a meaningful manner to make changes in their schools.

#### **Question re: Education audit**

**Mr. Fairclough:** I have a question for the Minister of Education.

The Auditor General identified the fact that Yukon's graduation rate was the lowest in Canada when compared to every single province. Overall, the graduation rate is 58 percent. These stats were in the Department of Education all along. This was unpublished data. The minister had to have been aware of them, but continued to publish percentages that were, in the Auditor General's words, misleading. The Auditor General said in her report, "such relevant information should be considered in setting target graduation rates for performance measurement purposes."

What are the target graduation rates set by this minister?

**Hon. Mr. Rouble:** Mr. Speaker, this government has worked very closely with the Auditor General of Canada. Working with the Auditor General has been very beneficial in looking at the efficiency and effectiveness of how government operations are carried out. We welcome the opportunity to work with the Auditor General, and to look at her recommendations as to how we can improve this system.

For some reason, in the 1990s, a decision was made to follow a graduation model that was continued, and previous Liberal governments published information under it; previous NDP governments published the same statistic. This government has changed that. We identified in the annual report that we would go to work on that. Also, Mr. Speaker, you'll see in the budget right now that there is an allocation for the B.C. enterprise information system. That is a new computer tracking system so that we will be able to track the data about student performance throughout the students' whole careers so that we will be able to better provide information to the public, to parents and to students.

**Mr. Fairclough:** No set targets, Mr. Speaker. Forty percent of First Nation students graduate; however, what really concerns me is that 60 percent do not. Now the Auditor General stated, "We found that the Department does not specify how large a gap in graduation rates must be before it is considered significant, and it does not analyze root causes or prepare action plans with corrective measures to help close the gaps."

This is unbelievable. I believe that the solution to the 60-percent failure rate should not be to fudge numbers and make the problems go away. Now several First Nations are considering drawing down education. Is it any wonder why? If all the First Nations in the Yukon got so frustrated with the minister that they collectively drew down education, the problem for the minister would simply go away.

The minister can start to fix this broken system, or he can continue on his path of meeting, studying reports and simply wait for the First Nations to pull out. Which one is he going to do?

**Hon. Mr. Rouble:** Mr. Speaker, this government and this minister is committing to increasing the educational outcomes for all Yukon students — especially those students of First Nation ancestry.

Mr. Speaker, also, we have a responsibility across Canada to eliminate the performance gap between students of First Nation ancestry and non-First Nation ancestry.

It is unfortunate, Mr. Speaker, that the Auditor General's historic audit did not capture many of the recent changes. The audit did not capture the education reform project, the New Horizons project implementation, changes such as the Individual Learning Centre, changes to the annual report or other changes to the curriculum.

Mr. Speaker, there have been significant action steps taken recently. These include the Individual Learning Centre — which has re-engaged literally hundreds of Yukon students to come back into a formal education system. This is a huge success, Mr. Speaker. Also, we've made changes to the curriculum and members opposite have seen this in the grade 10 curriculum materials and the grade 5 materials. There have been enhancements for experiential education.

Mr. Speaker, we are continuing to work with all our partners in education. We will continue to work with all Yukon First Nation governments to address one of the most important issues for any government, and that is educating their people.

**Mr. Fairclough:** The minister said that these programs are working, but 60 percent of First Nation students are not graduating, and I think the minister cannot grasp that percentage. Something needs to be done. Yesterday this minister said in response to a question, and I quote from *Hansard*, "I should note that we are not going to simply grant people a high school diploma. That has to be earned, and it is going to take the involvement of the student to achieve that goal". Now this minister refuses to accept any responsibility for his documented failure as an Education minister; instead he blames students for not earning their diplomas.

Will the minister stop blaming others for his obvious shortcomings and fix the education system?

**Hon. Mr. Rouble:** Mr. Speaker, obviously we all have a role to play in this: students, parents, teachers, the community and us as legislators. We recognize that there are tremendous learning challenges and difficulties in Yukon's education system. We are taking steps to address that. We also realize that there are multiple different pathways that students might want to take. For some it might be a career in carpentry

or plumbing. For others, they might not be satisfied until they are a nuclear physicist.

There are different pathways that different students will take and different routes to get there. Now, Mr. Speaker, as the Minister of Education, I will ensure that Yukon students have the opportunities that they need to succeed, and we will work with them to give them the chance, the tools, and the assets that they can use and work with to reach their educational goals, and yes, to earn the diplomas, earn their graduations and earn their degrees, because that's an incredibly important part of education.

**Speaker:** The time for Question Period has now elapsed.

### Notice of opposition private members' business

**Mr. McRobb:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Pursuant to Standing Order 14.2(3), I would like to identify the items standing in the name of the Official Opposition to be called on Wednesday, March 25, 2009. They are Motion No. 677, standing in the name of the Member for Mayo-Tatchun, and Motion No. 682, standing in the name of the Member for Copperbelt.

**Mr. Cardiff:** Pursuant to Standing Order 14.2(3), I'd like to identify the item standing in the name of the third party to be called on Wednesday, March 25, 2009. It is Motion No. 497, standing in the name of the Member for Mount Lorne.

**Speaker:** We will now proceed to Orders of the Day.

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

### GOVERNMENT BILLS

#### Bill No. 15: Second reading — *adjourned debate*

**Clerk:** Second reading, Bill No. 15, standing in the name of the Hon. Mr. Fentie; adjourned debate, Mr. Fairclough.

**Speaker:** Member for Mayo-Tatchun, you have 15 minutes left.

**Mr. Fairclough:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I left off this discussion — my response to the budget speech — by talking about some of the things that are happening in my community. I was talking about the community of Keno and the community of Pelly Crossing when I left off. I was talking about the fact that this government does have some responsibility for providing road maintenance in the communities. It has happened in the past and I have brought up, again, the need in the community of Pelly Crossing for this government to do some chipsealing on the road that leads from the highway to the Pelly Farm Road.

The government has done some chipsealing, but they did the wrong section about four years ago and they have left it alone, calling it a First Nation road. I know that government, at times, either put money into a municipality for this type of work or they do it themselves.

I've seen it done with a capital line item in the budget presented for road improvements. But I was quite surprised when I talked to one of my constituents in Pelly Crossing; in fact, they

had to pay for this and Government of Yukon was not involved monetarily. This concerns me, because this is a government that is supposedly taking care of communities that are not incorporated and they handle things like the garbage dumps, landfills and so on throughout the territory. We do have communities here that are in need of government assistance, find it very difficult and do not have the avenues to access the dollars as needed to improve the quality of life in their communities. These are unincorporated communities. I talked about the fact that government should be looking at and maintaining the equipment that they have in the community, like fire alarm systems. In the communities of Ross River and Pelly Crossing, this equipment failed. The government needs to pay attention to that because sometimes it costs lives.

Also, when I was in Pelly Crossing this past weekend for their bonspiel, the whole issue of highway maintenance came up to me almost everywhere I went. Maybe it's the fact that we had increased snowfall this year and people are having a little more trouble. But I'm hearing it here in Whitehorse, too, that the roads into their homes — anything that's off the highway — that government should take the time to at least remove the snow that they plowed over their road, blocking both entrance and exit from these roads.

So, if anything, government needs to change their policy. I know that they've cut back on highway maintenance in the past, but this is important. It has been brought to our attention. I'm sure it has been brought to government's attention many, many times. It's quite noticeable over the years from highways workers that the amount of time they spend doing maintenance during the summer, whether it's chipsealing or road maintenance or resurfacing, has been cut back. It's reflected in this budget again this year, and I don't think that's going to make many of those who are working on our highways too happy.

One of the things that small communities, like Keno, would like is government involvement. Everybody wants to go and see these small communities for their beauty as a tourist destination, and sometimes we have communities like Keno City that are small with a population of 25 that do not have things like public facilities for tourists to use. What they have been using is their community hall and that is in dire need of repair, and I think the government needs to pay some attention to these things if we are out there promoting Yukon as a pristine place to visit in the 2010 Winter Olympics in Vancouver and spending over \$2 million doing that. We should be paying attention to what we have in our backyard and making improvements there. I hear that up and down the highway, particularly when it comes to maintenance of our highway — the Silver Trail. It needs a lot of attention and this government should be paying attention to that and putting some money into the Silver Trail.

We have some line items in the budget that our party agrees with. We have been asking government to do this for quite some time — for example, having a sewage treatment facility in the community of Carmacks. Every year, every budget, every time we sit in this House, we bring this issue up and monies have been directed to it and the project continues to

happen. By the way, it's \$5.5 million and that's for the completion of the sewage system there.

One of the things that this government is saying throughout their budget speech is that they would like to see safe drinking water in the communities. Now who is bringing this issue up? It's the community people. It's the health and well-being of people in the Yukon. They want to see safe drinking water. They've urged government to put money into these projects. They've designed them. They've asked that pilot projects be set up and we've seen one go ahead in the community of Pelly Crossing. Yet last year this government did nothing for the community of Carmacks and Little Salmon-Carmacks First Nation. They had to go outside of the Yukon to get help. Isn't that amazing? The Canadian Auto Workers brought up and found some monies to help them out. But it's a temporary solution.

This government hasn't worked with that community to ensure they do have safe drinking water and to take care of this issue. They've already got a plan, but I have not seen any money out of this Yukon Party government to help the community to design such a plan.

I have asked the Highways minister in the past to please look at the safety issues of our highways.

Pelly Crossing — all they wanted there was to have a turning lane off the main highway coming down the hill. They need a right-hand turning lane so that the trucks can pull over. It is a safety issue and it is on the other side of the bridge. I see no money in this budget to go toward that.

I've asked, again, for this government to address the safety issues even in the community of Stewart Crossing, which wanted simple things like street lights put in to the entrance of their town, because people are walking up and down the road for exercise and it always becomes an issue with them that we have vehicles that are going at high speeds coming around that corner. There have been a lot of close calls — particularly when people walk with their pets.

I'm glad to see that the Yukon Party government is continuing on with the community development fund. This is one area where it addresses the priorities of community projects — sometimes. But what I have heard is that it is getting tougher and tougher to access this money. Some attention needs to be paid to that.

There have been some big issues talked about and one of the main ones is the price of gasoline. Over the past year, we've seen a huge increase in the price of gasoline in the territory and I know that the community members here in Whitehorse do not feel the impact like they do in the smaller communities. When the price of gasoline goes up to a \$1.45 or \$1.65 — that is a huge difference from what it is here in Whitehorse.

With all the thanks of having the electrical line extended to Pelly Crossing, this was a good thing and I know some people might think that it brings steady electricity into the community, but one of the biggest things that it eliminated was the noise generated by the diesel engines there in the middle of that small town. They appreciate it but what happened from that short period of time until now is that we've had so many outages that it is causing concern to people. These are extended periods of

time and there are discussions about what is going on with our system. Is it so old that it is breaking down and shutting off all the time?

We have just been hooked up to the grid here and we are experiencing this — the brownouts and so on. It is happening all across the territory. This is not acceptable and I think this government needs to pay a lot of attention to that. I know we heard some commitments to try and improve our infrastructure, but it can't carry on and on and on. It has been identified that five years ago it should have been looked at, but now I guess we are five years behind.

There are other projects that I had identified. In Mayo there was an issue — and I wrote to the minister — about the school bus situation. We bus students from Stewart, which is about 30 miles away, all the way to Mayo to attend school. The community of Mayo is expanding. They have a new subdivision on top of the hill, but yet the bus would not go five minutes and come out and take students to school there. I ask that things change and improve in that community. Every year there is some sort of busing issue in that community and we can't seem to resolve it. Why? It can't be that big of a deal for this government. We have over a \$1-billion budget.

Can't we spend more money on that project, Mr. Speaker? It needs to be improved.

This government talks about going green, and the community — the First Nation of Na Cho Nyäk Dun — wanted to put a geothermal heating system into their administration building and called for government support on this. Well, they get the same old thing — there's no money there, but man, are we ever bragging about a billion dollars. But it can't flow to communities.

I bet the Yukon government wants to do something like this. Why not work with a community that has looked at it, designed it, and wants to move forward? It's a prime example and a good project that I think the Yukon government and Yukon could have been proud of, if it had been successful.

Now I know I'm running out of time, and there's lots to bring up about my riding, but if there's one thing I can emphasize to the government that I've been hearing over and over again, it's let's do some improvements to the roads we have, whether it's the highways, community roads or secondary roads. There are lots of discussions about that. This government says they support mining. Well, what's wrong with putting a little bit of money into the secondary roads?

Bridge surfaces are falling apart. People are not accessing them and going out as far as they used to. We've had really bad weather in the past year that has washed out a lot of the roads and approaches to bridges. They want government to do something. This isn't the mining community. It was ignored for years and years and years under the Yukon Party. They need to do something and make some improvements in that area. I don't see a program for rural roads any more. I know that perhaps the next speaker might get up and talk about that a little bit, and I'd like to hear more from the members opposite on it.

The other big issue — and I've got one minute left — is the issue of education. Now, I know that the government members — the elected members — when they go back to their



riding or their home town, they're going to hear about it, over and over again. Something has to be done. There needs to be improvements. The Minister of Education, in my view, is failing on this front.

The Yukon Party has got to do something better than what they have been doing. They cannot talk and study and consult with their many partners in education. It's time to make some decisions. It's time to take action on some of the things they promised to do, instead of just shelving it. Those are really important. I'm going to be bringing that up again and hopefully we can have a good discussion about that tomorrow.

**Hon. Ms. Horne:** Mr. Speaker, it is with great personal pleasure that I rise to reply to this budget today. I will begin by saying what an honour it is to represent the beautiful riding of Pelly-Nisutlin, the communities of Teslin, Ross River and Faro and to thank my supporters for believing in me.

In 2002, Yukoners voted for change, for a new vision. They wanted us to work together to do better for Yukon. In 2006, Yukoners reaffirmed that our clear vision for a bright future was a direction in which they wanted to move. We committed to helping Yukoners achieve a better quality of life, to protecting our environment, to promoting a diversified economy and to practicing good government. In each of these areas, we have delivered. I have spoken previously about the things that we need to build a better economy. We need a transportation network to move people, supplies and products. We need a communications network to share information. We need access to energy at affordable rates. We need a pool of skilled and available workers. We need access to investment capital and we need a balanced, consistent, modern regulatory regime. We are addressing our needs in each one of these areas.

Mr. Speaker, a healthy economy gives us the resources necessary to address our social priorities. We need to generate enough wealth so that we have the money we need to run the social programs we all value so greatly. On the transportation side, Mr. Speaker, we have budgeted millions of dollars to rebuild the Robert Campbell Highway. For my constituents and for our government, this is an important project that will pay dividends long into the future.

Mr. Speaker, things like roads, bridges and other transportation routes are critical to developing our economy. This is what we are investing in. We need access to energy at affordable rates. I am happy to note in this budget the steps that we are taking to manage both the supply to and demand on our energy system.

We have \$4.25 million for the third turbine at the Aishihik dam. I am pleased that this government took the steps necessary to extend the electrical grid from Carmacks to Pelly Crossing. I am also very pleased that we sent the project to the Yukon Utilities Board for their review. This budget has money to extend the grid from Pelly Crossing to Stewart Crossing. It is my hope that projects like Mayo B, for example, that we can add to the system, will improve our electrical service. We are looking at \$120 million to upgrade the Mayo dam to provide an additional 40 gigawatts of green energy.

As an aside, I would like to thank Mr. Craig Steinbach and Mr. Jay Massey of the Yukon Electrical Company, for their assistance in addressing power concerns in Teslin. I appreciate their willingness to work together.

On the transportation side, Mr. Speaker, we have budgeted \$56.7 million to rebuild the Robert Campbell Highway, Shaktak project, and the Atlin Road. For my constituents, and for our government, rebuilding the Campbell Highway is a very important project that will pay dividends very, very long into the future.

In this budget we are continuing with our commitment to rebuild the highways. My goal is to see the entire highway rebuilt to accommodate safely an increased volume of vehicles and equipment in the area. That work has already begun at the southern end of the highway. I am also pushing to have the 36-kilometre gap in the BST at the north end closed. Last year we were able to stockpile the crush needed. This year and next I expect to see the road surfacing done.

Things like roads, bridges and other transportation routes are critical to develop our economy. We are further demonstrating our commitment to my riding by setting aside money for work on our airport infrastructure in Faro and Ross River. Improving the ability of Yukoners to move information, goods and people around the territory is the kind of activity that helps build an economy.

I spoke about the need for a communications network to improve our ability to share information. Under this government's watch we have been replacing the old radio-telephone network with a new system. This work has meant that Yukoners now have cellular service in our communities. We have earmarked \$14.9 million to improve this system.

I can remember a time when typewriters were more common than computers, when the winding telephones were common in every household. I am sure that when the Internet was first being developed, very few people imagined it could be used to send video and audio files. The ability to communicate quickly, clearly and completely using a spectrum of media is the kind of infrastructure that helps generate wealth.

We have in this budget things that may not seem very important, like piping work in our buildings in Ross River, but that is the kind of routine maintenance that extends the life of a building. This budget will also see money set aside to paint the exterior of our schools in Ross River and Teslin. Having a bright and cheerful place for our students to learn is a win for everyone. Often it is the simple things that make such a big difference.

While I am talking of our schools, I would like to congratulate each of the student-of-the-month winners in Teslin. Their principal tells me these students were chosen by their teachers for the positive citizenship qualities that they exhibited consistently through the month. They worked responsibly and generally to the best of their ability. They displayed a respectful attitude toward others, including staff and other students. They are helpful to others and positive role models within the school. I say to each one, "Well done and congratulations."

We are taking steps to improve our students' success in education. In my home community, our town and our First Na-

tion place great emphasis on getting a quality education. We heartily applaud those students who complete their grade 12. We encourage them to go on for further education, whether it is in trades and technology or attending college or university.

I am gratified when I hear of another individual making the choice to further his or her education. As I thought about this issue earlier this year, I was reminded of the great number of Yukon students who succeed so admirably at school. With our fantastic ratio of teachers to students, I truly believe that we have a winning formula for success in our schools.

I realize that some people may criticize us for having too many teachers and too many schools. I want to say that I really appreciate the kind of assistance that our students now get, and it will be a win situation.

My colleagues and I are in favour of keeping the schools open in Teslin, Ross River and Faro. I appreciate the \$150,000 for the early years transition learning program for kindergarten to grade 3 students to help improve our young students' performance. I would like to congratulate my colleague, the Minister of Education, for the excellent work he has done. As an MLA representing a rural riding, I appreciate his commitment to keeping schools with small numbers of students open. It is important that our children stay home with their families. I would also like to note that my community and my First Nation place great emphasis on getting a quality education. I appreciate the financial assistance and the investment we are making in our future. We have previously indexed the student grant, which means this year we are budgeting over \$3.7 million to help close to 800 students.

Speaking of helping students, we are investing some \$1.5 million for community training funds. Our investment in Yukon students includes those pursuing academic degrees in other programs as well.

We have some 440 registered apprentices. I am very proud of them all, but I would like to make special mention of the 89 First Nation students and the 45 women who are doing apprenticeships. I would note that more and more Yukon ladies are engaging in non-traditional fields like carpentry, construction, electricity, plumbing, sheet metal working and welding. I am encouraged by this. In October of last year we hosted the Labour Market Framework Symposium that drew representatives from key labour market stakeholders from across the territory, including all levels of government, First Nations, as well as business and industry interests and non-government organizations. We are educating today through programs like our training trust funds, our increased support for the Individual Learning Centre and our STEP program to help Yukoners get the skills they need.

Mr. Speaker, the other day I counted 60 bursaries and scholarships that were available on the Department of Education Web site. We are investing an additional \$300,000 into Yukon College training programs. The oil burner technician program is being developed in response to community needs identified by Yukon Housing Corporation and the Energy Solutions Centre.

The housing maintainer program will provide additional capacity for housing authorities to maintain buildings for their clients.

Mr. Speaker, for some of us who live outside of Whitehorse, having someone in our communities who can provide these services is essential and so very important.

Mr. Speaker, finding ways to help seniors stay in Yukon is a priority of mine. Seniors and elders play a key role in helping transmit the culture from generation to generation. I am pleased that we have \$3.5 million in capital and \$924,000 in O&M for four years to improve the X-ray services for all Yukon communities.

As a rural MLA, I applaud this government for this initiative. I also greatly appreciate the \$200,000 we are spending for the very successful 811 Yukon HealthLine.

We have the health care review steering committee which, as the result of a motion passed in this Assembly by all parties, was set up to engage Yukoners in a dialogue on the findings and recommendations of the Yukon health care review, which looked at current and long-term sustainability over the next 10 years.

It also has a \$2.08 million increase for social assistance. I appreciate the fact that this increase recognizes that those living in rural Yukon purchase groceries at prices that are higher than those in Whitehorse.

I would like to take a few moments to talk about my departmental responsibilities. I intend to elaborate further during our Committee of the Whole debate.

In late July, the Women's Directorate provided support for 11 Yukon women to attend the 2008 National Aboriginal Women's Summit in Yellowknife. This summit provided an excellent opportunity for Yukon delegates to discuss how to address local and national aboriginal women's issues.

In October, the Yukon Advisory Council on Women's Issues hosted an extremely successful women's forum called "Making Our Way: Yukon Women in Leadership". This forum brought 75 territory-wide participants together to explore leadership skills and to hear the personal stories of young women in a wide variety of leadership roles.

My colleague, the minister responsible for Yukon Housing Corporation, has \$6.2 million identified in this year's budget toward design, site preparation and construction on the Whitehorse affordable family housing project, which will be built on Nisutlin Drive in Riverdale. This project will provide affordable housing for 30 lone-parent families. A public information meeting was held in September, and an advisory committee, with representatives from the Riverdale Community Association, women's organizations, social housing clients and others, was established.

During 2008, the Women's Directorate partnered with representatives from the Department of Health and Social Services and the Department of Justice to form a government working group to research and understand the complex factors affecting Yukon women who are experiencing issues related to substance abuse. This work resulted in a recently released report entitled *Improving Treatment and Support for Yukon Girls and Women with Substance Use Problems and Addictions*, as well as Feb-

ruary 2009 training for substance abuse workers and service providers and women-centered care.

Over 80 front-line service providers and program managers in Yukon government, non-government organizations and First Nations participated in the February workshop. This important training provided an overview of key gender differences in the experience of substance use and addiction. It also outlined advances in evidence-based, women-centered practice and policy in the substance use field. The training was delivered by Nancy Poole, an internationally-renowned researcher and educator who works as a research associate with the B.C. Centre of Excellence for Women's Health. Ms. Poole was assisted by Cristine Urquhart, the provincial training consultant for ActNow BC — Healthy Choices in Pregnancy, a key initiative of the B.C. Centre of Excellence for Women's Health.

I am pleased that the Women's Directorate, in partnership with Health and Social Services and Yukon Justice, will sponsor additional clinical training in this area in the 2009-10 fiscal year.

This training will focus on the links between women's experiences of trauma, mental health issues and substance abuse. The cost of these two training sessions demonstrates a commitment of over \$50,000 to help address the special needs of Yukon women who struggle with substance abuse.

The primary objective of the Women's Directorate, Mr. Speaker, remains unchanged. It is to support this government's commitment to the economic, legal and social equality of women. Violence toward women remains the single largest impediment to the achievement of those objectives.

This government provides almost \$3 million annually to address family violence in our communities. I would like to outline some of the current and previous violence prevention initiatives led or sponsored by the Women's Directorate to help address this inequality.

Sexual Assault Prevention Month takes place in May. This year the Women's Directorate is partnering with Justice, the Yukon Liquor Corporation and Yukon College to deliver "Protect yourself, protect your drink" campaign, Women Abuse Prevention Month and the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women.

For the past five years, this government has provided funding for project-driven proposals and community-based projects that help to prevent violence against aboriginal women.

Since 2004, the directorate has supported 27 projects with over \$500,000. The 2009-10 Women's Directorate budget doubles the annual support provided to these projects, from \$100,000 annually to \$200,000 annually. We are doing this because aboriginal women experience spousal violence at a rate that is three times higher than for non-aboriginal women. Statistics Canada reports that violence toward women in the north far exceeds the national average. Calls for proposals for this year will be generated later this spring.

The Women's Directorate and the Department of Justice co-facilitated a 17-member inter-agency working group, CORE — Circles of Respect and Equality — that worked on a long-term public education campaign on the prevention of violence against women and children. The amount spent under this pro-

gram was over \$200,000. The three-year campaign released a nationally recognized Yukon-relevant violence prevention video and a training manual to help educate and raise awareness on violence against women and children in Yukon, and to empower the viewer to take action to prevent and stop violence.

In June and November 2008, train-the-trainers sessions took place which trained front-line workers on how these resources can be effectively used in communities. December is a high-risk time for increased violence against women and children. As part of its mandate to increase public awareness about violence against women, the Women's Directorate organized the seventh annual government-supported Bare Essentials campaign. The Bare Essentials campaign is in response to the identified needs of women's shelters and safe houses for basic hygiene products as well as underwear and socks for both women and children. The Bare Essentials campaign continues to experience enormous success.

Mr. Speaker, one of my constituents recently told me in a letter that it was better to light a candle than curse the darkness. As I think about the work that needs to be done, especially in the area of domestic violence, I really believe that we need to take that message to heart. It might be easier to focus on the problem, but the better choice is to focus on the solution. We are taking several concrete steps in this direction.

One of my concerns when I took office was how we treat women at the correctional centre. I was deeply troubled by their living conditions. I'm going to come back to this investment in a few minutes, when I talk about the new treatment and correctional centre, but I'm very, very pleased with the \$719,000 we have to begin construction of the women's transitional living unit for female inmates at Whitehorse Correctional Centre.

In September of last year, Yukon hosted a Yukon round table on fetal alcohol spectrum disorder, or FASD. We followed up with a meeting in which Yukon participants of the national conference continued the progress that was achieved with our partners in other jurisdictions.

How the justice system is able to approach FASD is a very important issue — one that I take very seriously. I raised this issue with Minister Nicholson when he was here last year. I have raised it at the FPT table. I have raised it in my discussions with other justice ministers. I have committed to bringing this issue forward for discussion again at the next federal, provincial and territorial ministers of Justice meeting.

I would like to thank the Minister of Health and Social Services and his department for their work and cooperation in advancing this government's commitment to addressing FASD. I am very pleased that we are taking steps to address this affliction. My colleague, the Minister of Health and Social Services, recently announced a program that provides services specifically for those suffering with substance abuse issues. The alcohol and drug information and referral service means Yukon residents have another addiction service available to them.

Our government identified a clear need for a confidential crisis line and referral service in the Yukon substance abuse action plan several years ago.

We now have a link to an addictions crisis and referral service. This telephone helpline is available toll-free to Yukon callers 24 hours a day, seven days a week and is multilingual, anonymous and completely confidential. It is separate from the 811 Yukon HealthLine. Those answering the ADIRS helpline are certified information and referral specialists with backgrounds in psychology, social work, addictions counselling and crisis support. I would also like to note the \$341,000 we are investing annually for the next three years for the substance abuse program for government employees.

When I look at the things that drive Yukon's social disorder, drug and alcohol abuse are at the top of the list. Finding ways to help people deal with their substance abuse problems is very important. We have enjoyed great success with the safer communities and neighbourhoods team. The SCAN team has received some 308 complaints as of February 20 that concerned 245 properties.

There have been 17 complaints resolved through warnings, 27 resolved through a voluntary ceasing of activity by the residents and 44 evictions. This budget has \$178,000 to improve services for this very successful program.

Mr. Speaker, given the comments made in the Legislature and the letters they have written to me, I know that some members opposite do not understand how this legislation works. SCAN is a civil legislation, which means that it does not put people in jail. What it does do is shut down the location where illegal activity is taking place. To complain that it isn't doing its job is like complaining that a hammer isn't doing its job, because it doesn't saw wood very well. No one thinks of building a house with just one tool, and we aren't going to build safer communities with just one tool, either. Let me be clear: it is another tool in our box that helps us fight crime. SCAN is intended to disrupt the places where criminals do business. Yukoners are reminded that they can call the SCAN hotline at 456-SCAN, or 456-7226 in Whitehorse, or toll-free at 1-866-530-SCAN in the communities if they witness ongoing prostitution, drug activity or bootlegging in their neighbourhood.

Our crime reduction team efforts are paying off. As at the end of February, the team had made 224 Criminal Code arrests, executed 74 arrest warrants, undertaken 324 curfew checks on prolific and priority offenders, taken 105 intoxicated persons into custody, laid 34 charges under the *Controlled Drug and Substances Act*, and executed seven search warrants.

Our government will continue to work with the RCMP to ensure Yukon streets are safe. I agree with Chief Superintendent Barry Harvie when he reports that the street crime reduction team is part of an overall crime reduction strategy by forming partnerships and using a collaborative approach to address the chronic criminals who are causing the majority of crime. We will also have continued success.

The Yukon government previously committed \$1.5 million over three years to support the initiative, which has been in operation since April 1, 2007. This budget includes funding for that partnership.

Mr. Speaker, in this budget we have money set aside to continue our work on replacing the correctional centre. Our

new multi-purpose correctional and treatment centre reflects what Yukoners told us they wanted in a new facility.

We embarked on a correctional reform process after taking office. We talked to the public, to First Nations, to First Nation governments, to correctional staff and inmates. Let me share with 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 in April 2006. The correctional redevelopment strategic plan was published in February 2007. We began the *Corrections Act* consultation in December 2007.

The outcome of the consultation was clear — healing and rehabilitation should be the focus. The new multi-purpose facility is a correctional and treatment centre that emphasizes treatment and rehabilitation. Flowing out of our extensive consultations was a correctional plan focused on treatment and programming to help offenders transition back into their communities and to lessen the chance of re-offending. The new multi-purpose correctional and treatment facility will not be a warehouse. 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.

I would note that this budget includes \$575,000 for the Community Wellness Court, plus an additional \$96,000 for a full-time alcohol and drug addictions counsellor for the court.

The new correctional centre we are building will provide secure custody housing for inmates. It will also provide multi-use treatment space that can be used by Justice, Health and Social Services and NGOs to provide programs for a range of other individuals. The facility is a new, generation three correctional centre that uses the enhanced direct supervision model. This means that in every area where inmates reside, staff will be directly on the floor with them. It allows staff to have direct interaction with inmates. This results in better program delivery that is more available and effective. It also results in better security. This multi-purpose facility gives these courts options when sentencing to deliver a treatment component rather than incarceration.

The more I think about corrections, the more I believe that we have to find ways to help engage the broader community. To help us better understand and assist offenders, we are implementing a new court registry information system that will track offenders from when they enter the criminal justice system to when they exit. This will replace the different systems currently being used.

Mr. Speaker, I think it would be appropriate here to talk for a few minutes about the work we are doing to prevent crime. We are continuing with our commitment to fund crime prevention groups, and we have maintained our funding commitments.

I believe that if we invest in people early in their lives, we can help steer them in positive and constructive directions. Helping children find their way is an old challenge. I think it

was Socrates who complained that kids don't treat elders with the respect they deserve. I think the best way to address this is to provide lots of positive, constructive options where adults engage and interact with children and teenagers.

The world that our young people have to navigate is much more complex than the one I grew up in. Increasingly, the dislikes and dispositions of young people are the subject of intensive research and analysis. They are bombarded by a multitude of carefully crafted and delivered messages that encourage them in their selection when making all kinds of choices.

One of the things that we know about this generation of young people is that they, like others, place a very high value on personal relationships. This is especially true as they each go through the transition of developing into their own person. Having our elders and seniors remain in our communities is a vital way of helping young Yukoners find their path.

We as a government have made a conscious decision to promote sports and recreation, as well as arts and culture, as ways of connecting young people with their larger society. Sports and recreation are great ways to promote healthy lifestyles, instill confidence, broaden one's circle of friends and acquaintances, and to learn those important life lessons about the value of teamwork and preparation.

Because of our clear vision for a bright future, we have awarded \$420,000 in Yukon Sport for Life program funding. Our overall goal is to promote a better quality of life for all Yukoners through increased participation in sport and physical activity. A key objective is to encourage increased physical activity for youth and promote healthy lifestyle choices. Mr. Speaker, in talking with my colleagues about this budget, I was again reminded of just how much this government has done and is doing to improve the lives of Yukoners.

Mr. Speaker, this is a good budget. This is a great budget, and I commend it to this House. I ask that all members join me in voting for it.

Thank you.

**Mr. Elias:** On behalf of the people of the Vuntut Gwitchin riding, I express my gratitude for the privilege of addressing this Legislative Assembly and I must say it is good to be back.

I would like to begin by thanking the community of Old Crow for their incredible support. As always, I am honoured to represent and serve such a wonderful riding in this Legislative Assembly. When I face the challenges as an MLA and give voice to the issues of my constituents, I do not feel alone. I always feel the supporting hands of my constituents on my shoulder and that helps me stand strong. I stand here today grateful for each and every one of my constituents and aware that the vision of our ancestors and their dreams for us live on in our precious children. On behalf of my constituents I want to thank my fellow legislators who have travelled to my community and listened to the issues and concerns of the residents and for recognizing the importance of the people of Old Crow and the priorities that we in the north must focus on. There is much work to do.

I will be giving the record budget today the praise it deserves, and the criticism it deserves as well, and making suggestions for spending alternatives for the members to consider.

I would also like to give special recognition to the officials who have worked tirelessly to develop our \$1.3-billion budget. Congratulations go out to them.

I stand today to affirm the grandeur of our territory, not because our creeks are filled with gold or the buried treasures under our lands, but because of the true richness of our territory: our people and the strength of our families. We are rich with heritage and cultural diversity. The vastness of our lands, the purity of our waters, and our ever-wondrous wildlife is the real currency of our vast wealth.

Around the world and throughout time, societies have built monuments to celebrate their existence, demonstrate their achievements, and represent themselves as a people. Like the pyramids in Egypt and the building of towers around the world that reach for the sky, to so many Yukoners, our monuments are places like the Old Crow Flats wetlands, the Tombstone Mountains, the three rivers — the Snake, Wind and Bonnet Plume — our national and territorial parks, our living languages and cultures, and our kind and friendly Yukon family demeanor. These are our monuments, and they give us strength.

"The future is not some place we are going, but one we are creating. The paths to it are not found, but made, and the activity of making them changes both the maker and the destination." This is a quote from John Schaar, a political theorist. Fifty years from now, the non-renewable resources may well be gone. Fifty years from now, the salmon stocks may all be gone. The moose and the caribou are endangered. Food security is all gone. If this happens, it is because we have allowed this future to come to pass.

Today we are creating a path that leads us to our future and the path that we must create must lead us to a different future than this. Whenever I find myself feeling doubtful about the path we are building together, what gives me the most hope is the next generation — the young people — who will one day be called upon to lead this territory. Many of the youth in my community challenge me to reaffirm our values and our community's commitment to those values. I am challenged to hold those values up against the hard realities of today's world and see how we measure up to the vision of our ancestors.

I am a youth to the elders, and an elder to the youth. I continue to learn about the gathered wisdom of our elders around the territory and I am challenged to use that wisdom in the context of today's world. I ask our elected representatives in this House: what kind of ancestor do you want to be? I am concerned that many of our youth are disengaged and cynical about our territory's politics. Just as we are creating a path for our children's future, they will be called upon to provide leadership and a call for action. It will be their energies, attitudes, beliefs and innovative ideas that guide their decisions and create their future and their children's future. My message to the youth is this: I will do my best to create a better future for you; however, I cannot walk this path alone.

However, I cannot walk this path alone. I need your help and input to get the job done, and I thank you for your guidance today.

The health and well-being of the Porcupine caribou herd has been the talk at many dinner tables lately. Over the past years and months I have spoken with many people, and I have chosen my words carefully to cause the kind of discomfort to force us to ask ourselves this: how can we ensure that the caribou live on and prosper?

Vadzaih yeendoo gweeheidaii geenjit. That translates to “Caribou in the future, they are going to live”. This is a prediction from an elder in Venetie, Alaska.

We must create a path that ensures food security for our children and grandchildren. Today is a defining moment in our territory’s history with this record budget — a moment when our most valuable natural resource is collapsing — our food resources. We must foster collaboration and teamwork to solve this dilemma of a dwindling Porcupine caribou population and Southern Lakes moose population, and communicate a vision to protect the caribou and moose for future generations. Our resolve as a territory will be put to the test in these uncertain times. The Book of Proverbs says, “Where there is no vision, the people perish”. I say that if the Porcupine caribou herd population crashes, the ecosystem and ecological integrity in north Yukon crashes, then the Gwich’in culture will suffer endlessly.

We require all hands on deck if we are to achieve the wilderness protection of the calving grounds of the Porcupine caribou herd within the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge in Alaska. My constituents recognize and appreciate the continued financial support from the Premier’s office in ensuring that the Vuntut Gwich’in’s position and the Gwich’in Nation’s mandate to protect the calving grounds on the coastal plain of Alaska continues to be advocated around the globe. Please believe me when I say that there will be heavy price to pay if a catastrophic population decline in the Porcupine caribou herd is allowed to occur, as witnessed in neighbouring jurisdictions.

What is called for here is nothing less than leadership. Many Yukoners are leading from behind, accepting less and giving more. I know that many Yukoners are exercising their own restraint in making an individual difference when out on the land harvesting wildlife. I thank each and every one of them for that effort. More is needed from this Yukon Party government.

I question and I ask myself why in seven years has the Premier not travelled to Washington, D.C. to speak face to face with congressmen and senators about the protection of the Porcupine caribou calving grounds in Alaska? Why has our Yukon Environment minister not done so, as well?

I cannot put into words how valuable it is to speak face to face with the representatives and senators of the United States Congress and to press our case, as a Gwich’in and as a Yukoner about how critical the Porcupine caribou calving grounds is.

Just a few weeks ago, I witnessed our federal Minister of Environment walking the halls of the Senate and Congress buildings in the United States. Leadership is also knowing

when and how to abandon a failed idea, and it is, more often than not, the most difficult decision a leader can make. That was from Nelson Mandela.

Resource extraction has driven the north’s boom-and-bust economy for hundreds of years, and we are still feeling and dealing with the impacts of irresponsible mining activities and oil and gas developments in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s. The made-in-Yukon environmental checks and balances are a great improvement from back then, and we are much better equipped to deal with mining, oil and gas development and logging.

Yukon is rich with mineral and oil and gas resources, and we will see more and more pressure to extract this natural wealth in the years to come, as it should be — responsibly and sustainably. We need the mining industry to flourish. It’s important.

The Yukon Party has said that they support Prime Minister Harper’s vision for the north, which is resource extraction and exploitation. The battle for the Arctic is heating up, Mr. Speaker. We have to unlock the potential in the north, the Premier says. We have to use it or lose it, the Prime Minister says of our northern resources. This is the kind of dangerous, rigid ideology and dogmatic, narrow view that I hope does not come to fruition here in the Yukon. We have to use it or lose it.

For thousands of years the traditional occupation and use of the north by Canada’s aboriginal people is the strongest argument, in my opinion, that Canada has to exert its sovereignty jurisdiction. The recent interest in the Arctic by our federal government isn’t because they want to; it’s because they’re forced to. They have no choice but to pay very close attention to Arctic sovereignty because of the accessible shipping routes and access to the resources of the Arctic by the world community because of the melting Arctic sea ice. The very first thing out of our Premier’s and Prime Minister’s mouths was to exploit the true riches of the north, they said: our gold, oil, gas and diamond resources. This is not a vision, Mr. Speaker; it’s a mission. What they didn’t mention was just as important. Healthy, sustainable and vibrant northern communities were not mentioned by this Yukon Party government. In my view, Canada’s best case for Arctic sovereignty is in the strength of our communities, the health of our people and the proper management of lands, water and wildlife. Infrastructure spending and investment in all Yukon communities must be priorities during these uncertain economic times, so when the world looks to our north, they see strength in the fabric of our society, they see partnerships, they see cooperative governance, and they see a powerhouse of a people. We really need to work through these issues, because if Yukoners cannot expect to influence their government’s public policy on a given issue, then why are we here? The solutions to the challenges we face may not be perfect, but generation after generation of Yukoners have shown that we’re sure as heck going to give it a try.

Fellow members of this Legislative Assembly, we have a lot more work to do. We have to find a way to stem the migration to the capital city by many of my constituents, and it starts with closing the gaps that exist in public programs and services not being delivered properly — or at all, in my community of Old Crow — like health care, sports and recreation opportuni-

ties, access to jobs and education. We have more work to do for the companies and the workers out in our mines. More work for the truck drivers, whose businesses took a hit because the Dempster Highway was in rough shape last summer, and travel was difficult, and their equipment got damaged. We need to do more work for the young woman who is wondering where she's going to sleep tonight and more work is needed in the delivery of education in our territory. We have had six and a half years of a Yukon Party government and our graduation rates are just simply terrible.

More work needs to be done in the rehabilitation of our citizens who continually enter our justice system and in the prevention of crime within all aspects of our society. We need more work for the elder who is choking back the tears because of the terrible state of the chinook salmon fishery. She said to me, "How did we end up in this situation with our salmon? We have to do something before it is too late." We need to do more work for the grandparents out there who want to be the first priority as guardians to their grandchildren. More work needs to be put toward the commitments and promises made to my constituents in addressing demonstrated needs — like in Old Crow and the building of a community service and recreation centre, the upgrading of the drinking water well, road and water drainage systems, new subdivision development, access to territorial housing programs to help solve the overcrowding in our homes — where a family of seven occupies the same two-bedroom house. There is also a lack of regular dentist and optometrist service.

A billion dollars and this Yukon Party government refuses to deviate from the status quo and will continue to allow the burning of garbage in our waste-management areas regardless of the fact that we all know the dangers of doing so — the toxins, the organic pollutants accumulating in our environment.

So what will be the costs to future Yukoners of allowing this type of waste management across the Yukon to continue? I understand and found in the budget that they are committed to studying this issue and trying to find an answer and I wish them well in that endeavour. We are a territory better than this. I believe in a Yukon where hard work and our faith in the system is rewarded.

I'd like to take this opportunity, because I did take the time and because we're not giving community breakdowns. I did find some riding-specific things with regard to Old Crow and north Yukon that are worth mentioning. I thank the ministers responsible and the Premier's office for these — \$76,000 for the Old Crow emergency response and search and rescue; \$250,000 dedicated to Old Crow roadways; a transfer to the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation of \$67,000 for youth programs; a transfer to the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation of \$65,000 for regional health services; to the Fishing Branch ecological reserve — \$50,000 for a capital expenditure; and a total of \$1.155 million will be provided for airport projects in Beaver Creek, Burwash, Old Crow and Dawson City and Whitehorse.

I would like to mention again the \$50,000 to the Vuntut Gwitchin government to support their education and advocacy efforts related to the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge and the impacts on and conservation of the Porcupine caribou herd.

There is another \$250,000 for the water well in Old Crow that the community has been calling for for a long time; \$46,200 for sports and recreation in Old Crow; and for the Dempster Highway, another \$500,000 in capital investment. I hope many of my constituents benefit from these budget allocations soon. Once again, on behalf of my community and my constituents, I thank the Yukon Party government for these allocations in the budget.

I'll say again, Mr. Speaker, we live in a territory where an elderly woman cries as she asks, "How did we get into this situation with our salmon"? She lived in a time when fishing for two days was enough for their winter salmon supply. When our elders speak in this way and ask us to do something before it is too late, we must all respond to such a call for action.

I thank and congratulate the Premier for bringing the chinook salmon and the conservation of the Porcupine caribou herd to the attention of the Prime Minister. Please let me know if I can help in any way. This Yukon Party government can take its leadership role further and help develop a partnership with the federal and First Nation governments to conduct a complete examination of where and how the management of the Yukon and Alsek River drainage chinook salmon has failed and address it with one voice.

Yukoners do not expect their public government to solve all of their problems, but they do expect our government to protect our natural resources and our Yukon lifestyle from irresponsible decisions and the bad behaviour of others. They expect our government to do its part to combat climate change. They expect investments of our tax dollars to be safe, fair and, above all, accountable. Yukoners expect their government to work for them and with them, not against them.

Yukoners expect their elected officials' words to mean something and for their word to be counted upon. If there is a young man or woman who wants to stay with their family in Old Crow and still earn a high school education, then that really matters to me and it should matter to everyone in this Legislative Assembly.

If there is a single mother in the Yukon who can't pay her rent and has to choose between food and rent, that should concern us all.

When I see the Whitehorse Aboriginal Women's Circle continually struggling with this government in trying to achieve an aboriginal women's centre — a stable place to address and respond to a wide area of interests, needs and issues of our territory's aboriginal women — then that matters and concerns me. A billion-dollar budget and the statistics of violence and abuse against aboriginal women of our territory are terrible, and they struggle to get the capital and partners necessary to address the problems.

The minister responsible for the Women's Directorate made a pre-budget announcement to double the funding for the prevention of violence against women from \$100,000 to \$200,000 annually. This is an important step and in the right direction, and I want to thank her for that decision.

I say today that we must work toward a more inclusive decision-making process in our government here in the Yukon. There is only our Yukon, Mr. Speaker, and our failure to re-

spond to these important issues is a direct result of the failed politics and tired old policies of this Yukon Party government. The Premier, in his budget speech, congratulated his ministers on a job well done. I stand here today and I congratulate all MLAs of this Yukon Legislative Assembly for the work that they do on behalf of Yukoners and for their constituents.

I think of the things we can accomplish in public government — I'll say that again. I think of the things we could all accomplish if public government, First Nation governments and private industry worked together to make this territory a powerhouse in our country and the federation. When are we going to participate in politics of partnership? When will we end the divide-and-conquer politics of our time?

We need a government that is more compassionate and focused more on a "Let's address this issue together" approach, not one that considers our debate in this Assembly to be a futile exercise that they unfortunately must endure for six months of the year. We cannot allow our homeless youth to sleep on our streets or compromise their dignity just so they can have a place to rest. Mr. Speaker, the Yukon Territory is better than this. Yukoners expect their government to ensure opportunity for every Yukoner and not just those in the know.

More Yukoners can't afford to drive the cars they own; they can't afford to heat the homes they live in; they can't afford to buy food this month in lieu of paying their rent; they can't afford sports and recreation for their children. Retail store owners, commercial fishermen and families with no salmon on their tables are shouldering the burden as they watch the chinook salmon stocks collapse.

On every issue that would make a difference to the lives of Yukoners — chinook salmon stocks, healthy communities, jobs, the environment, health care, education and the economy — we need a government that will act now, because moving at a snail's pace is unacceptable in these harsh economic times. I believe that this Yukon Party government does care about what is going on in the lives of Yukoners. I have come to believe, however, that this government is sometimes unaware of what is actually going on in the lives of Yukoners. We all must pledge to move forward quickly and decisively to solve these problems and the many other challenges of our time. Let us keep our promises.

Let our words mean something. Let our northern communities set the example and let our Yukon be a leader.

I believe in a territory that is the envy of our country. I believe in a territory where healthy communities go hand in hand with economic progress, and where our environment is given the attention it deserves. What this territory needs is sound fiscal management and investment in our communities. As our communities become healthier, we attract more educated citizens, we inspire our young to greater achievements, and we become better equipped to be strong players in the northern economy and Arctic sovereignty. It's very good to see that our Premier now realizes that we are not immune to this global recession, and that we must also stimulate our Yukon economy. As always, I will be paying very close attention as to how this government models the way through this recession, and the attention they pay to all Yukoners in all of our communities.

The world is facing a global environmental threat worse than any we have previously seen in climate change. Yukoners know that climate change is a real and present danger, Mr. Speaker. We must get focused on the greatest challenge of our time: the fight against global warming and climate change. It has become very apparent that smaller jurisdictions, states and districts have set the example and are leading the way on the climate change front, so it is possible for our territory to do the same, Mr. Speaker.

Clearly, burning fossil fuels that generate carbon emissions is drastically affecting the planet and we can no longer ignore it. If we can find a way for the fight against climate change to be profitable, then we are halfway there. The government's action plan suggests that the Government of Yukon would not go carbon-neutral until 2022. That is not good enough. That is not an acceptable plan of action. If we are to lead by example, then the Yukon should be drastically reducing carbon emissions today, not 14 years from now. At the same time, we must help our businesses and citizens address the escalating economic environmental costs of energy. We must support greater investment in green technologies for the future and be seeking out opportunities for investment and research to be done here at home in the Yukon. We cannot turn our backs on the planet. Canada needs real environmental leadership now and it starts at home.

On a positive note, I accepted an invitation to accompany our Yukon Minister of Environment and the Leader of the Third Party to go to Poznań, Poland to attend the United Nations climate change conference in early December, 2008. There were leaders from around the world and approximately 12,000 delegates. It was important to me that we all went and worked together, and I believe that many Yukoners appreciated the efforts of all our political stripes representing Yukoners' issues and submitting our climate change testimony to the world.

It was valuable for me to witness our Environment minister addressing climate leaders at the climate leaders' summit, and sitting at the table alongside Scotland, France, India, China and other countries, speaking about the serious consequences we are already dealing with here in the Yukon, from the spruce bark beetle infestation to our melting glaciers, the effects that climate change is having on our fish and wildlife populations, the impacts that the Old Crow Flats are experiencing, the melting of permafrost and draining of lakes, and we made it very clear to the world that the effects of climate change are already being felt here at home. At the conference, I listened and learned from the leaders around the world, and how they are addressing the climate change issue in their respective jurisdictions.

On June 6, 2007, three large lakes rapidly drained within the Old Crow Flats, within the traditional lands of the Vuntut Gwitchin families who have lived in and used the area for generations. I can't begin to explain the social ramifications of this disaster, but the message is that we have to adapt to climate change. Well, I challenge anyone to come and show me how to adapt to something like this.



We need a government that seeks higher fuel efficiency standards for cars on the national stage. We need a government that will put forward a solid effort to build public opinion in favour of research and development of alternative fuels and green buildings, and more investment in renewable energy. We need a government that will combat climate change, not a government that just tells us we need to adapt to the changes that are occurring, and the damages. We must make and keep our promise to prepare the next generation of Yukoners, and ensure that they are ready to inherit the challenges of a rapidly changing north. There is no one-size-fits-all when it comes to tackling the climate change problem.

For instance, in my community of Old Crow, we have achieved another land claim implementation goal in the new John Tizya Visitor Reception Centre, in partnership with Parks Canada, and now the Department of Tourism and Culture. Our new building has on it a 3.4 kilowatt photovoltaic system, consisting of 45- by 75-watt panels. I understand that this may be the largest photovoltaic array to date in the Yukon, although this may have changed in the last few months with the panels on the roof of the Yukon Legislative Assembly. Photovoltaic array is a linked connection of photovoltaic modules, which are in turn made of multiple interconnected solar cells. The cells convert solar energy into direct current electricity via the photovoltaic effect.

The solar panels were installed in Old Crow because the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation was interested in a pilot project to test the viability of solar panels in the community and to reduce the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation buildings' impact on the environment while in operation.

Currently, all fuel oil is transported by air to my community, and all electrical power is produced using these transported fuels. The system on the John Tizya Centre is a grid-tied system, rather than a stand-alone battery bank system. This avoids the environmental hazards associated with deep-cell battery storage in the building and allows for surplus electrical power to be fed directly into the Yukon Electrical Company Limited's grid in Old Crow.

Estimates suggest that 2,600 kilowatt hours per year of electricity will be produced from the PV system on the John Tizya Centre in Old Crow, with perhaps 20 percent of it being exported back to the grid from the building. However, if the building's loads are like a big house in the summertime, instead of an office building, then perhaps even as much as 40 percent might be exported. If the building pays the government electricity rate, then the first 1,000 kilowatt hours a month is at 17.45 cents per kilowatt hour. If all of the 2,600 kilowatt hours of production went only to the building, then the PV system's electrical value would be worth \$450 per year from electricity only, not including any emission offsets from the diesel generation, transportation of fuel, et cetera.

The installed cost of the PV system is in the range of \$40,000 or \$11.85 per watt. This would make the amortized costs of the photovoltaic system to be some 63 cents per kilowatt hour with no cost of capital. The cost of diesel fuel is roughly \$2.25 per litre. The Yukon Electrical Company Limited generator sets in Old Crow are running at 33-percent effi-

ciency on average. This makes the cost of electricity due to fuel alone equal to 61 cents per kilowatt hour. So the grid-connected photovoltaic system is almost on par with diesel grid electricity.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, eight families have left my community because of work, education for their children, access to proper sports and recreation and jobs. With a record budget, there is no cause for this to continue. The gaps between programs and service delivery and economic development in the capital city and my community have been too large and have gone on for too long for these families and my community members to bear or accept.

How do we strengthen my rural community and stop the exodus of residents seeking a better quality of life elsewhere? We can ensure the proper levels and delivery of education in our school — for instance, students who leave the Chief Zzeh Gittlit School in Old Crow and travel down to Whitehorse are continually lacking in basic reading, writing, science, academics and English. Why? Land-based experiential learning initiatives must get recognized and implemented in the education system by the Yukon government and they must understand that, yes, this has value and will someday be a major component in achieving learning outcomes of students within the Chief Zzeh Gittlit School.

We can ensure that the shovel-ready infrastructure projects get built, like the Old Crow community service and recreation centre, a place that will stand the test of time and adequately address many demonstrated needs of my community. The richness of our culture in Yukon forms the foundation of our great wealth, but we are losing that wealth every time a Yukoner leaves their birthplace for a better quality of life.

I can see a time when we have comprehensive aboriginal language programs throughout the Yukon, including language nests in every community to help save and strengthen our languages across our territory. We can build the infrastructure needed to address recreational and healthy living activities and provide safe, long-term sport and recreation programs around the Yukon.

I can see a time when ice hockey programs are integrated into the school curriculum throughout the Yukon. The outcome or goal would be to enhance a hockey student's confidence, individual playing skills, self-esteem and opportunities in both academics and athletics beyond the primary and secondary school systems, all the while making efficient use of our arena facilities throughout the Yukon during school-day hours.

I am glad that the Yukon Party government recognizes the importance of achieving a new federal mandate to negotiate the next fiscal transfer agreement, not only for Yukon First Nations, but for the territory as a whole. I can see a time when all First Nation land claims are settled and funding is adequate. I can see this happening, but it is going to take leadership and hard work to get there.

I recognize the hard work of the Premier — what he has done to date — and the priority of working with First Nation chiefs in achieving this very important goal. I wish all the Yukon First Nation chiefs who are working toward this very important initiative — I wish you well because it will not only

benefit Yukon First Nations, but the entire Yukon in partnerships and economic development.

The Yukon has a valuable role to play in building a better country for ourselves and our children with the federation. This country of ours needs the Yukon Territory to be healthy and strong in these times of rapid change and uncertainty, and when economic aggression is everywhere.

I believe deeply that we cannot solve the challenges of our time unless we solve them together. No one MLA or political party has all the answers. Our next generation will continue the long walk down the path that we made for them — a walk for a stronger, more caring and compassionate Yukon Territory — for it is they who will build the next length of path.

Maintaining healthy, strong, vibrant Yukon communities is the key to success, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I will work to ensure this message gets through. As the MLA for the Vuntut Gwitchin riding, it is my job to ensure that their public government not only hears but understands their issues and concerns, and I will not hesitate to defend or advocate for what my constituents believe to be the right thing to do to address the needs of our time.

Thank you and mahsi' cho for the opportunity to address this record budget here today, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

**Hon. Mr. Lang:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, it gives me great honour to stand here this afternoon to address the budget that the Finance minister has put in front of the House and support it. It is the largest budget that the territorial government has put together and as we look back over the last six and a half years, we have seen the strength of our budgets grow.

I am very pleased to stand here as the Minister of Highways and Public Works and Community Services to address the issues for these two departments that members bring up here in the House. We are all elected by different constituencies in the territory. I am very pleased to represent Porter Creek Centre, and of course I have over the last seven years. My brother represented Porter Creek for 19 years, so it is a great honour for me to carry on representing the Porter Creek community. In addressing that, again I am a voice in the House here for the Department of Highways and Public Works and Community Services. As that voice, I represent a large department in the government and of course a very solid department in the government. As I listen to the opposition talk about the department or talk about issues in the department, I would like to say how proud I am of the members of the department who work in all of our communities, whether it is Old Crow, Watson Lake, Mayo, Haines Junction, Destruction Bay, Swift River — all of these communities have representation from the Department of Highways and Public Works.

Community Services, Mr. Deputy Speaker, touches every community and every municipality in the territory. Then again, they are representative of Yukoners, concerned about Yukon needs and, of course, working with municipalities to address some of their problems, which are issues that affect all of the communities.

Mr. Speaker, the Department of Highways and Public Works this year has a very large, robust budget.

Of course, when you look at Education — and we'll be discussing that as we move through this sitting — the good work that is being done in Economic Development, Health and Social Services — of course is a very big issue for all Yukoners. And, of course, we'll see the improvement of the resources at hand for all of these departments.

Justice has a responsibility in all of our communities and we'll be discussing the go-forward plan on the new treatment and health centre and the investment Yukoners are putting in there. The Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources will be standing up talking about the management of our resources, our land and issues that affect, again, communities in the territory.

Today we're talking about the finances of the territory in the fact that we're addressing this budget. This budget is a billion-dollar budget, Mr. Speaker. I find it interesting as a Yukoner, and I'm sure Yukoners who are listening to this last couple of days in the House — which is the opening of this sitting — that very few questions from the opposition have been directed to the Minister of Finance.

Now, I don't know what I can read into that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but I find it interesting that Yukoners have in front of them today, in this House, over a billion-dollar investment in the territory and the Minister of Finance is not being questioned on a daily basis about this. The opposition has the obligation or the responsibility to manage their time and I'm sure we'll get into this department by department because this is a very good-news budget for the territory.

As far as Highways and Public Works is concerned — and again, it touches everybody and its resources throughout the territory, and of course it is dependent on the weather. I hear in the House here the negativity toward the conditions of the highways last year where some of the members opposite talk in a negative tone about the maintenance but, of course, they don't take into consideration the fact that we had a very wet summer last year. The individuals worked as hard as they could to bring those highway sections up to an acceptable standard but, being the weather that it was, lots of times it wasn't possible. I again say to the department, "a job well done," Mr. Deputy Speaker, because they did a good job.

As you move through the Department of Highways and Public Works, whether you're in Destruction Bay or in Carcross and all of these small communities throughout the territory, they are all local individuals who work for the department on a daily basis. By the way, Mr. Deputy Speaker, they represent us in the communities. What do I mean by that? I mean, they get complaints every day. They get discussions on the highway condition and yet they still live, participate and work in these small communities. I take my hat off to those individuals because the job doesn't end at 5:00. The job is a job that takes you from the workplace to your home and to your social life.

Again, it's a lot of responsibility on their part, and they do an excellent job, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

As we move forward with our budget here, and as we will be debating the Department of Highways and Public Works, I'd like to highlight a few things that we're doing in the department. The member opposite, the member from Carmacks, was

talking about how we're not doing anything for bridges. I mean, I sit in the House here and listen to the opposition. One minute we're talking about, "You're not doing anything", and then the next minute we're talking about, "We're not involving the opposition enough in the decision-making process." Yet the negativity that flows across the floor is not a positive relationship.

The bridge — we're spending \$4.2 million on the M'Clintock River bridge re-decking — \$4.2 million over the next two years. That's a big investment. We're spending \$1.2 million to work on the pavement, a full pavement overlay, for this coming season, and this will be from kilometre 1448 on the Old Alaska Highway to kilometre 1554. This is a big investment in the infrastructure of the territory.

Certainly, regarding the \$635,000 we're investing in the north highway to take a look and manage some of the issues we have with the permafrost issue on the north Alaska Highway, that money will be spent to address the driving conditions of that section of the highway — again, a big investment in the territory and in that section of the highway.

If you were to look at the Klondike Highway — a \$4.9-million investment — what does that include? Well, we're looking at reconstruction of kilometre 714 to 716, and that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is in Dawson City, in your riding. That's an enhancement and paving of Front Street which, by the way, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for the House's benefit, is part of the Klondike Highway because, of course, we have the ferry at one end and, of course, the Klondike Highway. So this government is going to go to work, and we're going to upgrade that section of road and take a look at what we can do to maximize the benefits to Dawson City.

There is a \$700,000 culvert replacement at Beaver Dam Creek, which is an investment in the Klondike Highway; another \$350,000 for the reconstruction of Flat Creek Hill, kilometre 655 to 657 — another big investment on the Klondike Highway.

This is the government that hasn't invested any money on the roads, according to the members opposite. We've got rock scaling going on; we've got a culvert replacement on the Klondike Highway on Too Much Gold and All Gold creeks. Those are all investments in just that section of the highway. That's a total of almost \$5 million on the Klondike Highway.

Now, there is a \$1,606,000 commitment — investment — to resurface with BST and that will be the Klondike Highway again — pavement overlay, Takhini Bridge to Three Mile Pit and kilometre 214 to 222. That again is another needed investment in our highway system, and certainly we've addressed that issue.

Now, the member opposite talked about that we're not doing anything with our bridges. We're looking at a \$1.4-million investment, and that will include Takhini River bridge — a rehab of the bearing seats. That's a start of the rehabilitation of the Takhini River bridge. Install approach guide rail for Eagle River bridge on the Dempster — another investment on one of our highways; Rose River bridge rehabilitation — another investment of \$250,000; Flat Creek bridge rehabilitation, design and permitting — so there is something we are looking forward

to in the future. Fox Creek bridge is another design project where we will be looking at replacing the bridge and putting in a culvert.

We have another resource road that is open seasonally — which is the North Canol Road — and we are spending \$275,000 to rehabilitate Moose Creek and Itsi Creek on the North Canol Road. These are all investments in bridges and infrastructure for Yukoners. There is another \$150,000 invested so we can get an overview of bridge inspections so we can do the work we have to do in the future to make sure that our bridges are safe for the travelling public, and so we can have a workplan together on how governments would move forward with upgrading and installing new infrastructure on bridges on our highways.

The Campbell Highway — we have a \$1-million project at Star Creek — the culvert replacement at kilometre 312 — another investment in our highway system. We have been working over the last two or three years with the member from Teslin on the BST for Carmacks to Faro, from kilometre 528 to 546. That project will be finalized this year to an investment total of over \$1 million.

Now the Campbell Highway — as we're all aware, because of the nature of what has happened in the past and of course we as a government look at it as a huge asset to have the Campbell Highway upgraded — we have invested \$8.5 million for this coming year for the reconstruction plan from kilometre 10 to 190, so this will be a reconstruction from kilometre 30 to 42, which is \$6 million; reconstruction of kilometre 10 to 12 — that's Watson Creek — \$1 million; produce and stockpile aggregate, kilometre 47 to 60, which is \$700,000; and of course BST and revegetation, kilometre 12 to 17, is another \$300,000; clearing kilometre 60 — \$300,000; resurface and revegetation, kilometre 107 to 114 — \$200,000.

On the back of that, the remaining work at Tom Creek, kilometre 35 to 36, and Tuchtua, kilometre 107 to 114, will also be completed — so again, a big investment in the Campbell Highway, addressing a lot of the issues of bringing that highway up to a standard that's acceptable to the traveling public in the territory.

The Atlin Road is important to Yukon. It ties us to our neighbour, British Columbia, and of course, Atlin. Over the last period of time we have been addressing the upgrades from kilometre 1 to 41. This investment of \$2.9 million is to reconstruct and produce aggregate for the Atlin Road between kilometre 6 and 12.

Now you can see, Mr. Speaker, by all of these statistics out there — and these are facts — we are investing in our roads and our bridges and we're doing the good work that Yukoners elected us to do in overseeing their infrastructure to maximize the benefit for all Yukoners and of course the travelling public.

The Dempster Highway is another important highway for us. We have been looking at investing in there. We're going to invest in the gravel production; we're going to surface and we will enhance our gravel pits at various locations along the highway and we will inventory gravel so that we can do the good work that the Dempster Highway demands.

Also, erosion control will have to be done from kilometre 95 to 115, and of course we have to be always diligent that we have the gravel in place so that our graders can keep the surface of the highway up to an acceptable standard.

Again, Mr. Speaker, the North Canol is a pioneer work and subgrade repairs is another half-million dollar investment. Certainly, the North Canol has created interest, and of course the safety of the road has always been in question. Part of the investment up there will be to make sure that this road can be accessed in a safe way. There will be spot repairs in numerous locations on the Canol Road at kilometre 228, and of course at the border at kilometre 462. As you see, the North Canol is a long road, and is used by the mining community and also by First Nations and Yukoners, who do a lot of hunting and recreational things on the highway. It certainly is a beautiful asset for the territory.

As we go down through what this government has invested, with the help of recommendations from a very capable group of individuals that work in the department, there's a \$1.2 million investment in things like secondary roads, Mr. Speaker, and it's for application of BST, small design projects, crushing, vegetation control, bridge abutment replacement and rural road upgrading program. These are all investments in Yukon, Mr. Speaker, and that's what this government is doing, and that's what the department does on a daily basis. It is to maximize the dollars that are spent to the benefit of all the taxpayers in the territory.

As we drive through the community, we can see that the Whitehorse air terminal building is getting a complete expansion. That work is going ahead. There's another \$7.4 million, Mr. Speaker, and that will expand the air terminal building to meet the Canada Border Services Agency's security requirements, customs and all the things that go along with being an international airport.

Those investments are not only for tourism — for the travelling public — because it certainly bodes well for the territory to have an international airport and we certainly look forward to the completion of this investment. This is another investment in the Yukon's infrastructure that the Department of Highways and Public Works is going to oversee. Of course, we have other investments in the territory. We have a vast number of airports, and these airports are very important not only for the flying public, which is important, but for medivacs and all that goes along with keeping our communities safe. Certainly those need constant upgrading. Of course, with that we are looking at almost a \$1.2 million investment; \$700,000 of that is going to be spent on the Whitehorse airport. Of course, we are going to have baggage handling upgrades, apron concrete pads, pavement patching, apron work, lease lots, aircraft parking — all of the things that come with running an airport as busy as the one we have here in the city. It certainly doesn't mean that we aren't going to be doing an audit of what we need to do. That is going to be done by an independent individual.

There is going to be money invested in field surface improvements, lighting, navigational aids, including GPS — those are all being done territory-wide. Of course, we will expand on our running-up pads and safety and security issues. Those are

all going to be investments in the territory and throughout the territory.

Another issue we had was how do we control a community of Old Crow with the airport situated where it is? Well, we've invested over \$200,000 for the airport in Old Crow, which is going to purchase a product called EK35 that will be applied to the runway to address the dusty conditions during the summer; and also, we are investing in looking at the drainage ditch design so that we can move forward and control the drainage at the Old Crow Airport.

We are looking forward to working with Air North, too, as it pertains to Old Crow. We will invest in the Old Crow Airport so that they can utilize it for their jet service, when and if they move forward with that plan. That is another investment that we would have to make in Dawson City, because the jet service would also go to Dawson City. So there is more money being invested in the communities.

We haven't forgotten about Burwash. Burwash, again, needs the same dust control as Old Crow, so there is investment there — and of course, there is Beaver Creek. So we are investing in all these communities and in dust control. It is important that all our airports are safe and as dust free as possible for the travelling public. We also have to be aware that, like in Old Crow, individuals live very close to the airstrip so we try to minimize any kind of impact on them. Dust has been an issue. At our public meeting it was brought up and we've invested in that. Hopefully this product will minimize the dust in these communities.

There is always constant maintenance and upgrading of our airports. We're doing an investment in Pelly Crossing at the airport to eliminate water ponding. These are issues that come with spring and permafrost and all the things that happen. We want to make sure that we invest in our airports so that we can utilize them at any time of the day or night.

Mayo — we're investing there and looking at an apron expansion and rehabilitation of the runway and the taxiway. There is some money in the budget to do an overview, an engineering design, to see how we can upgrade the Mayo facility.

Dawson City has to have a fence put up to prevent wildlife from going across the runway for the safety, Mr. Speaker, not only of the wildlife but of the people in the airplanes using the airport.

Those are some of things that we're doing at the airports throughout the Yukon.

There is going to be investments in bridge upgrades in Whitehorse; the equipment in the restaurant needs enhancing and the fire hall needs some training equipment — that's going to be invested in. Radios are going to be invested in — airside and groundside — for both Dawson City and Old Crow. So this government has certainly taken a look at our infrastructure, our airports, our highways and our bridges. We will have an opportunity here in the House to debate the budget and — when they leave here in 30 or whatever days we sit here this time — they will be more aware of what this department does and more appreciative of the people who work in the department and do the good work for Yukoners.

In Highways and Public Works, with the many investments we have on the ground, we constantly look at the environmental issues we have. We've dedicated resources to the grader station to address environmental rehabilitation issues at Swift River and the grader station in the Whitehorse area and the environmental issues that are found around there. That is something that comes with these old grader stations, Mr. Speaker. It is something that we have to address on a yearly basis and I'm very happy to say there is money in the budget to work at this over the next period of time to rehabilitate the environmental questions on these investments on the ground.

Mr. Speaker, that is a very quick overview of what the government is doing in the Department of Highways and Public Works. We look forward to working with Yukoners on a lot of these issues that arose through the consultations and the community tours that we did.

A lot of this was brought up and put into this budget. I would like to thank all Yukoners who took the time out of their busy day, whether it was in Old Crow, Keno or Watson Lake, to come forward with some of their concerns about the Highways and Public Works department. Of course, again, I would like to thank the engineering department and all the staff in all the locations across the Yukon and also here in Whitehorse who work every day to bring the highways to the standard that they are. Working with nature the way it is in this part of the world, I would say they do a stellar job.

Of course, my other portfolio, Community Services, is another interesting department, and it covers a lot of responsibilities. I certainly learn something every week about what the department is responsible for. I grow to appreciate every day my partners in the department who work diligently to supply the services and carry out the responsibilities that the Community Services department is charged with. They are a very hard-working group of individuals, Mr. Speaker.

They acquired the ambulance services throughout the territory. I would like to thank all the people in EMS who work so hard to bring that service to where it is today. We as government certainly are investing in it. We should be investing in it as government. We look forward to the new facility in Watson Lake. It is a fine example of a modern ambulance station. There is a training complex there. Dawson City — all of these communities now have the facilities and the equipment they need and the people they need to supply Yukon with that kind of service. Of course, it didn't happen without a lot of hard work, Mr. Speaker. It is amazing what they do in a day.

For someone like me — a lifelong Yukoner — not needing an ambulance a lot, when I acquired the responsibility for being the voice of the department here in the House and in the government, I was amazed at what the individuals do, whether it's the medics, the paramedics or the whole structure of our ambulance service, whether it's the airvac component to it, the ambulances and how we monitor ambulances, and how we buy new ambulances, and of course, the growing demand. As our population grows, the number of calls to the department grows.

So again, I am amazed at what they've done in a very short period of time. The individuals know who they are. They have done an excellent job of getting that service up and running for

Yukoners. They are independent, and did the job that had to be done to do just exactly that.

So when we talk about Community Services, we're again talking about a department that works in every community. Now, whether it's a municipality in the territory, or a community that's not a municipality — which would be a community like Carcross, or like Pelly Crossing, or all these communities that don't have the population strength — they all are treated equally in their demands of the department — and again, Ross River.

One of the issues that the Yukon has is water treatment. Water treatment is a big investment for this government. Water treatment is a big investment for governments across Canada. I am not diminishing what is happening throughout Canada, but as we move forward in our communities, we are investing on the ground to make sure that all Yukoners have access to potable water. Carrying on in that vein, in the community of Ross River we have invested \$750,000 in the new budget to put in a new treatment process to address arsenic removal. There is arsenic in their water, so there is a \$750,000 investment, plus there is another \$400,000 being invested in water treatment there to supply the necessary building. There is \$1 million being put on the ground in Ross River so that people in Ross River have access to potable water. The Carcross water system treatment upgrade is another \$400,000. This is another investment on the ground to make sure that water plants are upgraded and the treatment meets the new regulations. Regulations have changed. They have gotten a little stronger, and what we are doing is addressing these new standards to make sure that our communities pass the mark when it comes to water here in the territory.

The Member for Vuntut Gwitchin was talking about the water situation. We're investing a quarter of a million dollars on the ground in Old Crow. That will do an operational upgrade to improve the service and meet regulatory requirements. In other words, we're going to enhance what they have there and work with the community to make sure they, in Old Crow, have potable water, and it's safe and usable for the community.

There is great debate out there about solid waste, and solid waste is a refuse situation throughout the territory. There are 17 solid-waste areas that the territorial government is responsible for. The municipalities have their own responsibility and — and I could be wrong — I think that's eight municipal refuse areas. We've committed and put money on the ground to go to work and completely review what's happening out there and what we are going to do to mitigate some of the questions on these solid-waste areas.

I have toured some of these areas. Carcross has an issue. Mr. Speaker, if you lived in Carcross in that part of the community, you would have an issue too. It's got to be addressed. It was one of the big issues during our community tours in the Carcross area. We committed to go to work and mitigate that issue.

Now, what the plan is, I can't tell you today. But the resources are on the ground right now, to bring those options to the government to see where we're going to go with it. Well, what is happening now in Carcross — or Deep Creek — is that

solid waste is not acceptable, Mr. Speaker. In this day and age, to have that kind of management on the ground, and have people live close to these areas, is not acceptable. So I look forward to receiving the recommendations from the department on exactly how we should move forward.

When we started this process, we didn't include the municipalities. But as we got discussing it more and more, I kept saying to the department, well, what happens outside? What's happening in the municipalities? How can we come up with a master plan, if we eliminate almost a third of the solid waste areas?" So we added that on, and hopefully that plan will come to us as government, and the go-forward will come out of that.

We as a government are committed to address the issues that are out there with our solid waste.

Dawson City council approached us on investment in the recreation complex in Dawson City. Dawson City had a plan. They came to us for resources and, because of that plan, we support the city's decision to move forward with the structural upgrading of the community complex in Dawson City. That's an investment of this government in the Dawson City arena complex of \$4 million over the next four years.

In the community of Carcross, we are investing \$735,000 to complete the public dock and boat launch, welcoming sign, road and drainage work. That money is going to be seen on the ground in Carcross — again, another community that is going to benefit from an investment by this government.

The Whitehorse waterfront has been an issue for 50 years. When I was a small child, they were talking about the waterfront.

We were busy tearing out the docks and all the warehouses, and we were discussing what we were going to do with the waterfront. Well, this government has put \$3.4 million in the budget to work with the city and look at a new parking lot for Rotary Park and of course the riverfront wharf project. Ongoing projects being completed in 2009 are the soil work at the former Motorways site. That is an environmental issue. The Shipyards Park landscaping project and the interior work on the roundhouse train shed and Shipyards Park heritage building. All of that money is going to be invested here for the beautification of the city, but also to enhance it for people who live in the city and the territory, and also it is a great plus for the tourist industry in the territory. We are also investing another \$750,000 for arsenic treatment upgrades to Carcross-Tagish First Nation, Haines Junction, Teslin and Champagne and Aishihik First Nations, which have public water supplies with arsenic levels that exceed the regulatory limits. Now, Mr. Speaker, when I say that, they have changed that level of arsenic acceptability, but what we are doing is investing to make sure our communities meet that new accepted level.

We've been working with the Marsh Lake community so we could get a commercial filling station there, a system for water. We're investing \$2.4 million on the ground to address that. We're working with the MLA, and of course the community, to get that up and running in this season.

Now, if we were to take a look at the Department of Community Services — and again, I remind the House of the lengthy list of responsibilities that Community Services has to

all Yukoners, and of course the work that the individuals in the department have to do to monitor all the things they do.

FireSmart — the FireSmart investment, when it was made many years ago, I would say, was looked at a little differently than it's looked at today. FireSmart was looked at as maybe a bit of a make-work plan, and it would employ people — which it did — and they would go out and look at fire smarting around communities. In the economy we have now, FireSmart becomes even more important as exactly that: fire protection for our communities. This year, we will be investing \$1.5 million, and we will be assessing proposals that come in to us as a government, and working with our communities to make sure we maximize the fire protection around our communities. Again, that is another job that Community Services does, hand in hand with our municipalities and our communities, to minimize the fire threat to our communities.

We're always looking at the revolving fact of investments for replacing vehicles. These vehicles are our protective service emergency response vehicle purchases. We're going to invest \$775,000 and put that into a new pumping truck for the Ross River fire department — one new, multi-purpose fire management vehicle to provide initial response to wildland fires.

As you can see, the department is very large and diversified. I look forward to responding when we have the departments up for debate. I certainly commend to the House today this very solid budget. I look forward to defending my departments and also voting for this department as we move forward in this sitting.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Inverarity:** Mr. Speaker, I'm quite pleased to be here this afternoon to give my reply to the budget speech. I have been looking forward to this for a long time and I think that we can all get through the next few days and get down to some serious work of looking at the budget in some detail.

I think, first of all, Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my family and my wife, specifically, who has helped me through the last two and a half years as a Member of the Legislative Assembly. Her support and willingness to listen to me and my rantings at home is certainly worth my thanking her to the extreme.

I would also like to thank the constituents of Porter Creek South. I have met with them on a number of occasions, specifically the Porter Creek Community Association and Friends of McIntyre Creek. They are both very busy. They bring me their issues and concerns. With regard to the Friends of McIntyre Creek, I would also like to thank them for demonstrating to our current government the inherent value in the McIntyre Creek watershed. This particular group of concerned citizens has been working very hard to ensure that the McIntyre Creek is protected against too much urban development. I will do what I can to support them in that effort.

I think, just for the record, Mr. Speaker, I would like to mention that next Tuesday, April 1, the Friends of McIntyre Creek will be meeting at Mount McIntyre. They are looking for groups and people to support their cause. They would like to ask any community groups or individuals who use the McIn-

tyre Creek watershed to come and speak. It is my understanding that individuals from the government, perhaps Community Services and perhaps Highways and Public Works, could be there, plus the City of Whitehorse will also be attending the meeting to listen to and try to work through the issues around this particular watershed that runs right through our corridor.

I would also like to thank those members of the Liberal Party who have offered their support to me over the last year — my mentors and other individuals who have voiced their opinion and given me counsel in this particular area.

With regard to the specific issues around Porter Creek and my constituents, I think I would like to address, part and parcel to McIntyre Creek, but as part of that, it's the Whistle Bend development that is going to be happening on the lower bench in Porter Creek. The particular concerns that I have had that I don't feel have been addressed to any degree are going to be the traffic patterns that will affect all of Porter Creek and not just Porter Creek South.

When this project is completed, there is going to be somewhere between seven and 10,000 new residents living in this particular area. A lot of traffic is going to be happening and I know the city is quite concerned about what the traffic patterns are going to be. I understand they are actually waiting for some traffic reports that this government is doing on their behalf. It is a concern to them.

I have to say that on some of the maps I've been looking at, it is a little bit ambiguous. They are showing roads that are, perhaps, earmarked to go from Mountainview Drive, all the way through the McIntyre Creek area, to the Alaska Highway. I don't think that there has been adequate discussion. I will give the City of Whitehorse high praise for their charette process. I have attended virtually all of those meetings, Mr. Speaker, and I can say that I think that process has been very good.

However, at each and every one of these meetings that I have attended, I have asked the question: what are we going to do about traffic flows in this area. I keep getting stalled and delayed.

I see no comprehensive analysis and no debate or discussion going on at any of these meetings — including the OCP meeting in January, to discuss what they are going to do with approximately 3,500 or 4,000 traffic movements along Mountainview Drive, along Wann Road in Porter Creek, and a number of other areas. This is a serious issue, and it needs to be addressed.

One of the other concerns that was brought to me by a resident of Tamarack is that, at the end of Tamarack, there's a little community park, a playground and whatnot. It looks, on some of the maps, that in fact the access road to Whistle Bend will go within — hard to say — it could be as little as a hundred metres, or it could be a couple hundred metres of this particular park, and that concern has been brought to me by a constituent, and I bring it forward to the House that it needs to be addressed. Where the actual intersection is going to intersect Mountainview Drive is just down from 12<sup>th</sup> Avenue. It's almost like trying to create another Hamilton Boulevard and Alaska Highway. It's on a hill. Is it the right place to put it? Should we be looking at diverting some traffic flows over to Range Road?

There is an intersection there now, and perhaps it's something that needs to be considered. The point, Mr. Speaker, that I'm trying to make is that there needs to be some debate and some discussion, and we don't see it coming forth.

Another area that's of concern is the residential lots. Lot development, or lack of it, is still a problem in my riding. We see budget announcements but we don't see an adequate number of serviced lots being made available. I know the government has signed an MOU with the city. However, when you go and talk to the city about it, they say, yes, we're developing that — but the reality is, it's the Government of Yukon that's actually doing the layout for subdivisions, and so we get this back and forth. Nothing frustrates residents of Whitehorse more — in fact, the whole of Yukon — than getting bureaucratic shuffling from one area to the other. I think we should all be up front about the development, not only of the lots, but in all of the services that we offer our residents. I think it's important that we move in that direction.

We would benefit from clear division of responsibilities between YTG and the City of Whitehorse in terms of availability of serviced residential lots.

A couple of other issues that I've brought forward — and you recall last year I brought forward one on flags. I think that issue has been fixed. However, another one that has come forward is wait times for eye specialists. This issue now is a real issue. If you maybe have a problem with your eyesight, or they suspect that there's a problem at the optometrist, it's a two-year waiting period to get in to see an optometrist about an eye problem.

I think that from a health care point of view this is unacceptable and we should be moving more in that direction to try to reduce the wait times. I understand the Minister of Health and Social Services has made commitments to some, but hip replacements and knee replacements are only part of the problem. We also need to address the other parts of the body and, in this particular case, how would we all be if we walked around and we could not see. We see that with people with disabilities and we don't fully understand how difficult it is to lose one of your senses. We need to be more empathetic and we need to do more for those of us who are aging and to get these wait times down on these particular issues.

On a more positive note, the Pine Street postal station that used to be vandalized on a routine basis is gone in my riding. In this particular case, they put in sub-post office boxes along the streets and that has improved the access to mail service in my riding, and I am very pleased to see that.

On another note, and I am not going to go into it in a lot of detail, but we see that gas prices are still high. We see electricity bills are continually climbing. These are issues that had been brought forward in this House in the last sitting. We have brought forward those issues to the media, and we will continue to raise them as we move through this particular sitting and we focus on the areas besides just education, and the correctional centre and the budget. You will see us responding to all of these issues in the near future, and we will be holding the government duly accountable for them.

There are a couple of other areas that I worked on over the past six months. As you know, I sit as a member of the Public Accounts Committee. I have to say that we have worked hard to bring this committee back into a working form, and I'm very, very proud that we have accomplished this. I would like to thank those members of Public Accounts — some are in the House here today — who have worked very hard to get this committee back working together.

I think we have done very good work with the Education report from the Auditor General and will be making some comments on it in the near future, but I think that credit is deserved for those members who have gone above and beyond trying to reconstitute this particular committee.

As you know, Mr. Speaker, I also sat on the Select Committee for Human Rights in the fall, and we tabled our report just toward the end of the fall sitting, and it was very well accepted. My understanding is that the department is working diligently on trying to do some amendments — short-term and long-term ones.

I am going to continue to be responsible. Although I'm not going to be the Justice critic in the future, I will continue to be the critic for the Human Rights Commission, and I look forward to continuing to voice my opinion on changes to this act. I tabled one in the House just this week on a new issue that's come up regarding water rights and safety and those kinds of things. If you say this is a pet project of mine, or a pet concern, that would be true.

One of the other areas that I had some concerns with is the audit reports that we talked about. I will be mentioning some that we have looked at over the past two years, and asking some questions regarding that as we go through this budget speech.

I'd like to thank all those people who have spoken to me on a social occasion about their public concerns and about what's happening in the Legislative Assembly. I've become even more convinced through my experience here in the Yukon Legislature that our social problems can be resolved and that our public issues can also be addressed. As one constituent said to me, how can the many problems we all have with government be fixed? That's a statement in itself. We have issues within the Legislative Assembly that we think we should be able to resolve. I know we've talked about decorum in the past, and it is now one that we are all vigilantly trying to discuss. I've made a commitment — a personal commitment to my constituents — to try to be more accountable and ask reasonable questions. But that's a two-sided street, Mr. Speaker. If we're going to ask reasonable questions, we should be getting reasonable answers. We should be getting answers to our questions. So I think that there's always room for improvement. I'd like to see the members try. I believe that we can collectively make our home here a better place to live.

As I mentioned briefly, Mr. Speaker, I have changed some critic portfolio areas. I'd like to discuss just a couple at the moment — previous ones that I think require a closing comment. Not that I'm going to give them up totally; if I feel the need, I will certainly interject into the debate as we go.

A particular interest is the Justice critic. In my previous role as the Justice critic, I worked very hard to find some sensible thinking behind the Yukon Party's management of the condemned Whitehorse Correctional Centre. I don't usually take issue with this government's wanting to do it their way, but I think enough is enough. We've waited eight years, and while they are making a good start on a new building, it still needs a lot of work, and we still need to address the current issues.

Had this government finished the project of the new correctional centre that was started under the previous Liberal government and has been labelled numerous ways here — and I'll get into that in a minute — it would have been built by now. It would have been commissioned at a third of the cost the minister is here proposing today to be the best correctional system in Canada. If I am to be criticized for my focus on the physical part of the building, then so be it, because we need to have the physical structure of the building in place so that the development of the programs can be in place. I see right now an issue where today in the House we have been asking questions about the programming and we get this "it'll come, it'll come". An acceptable safe operations building is simply the starting point for an effective corrections system — something that Yukon does not currently have. What Yukon does have is an inadequate, unsafe building with no rehabilitative programming in place. When people who face a judge ask for a longer sentence than they actually deserve just so that they can avoid incarceration in the Yukon, I'm left to believe that Yukon's justice system has literally gone off the rails.

This government cannot take credit for building an adequate, acceptable correctional centre if they can only take credit for creating a train wreck out of the Yukon justice system.

There has been a lot made about the warehouse of the previous Liberal government. Well, I went back and I looked. I had a look at the plans that were developed by the previous government. I compared them to what was coming forward out of the current correctional centre and the warehouse that is being addressed is not a warehouse that we had. We had virtually every single space allocated in the new correctional centre under our proposal at only \$24 million, instead of \$67 million. I look at the plans and I'm reminded — I see the men's area; I see program areas; I see a spirituality room where there are elders listed and there is a chapel, for example. I also see the women's centre that has been talked about that's in the current one and a mental health facility for those people who have mental health issues. So calling it a "warehouse" is really just a red herring, Mr. Speaker.

It's not acceptable. We have done a very good job. Had this government not wasted seven years diddling around — not building, not talking, not doing anything about the correctional centre — I think that the programming the minister is talking about would be well-developed and would be in place, and the recidivism rates that we've heard the minister speaking about today would now be a lot lower, if not non-existent, but you need to start with a place to put them.

My concern about today is that we have people in the system who are getting no help — none. We see them wanting to leave the Yukon — go out — they want to be sent to Agassiz.



They'll go to a high-end correctional centre just to get some programming, so that they can fix themselves. That's a shame when we have to see that. Really, what we need is a creative approach to bridge this gap.

I'll acknowledge that the centre has not been built today, and it's going to be 2011, if we're lucky, before it's done. So, what are we as a government going to do about effective programming in our justice system to address the people who are there now?

We don't see it. We see the guards complaining about it. We see the inmates complaining about it. We see the people with health issues being sent over to the hospital or sent up to the jail with mental health issues. It is not being done. It needs to be done, Mr. Speaker.

I would like to also address the Yukon Liquor Corporation. We have talked about this many times, although some of it is probably well worth repeating. This was another very good project that was started under the Liberal government. We did a good job. We had 46 recommendations and they sat on the books for seven years. Finally, we get the act. We don't get all of the recommendations; I think we ended up with 38 of the 48 that were recommended, but most of the ones that really needed to be put in place were put in place. Well, there is no really good reason for this lengthy delay. Yukoners have had to wait an additional year from the time the actual act was proclaimed. The minister said that the regulations would be in place by June 1 of last year.

It's now almost April 1 and we'll see these regulations coming into place on April 1. I think the only people who have really benefited by this delay as far as I can tell are existing hoteliers. The people who have been harmed by this government's inaction are the potential entrepreneurs and investors who required a liquor licence for their business and they could not get one because of that delay.

I would be a lot happier about the new liquor laws and regulations if the government had used the opportunity to level the playing field, and make it equal for all entrepreneurs and everybody who wanted to move into this line of business. But as we've seen, a \$250,000 minimum investment for a liquor licence, which is subject to an individual discretion of the minister, hardly fits the description of a level playing field, does it?

Tourism and Culture is a new area I'm moving into. I'll be taking over Tourism and Culture from the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin. When I first thought about this, it may seem strange, because I used to run a RadioShack store.

However, perhaps a little bit of background might alleviate the minister's fears about where I come from — from a tourism point of view.

I started my work career with the Canadian Pacific Railroad and when I worked on the Canadian I got to see lots of tourists. I moved into the airline industry and I spent 15 years with Canadian Pacific Airlines. I got a lot of customer service training. I got a lot of understanding. I attended travel trade shows. I actually sold information systems at one point in my career to travel agencies and I understand what they have been going through over the period of the last 10 years with deregulation in the industry.

I was also a board member — and a lot of people don't know this — for the Tourism Industry Association for about three or four years in the early 1990s. I participated in the Yukon Anniversaries Commission. I saw things that were going on in Yukon and helped precipitate.

What I guess I am saying is that my background with tourism probably exceeds my background in IT, which some people know about me. What I want to say is that I believe in tourism.

I think that tourism is, in fact, a strategic industry in the Yukon, but if you look at the current government, and you go to the Department of Economic Development, you don't see tourism there as a strategic industry. Yes, they have their own department — well, they share it with Culture — and the two have some relationships. But if it's all about Economic Development, then why don't we see the Department of Economic Development investing the kind of money in tourism — because it's been here forever and it is a strategic industry in the Yukon — but they don't. What do they do? They go off to China, and yes, that's important from a mining perspective. They introduce tax breaks for companies who want to invest in mining in the Yukon, and you know, that's a good thing too. But do they do it for the tourism industry? Do they offer a tax incentive for people who want to invest in the tourism industry in the Yukon? No. We need to view tourism as a strategic industry. We don't see it here; we don't see it from this government. They put it on the back bench. In fact, what have they done? They've taken \$500,000 in the current fiscal budget from North American marketing and moved it over into European marketing.

I believe that's the way it is worded — I'm not sure if I have it here or not — but they have tried to imply that it is new money. It isn't; it's robbing Peter to pay Paul. If you really want a healthy industry in tough times, you need to look at those traditional tourist industries that we have and we need to continue to support them. Highway traffic — yes it's down, but so is international travel. You cannot take the money away from the domestic market. There are lots of farmers, for example, who put their crops in in the springtime, and a lot of them have RVs — if we targeted them, they could come up to the Yukon during the growing season. It might be six or eight weeks that they have, and to abandon them and to abandon the highway lodge owners is not right.

I think I want to assure the government that, when it comes to tourism, they have a strong supporter in me, but they have to do the right thing. It can't be about photo ops and getting your picture in the paper. We are in tough times. We need to do stuff. We need to be creative because everybody out there is trying to be just as creative as we are and we can't rely on the old business models. We need to look at how we're going to change, and I'll be right there, if the minister wants my help.

As you know, one of the other areas that's a concern — one of my critic areas — is the Department of Highways and Public Works. I think it might be a good time — I put this budget speech over here because I wanted to quote something, and as we move into the Department of Highways and Public Works I think it's important for me to re-establish a base

ground playing here, so that we know what the Premier's goal is.

In a second statement here, he says, "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 in the territory." Clearly, stimulus is an important issue in this government.

They feel that they have this billion-dollar budget that they want to talk about. I have to admit that a billion dollars is a nice big number, and it's a catchy number, but the reality is that this budget is only two percent higher than last year — in total.

What does that mean, Mr. Speaker? It means it's not a stimulus budget; it's a status quo budget. Everybody else in the country is getting billions, or hundreds of millions, of dollars for infrastructure spending. We don't see it. We see, basically, a two-percent increase. I think that we could do a better job. I think the government could do a better job, and as I move into the Department of Highways and Public Works, I think it's worthwhile recognizing that all of the discussion about infrastructure has very little to do with stimulus spending, because it isn't there.

The capital budget has increased in Highways and Public Works; however, the operations budget for highways and maintenance has decreased by six percent. We're kind of going in the wrong direction, if you haven't noticed.

Previously asked questions that I've had about highways — and let's look at highways — I mean, if you look at the overall budget for maintenance, the transportation division is down by four percent. They're claiming a one-percent increase. However, most of that one-percent increase is made up by a 30-percent increase in information technology, and yes, I agree that we need to have a new MDMRS system, a new telephone system that's throughout the Yukon for all of the workers and government employees. But the rest of the O&M budget has been sacrificed for that particular issue.

If we look at the O&M side of the highways division that the minister was just talking about, we see the Alaska Highway with a 14-percent decrease in the amount of money for O&M. The Haines Road — a three-percent decrease; the Campbell Highway — great discussion — \$10 million this year — which was really the \$30 million that was announced a year or so ago — a 22-percent decrease in the Campbell Highway spending this year on maintenance. Maybe that's because the road has been improved so well they don't have to do as much maintenance — sounds like a good reason.

On the Atlin Road — yes, it's good to see that the improvements are going to happen on the capital side but they're going to decrease their maintenance on it. The biggest one of all — and I know my member here for — I'm sorry, Mr. Speaker, I'm having a problem — I'll go right on — a 47-percent decrease in the Silver Trail for maintenance. We've heard the member talking about this — nothing but potholes.

I look at the north Klondike Highway and, while I do see a bit of increase on maintenance on that, we see flooding there in terms of icing-up on the highway this year. I drove it last fall with the member from Teslin — she will vouch, probably, that the potholes were quite bad on the north Klondike Highway.

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

**Mr. Inverarity:** I drive the Klondike Highway frequently and there was a washout last summer that was patched up. There is ice buildup this winter and a serious concern about more washouts over the next summer. Potholes are deeper, frost heaves — it is like a roller coaster ride on the north Klondike. We need to see ongoing maintenance in all of these areas.

One area that I would like to just touch on that falls in this area, I believe, is the driver's licence issue. I think we need to clarify just a few things when we start talking about drivers' licences.

The issue here for me is one of two different topic areas around drivers' licences. I have asked the government whether or not they are going to put an enhanced driver's licence program into place — mostly to find out, if in fact they are going to do that, it's an issue that actually needs to be debated. The other issue of course is the driver's licence itself. What is the purpose of the driver's licence — and I brought this up on a number of occasions. There isn't a week that goes by that I don't get an e-mail or a phone call from someone who says: "I tried to rent a car in California. It took me an hour and a half to convince them that our driver's licence was real. They thought it came from Disney World."

The issue here is that our driver's licence is no longer being accepted as a driver's licence. The issue of border crossings or enhanced security or all of that stuff needs to be debated, but the simple fact is that people — Yukoners — can't use their driver's licence as a driver's licence.

I had a call on Saturday — spent an hour on the phone with actually a Yukon Party supporter. He said that he went to California, wanted to rent a car and it took a long time to convince them that it was a real licence. I had another call, a week ago, from a lady who tried to rent a car, and it was really funny because what happened was that they couldn't put the information into the computer system — it wouldn't take it. So when she rented the car the operator of the Hertz car rental — I think it was, but a major national carrier — put in "OK" for Oklahoma instead of Yukon Territory, because it wouldn't take YT. Now, you might blame the system for that but what was really interesting was that a week later they wanted to keep the car for an extra day and they phoned up to say they wanted to keep the car. What happened? Well, they had no record of them. So she looked at her car rental form and it had a name like "Yoshi Yakamoda" or something from Oklahoma City, and that was what the actual driver's licence was made out as, because somebody there has the same driver's licence number as this individual from Yukon.

We got a big kick out of it. The reality was that the Hertz car rental system wouldn't take the YT for the Yukon. Now, is that the fault of the government? No, obviously it is not — but that is just another example of the kinds of problems that we're experiencing with the Yukon drivers' licences.

I think it's important that we also address the issue of the enhanced driver's licence, and its purpose and what it's for. I'm just going to talk briefly about this because, really, the issue of the enhanced driver's licence isn't necessarily, well, it benefits the Yukoners if they want to go across the border, but the real-

ity is that most Yukoners, because of the problems they've had with the driver's licence, have gone out and gotten a passport. So the need to have an enhanced driver's licence might be questionable.

Yes, it might be important to have, it maybe is, but you know, there are some real issues over an enhanced driver's licence from a privacy point of view. Do you want to have the U.S. government have your medical information or your biometric information? I know the U.S. government would like to have that information, but it's an issue and one I'm suggesting needs some debate in this House, because the driver's licence and the ability to drive, and the right to drive, is different from the issue of using that as a piece of identification that is really a citizenship issue. Those are the two defining factors around the driver's licence.

Now I think that we could get something fairly reasonable or fairly soon that would solve the first problem, which is a driver's licence that doesn't look like it has been counterfeited, or been made by a high school student — which we've heard stories about in this House. I think maybe if we're going to move toward an EDL, we need to debate whether or not that's the right way to go.

The last topic that I'd like to talk about is education. I'm going to briefly talk on it and then I hope we will have enough time. The education reform project produced 207 recommendations for improving our education system. The Auditor General of Canada made further recommendations for improving our education system. I'm disappointed that this budget fails to address those recommendations. The budget completely fails to improve our education system and this budget will not improve graduation rates for Yukon students.

By refusing to set targets for graduation rates, the minister is flying blind. The minister is ignoring recommendations from the Auditor General and it's like the Premier — it's like they're discounting her opinion — and that's not right. The government has spent years on the education reform process, only to ignore the recommendations and announce another study called New Horizons.

All this endless review and reform is just that — endless review and reform.

The Education minister's mantra revolves around his partners in education and all the wonderful accomplishments. Unfortunately what is not improving and what matters most is what is happening in the classroom. Mr. Speaker, I could go on with this topic, but I think we will be harping on this for the whole sitting, because it is so important.

I would like to thank the members here for my time today. Thank you.

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is a pleasure to rise today in debate on the budget. First of all, I would like to thank, as we stand at the beginning of the new fiscal year, my constituents once again — the riding of Lake Laberge — for the opportunity to work with them over the past year. I thank, as well, the staff at the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources, as well as the Yukon Liquor Corporation and Lottery Commission for their support. It has been a pleas-

ure working with them. During the course of this fiscal year, at the beginning, I had the opportunity to be the Minister of Health and Social Services before taking on this new opportunity. I would like to, again, thank the staff of Health and Social Services and Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board for all their support over the two and half years that I had the pleasure of working with them.

I am very pleased to see this budget has made a number of investments, of course, to continue stimulating the Yukon economy and to continuing investing in infrastructure needs. I am very pleased with the investment in cellphone service expansion for the Ibex Valley and Lake Laberge areas. Of course, for constituents with whom I haven't had the opportunity to share the news yet, the plans from Highways and Public Works will be that Ibex has a new tower location, while the Lake Laberge expansion uses the existing mobile radio tower up on Vista Road. I thank the minister for his work in that area and I thank department staff for their efforts in putting together that expansion.

I am also very pleased that Highways and Public Works contains further investments in road improvements, including pavement work between the Takhini River bridge on the Mayo Road and the gravel pit at the top of the hill. There's also continuation of the pavement work and improvement north from kilometre 217 on the Mayo Road — or the north Klondike Highway as it is officially known — to kilometre 222. Again, I thank the minister and staff for that work. Also there is pavement improvement scheduled for the Alaska Highway between the Old Alaska Highway and Takhini Crossing from kilometre 1448 to kilometre 1554 — again, another change and investment that I'm very pleased to see.

I again thank those who have worked to put this together. I know that constituents will be pleased to see improvement to that area. As well, there is the maintenance of the Takhini River bridge on the Mayo Road, which is, of course, necessary and appreciated to ensure that its structural integrity remains strong.

There are a number of areas this year, both within my areas of departmental responsibility and others of relevance to my constituents and other Yukoners that I'm very pleased to see and very pleased to be standing in support of. The investment in the agriculture industry — the \$987,000 of the contribution to the Growing Forward initiative, which includes \$592,000 of that being recoverable from the federal government — is very important and will give us significant ability to move forward in building for the future of the industry and addressing industry priorities, including especially a very strong focus on infrastructure to improve access to market, and, as well, steps that will continue our focus on the business risk management side of things. That includes assisting with some of the risks that have occurred recently through damage from the wild elk herd.

As well, a very important initiative that we have embarked on this year is the move of the land planning branch from Community Services to the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources. It is a step forward by this government in modernizing the land system, in streamlining the delivery of land ser-

vices outside municipalities to Yukon citizens and in moving the staff together under one roof. This is to make it easier for them to work together efficiently and collaboratively in delivering those services, both in a timely manner for Yukoners and in a way that we believe will make it easier for them to do their job and to deliver those services as efficiently and as quickly as possible. As announced earlier, the increase we have made to the Yukon mining incentives program is a key part of our response to the current world economic downturn. It has targeted the area where we expect — and where it has experienced the greatest challenge — which is in raising capital. This is particularly for early-stage exploration work.

Mining exploration, as you may recall, has significantly increased since we took office in 2002, from a level of less than \$7 million to the last two seasons in excess of \$100 million in mining exploration, which, of course, is money that is going to put Yukon citizens to work. While we recognize that the current economic climate will result in some downturn in that exploration work, we have done what we can to offset that by providing this one-time increase in funding to encourage this further investment. We have raised the thresholds for eligible projects and are trying to encourage companies that have exploration work ongoing — or who are considering exploration work — to make a decision this year to continue investing and continue exploration, continue employing Yukon citizens, and continue supporting the service and supply companies that provide services to them.

And that, I should point out, of course complements the changes that we made to the *Quartz Mining Act* and the regulations which become effective, as I announced earlier, within days, to modernize the administrative provisions and reduce some of the unnecessary costs, including the costs that were required due to the now-replaced antiquated requirement under the old *Quartz Mining Act*, whereby those doing staking work on quartz mining claims had to have four-by-four claim posts to mark those claims. We've modernized that and replaced it with a requirement for a milled two-by-two — which of course is an inch-and-a-half by an inch-and-a-half.

Other changes include the change from the former provision where it was not possible to get claim tags until after a claim had been staked. We've made it so that those claim tags can be purchased ahead of time and thus staked at the time. Claim tags can be placed on poles — or posts, rather — and that can reduce what previously guaranteed that those doing mining exploration work and staking quartz mining claims would have to make at least two trips to the field. We've reduced that unnecessary cost and of course enabled them to make those investments into other areas, such as doing further exploration or further work on their projects, which we would hope they would do. They simply have the requirement now to register those claims once they've put the claim pegs on them.

Those are but a few of the changes that have been made and again, a key part of modernizing our system, reducing those administrative requirements and burdens, which do nothing to encourage better corporate citizenship, and do nothing to improve the Yukon government's ability to ensure that companies are acting in an appropriate manner. Those unnecessary

burdens, which were often referred to as “red tape,” are areas that we have recognized in response to industry's identification of them, and I'm pleased to have been able to act on them with the passage of the act last fall and the recent passage of the regulations.

Further areas within the budget that I'm, again, very pleased to see include the investment in the third wheel at Aishihik, which is aimed at improving the stability of our system. It will give more capacity within the existing hydroelectric system to respond to the current needs. The wheel is smaller than the two existing turbines at the Aishihik hydroelectric facility, which will enable the Yukon Energy Corporation to address the needs more responsibly and use less water when they are using one of the existing wheels and the new wheel. Essentially, they'll be able to use one wheel and part of a wheel, while flowing less water over the dam, thus giving them more time and more capacity to use that energy. Of course, it also increases the total maximum hydro output of that dam during periods of high demand.

Again, this is an important investment made by the government in expanding the hydroelectric system, expanding the capacity. It is also important to note that this wheel is more modern than the existing turbines and is able to come up to speed and take on load quicker, which enables that portion of the system to respond more quickly and more capably to interruptions in service and production from other areas within the system because, of course, improving systems stability is a key focus of the Yukon government and is identified in the energy strategy as an area that of course we will be working on with the two utilities — Yukon Energy Corporation and Yukon Electrical — to improve the reliability of the system, provide downward pressure on rates and expand the system to meet the needs of a growing economy as well as developing an improved approach to managing electricity generation and distribution. That includes key priorities, including the work that is currently being done on the development of an independent power producer policy and work to develop a biomass energy production policy.

My intention is to be fairly brief in my budget speech today. I recognize that there are many other members who wish to speak and, of course, we have a session where we'll have the opportunity to debate, particularly departmentally, much of what is in the budget — probably several times. So, I will be brief here today.

I'm very pleased to see, of course, that funding has been continued for the very successful 811 Yukon HealthLine. That is an initiative that I was very pleased to implement, during my time as Minister of Health and Social Services, last June. I'm certainly very pleased to see that it has been more successful than we projected that it would be and has assisted Yukon citizens.

Increases, as well, to the Yukon seniors income supplement are important, particularly at this point in time, to help seniors of low income to continue to live in their home.

The increase to the childcare subsidy program is important, particularly for families who work and need to have their chil-

dren in childcare. And, again, this is targeted to those with low incomes.

The new animal welfare officer under the *Animal Protection Act* is an initiative that, of course, is very important to constituents of mine who own pets and who care very deeply about ensuring that animals are treated well and, of course, for those who own livestock within my riding, they recognize the importance of ensuring that animals are treated well and recognize from an industry perspective the importance of having appropriate measures in place to deal with those very few individuals who would not take care of their animals in an appropriate manner.

Moving on to other areas, this year's budget includes the creation of a climate change secretariat — again, an important part and a direct linkage to the energy strategy that I mentioned briefly. Of course, that is the Yukon energy strategy and I had the pleasure of announcing that in January of this year. I am sure we'll be discussing that further during this session so I won't spend a significant amount of time talking about it today except to thank department staff and Yukon stakeholders who participated in the development of that strategy for their input. The energy strategy will be a very key initiative of the government as we move forward in ensuring that the Yukon responds to climate change, takes action to reduce our carbon footprint and to mitigate any increases through new economic activity. Of course, the stability of the system is very important. That is a key priority in the energy strategy and to work with the two utilities to improve system stability.

As well, energy needs also include things such as the need to ensure that oil and gas, wood energy and other energy products are managed in an appropriate manner.

One key thing I should note is that this also includes steps such as encouraging local production, including agriculture, to reduce reliance on transport of goods. More and more Yukoners are becoming aware that the work done by Yukon farmers — locally grown products — are not only more environmentally responsible, in that they are not shipped here at great expense and significant carbon footprint through being transported up the highway, but being grown locally, we also have a greater degree of certainty about the food quality and food safety issues, which are becoming more and more in the minds of not only Yukon citizens, but all Canadians in the wake of a few very tragic incidents that question and cause Canadians to reevaluate the steps that are taken around Canada's food supply.

I should note that the Growing Forward initiative that we partnered with the federal government does include funding, as well, for food security work, and some of the investments that we will be making through that program will focus on improving food security, as well as, as I mentioned, a key focus of improving access to markets and the ability for Yukon farmers to operate in a manner that is sustainable and profitable.

Another area that ties into the energy strategy is the continued investment of \$150,000 in our good energy program, which is focused on helping Yukoners lower energy costs by providing rebates for the purchase of energy-efficient products. Again this is an area I'm pleased that we've been able to con-

tinue. It is important both for encouraging people to continue spending money on local suppliers of those products, and in the long term to significantly reduce the costs that they will be seeing themselves from operating those products. So again, at this point in time, recognizing that Canada and the Yukon are not immune to what is happening in the world economy, this is important to help us continue to encourage both continued investment in this area by individuals, and helping them take action in the short, medium and long term that reduces those costs that they and their family face.

Another step we are taking, which we will be talking about more in future days, complements the investment we are making in the Aishihik hydroelectric dam and the investment already made in extending the Whitehorse-Aishihik-Faro grid north to Pelly Crossing. Perhaps we need to rename the grid, Mr. Speaker. That work that has been done to extend it north to Pelly Crossing and connect up the Capstone Mining copper mine at Minto to the grid. Not only has it significantly reduced the carbon emissions that otherwise would have occurred, but it is one step closer to connecting those two grids. As has been announced and as has been mentioned in the budget, of course, we are working right now on that initiative to ultimately connect the two grids and work toward the extension of that grid. We are working with the federal government, seeking their partnership and First Nation partnership, to upgrade the Mayo dam as well in what is referred to as Mayo B. That project of course is currently being reviewed by the Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Board.

We look forward to that moving forward. It is, again, another step and another action that the Yukon government is taking to act on climate change to reduce the Yukon's footprint, to improve the stability of our energy system, to increase the overall capacity of the system and make those investments in the Yukon's present and the Yukon's future.

Under the Department of Environment, the \$319,000 being provided to develop a new comprehensive animal health program will support interdepartmental integration and coordination of animal health and welfare functions and provide support services that are very important to the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources, particularly the work around the mobile abattoir and work that we will be doing with regard to ensuring the safety and security of the food supply. I am very pleased to see that program come to fruition and pleased that it will help us take that action, particularly when we see experience in other jurisdictions when problems have occurred. Instead, we are taking the action of enhancing the precautions we take in the work that is done around food security, including animal health.

Another area that has been continued and, back in the last mandate, was a program that I worked to see come to fruition — it had been requested by my constituents and proposed by them — is the domestic water well drilling program. I'm very pleased to see that continued investment. It has certainly had significant benefit in helping Yukon citizens put wells in for their residences. Of course, as I'm sure you recall, Mr. Speaker, it is done through the structure whereby they receive government investment, but have to pay that back through a caveat

that is placed on the title of their property. They pay back the program over a period of time, up to, I believe, 15 years. That enables them to invest in improving their water to reduce their costs far below what they would ever be able to receive from a bank investing in that infrastructure improvement. As well, in reducing those payment costs, they pay — as I believe you know — the Bank of Canada prime rate. This ensures for the Yukon government that, aside from some administrative costs to the program, ultimately those investments are 100-percent recoverable. That program has been very successful to date. I'm very pleased to see continued investment in that area.

I'm pleased as well, moving on to other areas of the budget, to see the patient wait-time guarantee trust fund being used to good purpose. It is an area that I was pleased to assign a commitment on behalf of Yukon to implement the wait-time guarantee. There is funding that the current minister in the department has allocated in this area — \$194,000 for knee replacement surgery — that, of course, is the area that we had made our guarantee in. The work that's being done to — I believe that was the area, Mr. Speaker. Sorry, I misspoke myself, Mr. Speaker; I'm having, I guess, a senior moment a little bit early. It was mammography that the guarantee was made in. That was a senior moment on my part — far too early. But I'm pleased to see \$194,000 for knee replacement surgery and \$245,000 for mammography, which will enable Yukon to meet our commitment under the wait-time guarantee agreement with the federal government.

The commitment that is put in place to Whitehorse General Hospital for echocardiology will improve services to Yukon citizens, help us reduce wait times in areas where we are currently having challenges accessing those services in a timely manner — recognizing that when we are not able to access those services inside the territory, that we must take advantage of the system in B.C. and Alberta. Thus, as a result, in areas where they have wait times, we will also have wait times. This investment, particularly the steps that are being taken to improve the local services, will significantly benefit Yukon citizens.

I would also like to commend the minister and the department for the success in receiving federal funding for the patient wait-time pilot project, which was application based. I am pleased that a successful proposal has been put forward that allows us to test the feasibility of providing Yukon patients with access and recourse to a wider range of choice in service providers and locations for cancer care, cardiac care, orthopaedic surgery and sight restoration.

Wait times in health care are challenges being faced from coast to coast to coast in Canada, and this investment this year in helping us reduce those areas where we're facing challenges is very important, I believe, in improving health outcomes for Yukon citizens and helping us to ensure that our system — which already delivers health care that is second to none anywhere in Canada — and this investment will enable us to address those areas where wait times are currently longer than we believe they should be.

Two other areas that I would like to mention — the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources this year will be

conducting a forest health risk assessment, which is important to monitor the effects of not only climate change, but other changes within the forest. It's important that we continue to take action in these areas and the investment there will enable us to gain information that we do not currently have.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I believe I have covered the high points of many of the areas within the budget. I could of course go on for quite some time, but a number of my colleagues have already covered many areas of importance within the budget, and of course the Premier within the budget speech has addressed a number of these areas, and we have many days yet remaining in the session. So with that, Mr. Speaker, I will thank you and members of this Assembly for their attention and look forward to listening to further debate on the budget.

I commend this budget to the House. Of course this continued investment, this largest budget in Yukon's history, the seventh consecutive year-end with a budget surplus is an important further demonstration of our record of strong fiscal management, of successfully working with the federal government to identify areas of Yukon need and receive further investment in these areas. We have come back from the situation we were placed in by the former federal Liberal government from 1993 onward when, in the early 1990s, they significantly slashed the transfer payments to the territory. They slashed the Canada health transfer and Canada social transfer, and we appreciate the improved relations we have with the current federal government and the work that has been done in the new territorial funding formula.

I want to thank again the officials within the Department of Finance, in particular, but also other departments, who have worked to support the business case that has been made on the TFF and the successful negotiation of the new formula. It is something that unfortunately, because of its complexity, is probably not well understood by many Yukoners and is certainly not reported in its details by the media and is an area of course that the opposition likes to gloss over because the structure of the new TFF — the work that has been done successfully by officials and by the Premier in working with the federal government to achieve this new relationship — will enable the Yukon to move forward without the previous negative arrangement, commonly referred to as “perversity factor”, where for every dollar that we raised in increased territorial revenue, we would lose more than a dollar from federal transfers.

The new arrangement is a very important step to help the Yukon continue to receive the federal support. We, as every jurisdiction in Canada, do need the investment in our comparable services while setting up the structure that did not exist before, that now allows us to move forward, to further build and further strengthen Yukon's private sector economy and develop our resources in a responsible manner without being penalized for that.

Ultimately the new structure will enable the Yukon to move toward a prosperous future for all Yukon citizens.

I should note that the doom and gloom is often in the media these days, and certainly we hear it from the opposition, as we've heard from the opposition for the last six and a half years. But the current doom and gloom about the economy, I

would note, is something that we recognize is a challenge. We recognize there will be impacts, but I would encourage all members of the Assembly to listen to those economists who compare the current world recession to previous recessions, to note that there have been recessions in the past, and there will be recessions in the future.

The Yukon is taking the action now, as I believe we should, to mitigate impacts, but looking for opportunities once the world emerges from the economic downturn, to ensure that the Yukon emerges from this period of challenge and difficulty stronger than ever and able, more than ever before, to build a territory, to strengthen a territory, that meets the needs of all its citizens, that preserves our environment, that has a strong, responsible economy, both resource development and in other areas, such as tourism and agriculture and forestry — all of these areas, both renewable and non-renewable sectors — that are an important part of the fabric and the diversification of the Yukon economy.

With that, Mr. Speaker, since I could go on for quite some time here, I thank you again for this opportunity and look forward to continuing this session. And as I look outside, I see the sun is shining, and I believe the sun will shine for the Yukon now and into the future.

Thank you.

**Speaker:** The House will recess for five minutes.

*Recess*

**Speaker:** I will now call the House to order. The Member for Kluane, please.

**Mr. McRobb:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is nice to see so many smiling faces back in here again in the spring. I am wondering how long it will take for that snow to melt on the window up there, given the large production of hot air.

I too, Mr. Speaker, would like to begin by thanking my constituents for their support and for bringing issues to my attention, as do other Yukoners — especially in my critic areas of Energy, Mines and Resources, Economic Development, Yukon Housing Corporation, and the Energy Corporation and Development Corporation.

As you should all know by now, Kluane is the most spectacular region in the territory, if not the world. I hope the Minister of Economic Development feels that is a familiar message when he is out travelling to other parts of the world to deliver that message. This is the opportunity available each spring to every member to talk about any issue, whether it is in the budget or not.

I would first like to touch on the big picture. I feel it is very important, Mr. Speaker, and we should not ignore it. We all need to improve the system in which we work.

We all have agreed at one time or another on the importance of undertaking legislative reform. We have all agreed at one time or another to address these matters at SCREP. SCREP is the Standing Committee on Rules, Elections and Privileges. It is the appropriate committee that can change the House rules

and improve the system. The problem is the committee hasn't been doing its work. The Yukon Party has unfortunately stalled any progress at SCREP and basically the committee has done nothing. It doesn't even meet. This is despite a promise made by the Yukon Party members shortly after the last election to move forward with this agenda. You might remember the opposition side agreed to shorten the length of the sitting in the fall of 2006 to 12 days instead of 28 days, I believe it was, and in return we were given this promise.

This is really unfortunate, Mr. Speaker, because we really could be doing so much more for the people we serve, and that is the ultimate test. Are we serving the public in the best way possible? I don't think so.

Let's turn to what the highways minister said a few minutes ago. I wish to respond to those comments. He wondered why there hadn't been any questions on the budget yet. Is that a serious question, Mr. Speaker? Well, if it is, he should know why, especially after sitting in this House for the past six and a half years.

I'll give him three quick reasons. First, the departmental budget briefings only started this morning, and they won't be completed for another week or two. Many of the main departments where the funding lies — the departments — we haven't had briefings yet on them. So, why should we be forced to ask questions, when we haven't even had the opportunity to ask questions to the officials?

Secondly, asking budget questions is what Committee of the Whole is for, and that process won't start until our reply speeches are done, at the earliest.

And finally, Question Period is for any issue. It so happens that most of our questions are related to this government's failure to properly educate our children. This is what Yukoners have asked us to do and, as the voice of the people, we feel it's our responsibility to ask whatever question is in the public interest.

Another general issue I want to mention is this government's failure to diversify our economy. This has been referenced by several previous speakers as well. Now, the Yukon Party was elected to office twice on the grounds that it would lessen our dependence on the federal government by diversifying the territory's economy. But any notion of success was quickly dispelled by the Premier's own budget figures. Our own economy, which is termed "own-source revenue" in the budget, has decreased in recent years from about 16 percent to only 11.4 percent. That's a huge decrease, Mr. Speaker, not an increase. The proof is in the budget pudding. The Yukon Party has failed to diversify our private sector economy.

Now, some may ask what a Liberal government would have done. Well, there are two things that occur to me: expanding our Internet bandwidth, and ditto with cellular infrastructure.

Sure, Mr. Speaker, the Yukon Party can point to the addition of two more areas of cell coverage in 2009 but that's too little, too late. There are still communities without coverage as, too, are most of our highways. We must wake up to what's happening in the south and realize that not all tourists will want to travel in a region where they can't e-mail those pictures back

home or check their e-mail while driving, or be available for that phone call.

This is an increasing situation and other parts of the continent realize this as more and more people get BlackBerrys and other communication devices. They simply don't want to go to a region that is not connected. We should think of this as a marketing opportunity. Wouldn't it be great to promote ourselves as a connected territory? Well, I think so, Mr. Speaker. That's just one of the areas being neglected that would help to diversify our Yukon economy.

Now I know members of the Yukon Party would like me to give more examples because they're a bit short on good ideas, but they will have to wait for that.

I want to mention a few riding issues, because I may run out of time before I'm done here. I want to ensure I get them in.

First of all, I do thank the government and recognize the expenditures that do exist in the Klwane region. The big ticket items of course are all paid for by the U.S. taxpayer, such as the Shakwak highway improvements. The seniors facility in Haines Junction was paid for by the federal government and, as a strange twist, Mr. Speaker, it was even paid for by the Paul Martin Liberal government, but we don't hear any mention of that when the government announces it. There are a few dribs and drabs, which are two improvements to the St. Elias Community School in Haines Junction, and I am sure students, teachers and parents will especially appreciate it.

Most significantly, it is what is missing in the budget. This government talks about infrastructure; it talks about energy infrastructure; it talks about stimulus.

It talks about climate change and reducing carbon dioxide emissions and yet there is no mention of a Haines Road power line in this budget — no mention at all. It wasn't long ago when there was a contingent of residents from the Haines Road who approached the Yukon Utilities Board, raising the profile of that issue.

I would add, Mr. Speaker, that there is a government highways maintenance camp on that highway that could be brought online and have the diesel generators shut off, as well as several businesses and residents.

What about a post-Shakwak economic plan? Mr. Speaker, this has been something on my constituents' agenda for more than a dozen years now. They ask what will happen once the Shakwak project ends. We are getting very close to the end of the project, after about 30 years. This is a significant project. In recent years, the expenditures have totalled about \$30 million per year.

There's just basically the Slims River bridge and some chipseal remaining. All the highway reconstruction has been done. So what's going to happen after Shakwak to the dozens of local or regional employees who have depended on this project for a paycheck?

Well, Mr. Speaker, years ago, the Yukon government sent out some people from the Department of Economic Development to develop an economic plan, and that's what the Yukon Party pointed to — the economic plan. Well, Mr. Speaker, I've had this plan for two years now, and I'm still waiting for the government to do anything with the plan. What's it waiting

for? There are several good ideas in that plan that should've been implemented long ago, yet for the next year, after reviewing the budget, there's nothing — nothing for that plan. One of the big-ticket items last year was the paving in Haines Junction. Well, Mr. Speaker, we didn't hear how the U.S. taxpayer paid for that paving, but they did. It was part of the Shakwak reconstruction project.

Now, the paving only went partway through town. It stopped halfway through town, and everybody wondered why. The crews and the equipment were on-site, ready and willing, but there was no money from the Yukon government to supplement the U.S. taxpayers' funds in order to complete the job. It's sad to have to stand here today and say that, after a cursory review of this budget, there is still no funding to complete that work.

So it seems the only time the Yukon Party spends money of any significance in the region is when it's from somebody else — the U.S. taxpayer or the Paul Martin budget, but nothing, really, of any significance from the Yukon budget, even though there is more than a billion dollars to spend in this year's budget. We're talking about capital works here, Mr. Speaker.

Even the north highway rip and reshape, a.k.a. R and R, is down to \$635,000 this year.

Now the purpose of this money is to resurface the north Alaska Highway that has already been improved through the Shakwak project to make it safer and more drivable. This is a problem due to the permafrost heaving of the highway. Anybody who has driven that road is familiar with this issue. Even though the government is in denial, I'm still hearing accounts of how there are still disconnected trailers on that section of highway from moving vehicles because of the heaves and bumps on the road.

I was surprised a couple of years ago when officials at the highways briefing were unaware of this. I recall there were between a dozen and 15 incidents that summer. I've spoken to people recently and there have been several just in the past few weeks. In one case, a towed vehicle passed the powered vehicle going down a hill — with nobody in it, of course. You know, Mr. Speaker, this is a real issue. Do we have to wait for a serious accident before we act on this?

What I am referring to is beyond an R-and-R budget that used to be a couple of million dollars a year. Now it has been reduced to \$635,000. That isn't enough. This is a main artery through the Yukon Territory — international highway — and it's rather disgraceful to see the deteriorated sections not being improved on a timely basis and having to wait and hope for next year's budget in order to be fixed.

What about the fire hall in Beaver Creek that residents and first responders have been requesting for the past few years? There is still nothing in the budget. It is no wonder why attendance at the Premier's budget meetings in that community have been sparse in recent years. I have talked to people who have attended and they shrug their shoulders and say, "What's the use? They don't listen anyway."

Another issue is land availability.



Now I do note that there will be some lot development in Haines Junction, and there is an expense attached to that, although it's a recoverable expense from people who buy the lots, so it's a zero-sum game, where it doesn't amount to out-of-pocket expenses for the government. But there are still other communities where residents and wannabe residents have been requesting land for several years. Destruction Bay comes to mind. Now, I spoke to one person in particular who indicated there might be something happening with the department on developing a lot or two in that region. But Mr. Speaker, I'll wait until there are results; otherwise I'll keep mentioning it.

What about the community well in Mendenhall? Well, this is an issue, and it has gone unresolved by the government. The government is putting a well into Destruction Bay, and that's great, but what about the community of Mendenhall? If I recall correctly, Mr. Speaker, that well was put in there by government maybe 10 years ago, and it was found to be contaminated and closed down. Residents have been promised for quite awhile now — maybe even years — that the well would be replaced. There is nothing in the budget for it.

There are several other issues that exist that hopefully I'll have time later in the sitting to raise.

I want to talk a bit about some energy issues — starting with power bills. Now, I've had a lot of time to think about what has happened in the past few years. It struck me that the Yukon Party really has confused the whole issue of cost to consumers. A lot of people are smart enough, Mr. Speaker, to figure out that they are paying more now than they were before.

The government talks about decreasing rates. Well, Mr. Speaker, rates are only a portion of a consumer's bill. There are several other components to factor before the bill is determined. These include the customer charge, riders, surcharge, et cetera.

So the rate is only part of the bill, and it's the bill that people have to pay.

A couple of years ago, when I pressed the former energy minister on his grand plan to eliminate the rate stabilization fund and decrease rates, he promised there would be no net bill increases. But that promise hasn't been kept. People are paying at least 20 percent more in the past year and a half, I believe it is, and it's scheduled to go up another 15 percent when the rest of the program is cut this summer.

Now, rates have decreased a few percentage points, but bills have increased about \$20 for each customer, on average, each month. And when the Yukon Party cuts the other half of the program — which I just referenced — it will cost customers another \$15 each month, for a total of about \$35 more each month from every average customer. What does the Yukon Party say? Well, not much. Probably just "Welcome to the recession."

Let's explore this a bit more, beginning with the rate stabilization fund. This program was established in the fall of 1998. Contrary to the Yukon Party's assertions, it had the goal of stabilizing power bills for the long-term future. Some of you may be surprised to hear that, because we've heard words to the contrary from the Yukon Party and even officials who represent the Yukon Energy Corporation who weren't around

when the program was created. The rate stabilization fund was never intended to be a short-term program or a stop-gap measure. But that's what the Yukon Party turned it into. Let's dig into this a bit more.

The program was originally funded through the Yukon government's budget and continued as such under the most recent NDP and Liberal governments. However, this all changed under the Yukon Party. In its wisdom, the Yukon Party stopped funding the program from consolidated revenues and the cost was foisted on to the Yukon Development Corporation, which owns the Yukon Energy Corporation.

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

*Debate on second reading of Bill No. 15 accordingly adjourned*

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